Bluebeard's Key; Man or Monster?

Key Stage 4 Programme – 2016

Researchers in Schools

Teacher: Dr McGrath

Elle se jeta aux pieds de son mari en pleurant, lui demandant pardon ; mais la Barbe-Bleue avait le cœur plus dur qu'un rocher. Il faut mourir, Madame, dit-il d'un air terrible, et tout à l'heure.

Puisqu'il faut mourir, dit-elle en sanglotant, donnez-moi un moment pour prier Dieu. — Je vous donne un quart d'heure, reprit la Barbe-Bleue, mais pas un moment de plus.

Pupil Name: _____

Timetable and Assignment Submission

Timetable – Tutorials

Tutorial	Date	Time	Location
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

Timetable – Homework Assignments

Homework Assignment	Description	Due Date
Tutorial 1	200 words on 'Barbe Bleue'	
Tutorial 2	250 words on 'The Bloody Chamber'	
Tutorial 3	250 words on 'Bluebeard's Egg'	
Tutorial 4	Draft Assignment	
Tutorial 5	Final Assignment	

Assignment Submission – Lateness and Plagiarism

Lateness	
Late Submissions	10 marks deducted
Plagiarism	
Some plagiarism	10 marks deducted
Moderate plagiarism	20 marks deducted
Extreme plagiarism	Automatic fail

Uni Pathways Year 10 Programme – 2016 – Pupil Feedback Report

Grade	Marks	What this means
1st	70+	Performing to an excellent standard at A-Level
2:1	60-69	Performing to a good standard at A-Level
2:2	50-59	Performing to an excellent standard at current key stage
3rd	40-49	Performing to a good standard at current key stage
Working towards a pass	0-39	Performing below a good standard at current key stage
Did not submit	DNS	No assignment received

Name of Teacher	Dr D McGrath		
Title of Assignment	Compare and contrast Charles Perrault's original version of 'Bluebeard' to one or more contemporary versions. Explore how the two versions are different/similar in light of their different cultural and social contexts.		
Name of Pupil			
Name of School	Challney High School for Boys		
ORIGINAL MARK / 100		**FINAL MARK / 100**	
DEDUCTED MARKS		**FINAL GRADE**	

If marks have been deducted (e.g. late submission, plagiarism) the PhD tutor should give an explanation in this section:

Learning Feedback Comment 1 – *Knowledge and Understanding*	
What you did in relation to this Key Learning Priority	**How you could improve in the future**

Learning Feedback Comment 2 – *Critical Engagement and Analysis*	
What you did in relation to this Key Learning Priority	**How you could improve in the future**

Learning Feedback Comment 3 – *Communication*	
What you did in relation to this Key Learning Priority	**How you could improve in the future**

Resilience Comment	
How you showed learning resilience during the course	**How you could build learning resilience in the future**

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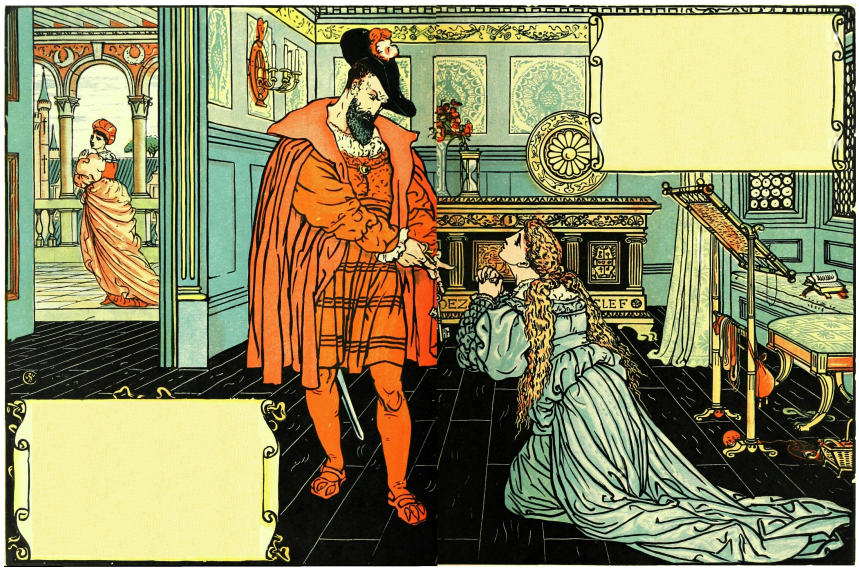
Course Rationale

Many fairy tales that are still popular today were very different in their original forms, some much more frightening and even gruesome. The aim of this course is to explore and compare the French fairy tale, *La Barbe Bleue* and how the story has evolved and changed over time. Students will be introduced to the scholarly study of fairy tales and folklore and the associated cultural, sociological and historical contexts. This inter-disciplinary course will allow students to gain knowledge in the fields of comparative literary studies (English and French), folklore studies, sociology, gender studies, cultural studies and history. The course will focus specifically on the French origin of this tale and several modern retellings.

The introductory tutorial will focus on the history of European fairy tales in general, where they originated from and why they are still well known today. Following this, pupils will refine their critical reading skills through close textual analysis and consideration of cultural and social contexts. Over the following tutorials, students will study four short tales by authors from different cultural and historical backgrounds and will prepare notes each week, which will provide material for subsequent class discussions on the issues raised in the tales. Students will also study one film version of the tale.

The final assignment will be in the form of a 2000 word essay based on the texts studied during the course. Students will need to put into practice the critical and analytical skills they have developed and to think independently in order to produce an essay with a coherent argument drawing on what they have learned throughout the tutorials. Emphasis will be placed on how the students explain the cultural and historical context of the texts and how they relate to each other.



Mark Scheme

Key Skill	1st	2.2
Knowledge and Understanding	☐ Student demonstrates excellent understanding and knowledge of source texts and comprehension of cultural and historical contexts through analysis, comparisons and relevant citations.	☐ Student demonstrates a good understanding and knowledge of source texts and some comprehension of cultural and historical contexts but lacks relevant quotes, examples etc.
Critical Engagement and Analysis	☐ Student engages with the texts critically and demonstrates the ability to analyse and think independently. Student also shows evidence of relevant independent research to justify answer and engagement with the issues raised during the course.	☐ Student shows evidence of a personal response to the texts in the form of analysis and independent thought but lacks some independent research on the topic and thorough engagement with the issues raised during the course.
Communication	☐ Student presents an excellent argument that is clear and logical and culminates in a coherent conclusion. Answer is structured and contains clear, relevant examples that illustrate points made. Student uses appropriate terminology and vocabulary.	☐ Student provides a clear, structured essay and argument is mostly coherent but the answer lacks some relevant examples to illustrate points made.

Glossary of Keywords

Word	Definition	In a sentence…
Fairy tale	A story about fairies or other mythical or magical beings, especially one of traditional origin told to children.	Fairy tales often feature characters such as princes, princesses, witches and monsters.
Conte de fée	The French term for fairy tale.	The French author, Mme d'Aulnoy, coined the term 'conte de fée'. This is where the term 'fairy tale' originated.
Folklore	The unwritten literature of a people as expressed in folk tales, stories, legends, proverbs, riddles, songs, etc. Normally attached to a specific group or culture.	Many scholars believe that the fairy tales we know today originated as folklore (stories told orally).
Context	The set of circumstances or facts that surround a particular event or situation.	Skilled readers use context to construct meaning from words as they are read.
Symbolism	The representation of something in symbolic form or the attribution of symbolic meaning or character to something.	Traditionally, roses and the colour red are symbols of love.
Metaphor	A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action that it does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance, for example *he is a lion in battle.*	Example of a metaphor: She is a walking dictionary.
Adaptation / Retelling / Rewriting	In relation to literature: Creating a new version of a text that already exists.	Emma Donoghue's 'The Tale of the Rose' is a retelling of 'Beauty and the Beast'.
Modern / Contemporary	Of or relating to present and recent time; not ancient.	Angela Carter's 'The Company of Wolves' is a modern rewriting of 'Little Red Riding Hood'.
Intertextuality	The interrelationship between texts, especially works of literature; the way that similar or related texts influence, reflect, or differ from each other	In this course, we will study the intertextual relationships between the texts.
Stereotype	A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.	Example of a stereotype: All brainy people are geeks.

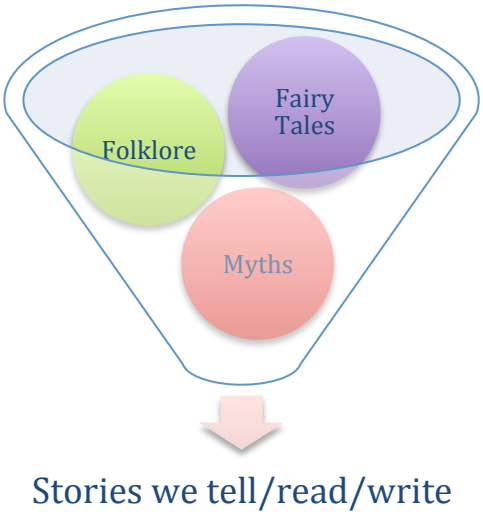
Tutorial 1 – What are fairytales?

Today's Key Question(s):

- What is folklore?
- What are fairy tales?
- What is myth?
- Why are fairy tales often considered childish?
- Are fairy tales still relevant today?

What is the Purpose of Tutorial 1?

- Tutorial one will provide an introduction to the history of fairy tales, why they are historically and culturally important and how they have changed over time.



What are myths?

Myths are sacred tales or fables of a culture. They usually deal with the human condition, good and evil, human origins, life and death, the afterlife, and the gods. Myths express the beliefs and values about these subjects held by a certain culture, for example ancient Greek and Roman myths.

What is folklore?

Folklore is the unwritten literature of a people as expressed in folk tales, stories, legends, proverbs, riddles, songs, etc. normally attached to a specific group or culture. Many scholars believe that the fairy tales we know today originated as folklore (stories told orally).

What are fairy tales?

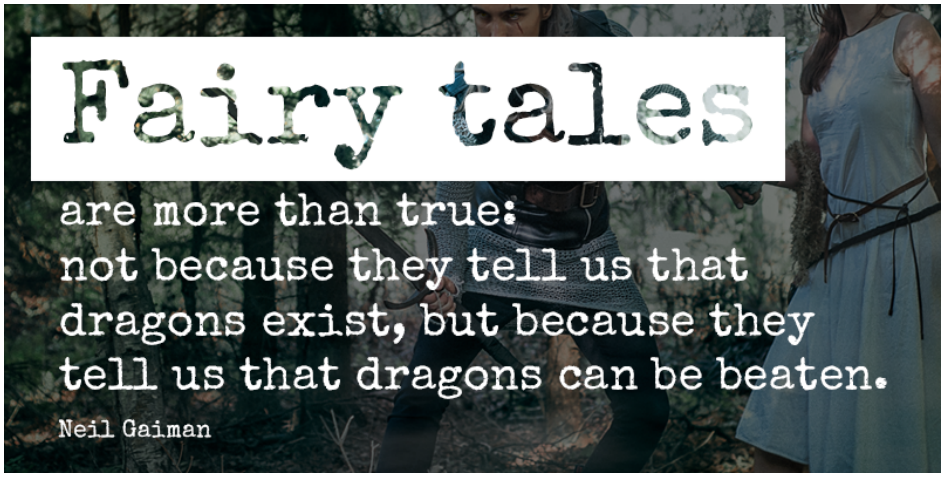
Fairy tales are stories about fairies or other magical beings. Fairy tales often feature characters such as princes, princesses, witches and monsters. The term fairy tale (conte de fée) was coined by Mme d'Aulnoy, a French fairy-tale author in 1697. Originally, fairy tales were written for an adult audience (often as a form of thinly-veiled social commentary) and later became associated with children.

Different countries & cultures will have different versions of tales depending on their customs and values

So, what can we learn from fairy tales?

Activity 1: Think about stories, folklore, myths and fairy tales that you know.
Make a list:

Activity 2: Consider the following quote:



<u>Discuss:</u> Why do you think we still tell fairy tales?
Are they still relevant today?

Charles Perrault (1628-1703)

- Charles Perrault was a French poet and author and is one of the most famous fairy-tale authors of all time.
- He wrote many tales that are still famous today including Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Tom Thumb and Sleeping Beauty.

Barbe Bleue
By Charles Perrault

Il était une fois un homme qui avait de belles maisons à la ville et à la campagne, de la vaisselle d'or et d'argent, des meubles en broderie, et des carrosses tout dorés ; mais par malheur cet homme avait la Barbe bleue : cela le rendait si laid et si terrible, qu'il n'était ni femme ni fille qui ne s'enfuît de devant lui.

Une de ses voisines, dame de qualité, avait deux filles parfaitement belles. Il lui en demanda une en mariage, et lui laissa le choix de celle qu'elle voudrait lui donner. Elles n'en voulaient point toutes deux, et se le renvoyaient l'une à l'autre, ne pouvant se résoudre à prendre un homme qui eût la barbe bleue. Ce qui les dégoûtait encore, c'est qu'il avait déjà épousé plusieurs femmes, et qu'on ne savait ce que ces femmes étaient devenues. La Barbe bleue, pour faire connaissance, les mena avec leur mère, et trois ou quatre de leurs meilleures amies, et quelques jeunes gens du voisinage, à une de ses maisons de campagne, où on demeura huit jours entiers. Ce n'était que promenades, que parties de chasse et de pêche, que danses et festins, que collations : on ne dormait point, et on passait toute la nuit à se faire des malices les uns aux autres; enfin tout alla si bien, que la cadette commença à trouver que le Maître du logis n'avait plus la barbe si bleue, et que c'était un fort honnête homme.

Dès qu'on fut de retour à la ville, le mariage se conclut. Au bout d'un mois la Barbe bleue dit à sa femme qu'il était obligé de faire un voyage en Province, de six semaines au moins, pour une affaire de conséquence; qu'il la priait de se bien divertir pendant son absence, qu'elle fît venir ses bonnes amies, qu'elle les menât à la campagne si elle voulait, que partout elle fît bonne chère. Voilà, lui dit-il, les clefs des deux grands garde-meubles, voilà celles de la vaisselle d'or et d'argent qui ne sert pas tous les jours, voilà celles de mes coffres-forts, où est mon or et mon argent, celles des cassettes où sont mes pierreries, et voilà le passe-partout de tous les appartements : Pour cette petite clef-ci, c'est la clef du cabinet au bout de la grande galerie de l'appartement bas : ouvrez tout, allez partout, mais pour ce petit cabinet, je vous défends d'y entrer, et je vous le défends de telle sorte, que s'il vous arrive de l'ouvrir il n'y a rien que vous ne deviez attendre de ma colère. Elle promit d'observer exactement tout ce qui lui venait d'être ordonné ; et lui, après l'avoir embrassée, il monte dans son carrosse, et part pour son voyage.

Les voisines et les bonnes amies n'attendirent pas qu'on les envoyât quérir pour aller chez la jeune mariée, tant elles avaient d'impatience de voir toutes les richesses de sa Maison, n'ayant osé y venir pendant que le Mari y était, à cause de sa Barbe bleue qui leur faisait peur. Les voilà aussitôt à parcourir les chambres, les cabinets, les gardes-robes, toutes plus belles et plus riches les unes que les autres. Elles montèrent ensuite aux gardes-meubles, où elles ne pouvaient assez admirer le nombre et la beauté des tapisseries, des lits, des sophas, des cabinets, des guéridons, des tables et des miroirs, où l'on se voyait depuis les pieds jusqu'à la tête et dont les bordures, les unes de glaces, les autres d'argent et de vermeil doré, étaient les plus belles et les plus magnifiques qu'on eût jamais vues. Elles ne cessaient d'exagérer et d'envier le bonheur de leur amie, qui cependant ne se divertissait point à voir toutes ces richesses, à cause de l'impatience qu'elle avait d'aller ouvrir le cabinet de l'appartement bas. Elle fut si pressée de sa curiosité, que sans considérer qu'il était malhonnête de quitter sa compagnie, elle y descendit par un petit escalier dérobé, et avec tant de précipitation, qu'elle pensa se rompre le cou deux ou trois fois.

Étant arrivée à la porte du cabinet, elle s'y arrêta quelque temps, songeant à la défense que son mari lui avait faite, et considérant qu'il pourrait lui arriver malheur d'avoir été désobéissante ; mais la tentation était si forte qu'elle ne put la surmonter : elle prit donc la petite clef, et ouvrit en tremblant la porte du cabinet. D'abord elle ne vit rien, parce que les fenêtres étaient fermées ; après quelques moments elle commença à voir que le plancher était tout couvert de sang caillé, et que dans ce sang se miraient les corps de plusieurs femmes mortes et attachées le long des murs (c'étaient toutes les femmes que la Barbe bleue avait épousées et qu'il avait égorgées l'une après l'autre).

Elle pensa mourir de peur, et la clef du cabinet qu'elle venait de retirer de la serrure lui tomba de la main.

Après avoir un peu repris ses esprits, elle ramassa la clef, referma la porte, et monta à sa chambre pour se remettre un peu ; mais elle n'en pouvait venir à bout, tant elle était émue. Ayant remarqué que la clef du cabinet était tachée de sang, elle l'essuya deux ou trois fois, mais le sang ne s'en allait point ; elle eut beau la laver et même la frotter avec du sablon et avec du grais, il y demeura toujours du sang, car la clef était Fée, et il n'y avait pas moyen de la nettoyer tout à fait : quand on ôtait le sang d'un côté, il revenait de l'autre.

La Barbe bleue revint de son voyage dès le soir même, et dit qu'il avait reçu des lettres dans le chemin, qui lui avaient appris que l'affaire pour laquelle il était parti venait d'être terminée à son avantage. Sa femme fit tout ce qu'elle put pour lui témoigner qu'elle était ravie de son prompt retour. Le lendemain il lui redemanda les clefs, et elle les lui donna, mais d'une main si tremblante, qu'il devina sans peine tout ce qui s'était passé. D'où vient, lui dit-il, que la clef du cabinet n'est point avec les autres ? Il faut, dit-elle, que je l'aie laissée là-haut sur ma table. Ne manquez pas, dit la Barbe bleue, de me la donner tantôt. Après plusieurs remises, il fallut apporter la clef. La Barbe bleue, l'ayant considérée, dit à sa femme : Pourquoi y a-t-il du sang sur cette clef ? Je n'en sais rien, répondit la pauvre femme, plus pâle que la mort. Vous n'en savez rien, reprit la Barbe bleue, je le sais bien, moi ; vous avez voulu entrer dans le cabinet ! Hé bien, Madame, vous y entrerez, et irez prendre votre place auprès des Dames que vous y avez vues. Elle se jeta aux pieds de son mari, en pleurant et en lui demandant pardon, avec toutes les marques d'un vrai repentir de n'avoir pas été obéissante.

Elle aurait attendri un rocher belle et affligée comme elle était; mais la Barbe bleue avait le coeur plus dur qu'un rocher Il faut mourir Madame, lui dit-il, et tout à l'heure. Puisqu'il faut mourir, répondit-elle, en le regardant les yeux baignés de larmes, donnez-moi un peu de temps pour prier Dieu. Je vous donne un quart d'heure, reprit la Barbe bleue, mais pas un moment davantage.

Lorsqu'elle fut seule, elle appela sa soeur, et lui dit : Ma soeur Anne (car elle s'appelait ainsi), monte, je te prie, sur le haut de la Tour pour voir si mes frères ne viennent point; ils m'ont promis qu'ils me viendraient voir aujourd'hui, et si tu les vois, fais-leur signe de se hâter. La soeur Anne monta sur le haut de la Tour, et la pauvre affligée lui criait de temps en temps : Anne, ma soeur ne vois-tu rien venir ? Et la soeur Anne lui répondait : Je ne vois rien que le Soleil qui poudroie, et l'herbe qui verdoie.

Cependant la Barbe bleue, tenant un grand coutelas à sa main, criait de toute sa force à sa femme : Descends vite ou je monterai là-haut. Encore un moment, s'il vous plaît, lui répondait sa femme ; et aussitôt elle criait tout bas : Anne, ma soeur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir ? Et la soeur Anne répondait: Je ne vois rien que le Soleil qui poudroie, et l'herbe qui verdoie. Descends donc vite, criait la Barbe bleue, ou je monterai là-haut. Je m'en vais, répondait sa femme, et puis elle criait : Anne, ma soeur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir? Je vois, répondit la soeur Anne, une grosse poussière qui vient de ce côté-ci. Sont ce mes frères ? Hélas ! non, ma sœur, c'est un Troupeau de Moutons. Ne veux-tu pas descendre ? criait la Barbe bleue. Encore un moment, répondait sa femme ; et puis elle criait : Anne, ma soeur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir ? Je vois, répondit-elle, deux Cavaliers qui viennent de ce côté-ci, mais ils sont bien loin encore : Dieu soit loué, s'écria-t-elle un moment après, ce sont mes frères, je leur fais signe tant que je puis de se hâter. La Barbe bleue se mit à crier si fort que toute la maison en trembla. La pauvre femme descendit, et alla se jeter à ses pieds toute épleurée et toute échevelée. Cela ne sert de rien, dit la Barbe bleue, il faut mourir, puis la prenant d'une main par les cheveux, et de l'autre levant le coutelas en l'air, il allait lui abattre la tête. La pauvre femme se tournant vers lui, et le regardant avec des yeux mourants, le pria de lui donner un petit moment pour se recueillir. Non, non, dit-il, recommande-toi bien à Dieu ; et levant son bras...

Dans ce moment on heurta si fort à la porte, que la Barbe bleue s'arrêta tout court : on ouvrit, et aussitôt on vit entrer deux Cavaliers, qui mettant l'épée à la main, coururent droit à la Barbe bleue. Il reconnut que c'était les frères de sa femme, l'un Dragon et l'autre Mousquetaire, de sorte qu'il s'enfuit aussitôt pour se sauver ; mais les deux frères le poursuivirent de si près, qu'ils l'attrapèrent avant qu'il pût gagner le perron. Ils lui passèrent leur épée au travers du corps, et le laissèrent mort. La pauvre femme était presque aussi morte que son mari, et n'avait pas la force de se lever pour embrasser ses frères.

Il se trouva que la Barbe bleue n'avait point d'héritiers, et qu'ainsi sa femme demeura maîtresse de tous ses biens. Elle en employa une grande partie à marier sa soeur Anne avec un jeune Gentilhomme, dont elle était aimée depuis longtemps; une autre partie à acheter des Charges de Capitaine à ses deux frères ; et le reste à se marier elle-même à un fort honnête homme, qui lui fit oublier le mauvais temps qu'elle avait passé avec la Barbe bleue.

MORALITÉ

La curiosité malgré tous ses attraits, coûte souvent bien des regrets ;
On en voit tous les jours mille exemples paraître.
C'est, n'en déplaise au sexe, un plaisir bien léger ;
Dès qu'on le prend il cesse d'être,
Et toujours il coûte trop cher.

AUTRE MORALITÉ

Pour peu qu'on ait l'esprit sensé,
Et que du Monde on sache le grimoire,
On voit bientôt que cette histoire est un conte du temps passé ;
Il n'est plus d'Époux si terrible,
Ni qui demande impossible,
Fût-il malcontent et jaloux.
Près de sa femme on le voit filer doux ;
Et de quelque couleur que sa barbe puisse être,
On a peine à juger qui des deux est le maître.

Blue Beard
By Charles Perrault

There was once a man who had fine houses, both in town and country, a deal of silver and gold plate, embroidered furniture, and coaches gilded all over with gold. But this man was so unlucky as to have a blue beard, which made him so frightfully ugly that all the women and girls ran away from him.

One of his neighbours, a lady of quality, had two daughters who were perfect beauties. He desired of her one of them in marriage, leaving to her choice which of the two she would bestow on him. Neither of them would have him, and they sent him backwards and forwards from one to the other, not being able to bear the thoughts of marrying a man who had a blue beard. Adding to their disgust and aversion was the fact that he already had been married to several wives, and nobody knew what had become of them.

Blue Beard, to engage their affection, took them, with their mother and three or four ladies of their acquaintance, with other young people of the neighbourhood, to one of his country houses, where they stayed a whole week. The time was filled with parties, hunting, fishing, dancing, mirth, and feasting. Nobody went to bed, but all passed the night in rallying and joking with each other. In short, everything succeeded so well that the youngest daughter began to think that the man's beard was not so very blue after all, and that he was a mighty civil gentleman.

As soon as they returned home, the marriage was concluded. About a month afterwards, Blue Beard told his wife that he was obliged to take a country journey for six weeks at least, about affairs of very great consequence. He desired her to divert herself in his absence, to send for her friends and acquaintances, to take them into the country, if she pleased, and to make good cheer wherever she was.

“Here”, said he, “are the keys to the two great wardrobes, wherein I have my best furniture. These are to my silver and gold plate, which is not everyday in use. These open my strongboxes, which hold my money, both gold and silver; these my caskets of jewels. And this is the master key to all my apartments. But as for this little one here, it is the key to the closet at the end of the great hall on the ground floor. Open them all; go into each and every one of them, except that little closet, which I forbid you, and forbid it in such a manner that, if you happen to open it, you may expect my just anger and resentment”.

She promised to observe, very exactly, whatever he had ordered. Then he, after having embraced her, got into his coach and proceeded on his journey. Her neighbours and good friends did not wait to be sent for by the newly married lady. They were impatient to see all the rich furniture of her house, and had not dared to come while her husband was there, because of his blue beard, which frightened them. They ran through all the rooms, closets, and wardrobes, which were all so fine and rich that they seemed to surpass one another.

After that, they went up into the two great rooms, which contained the best and richest furniture. They could not sufficiently admire the number and beauty of the tapestry, beds, couches, cabinets, stands, tables, and

looking glasses, in which you might see yourself from head to foot; some of them were framed with glass, others with silver, plain and gilded, the finest and most magnificent that they had ever seen.

They ceased not to extol and envy the happiness of their friend, who in the meantime in no way diverted herself in looking upon all these rich things, because of the impatience she had to go and open the closet on the ground floor. She was so much pressed by her curiosity that, without considering that it was very uncivil for her to leave her company, she went down a little back staircase, and with such excessive haste that she nearly fell and broke her neck.

Having come to the closet door, she made a stop for some time, thinking about her husband's orders, and considering what unhappiness might attend her if she was disobedient; but the temptation was so strong that she could not overcome it. She then took the little key, and opened it, trembling. At first she could not see anything plainly, because the windows were shut. After some moments she began to perceive that the floor was all covered over with clotted blood, on which lay the bodies of several dead women, ranged against the walls. (These were all the wives whom Blue Beard had married and murdered, one after another.) She thought she should have died for fear, and the key, which she, pulled out of the lock, fell out of her hand.

After having somewhat recovered her surprise, she picked up the key, locked the door, and went upstairs into her chamber to recover; but she could not, so much was she frightened. Having observed that the key to the closet was stained with blood, she tried two or three times to wipe it off; but the blood would not come out; in vain did she wash it, and even rub it with soap and sand. The blood still remained, for the key was magical and she could never make it quite clean; when the blood was gone off from one side, it came again on the other.

Blue Beard returned from his journey the same evening, saying that he had received letters upon the road, informing him that the affair he went about had concluded to his advantage. His wife did all she could to convince him that she was extremely happy about his speedy return.

The next morning he asked her for the keys, which she gave him, but with such a trembling hand that he easily guessed what had happened.

“What!” said he, “is not the key of my closet among the rest?”

“I must”, said she, “have left it upstairs upon the table.”

“Fail not”, said Blue Beard, “to bring it to me at once.”

After several goings backwards and forwards, she was forced to bring him the key. Blue Beard, having very attentively considered it, said to his wife, “Why is there blood on the key?”

“I do not know,” cried the poor woman, paler than death.

“You do not know!” replied Blue Beard. “I very well know. You went into the closet, did you not? Very well, madam; you shall go back, and take your place among the ladies you saw there.”

Upon this she threw herself at her husband's feet, and begged his pardon with all the signs of a true repentance, vowing that she would never more be disobedient. She would have melted a rock, so beautiful and sorrowful

was she; but Blue Beard had a heart harder than any rock!
“You must die, madam”, said he, “at once”.

“Since I must die”, answered she (looking upon him with her eyes all bathed in tears), “give me some little time to say my prayers”.

“I give you”, replied Blue Beard, “half a quarter of an hour, but not one moment more.”

When she was alone she called out to her sister, and said to her, "Sister Anne" (for that was her name), "go up, I beg you, to the top of the tower, and look if my brothers are not coming. They promised me that they would come today, and if you see them, give them a sign to make haste.

Her sister Anne went up to the top of the tower, and the poor afflicted wife cried out from time to time, “Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?”

And sister Anne said, "I see nothing but a cloud of dust in the sun, and the green grass."

In the meanwhile Blue Beard, holding a great saber in his hand, cried out as loud as he could bawl to his wife, "Come down instantly, or I shall come up to you."

“One moment longer, if you please,” said his wife; and then she cried out very softly, “Anne, sister Anne, do you see anybody coming?”

And sister Anne answered, “I see nothing but a cloud of dust in the sun, and the green grass.”

“Come down quickly,” cried Blue Beard, “or I will come up to you.”

“I am coming,” answered his wife; and then she cried, “Anne, sister Anne, do you not see anyone coming?”

“I see,” replied sister Anne, “a great cloud of dust approaching us.”

“Are they my brothers?”

“Alas, no my dear sister, I see a flock of sheep.”

“Will you not come down?” cried Blue Beard.

“One moment longer,” said his wife, and then she cried out, “Anne, sister Anne, do you see nobody coming?”

“I see,” said she, “two horsemen, but they are still a great way off.”

“God be praised,” replied the poor wife joyfully. “They are my brothers. I will make them a sign, as well as I can for them to make haste.”

Then Blue Beard bawled out so loud that he made the whole house tremble. The distressed wife came down, and threw herself at his feet, all in tears, with her hair about her shoulders.

“This means nothing,” said Blue Beard. “You must die!” Then, taking hold of her hair with one hand, and lifting up the sword with the other, he prepared to strike off her head. The poor lady, turning about to him, and looking at him with dying eyes, desired him to afford her one little moment to recollect herself.

“No, no,” said he, “commend yourself to God,” and was just ready to strike.

At this very instant there was such a loud knocking at the gate that Blue Beard made a sudden stop. The gate was opened, and two horsemen entered. Drawing their swords, they ran directly to Blue Beard. He knew them to be his wife's brothers, one a dragoon, the other a musketeer; so that he ran away immediately to save himself; but the two brothers pursued and overtook him before he could get to the steps of the porch. Then

they ran their swords through his body and left him dead. The poor wife was almost as dead as her husband, and had not strength enough to rise and welcome her brothers.

Blue Beard had no heirs, and so his wife became mistress of all his estate. She made use of one part of it to marry her sister Anne to a young gentleman who had loved her a long while; another part to buy captains' commissions for her brothers, and the rest to marry herself to a very worthy gentleman, who made her forget the ill time she had passed with Blue Beard.

MORAL: Curiosity, in spite of its appeal, often leads to deep regret. To the displeasure of many a maiden, its enjoyment is short lived. Once satisfied, it ceases to exist, and always costs dearly.

ANOTHER MORAL: Apply logic to this grim story, and you will ascertain that it took place many years ago. No husband of our age would be so terrible as to demand the impossible of his wife, nor would he be such a jealous malcontent. For, whatever the colour of her husband's beard, the wife of today will let him know who the master is.

Today's Homework is: Baseline Assessment

- Read *Barbe Bleue / Bluebeard* by Charles Perrault.
- Read the text and underline the key moments in the story (at least 3). Write 200 words on why you feel these parts of the text are the key parts (the most important) and be prepared to discuss in the next tutorial. Students will have 1-2 minutes to explain their ideas.

What is a Baseline Assessment?

The homework assignment for the first tutorial is a baseline test to see your initial level of attainment in this subject area. The assignment will test for some or all of the subject specific skills that are required later in the final assignment. However, it is shorter than the final assignment and will be an introduction to the subject as well as a challenge!

Do not worry too much about doing 'well' or 'badly' on the baseline test, it takes into account the fact that you may not be familiar with the subject area. It is designed to help you and your teacher identify where you are at the start of the programme and to help you measure your progress along the way.

Consider these questions when writing your paragraph for homework and we'll discuss them in the next tutorial.

1. Were you familiar with the tale already?
3. How is the character of Bluebeard represented?
5. What do you think of the young girl?

Notes:

Tutorial 2 – The Bloody Chamber

Today's Key Question(s):

- Was anyone familiar with this tale (or a similar one) already?
- How is this tale different to other more well-known fairy tales?
- What do you think is the fundamental meaning/moral of the tale?

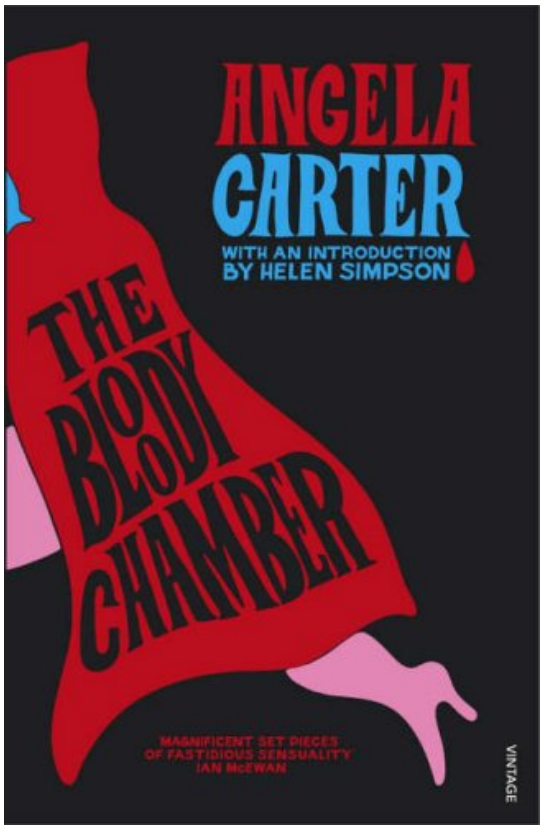
What is the Purpose of Tutorial 2?

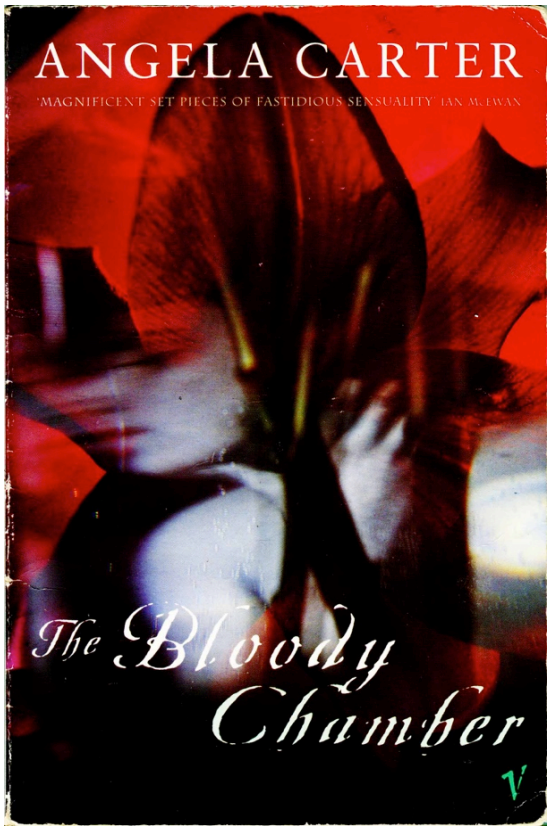
- To begin to allow students to think critically and independently when reading a text and to encourage them to voice their opinions and ideas.

Vintage Images of *Barbe Bleue* by famous illustrator Gustave Doré

Angela Carter (1940-1992)

- Angela Carter was an English journalist and author.
- She published many novels and anthologies of short stories.
- Her collection of fairy tales, entitled *The Bloody Chamber* was published in 1979. Here, we will look at the tale of the same name which is a retelling of Barbe Bleue / Bluebeard.
- She also published a translated anthology of Charles Perrault's fairy tales.





The Bloody Chamber
By Angela Carter

I remember how, that night, I lay awake in the wagon-lit in a tender, delicious ecstasy of excitement, my burning cheek pressed against the impeccable linen of the pillow and the pounding of my heart mimicking that of the great pistons ceaselessly thrusting the train that bore me through the night, away from Paris, away from girlhood, away from the white, enclosed quietude of my mother's apartment, into the unguessable country of marriage.

And I remember I tenderly imagined how, at this very moment, my mother would be moving slowly about the narrow bedroom I had left behind forever, folding up and putting away all my little relics, the tumbled garments I would not need any more, the scores for which there had been no room in my trunks, the concert programmes I'd abandoned; she would linger over this torn ribbon and that faded photograph with all the half-joyous, half-sorrowful emotions of a woman on her daughter's wedding day. And, in the midst of my bridal triumph, I felt a pang of loss as if, when he put the gold band on my finger, I had, in some way, ceased to be her child in becoming his wife.

Are you sure, she'd said when they delivered the gigantic box that held the wedding dress he'd bought me, wrapped up in tissue paper and red ribbon like a Christmas gift of crystallized fruit. Are you sure you love him? There was a dress for her, too; black silk, with the dull, prismatic sheen of oil on water, finer than anything she'd worn since that adventurous girlhood in Indo-China, daughter of a rich tea planter. My eagle-featured, indomitable mother; what other student at the Conservatoire could boast that her mother had outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates, nursed a village through a visitation of the plague, shot a man-eating tiger with her own hand and all before she was as old as I?

'Are you sure you love him?' 'I'm sure I want to marry him,' I said. And would say no more. She sighed, as if it was with reluctance that she might at last banish the spectre of poverty from its habitual place at our meagre table. For my mother herself had gladly, scandalously, defiantly beggared herself for love; and, one fine day, her gallant soldier never returned from the wars, leaving his wife and child a legacy of tears that never quite dried, a cigar box full of medals and the antique service revolver that my mother, grown magnificently eccentric in hardship, kept always in her reticule, in case--how I teased her--she was surprised by footpads on her way home from the grocer's shop.

Now and then a starburst of lights spattered the drawn blinds as if the railway company had lit up all the stations through which we passed in celebration of the bride. My satin nightdress had just been shaken from its wrappings; it had slipped over my young girl's pointed breasts and shoulders, supple as a garment of heavy water, and now teasingly caressed me, egregious, insinuating, nudging between my thighs as I shifted restlessly in my narrow berth. His kiss, his kiss with tongue and teeth in it and a rasp of beard, had hinted to me, though with the same exquisite tact as this nightdress he'd given me, of the wedding night, which would be voluptuously deferred until we lay in his great ancestral bed in the sea-girt, pinnacled domain that lay, still, beyond the grasp of my imagination ... that magic place, the fairy castle whose walls were made of foam, that legendary habitation in which he had been born. To which, one day, I might bear an heir. Our destination, my destiny.

Above the syncopated roar of the train, I could hear his even, steady breathing. Only the communicating door kept me from my husband and it stood open. If I rose up on my elbow, I could see the dark, leonine shape of his head and my nostrils caught a whiff of the opulent male scent of leather and spices that always accompanied him and sometimes, during his courtship, had been the only hint he gave me that he had come into my mother's sitting room, for, though he was a big man, he moved as softly as if all his shoes had soles of velvet, as if his footfall turned the carpet into snow.

He had loved to surprise me in my abstracted solitude at the piano. He would tell them not to announce him, then soundlessly open the door and softly creep up behind me with his bouquet of hot-house flowers or his box of marrons glacés, lay his offering upon the keys and clasp his hands over my eyes as I was lost in a Debussy prelude. But that perfume of spiced leather always betrayed him; after my first shock, I was forced always to mimic surprise, so that he would not be disappointed.

He was older than I. He was much older than I; there were streaks of pure silver in his dark mane. But his strange, heavy, almost waxen face was not lined by experience. Rather, experience seemed to have washed it perfectly smooth, like a stone on a beach whose fissures have been eroded by successive tides. And sometimes that face, in stillness when he listened to me playing, with the heavy eyelids folded over eyes that always disturbed me by their absolute absence of light, seemed to me like a mask, as if his real face, the face that truly reflected all the life he had led in the world before he met me, before, even, I was born, as though that face lay underneath this mask. Or else, elsewhere. As though he had laid by the face in which he had lived for so long in order to offer my youth a face unsigned by the years. And, elsewhere, I might see him plain. Elsewhere. But, where?

In, perhaps, that castle to which the train now took us, that marvellous castle in which he had been born. Even when he asked me to marry him, and I said: 'Yes,' still he did not lose that heavy, fleshy composure of his. I know it must seem a curious analogy, a man with a flower, but sometimes he seemed to me like a lily. Yes. A lily. Possessed of that strange, ominous calm of a sentient vegetable, like one of those cobra-headed, funereal lilies whose white sheaths are curled out of a flesh as thick and tensely yielding to the touch as vellum. When I said that I would marry him, not one muscle in his face stirred, but he let out a long, extinguished sigh. I thought: Oh! how he must want me! And it was as though the imponderable weight of his desire was a force I might not withstand, not by virtue of its violence but because of its very gravity.

He had the ring ready in a leather box lined with crimson velvet, a fire opal the size of a pigeon's egg set in a complicated circle of dark antique gold. My old nurse, who still lived with my mother and me, squinted at the ring askance: opals are bad luck, she said. But this opal had been his own mother's ring, and his grandmother's, and her mother's before that, given to an ancestor by Catherine de Medici ... every bride that came to the castle wore it, time out of mind. And did he give it to his other wives and have it back from them? asked the old woman rudely; yet she was a snob. She hid her incredulous joy at my marital coup--her little Marquise--behind a façade of fault-finding. But, here, she touched me. I shrugged and turned my back pettishly on her. I did not want to remember how he had loved other women before me, but the knowledge often teased me in the threadbare self-confidence of the small hours.

I was seventeen and knew nothing of the world; my Marquis had been married before, more than once, and I remained a little bemused that, after those others, he should now have chosen me. Indeed, was he not still

in mourning for his last wife? Tsk, tsk, went my old nurse.

And even my mother had been reluctant to see her girl whisked off by a man so recently bereaved. A Romanian countess, a lady of high fashion. Dead just three short months before I met him, a boating accident, at his home, in Brittany. They never found her body but I rummaged through the back copies of the society magazines my old nanny kept in a trunk under her bed and tracked down her photograph. The sharp muzzle of a pretty, witty, naughty monkey; such potent and bizarre charm, of a dark, bright, wild yet worldly thing whose natural habitat must have been some luxurious interior decorator's jungle filled with potted palms and tame, squawking parakeets.

Before that? *Her* face is common property; everyone painted her but the Redon engraving I liked best, *The Evening Star Walking on the Rim of Night*. To see her skeletal, enigmatic grace, you would never think she had been a barmaid in a café in Montmartre until Puvis de Chavannes saw her and had her expose her flat breasts and elongated thighs to his brush. And yet it was the absinthe doomed her, or so they said. The first of all his ladies? That sumptuous diva; I had heard her sing Isolde, precociously musical child that I was, taken to the opera for a birthday treat. My first opera; I had heard her sing Isolde. With what white-hot passion had she burned from the stage! So that you could tell she would die young. We sat high up, halfway to heaven in the gods, yet she half-blinded me. And my father, still alive (oh, so long ago), took hold of my sticky little hand, to comfort me, in the last act, yet all I heard was the glory of her voice.

Married three times within my own brief lifetime to three different graces, now, as if to demonstrate the eclecticism of his taste, he had invited me to join this gallery of beautiful women, I, the poor widow's child with my mouse-coloured hair that still bore the kinks of the plaits from which it had so recently been freed, my bony hips, my nervous, pianist's fingers.

He was rich as Croesus. The night before our wedding--a simple affair, at the Mairie, because his countess was so recently gone--he took my mother and me, curious coincidence, to see *Tristan*. And, do you know, my heart swelled and ached so during the Liebestod that I thought I must truly love him. Yes. I did. On his arm, all eyes were upon me. The whispering crowd in the foyer parted like the Red Sea to let us through. My skin crisped at his touch.

How my circumstances had changed since the first time I heard those voluptuous chords that carry such a charge of deathly passion in them! Now, we sat in a loge, in red velvet armchairs, and a braided, bewigged flunkey brought us a silver bucket of iced champagne in the interval. The froth spilled over the rim of my glass and drenched my hands, I thought: My cup runneth over. And I had on a Poiret dress. He had prevailed upon my reluctant mother to let him buy my trousseau; what would I have gone to him in, otherwise? Twice-darned underwear, faded gingham, serge skirts, hand-me-downs. So, for the opera, I wore a sinuous shift of white muslin tied with a silk string under the breasts. And everyone stared at me. And at his wedding gift. His wedding gift, clasped round my throat. A choker of rubies, two inches wide, like an extraordinarily precious slit throat.

After the Terror, in the early days of the Directory, the aristos who'd escaped the guillotine had an ironic fad of tying a red ribbon round their necks at just the point where the blade would have sliced it through, a red ribbon like the memory of a wound. And his grandmother, taken with the notion, had her ribbon made up in rubies; such a gesture of luxurious defiance! That night at the opera comes back to me even now ... the white

dress; the frail child within it; and the flashing crimson jewels round her throat, bright as arterial blood.

I saw him watching me in the gilded mirrors with the assessing eye of a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh, or even of a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab. I'd never seen, or else had never acknowledged, that regard of his before, the sheer carnal avarice of it; and it was strangely magnified by the monocle lodged in his left eye. When I saw him look at me with lust, I dropped my eyes but, in glancing away from him, I caught sight of myself in the mirror. And I saw myself, suddenly, as he saw me, my pale face, the way the muscles in my neck stuck out like thin wire. I saw how much that cruel necklace became me. And, for the first time in my innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away. The next day, we were married.

The train slowed, shuddered to a halt. Lights; clank of metal; a voice declaring the name of an unknown, never-to-be visited station; silence of the night; the rhythm of his breathing, that I should sleep with, now, for the rest of my life. And I could not sleep. I stealthily sat up, raised the blind a little and huddled against the cold window that misted over with the warmth of my breathing, gazing out at the dark platform towards those rectangles of domestic lamplight that promised warmth, company, a supper of sausages hissing in a pan on the stove for the station master, his children tucked up in bed asleep in the brick house with the painted shutters ... all the paraphernalia of the everyday world from which I, with my stunning marriage, had exiled myself.

Into marriage, into exile; I sensed it, I knew it--that, henceforth, I would always be lonely. Yet that was part of the already familiar weight of the fire opal that glimmered like a gypsy's magic ball, so that I could not take my eyes off it when I played the piano. This ring, the bloody bandage of rubies, the wardrobe of clothes from Poiret and Worth, his scent of Russian leather--all had conspired to seduce me so utterly that I could not say I felt one single twinge of regret for the world of tar-tines and maman that now receded from me as if drawn away on a string, like a child's toy, as the train began to throb again as if in delighted anticipation of the distance it would take me.

The first grey streamers of the dawn now flew in the sky and an eldritch half-light seeped into the railway carriage. I heard no change in his breathing but my heightened, excited senses told me he was awake and gazing at me. A huge man, an enormous man, and his eyes, dark and motionless as those eyes the ancient Egyptians painted upon their sarcophagi, fixed upon me. I felt a certain tension in the pit of my stomach, to be so watched, in such silence. A match struck. He was igniting a Romeo y Julieta fat as a baby's arm.

'Soon,' he said in his resonant voice that was like the tolling of a bell and I felt, all at once, a sharp premonition of dread that lasted only as long as the match flared and I could see his white, broad face as if it were hovering, disembodied, above the sheets, illuminated from below like a grotesque carnival head. Then the flame died, the cigar glowed and filled the compartment with a remembered fragrance that made me think of my father, how he would hug me in a warm fug of Havana, when I was a little girl, before he kissed me and left me and died.

As soon as my husband handed me down from the high step of the train, I smelled the amniotic salinity of the ocean. It was November; the trees, stunted by the Atlantic gales, were bare and the lonely halt was deserted but for his leather-gaitered chauffeur waiting meekly beside the sleek black motor car. It was cold; I drew my furs about me, a wrap of white and black, broad stripes of ermine and sable, with a collar from which my head rose like the calyx of a wildflower. (I swear to you, I had never been vain until I met him.) The bell clanged; the

straining train leapt its leash and left us at that lonely wayside halt where only he and I had descended. Oh, the wonder of it; how all that might of iron and steam had paused only to suit his convenience. The richest man in France.

'Madame.' The chauffeur eyed me; was he comparing me, invidiously, to the countess, the artist's model, the opera singer? I hid behind my furs as if they were a system of soft shields. My husband liked me to wear my opal over my kid glove, a showy, theatrical trick--but the moment the ironic chauffeur glimpsed its simmering flash he smiled, as though it was proof positive I was his master's wife. And we drove towards the widening dawn, that now streaked half the sky with a wintry bouquet of pink of roses, orange of tiger-lilies, as if my husband had ordered me a sky from a florist. The day broke around me like a cool dream. Sea; sand; a sky that melts into the sea--a landscape of misty pastels with a look about it of being continuously on the point of melting. A landscape with all the deliquescent harmonies of Debussy, of the études I played for him, the reverie I'd been playing that afternoon in the salon of the princess where I'd first met him, among the teacups and the little cakes, I, the orphan, hired out of charity to give them their digestive of music.

And, ah! his castle. The faery solitude of the place; with its turrets of misty blue, its courtyard, its spiked gate, his castle that lay on the very bosom of the sea with seabirds mewing about its attics, the casements opening on to the green and purple, evanescent departures of the ocean, cut off by the tide from land for half a day ... that castle, at home neither on the land nor on the water, a mysterious, amphibious place, contravening the materiality of both earth and the waves, with the melancholy of a mermaiden who perches on her rock and waits, endlessly, for a lover who had drowned far away, long ago. That lovely, sad, sea-siren of a place!

The tide was low; at this hour, so early in the morning, the causeway rose up out of the sea. As the car turned on to the wet cobbles between the slow margins of water, he reached out for my hand that had his sultry, witchy ring on it, pressed my fingers, kissed my palm with extraordinary tenderness. His face was as still as ever I'd seen it, still as a pond iced thickly over, yet his lips, that always looked so strangely red and naked between the black fringes of his beard, now curved a little. He smiled; he welcomed his bride home.

No room, no corridor that did not rustle with the sound of the sea and all the ceilings, the walls on which his ancestors in the stern regalia of rank lined up with their dark eyes and white faces, were stippled with refracted light from the waves which were always in motion; that luminous, murmurous castle of which I was the chatelaine, I, the little music student whose mother had sold all her jewellery, even her wedding ring, to pay the fees at the Conservatoire.

First of all, there was the small ordeal of my initial interview with the housekeeper, who kept this extraordinary machine, this anchored, castellated ocean liner, in smooth running order no matter who stood on the bridge; how tenuous, I thought, might be my authority here! She had a bland, pale, impassive, dislikeable face beneath the impeccably starched white linen head-dress of the region. Her greeting, correct but lifeless, chilled me; daydreaming, I dared presume too much on my status ... briefly wondered how I might install my old nurse, so much loved, however cosily incompetent, in her place. Ill-considered schemings! He told me this one had been his foster mother; was bound to his family in the utmost feudal complicity, 'as much part of the house as I am, my dear'. Now her thin lips offered me a proud little smile. She would be my ally as long as I was his. And with that, I must be content.

But, here, it would be easy to be content. In the turret suite he had given me for my very own, I could gaze out over the tumultuous Atlantic and imagine myself the Queen of the Sea. There was a Bechstein for me in the music room and, on the wall, another wedding present--an early Flemish primitive of Saint Cecilia at her celestial organ. In the prim charm of this saint, with her plump, sallow cheeks and crinkled brown hair, I saw myself as I could have wished to be. I warmed to a loving sensitivity I had not hitherto suspected in him. Then he led me up a delicate spiral staircase to my bedroom; before she discreetly vanished, the housekeeper set him chuckling with some, I dare say, lewd blessing for newlyweds in her native Breton. That I did not understand. That he, smiling, refused to interpret.

And there lay the grand, hereditary matrimonial bed, itself the size, almost, of my little room at home, with the gargoyles carved on its surfaces of ebony, vermilion lacquer, gold leaf; and its white gauze curtains, billowing in the sea breeze. Our bed. And surrounded by so many mirrors! Mirrors on all the walls, in stately frames of contorted gold, that reflected more white lilies than I'd ever seen in my life before. He'd filled the room with them, to greet the bride, the young bride. The young bride, who had become that multitude of girls I saw in the mirrors, identical in their chic navy blue tailor-mades, for travelling, madame, or walking. A maid had dealt with the furs. Henceforth, a maid would deal with everything.

'See,' he said, gesturing towards those elegant girls. 'I have acquired a whole harem for myself!' I found that I was trembling. My breath came thickly. I could not meet his eye and turned my head away, out of pride, out of shyness, and watched a dozen husbands approach me in a dozen mirrors and slowly, methodically, teasingly, unfasten the buttons of my jacket and slip it from my shoulders. Enough! No; more! Off comes the skirt; and, next, the blouse of apricot linen that cost more than the dress I had for first communion. The play of the waves outside in the cold sun glittered on his monocle; his movements seemed to me deliberately coarse, vulgar. The blood rushed to my face again, and stayed there. And yet, you see, I guessed it might be so--that we should have a formal disrobing of the bride, a ritual from the brothel. Sheltered as my life had been, how could I have failed, even in the world of prim bohemia in which I lived, to have heard hints of *his* world?

He stripped me, gourmand that he was, as if he were stripping the leaves off an artichoke--but do not imagine much finesse about it; this artichoke was no particular treat for the diner nor was he yet in any greedy haste. He approached his familiar treat with a weary appetite. And when nothing but my scarlet, palpitating core remained, I saw, in the mirror, the living image of an etching by Rops from the collection he had shown me when our engagement permitted us to be alone together ... the child with her sticklike limbs, naked but for her button boots, her gloves, shielding her face with her hand as though her face were the last repository of her modesty; and the old, monocled lecher who examined her, limb by limb. He in his London tailoring; she, bare as a lamb chop. [...]

And I began to shudder, like a racehorse before a race, yet also with a kind of fear, for I felt both a strange, impersonal arousal at the thought of love and at the same time a repugnance I could not stifle for his white, heavy flesh that had too much in common with the armfuls of arum lilies that filled my bedroom in great glass jars, those undertakers' lilies with the heavy pollen that powders your fingers as if you had dipped them in turmeric. The lilies I always associate with him; that are white. And stain you.

This scene from a voluptuary's life was now abruptly terminated. It turns out he has business to attend to; his estates, his companies--even on your honeymoon? Even then, said the red lips that kissed me before he

left me alone with my bewildered senses--a wet, silken brush from his beard; a hint of the pointed tip of the tongue. Disgruntled, I wrapped a neglige of antique lace around me to sip the little breakfast of hot chocolate the maid brought me; after that, since it was second nature to me, there was nowhere to go but the music room and soon I settled down at my piano.

Yet only a series of subtle discords flowed from beneath my fingers: out of tune ... only a little out of tune; but I'd been blessed with perfect pitch and could not bear to play anymore. Sea breezes are bad for pianos; we shall need a resident piano-tuner on the premises if I'm to continue with my studies! I flung down the lid in a little fury of disappointment; what should I do now, how shall I pass the long, sea-lit hours until my husband beds me? I shivered to think of *that*.

His library seemed the source of his habitual odour of Russian leather. Row upon row of calf-bound volumes, brown and olive, with gilt lettering on their spines, the octavo in brilliant scarlet morocco. A deep-buttoned leather sofa to recline on. A lectern, carved like a spread eagle, that held open upon it an edition of Huysmans's *Là-bas*, from some over-exquisite private press; it had been bound like a missal, in brass, with gems of coloured glass. The rugs on the floor, deep, pulsing blues of heaven and red of the heart's dearest blood, came from Isfahan and Bokhara; the dark panelling gleamed; there was the lulling music of the sea and a fire of apple logs. The flames flickered along the spines inside a glass-fronted case that held books still crisp and new. Eliphas Levy; the name meant nothing to me. I squinted at a title or two: *The Initiation*, *The Key of Mysteries*, *The Secret of Pandora's Box*, and yawned. Nothing, here, to detain a seventeen-year-old girl waiting for her first embrace. I should have liked, best of all, a novel in yellow paper; I wanted to curl up on the rug before the blazing fire, lose myself in a cheap novel, munch sticky liqueur chocolates. If I rang for them, a maid would bring me chocolates.

Nevertheless, I opened the doors of that bookcase idly to browse. And I think I knew, I knew by some tingling of the fingertips, even before I opened that slim volume with no title at all on the spine, what I should find inside it. […] The picture had a caption: 'Reproof of curiosity'. My mother, with all the precision of her eccentricity, had told me what it was that lovers did; I was innocent but not naïve. *The Adventures of Eulalie at the Harem of the Grand Turk* had been printed, according to the flyleaf, in Amsterdam in 1748, a rare collector's piece. Had some ancestor brought it back himself from that northern city? Or had my husband bought it for himself, from one of those dusty little bookshops on the Left Bank where an old man peers at you through spectacles an inch thick, daring you to inspect his wares ... I turned the pages in the anticipation of fear; the print was rusty. Here was another steel engraving: 'Immolation of the wives of the Sultan'. I knew enough for what I saw in that book to make me gasp.

There was a pungent intensification of the odour of leather that suffused his library; his shadow fell across the massacre. 'My little nun has found the prayerbooks, has she?' he demanded, with a curious mixture of mockery and relish; then, seeing my painful, furious bewilderment, he laughed at me aloud, snatched the book from my hands and put it down on the sofa. 'Have the nasty pictures scared Baby? Baby mustn't play with grownups' toys until she's learned how to handle them, must she?' Then he kissed me. And with, this time, no reticence. […] I stumbled on the winding stair that led to the bedroom, to the carved, gilded bed on which he had been conceived. I stammered foolishly: We've not taken luncheon yet; and, besides, it is broad daylight... All the better to see you. He made me put on my choker, the family heirloom of one woman who had escaped the

blade. With trembling fingers, I fastened the thing about my neck. It was cold as ice and chilled me. He twined my hair into a rope and lifted it off my shoulders so that he could the better kiss the downy furrows below my ears; that made me shudder. And he kissed those blazing rubies, too. He kissed them before he kissed my mouth. Rapt, he intoned: 'Of her apparel she retains/Only her sonorous jewellery.' A dozen husbands impaled a dozen brides while the mewing gulls swung on invisible trapezes in the empty air outside.

I was brought to my senses by the insistent shrilling of the telephone. He lay beside me, felled like an oak, breathing stertorously, as if he had been fighting with me. In the course of that one-sided struggle, I had seen his deathly composure shatter like a porcelain vase flung against a wall. […] And perhaps I had seen his face without its mask; and perhaps I had not. Yet I had been infinitely disheveled […].

I gathered myself together, reached into the cloisonne cupboard beside the bed that concealed the telephone and addressed the mouthpiece. His agent in New York. Urgent. I shook him awake and rolled over on my side, cradling my spent body in my arms. His voice buzzed like a hive of distant bees. My husband. My husband, who, with so much love, filled my bedroom with lilies until it looked like an embalming parlour. Those somnolent lilies, that wave their heavy heads, distributing their lush, insolent incense reminiscent of pampered flesh.

When he'd finished with the agent, he turned to me and stroked the ruby necklace that bit into my neck, but with such tenderness now, that I ceased flinching […]. My dear one, my little love, my child, did it hurt her? He's so sorry for it, such impetuousness, he could not help himself; you see, he loves her so ... and this lover's recitative of his brought my tears in a flood. I clung to him as though only the one who had inflicted the pain could comfort me for suffering it. For a while, he murmured to me in a voice I'd never heard before, a voice like the soft consolations of the sea. But then he unwound the tendrils of my hair from the buttons of his smoking jacket, kissed my cheek briskly and told me the agent from New York had called with such urgent business that he must leave as soon as the tide was low enough. Leave the castle? Leave France! And would be away for at least six weeks. 'But it is our honeymoon!'

A deal, an enterprise of hazard and chance involving several millions, lay in the balance, he said. He drew away from me into that waxworks stillness of his; I was only a little girl, I did not understand. And, he said unspoken to my wounded vanity, I have had too many honeymoons to find them in the least pressing commitments. I know quite well that this child I've bought with a handful of coloured stones and the pelts of dead beasts won't run away. But, after he'd called his Paris agent to book a passage for the States next day--just one tiny call, my little one--we should have time for dinner together.

And I had to be content with that, a Mexican dish of pheasant with hazelnuts and chocolate; salad; white, voluptuous cheese; a sorbet of muscat grapes and Asti spumante. A celebration of Krug exploded festively. And then acrid black coffee in precious little cups so fine it shadowed the birds with which they were painted. I had Cointreau, he had cognac in the library, with the purple velvet curtains drawn against the night, where he took me to perch on his knee in a leather armchair beside the flickering log fire. He had made me change into that chaste little Poiret shift of white muslin; he seemed especially fond of it […]. But he would not let me take off my ruby choker, although it was growing very uncomfortable, nor fasten up my descending hair, the sign of a virginity so recently ruptured that still remained a wounded presence between us. He twined his fingers in my hair until I winced […].

Then I realized, with a shock of surprise, how it must have been my innocence that captivated him--the silent music, he said, of my unknowingness, like *La Terrasse des audiences au clair de lune* played upon a piano with keys of ether. You must remember how ill at ease I was in that luxurious place, how unease had been my constant companion during the whole length of my courtship by this grave satyr who now gently martyrized my hair. To know that my naivety gave him some pleasure made me take heart. Courage! I shall act the fine lady to the manner born one day, if only by virtue of default.

Then, slowly yet teasingly, as if he were giving a child a great, mysterious treat, he took out a bunch of keys from some interior hidey-hole in his jacket--key after key, a key, he said, for every lock in the house. Keys of all kinds--huge, ancient things of black iron; others slender, delicate, almost baroque; wafer-thin Yale keys for safes and boxes. And, during his absence, it was I who must take care of them all.

I eyed the heavy bunch with circumspection. Until that moment, I had not given a single thought to the practical aspects of marriage with a great house, great wealth, a great man, whose key ring was as crowded as that of a prison warder. Here were the clumsy and archaic keys for the dungeons, for dungeons we had in plenty although they had been converted to cellars for his wines; the dusty bottles inhabited in racks all those deep holes of pain in the rock on which the castle was built. These are the keys to the kitchens, this is the key to the picture gallery, a treasure house filled by five centuries of avid collectors--ah! he foresaw I would spend hours there.

[...] A log fell in the fire, instigating a shower of sparks; the opal on my finger spurted green flame. I felt as giddy as if I were on the edge of a precipice; I was afraid, not so much of him, of his monstrous presence, heavy as if he had been gifted at birth with more specific *gravity* than the rest of us, the presence that, even when I thought myself most in love with him, always subtly oppressed me ... No. I was not afraid of him; but of myself. I seemed reborn in his unreflective eyes, reborn in unfamiliar shapes. I hardly recognized myself from his descriptions of me and yet, and yet--might there not be a grain of beastly truth in them? And, in the red firelight, I blushed again, unnoticed, to think he might have chosen me because, in my innocence, he sensed a rare talent for corruption.

Here is the key to the china cabinet--don't laugh, my darling; there's a king's ransom in Sèvres in that closet, and a queen's ransom in Limoges. And a key to the locked, barred room where five generations of plate were kept. Keys, keys, keys. He would trust me with the keys to his office, although I was only a baby; and the keys to his safes, where he kept the jewels I should wear, he promised me, when we returned to Paris. Such jewels! Why, I would be able to change my earrings and necklaces three times a day, just as the Empress Josephine used to change her underwear. He doubted, he said, with that hollow, knocking sound that served him for a chuckle, I would be quite so interested in his share certificates although they, of course, were worth infinitely more.

Outside our firelit privacy, I could hear the sound of the tide drawing back from the pebbles of the foreshore; it was nearly time for him to leave me. One single key remained unaccounted for on the ring and he hesitated over it; for a moment, I thought he was going to unfasten it from its brothers, slip it back into his pocket and take it away with him.

'What is *that* key?' I demanded, for his chaffing had made me bold. 'The key to your heart? Give it me!' He dangled the key tantalizingly above my head, out of reach of my straining fingers; those bare red lips of his

cracked sidelong in a smile.

'Ah, no,' he said. 'Not the key to my heart. Rather, the key to my enfer.' He left it on the ring, fastened the ring together, shook it musically, like a carillon. Then threw the keys in a jingling heap in my lap. I could feel the cold metal chilling my thighs through my thin muslin frock. He bent over me to drop a beard-masked kiss on my forehead.

'Every man must have one secret, even if only one, from his wife,' he said. 'Promise me this, my whey-faced piano-player; promise me you'll use all the keys on the ring except that last little one I showed you. Play with anything you find, jewels, silver plate; make toy boats of my share certificates, if it pleases you, and send them sailing off to America after me. All is yours, everywhere is open to you--except the lock that this single key fits. Yet all it is is the key to a little room at the foot of the west tower, behind the still-room, at the end of a dark little corridor full of horrid cobwebs that would get into your hair and frighten you if you ventured there. Oh, and you'd find it such a dull little room! But you must promise me, if you love me, to leave it well alone. It is only a private study, a hideaway, a "den", as the English say, where I can go, sometimes, on those infrequent yet inevitable occasions when the yoke of marriage seems to weigh too heavily on my shoulders. There I can go, you understand, to savour the rare pleasure of imagining myself wifeless.'

There was a little thin starlight in the courtyard as, wrapped in my furs, I saw him to his car. His last words were, that he had telephoned the mainland and taken a piano-tuner on to the staff; this man would arrive to take up his duties the next day. He pressed me to his vicuña breast, once, and then drove away. I had drowsed away that afternoon and now I could not sleep. I lay tossing and turning in his ancestral bed until another daybreak discoloured the dozen mirrors that were iridescent with the reflections of the sea. The perfume of the lilies weighed on my senses; when I thought that, henceforth, I would always share these sheets with a man whose skin, as theirs did, contained that toad-like, clammy hint of moisture, I felt a vague desolation that within me, now my female wound had healed, there had awoken a certain queasy craving like the cravings of pregnant women for the taste of coal or chalk or tainted food, for the renewal of his caresses. Had he not hinted to me, in his flesh as in his speech and looks, of the thousand, thousand baroque intersections of flesh upon flesh? I lay in our wide bed accompanied by, a sleepless companion, my dark newborn curiosity.

I lay in bed alone. And I longed for him. And he disgusted me. Were there jewels enough in all his safes to recompense me for this predicament? Did all that castle hold enough riches to recompense me for the company of the libertine with whom I must share it? And what, precisely, was the nature of my desirous dread for this mysterious being who, to show his mastery over me, had abandoned me on my wedding night?

Then I sat straight up in bed, under the sardonic masks of the gargoyles carved above me, riven by a wild surmise. Might he have left me, not for Wall Street but for an importunate mistress tucked away God knows where who knew how to pleasure him far better than a girl whose fingers had been exercised, hitherto, only by the practice of scales and arpeggios? And, slowly, soothed, I sank back on to the heaping pillows; I acknowledged that the jealous scare I'd just given myself was not unmixed with a little tincture of relief.

At last I drifted into slumber, as daylight filled the room and chased bad dreams away. But the last thing I remembered, before I slept, was the tall jar of lilies beside the bed, how the thick glass distorted their fat stems so they looked like arms, dismembered arms, drifting drowned in greenish water.

Coffee and croissants to console this bridal, solitary waking. Delicious. Honey, too, in a section of comb on a glass saucer. The maid squeezed the aromatic juice from an orange into a chilled goblet while I watched her as I lay in the lazy, midday bed of the rich. Yet nothing, this morning, gave me more than a fleeting pleasure except to hear that the piano-tuner had been at work already. When the maid told me that, I sprang out of bed and pulled on my old serge skirt and flannel blouse, costume of a student, in which I felt far more at ease with myself than in any of my fine new clothes.

After my three hours of practice, I called the piano-tuner in, to thank him. He was blind, of course; but young, with a gentle mouth and grey eyes that fixed upon me although they could not see me. He was a blacksmith's son from the village across the causeway; a chorister in the church whom the good priest had taught a trade so that he could make a living. All most satisfactory. Yes. He thought he would be happy here. And if, he added shyly, he might sometimes be allowed to hear me play ... for, you see, he loved music. Yes. Of course, I said. Certainly. He seemed to know that I had smiled.

After I dismissed him, even though I'd woken so late, it was still barely time for my 'five o'clock'. The housekeeper, who, thoughtfully forewarned by my husband, had restrained herself from interrupting my music, now made me a solemn visitation with a lengthy menu for a late luncheon. When I told her I did not need it, she looked at me obliquely, along her nose. I understood at once that one of my principal functions as chatelaine was to provide work for the staff. But, all the same, I asserted myself and said I would wait until dinner-time, although I looked forward nervously to the solitary meal. Then I found I had to tell her what I would like to have prepared for me; my imagination, still that of a schoolgirl, ran riot. A fowl in cream--or should I anticipate Christmas with a varnished turkey? No; I have decided. Avocado and shrimp, lots of it, followed by no entrée at all. But surprise me for dessert with every ice-cream in the ice box. She noted all down but sniffed; I'd shocked her. Such tastes! Child that I was, I giggled when she left me. But, now ... what shall I do, now?

I could have spent a happy hour unpacking the trunks that contained my trousseau but the maid had done that already, the dresses, the tailor-mades hung in the wardrobe in my dressing room, the hats on wooden heads to keep their shape, the shoes on wooden feet as if all these inanimate objects were imitating the appearance of life, to mock me. I did not like to linger in my overcrowded dressing room, nor in my lugubriously lily-scented bedroom. How shall I pass the time?

I shall take a bath in my own bathroom! And found the taps were little dolphins made of gold, with chips of turquoise for eyes. And there was a tank of goldfish, who swam in and out of moving fronds of weeds, as bored, I thought, as I was. How I wished he had not left me. How I wished it were possible to chat with, say, a maid; or, the piano-tuner ... but I knew already my new rank forbade overtures of friendship to the staff.

I had been hoping to defer the call as long as I could, so that I should have something to look forward to in the dead waste of time I foresaw before me, after my dinner was done with, but, at a quarter before seven, when darkness already surrounded the castle, I could contain myself no longer. I telephoned my mother. And astonished myself by bursting into tears when I heard her voice. No, nothing was the matter. Mother, I have gold bath taps. I said, gold bath taps! No; I suppose that's nothing to cry about, Mother. The line was bad, I could hardly make out her congratulations, her questions, her concern, but I was a little comforted when I put the receiver down. Yet there still remained one whole hour to dinner and the whole, unimaginable desert of the

rest of the evening.

The bunch of keys lay, where he had left them, on the rug before the library fire which had warmed their metal so that they no longer felt cold to the touch but warm, almost, as my own skin. How careless I was; a maid, tending the logs, eyed me reproachfully as if I'd set a trap for her as I picked up the clinking bundle of keys, the keys to the interior doors of this lovely prison of which I was both the inmate and the mistress and had scarcely seen. When I remembered that, I felt the exhilaration of the explorer. Lights! More lights!

At the touch of a switch, the dreaming library was brilliantly illuminated. I ran crazily about the castle, switching on every light I could find--I ordered the servants to light up all their quarters, too, so the castle would shine like a seaborne birthday cake lit with a thousand candles, one for every year of its life, and everybody on shore would wonder at it. When everything was lit as brightly as the café in the Gare du Nord, the significance of the possessions implied by that bunch of keys no longer intimidated me, for I was determined, now, to search through them all for evidence of my husband's true nature. His office first, evidently.

A mahogany desk half a mile wide, with an impeccable blotter and a bank of telephones. I allowed myself the luxury of opening the safe that contained the jewellery and delved sufficiently among the leather boxes to find out how my marriage had given me access to a jinn's treasury--parures, bracelets, rings ... While I was thus surrounded by diamonds, a maid knocked on the door and entered before I spoke; a subtle discourtesy. I would speak to my husband about it. She eyed my serge skirt superciliously; did madame plan to dress for dinner?

She made a moue of disdain when I laughed to hear that, she was far more the lady than I. But, imagine--to dress up in one of my Poiret extravaganzas, with the jewelled turban and aigrette on my head, roped with pearl to the navel, to sit down all alone in the baronial dining hall at the head of that massive board at which King Mark was reputed to have fed his knights ... I grew calmer under the cold eye of her disapproval. I adopted the crisp inflections of an officer's daughter. No, I would not dress for dinner. Furthermore, I was not hungry enough for dinner itself. She must tell the housekeeper to cancel the dormitory feast I'd ordered. Could they leave me sandwiches and a flask of coffee in my music room? And would they all dismiss for the night? Mais oui, madame.

I knew by her bereft intonation I had let them down again but I did not care; I was armed against them by the brilliance of his hoard. But I would not find his heart amongst the glittering stones; as soon as she had gone, I began a systematic search of the drawers of his desk.

All was in order, so I found nothing. Not a random doodle on an old envelope, nor the faded photograph of a woman. Only the files of business correspondence, the bills from the home farms, the invoices from tailors, the billets-doux from international financiers. Nothing. And this absence of the evidence of his real life began to impress me strangely; there must, I thought, be a great deal to conceal if he takes such pains to hide it.

His office was a singularly impersonal room, facing inwards, on to the courtyard, as though he wanted to turn his back on the siren sea in order to keep a clear head while he bankrupted a small businessman in Amsterdam or--I noticed with a thrill of distaste--engaged in some business in Laos that must, from certain cryptic references to his amateur botanist's enthusiasm for rare poppies, be to do with opium. Was he not rich enough to do without crime? Or was the crime itself his profit? And yet I saw enough to appreciate his zeal for secrecy.

Now I had ransacked his desk, I must spend a cool-headed quarter of an hour putting every last letter

back where I had found it, and, as I covered the traces of my visit, by some chance, as I reached inside a little drawer that had stuck fast, I must have touched a hidden spring, for a secret drawer flew open within that drawer itself; and this secret drawer contained--at last!--a file marked: *Personal*. I was alone, but for my reflection in the uncurtained window. I had the brief notion that his heart, pressed flat as a flower, crimson and thin as tissue paper, lay in this file. It was a very thin one.

I could have wished, perhaps, I had not found that touching, ill-spelt note, on a paper napkin marked *La Coupole*, that began: 'My darling, I cannot wait for the moment when you may make me yours completely.' The diva had sent him a page of the score of *Tristan*, the Liebestod, with the single, cryptic word: 'Until...' scrawled across it. But the strangest of all these love letters was a postcard with a view of a village graveyard, among mountains, where some black-coated ghoul enthusiastically dug at a grave; this little scene, executed with the lurid exuberance of Grand Guignol, was captioned: 'Typical Transylvanian Scene--Midnight, All Hallows.' And, on the other side, the message: 'On the occasion of this marriage to the descendant of Dracula--always remember, "the supreme and unique pleasure of love is the certainty that one is doing evil". Toutes amitiés, C.'

A joke. A joke in the worst possible taste; for had he not been married to a Romanian countess? And then I remembered her pretty, witty face, and her name--Carmilla. My most recent predecessor in this castle had been, it would seem, the most sophisticated.

I put away the file, sobered. Nothing in my life of family love and music had prepared me for these grown-up games and yet these were clues to his self that showed me, at least, how much he had been loved, even if they did not reveal any good reason for it. But I wanted to know still more; and, as I closed the office door and locked it, the means to discover more fell in my way.

Fell, indeed; and with the clatter of a dropped canteen of cutlery, for, as I turned the slick Yale lock, I contrived, somehow, to open up the key ring itself, so that all the keys tumbled loose on the floor. And the very first key I picked out of that pile was, as luck or ill fortune had it, the key to the room he had forbidden me, the room he would keep for his own so that he could go there when he wished to feel himself once more a bachelor.

I made my decision to explore it before I felt a faint resurgence of my ill-defined fear of his waxen stillness. Perhaps I half-imagined, then, that I might find his real self in his den, waiting there to see if indeed I had obeyed him; that he had sent a moving figure of himself to New York, the enigmatic, self-sustaining carapace of his public person, while the real man [...], occupied himself with pressing private business in the study at the foot of the west tower, behind the still-room. Yet, if that were so, it was imperative that I should find him, should know him; and I was too deluded by his apparent taste for me to think my disobedience might truly offend him. I took the forbidden key from the heap and left the others lying there.

It was now very late and the castle was adrift, as far as it could go from the land, in the middle of the silent ocean where, at my orders, it floated, like a garland of light. And all silent, all still, but for the murmuring of the waves.

I felt no fear, no intimation of dread. Now I walked as firmly as I had done in my mother's house. Not a narrow, dusty little passage at all; why had he lied to me? But an ill-lit one, certainly; the electricity, for some reason, did not extend here, so I retreated to the still-room and found a bundle of waxed tapers in a cupboard, stored there with matches to light the oak board at grand dinners. I put a match to my little taper and advanced with it in my hand, like a penitent, along the corridor hung with heavy, I think Venetian, tapestries. The flame

picked out, here, the head of a man, there, the rich breast of a woman spilling through a rent in her dress--the Rape of the Sabines, perhaps? The naked swords and immolated horses suggested some grisly mythological subject. The corridor wound downwards; there was an almost imperceptible ramp to the thickly carpeted floor. The heavy hangings on the wall muffled my footsteps, even my breathing. For some reason, it grew very warm; the sweat sprang out in beads on my brow. I could no longer hear the sound of the sea.

A long, a winding corridor, as if I were in the viscera of the castle; and this corridor led to a door of worm-eaten oak, low, round-topped, barred with black iron. And still I felt no fear, no raising of the hairs on the back of the neck, no prickling of the thumbs. The key slid into the new lock as easily as a hot knife into butter. No fear; but a hesitation, a holding of the spiritual breath. If I had found some traces of his heart in a file marked: *Personal*, perhaps, here, in his subterranean privacy, I might find a little of his soul. It was the consciousness of the possibility of such a discovery, of its possible strangeness, that kept me for a moment motionless, before, in the foolhardiness of my already subtly tainted innocence, I turned the key and the door creaked slowly back.

'There is a striking resemblance between the act of love and the ministrations of a torturer,' opined my husband's favourite poet; I had learned something of the nature of that similarity on my marriage bed. And now my taper showed me the outlines of a rack. There was also a great wheel, like the ones I had seen in woodcuts of the martyrdoms of the saints, in my old nurse's little store of holy books. And--just one glimpse of it before my little flame caved in and I was left in absolute darkness--a metal figure, hinged at the side, which I knew to be spiked on the inside and to have the name: the Iron Maiden. Absolute darkness. And, about me, the instruments of mutilation.

Until that moment, this spoiled child did not know she had inherited nerves and a will from the mother who had defied the yellow outlaws of Indo-China; My mother's spirit drove me on, into that dreadful place, in a cold ecstasy to know the very worst. I fumbled for the matches in my pocket; what a dim, lugubrious light they gave! And yet, enough, oh, more than enough, to see a room designed for desecration and some dark night of unimaginable lovers whose embraces were annihilation.

The walls of this stark torture chamber were the naked rock; they gleamed as if they were sweating with fright. At the four corners of the room were funerary urns, of great antiquity, Etruscan, perhaps, and, on three-legged ebony stands, the bowls of incense he had left burning which filled the room with a sacerdotal reek. Wheel, rack and Iron Maiden were, I saw, displayed as grandly as if they were items of statuary and I was almost consoled, then, and almost persuaded myself that I might have stumbled only upon a little museum of his perversity, that he had installed these monstrous items here only for contemplation.

Yet at the centre of the room lay a catafalque, a doomed, ominous bier of Renaissance workmanship, surrounded by long white candles and, at its foot, an armful of the same lilies with which he had filled my bedroom, stowed in a four-foot-high jar glazed with a sombre Chinese red. I scarcely dared examine this catafalque and its occupant more closely; yet I knew I must.

Each time I struck a match to light those candles round her bed, it seemed a garment of that innocence of mine for which he had lusted fell away from me. The opera singer lay [...] under a thin sheet of very rare and precious linen, such as the princes of Italy used to shroud those whom they had poisoned. I touched her, very gently [...]; she was cool, he had embalmed her. On her throat I could see the blue imprint of his strangler's fingers. The cool, sad flame of the candles flickered on her white, closed eyelids. The worst thing was, the dead

lips smiled.

Beyond the catafalque, in the middle of the shadows, a white, nacreous glimmer; as my eyes accustomed themselves to the gathering darkness, I at last--oh, horrors!--made out a skull; yes, a skull, so utterly denuded, now, of flesh, that it scarcely seemed possible the stark bone had once been richly upholstered with life. And this skull was strung up by a system of unseen cords, so that it appeared to hang, disembodied, in the still, heavy air, and it had been crowned with a wreath of white roses, and a veil of lace, the final image of his bride.

Yet the skull was still so beautiful, had shaped with its sheer planes so imperiously the face that had once existed above it, that I recognized her the moment I saw her; face of the evening star walking on the rim of night. One false step, oh, my poor, dear girl, next in the fated sisterhood of his wives; one false step and into the abyss of the dark you stumbled.

And where was she, the latest dead, the Romanian countess who might have thought her blood would survive his depredations? I knew she must be here, in the place that had wound me through the castle towards it on a spool of inexorability. But, at first, I could see no sign of her. Then, for some reason--perhaps some change of atmosphere wrought by my presence--the metal shell of the Iron Maiden emitted a ghostly twang; my feverish imagination might have guessed its occupant was trying to clamber out, though, even in the midst of my rising hysteria, I knew she must be dead to find a home there. With trembling fingers, I prised open the front of the upright coffin, with its sculpted face caught in a rictus of pain. Then, overcome, I dropped the key I still held in my other hand. It dropped into the forming pool of her blood.

She was pierced, not by one but by a hundred spikes, this child of the land of the vampires who seemed so newly dead, so full of blood ... oh God! how recently had he become a widower? How long had he kept her in this obscene cell? Had it been all the time he had courted me, in the clear light of Paris? I closed the lid of her coffin very gently and burst into a tumult of sobbing that contained both pity for his other victims and also a dreadful anguish to know I, too, was one of them.

The candles flared, as if in a draught from a door to elsewhere. The light caught the fire opal on my hand so that it flashed, once, with a baleful light, as if to tell me the eye of God--his eye--was upon me. My first thought, when I saw the ring for which I had sold myself to this fate, was, how to escape it. I retained sufficient presence of mind to snuff out the candles round the bier with my fingers, to gather up my taper, to look around, although shuddering, to ensure I had left behind me no traces of my visit.

I retrieved the key from the pool of blood, wrapped it in my handkerchief to keep my hands clean, and fled the room, slamming the door behind me. It crashed to with a juddering reverberation, like the door of hell. I could not take refuge in my bedroom, for that retained the memory of his presence trapped in the fathomless silvering of his mirrors. My music room seemed the safest place, although I looked at the picture of Saint Cecilia with a faint dread; what had been the nature of her martyrdom? My mind was in a tumult; schemes for flight jostled with one another ... as soon as the tide receded from the causeway, I would make for the mainland--on foot, running, stumbling; I did not trust that leather-clad chauffeur, nor the well-behaved housekeeper, and I dared not take any of the pale, ghostly maids into my confidence, either, since they were his creatures, all. Once at the village, I would fling myself directly on the mercy of the gendarmerie.

But--could I trust them, either? His forefathers had ruled this coast for eight centuries, from this castle whose moat was the Atlantic. Might not the police, the advocates, even the judge, all be in his service, turning a

common blind eye to his vices since he was milord whose word must be obeyed? Who, on this distant coast, would believe the white-faced girl from Paris who came running to them with a shuddering tale of blood, of fear, of the ogre murmuring in the shadows? Or, rather, they would immediately know it to be true. But were all honour-bound to let me carry it no further. Assistance. My mother. I ran to the telephone; and the line, of course, was dead. Dead as his wives.

A thick darkness, unlit by any star, still glazed the windows. Every lamp in my room burned, to keep the dark outside, yet it seemed still to encroach on me, to be present beside me but as if masked by my lights, the night like a permeable substance that could seep into my skin. I looked at the precious little clock made from hypocritically innocent flowers long ago, in Dresden; the hands had scarcely moved one single hour forward from when I first descended to that private slaughterhouse of his. Time was his servant, too; it would trap me, here, in a night that would last until he came back to me, like a black sun on a hopeless morning.

And yet the time might still be my friend; at that hour, that very hour, he set sail for New York. To know that, in a few moments, my husband would have left France calmed my agitation a little. My reason told me I had nothing to fear; the tide that would take him away to the New World would let me out of the imprisonment of the castle. Surely I could easily evade the servants. Anybody can buy a ticket at a railway station. Yet I was still rilled with unease. I opened the lid of the piano; perhaps I thought my own particular magic might help me, now, that I could create a pentacle out of music that would keep me from harm for, if my music had first ensnared him, then might it not also give me the power to free myself from him?

Mechanically, I began to play but my fingers were stiff and shaking. At first, I could manage nothing better than the exercises of Czerny but simply the act of playing soothed me and, for solace, for the sake of the harmonious rationality of its sublime mathematics, I searched among his scores until I found *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. I set myself the therapeutic task of playing all Bach's equations, every one, and, I told myself, if I played them all through without a single mistake--then the morning would find me once more a virgin.

Crash of a dropped stick. His silver-headed cane! What else? Sly, cunning, he had returned; he was waiting for me outside the door! I rose to my feet; fear gave me strength. I flung back my head defiantly. 'Come in!' My voice astonished me by its firmness, its clarity.

The door slowly, nervously opened and I saw, not the massive, irredeemable bulk of my husband but the slight, stooping figure of the piano-tuner, and he looked far more terrified of me than my mother's daughter would have been of the Devil himself. In the torture chamber, it seemed to me that I would never laugh again; now, helplessly, laugh I did, with relief, and, after a moment's hesitation, the boy's face softened and he smiled a little, almost in shame. Though they were blind, his eyes were singularly sweet.

'Forgive me,' said Jean-Yves. 'I know I've given you grounds for dismissing me, that I should be crouching outside your door at midnight ... but I heard you walking about, up and down--I sleep in a room at the foot of the west tower--and some intuition told me you could not sleep and might, perhaps, pass the insomniac hours at your piano. And I could not resist that. Besides, I stumbled over these--' And he displayed the ring of keys I'd dropped outside my husband's office door, the ring from which one key was missing. I took them from him, looked round for a place to stow them, fixed on the piano stool as if to hide them would protect me. Still he stood smiling at me. How hard it was to make everyday conversation.

'It's perfect,' I said. 'The piano. Perfectly in tune.' But he was full of the loquacity of embarrassment, as

though I would only forgive him for his impudence if he explained the cause of it thoroughly. 'When I heard you play this afternoon, I thought I'd never heard such a touch. Such technique. A treat for me, to hear a virtuoso! So I crept up to your door now, humbly as a little dog might, madame, and put my ear to the keyhole and listened, and listened--until my stick fell to the floor through a momentary clumsiness of mine, and I was discovered.' He had the most touchingly ingenuous smile.

'Perfectly in tune,' I repeated. To my surprise, now I had said it, I found I could not say anything else. I could only repeat: 'In tune ... perfect ... in tune,' over and over again. I saw a dawning surprise in his face. My head throbbed. To see him, in his lovely, blind humanity, seemed to hurt me very piercingly, somewhere inside my breast; his figure blurred, the room swayed about me. After the dreadful revelation of that bloody chamber, it was his tender look that made me faint.

When I recovered consciousness, I found I was lying in the piano-tuner's arms and he was tucking the satin cushion from the piano-stool under my head. 'You are in some great distress,' he said. 'No bride should suffer so much, so early in her marriage.' His speech had the rhythms of the countryside, the rhythms of the tides. 'Any bride brought to this castle should come ready dressed in mourning, should bring a priest and a coffin with her,' I said. 'What's this?'

It was too late to keep silent; and if he, too, were one of my husband's creatures, then at least he had been kind to me. So I told him everything, the keys, the interdiction, my disobedience, the room, the rack, the skull, the corpses, the blood. 'I can scarcely believe it,' he said, wondering. 'That man ... so rich; so well-born.' 'Here's proof,' I said and tumbled the fatal key out of my handkerchief on to the silken rug. 'Oh God,' he said. 'I can smell the blood.' He took my hand; he pressed his arms about me. Although he was scarcely more than a boy, I felt a great strength flow into me from his touch. 'We whisper all manner of strange tales up and down the coast,' he said.' There was a Marquis, once, who used to hunt young girls on the mainland; he hunted them with dogs, as though they were foxes. […]

But, in these more democratic times, my husband must travel as far as Paris to do his hunting in the salons. Jean-Yves knew the moment I shuddered. 'Oh, madame! I thought all these were old wives' tales, chattering of fools, spooks to scare bad children into good behaviour! Yet how could you know, a stranger, that the old name for this place is the Castle of Murder?' How could I know, indeed? Except that, in my heart, I'd always known its lord would be the death of me. 'Hark!' said my friend suddenly. 'The sea has changed key; it must be near morning, the tide is going down.' He helped me up. I looked from the window, towards the mainland, along the causeway where the stones gleamed wetly in the thin light of the end of the night and, with an almost unimaginable horror, a horror the intensity of which I cannot transmit to you, I saw, in the distance, still far away yet drawing moment by moment inexorably nearer, the twin headlamps of his great black car, gouging tunnels through the shifting mist.

My husband had indeed returned; this time, it was no fancy. 'The key!' said Jean-Yves. 'It must go back on the ring, with the others. As though nothing had happened.' But the key was still caked with wet blood and I ran to my bathroom and held it under the hot tap. Crimson water swirled down the basin but, as if the key itself were hurt, the bloody token stuck. The turquoise eyes of the dolphin taps winked at me derisively; they knew my husband had been too clever for me! I scrubbed the stain with my nail brush but still it would not budge. I thought how the car would be rolling silently towards the closed courtyard gate; the more I scrubbed the key,

the more vivid grew the stain. The bell in the gatehouse would jangle. The porter's drowsy son would push back the patchwork quilt, yawning, pull the shirt over his head, thrust his feet into his sabots ... slowly, slowly; open the door for your master as slowly as you can ...

And still the bloodstain mocked the fresh water that spilled from the mouth of the leering dolphin. 'You have no more time,' said Jean-Yves. 'He is here. I know it. I must stay with you.' 'You shall not!' I said. 'Go back to your room, now. Please.' He hesitated. I put an edge of steel in my voice, for I knew I must meet my lord alone. 'Leave me!'

As soon as he had gone, I dealt with the keys and went to my bedroom. The causeway was empty; Jean-Yves was correct, my husband had already entered the castle. I pulled the curtains close, stripped off my clothes and pulled the bedcurtains round me as a pungent aroma of Russian leather assured me my husband was once again beside me. 'Dearest!' With the most treacherous, lascivious tenderness, he kissed my eyes, and, mimicking the new bride newly wakened, I flung my arms around him, for on my seeming acquiescence depended my salvation.

'Da Silva of Rio outwitted me,' he said wryly.' My New York agent telegraphed Le Havre and saved me a wasted journey. So we may resume our interrupted pleasures, my love.' I did not believe one word of it. I knew I had behaved exactly according to his desires; had he not bought me so that I should do so? I had been tricked into my own betrayal to that illimitable darkness whose source I had been compelled to seek in his absence and, now that I had met that shadowed reality of his that came to life only in the presence of its own atrocities, I must pay the price of my new knowledge. The secret of Pandora's box; but he had given me the box, himself, knowing I must learn the secret. I had played a game in which every move was governed by a destiny as oppressive and omnipotent as himself, since that destiny was himself; and I had lost. Lost at that charade of innocence and vice in which he had engaged me. Lost, as the victim loses to the executioner.

His hand brushed my breast, beneath the sheet. I strained my nerves yet could not help but flinch from the intimate touch, for it made me think of the piercing embrace of the Iron Maiden and of his lost lovers in the vault. When he saw my reluctance, his eyes veiled over and yet his appetite did not diminish. […] Silent, mysterious, he moved away from me to draw off his jacket. He took the gold watch from his waistcoat and laid it on the dressing table, like a good bourgeois; scooped out his raiding loose change and now--oh God!--makes a great play of patting his pockets officiously, puzzled lips pursed, searching for something that has been mislaid. Then turns to me with a ghastly, a triumphant smile. 'But of course! I gave the keys to you!' 'Your keys? Why, of course. Here, they're under the pillow; wait a moment--what--Ah! No ... now, where can I have left them? I was whiling away the evening without you at the piano, I remember. Of course! The music room!' Brusquely he flung my négligé of antique lace on the bed. 'Go and get them.'

'Now? This moment? Can't it wait until morning, my darling?' I forced myself to be seductive. I saw myself, pale, pliant as a plant that begs to be trampled underfoot, a dozen vulnerable, appealing girls reflected in as many mirrors, and I saw how he almost failed to resist me. If he had come to me in bed, I would have strangled him, then. But he half-snarled: 'No. It won't wait. Now.' The unearthly light of dawn filled the room; had only one previous dawn broken upon me in that vile place? And there was nothing for it but to go and fetch the keys from the music stool and pray he would not examine them too closely, pray to God his eyes would fail him, that he might be struck blind. When I came back into the bedroom carrying the bunch of keys that jangled

at every step like a curious musical instrument, he was sitting on the bed in his immaculate shirtsleeves, his head sunk in his hands. And it seemed to me he was in despair.

Strange. In spite of my fear of him, that made me whiter than my wrap, I felt there emanate from him, at that moment, a stench of absolute despair, rank and ghastly, as if the lilies that surrounded him had all at once begun to fester, or the Russian leather of his scent were reverting to the elements of flayed hide and excrement of which it was composed. The chthonic gravity of his presence exerted a tremendous pressure on the room, so that the blood pounded in my ears as if we had been precipitated to the bottom of the sea, beneath the waves that pounded against the shore.

I held my life in my hands amongst those keys and, in a moment, would place it between his well-manicured fingers. The evidence of that bloody chamber had showed me I could expect no mercy. Yet, when he raised his head and stared at me with his blind, shuttered eyes as though he did not recognize me, I felt a terrified pity for him, for this man who lived in such strange, secret places that, if I loved him enough to follow him, I should have to die.

The atrocious loneliness of that monster! The monocle had fallen from his face. His curling mane was disordered, as if he had run his hands through it in his distraction. I saw how he had lost his impassivity and was now filled with suppressed excitement. The hand he stretched out for those counters in his game of love and death shook a little; the face that turned towards me contained a sombre delirium that seemed to me compounded of a ghastly, yes, shame but also of a terrible, guilty joy as he slowly ascertained how I had sinned.

That tell-tale stain had resolved itself into a mark the shape and brilliance of the heart on a playing card. He disengaged the key from the ring and looked at it for a while, solitary, brooding. 'It is the key that leads to the kingdom of the unimaginable,' he said. His voice was low and had in it the timbre of certain great cathedral organs that seem, when they are played, to be conversing with God. I could not restrain a sob.

'Oh, my love, my little love who brought me a white gift of music,' he said, almost as if grieving. 'My little love, you'll never know how much I hate daylight!" Then he sharply ordered: 'Kneel!' I knelt before him and he pressed the key lightly to my forehead, held it there for a moment. I felt a faint tingling of the skin and, when I involuntarily glanced at myself in the mirror, I saw the heart-shaped stain had transferred itself to my forehead, to the space between the eyebrows, like the caste mark of a brahmin woman. Or the mark of Cain. And now the key gleamed as freshly as if it had just been cut. He clipped it back on the ring, emitting that same, heavy sigh as he had done when I said that I would marry him.

'My virgin of the arpeggios, prepare yourself for martyrdom.' 'What form shall it take?' I said. 'Decapitation,' he whispered, almost voluptuously. 'Go and bathe yourself; put on that white dress you wore to hear *Tristan* and the necklace that prefigures your end. And I shall take myself off to the armoury, my dear, to sharpen my great-grandfather's ceremonial sword.' 'The servants?' 'We shall have absolute privacy for our last rites; I have already dismissed them. If you look out of the window you can see them going to the mainland.'

It was now the full, pale light of morning; the weather was grey, indeterminate, the sea had an oily, sinister look, a gloomy day on which to die. Along the causeway I could see trouping every maid and scullion, every pot-boy and pan-scourer, valet, laundress and vassal who worked in that great house, most on foot, a few on bicycles. The faceless housekeeper trudged along with a great basket in which, I guessed, she'd stowed as much as she could ransack from the larder. The Marquis must have given the chauffeur leave to borrow the

motor for the day, for it went last of all, at a stately pace, as though the procession were a cortege and the car already bore my coffin to the mainland for burial.

But I knew no good Breton earth would cover me, like a last, faithful lover; I had another fate. 'I have given them all a day's holiday, to celebrate our wedding,' he said. And smiled. However hard I stared at the receding company, I could see no sign of Jean-Yves, our latest servant, hired but the preceding morning.

'Go, now. Bathe yourself; dress yourself. The lustratory ritual and the ceremonial robing; after that, the sacrifice. Wait in the music room until I telephone for you. No, my dear!' And he smiled, as I started, recalling the line was dead.' One may call inside the castle just as much as one pleases; but, outside--never.'

I scrubbed my forehead with the nail brush as I had scrubbed the key but this red mark would not go away, either, no matter what I did, and I knew I should wear it until I died, though that would not be long. Then I went to my dressing room and put on that white muslin shift, costume of a victim of an auto-da-fé, he had bought me to listen to the Liebestod in. Twelve young women combed out twelve listless sheaves of brown hair in the mirrors; soon, there would be none. The mass of lilies that surrounded me exhaled, now, the odour of their withering. They looked like the trumpets of the angels of death. On the dressing table, coiled like a snake about to strike, lay the ruby choker. Already almost lifeless, cold at heart, I descended the spiral staircase to the music room but there I found I had not been abandoned

'I can be of some comfort to you,' the boy said.' Though not much use.' We pushed the piano stool in front of the open window so that, for as long as I could, I would be able to smell the ancient, reconciling smell of the sea that, in time, will cleanse everything, scour the old bones white, wash away all the stains. The last little chambermaid had trotted along the causeway long ago and now the tide, fated as I, came tumbling in, the crisp wavelets splashing on the old stones. 'You do not deserve this,' he said. 'Who can say what I deserve or no?' I said. 'I've done nothing; but that may be sufficient reason for condemning me.' 'You disobeyed him,' he said. 'That is sufficient reason for him to punish you.' 'I only did what he knew I would.' 'Like Eve,' he said.

The telephone rang a shrill imperative. Let it ring. But my lover lifted me up and set me on my feet; I knew I must answer it. The receiver felt heavy as earth. 'The courtyard. Immediately.' My lover kissed me, he took my hand. He would come with me if I would lead him. Courage. When I thought of courage, I thought of my mother. Then I saw a muscle in my lover's face quiver. 'Hoofbeats!' he said. I cast one last, desperate glance from the window and, like a miracle, I saw a horse and rider galloping at a vertiginous speed along the causeway, though the waves crashed, now, high as the horse's fetlocks. A rider, her black skirts tucked up around her waist so she could ride hard and fast, a crazy, magnificent horsewoman in widow's weeds.

As the telephone rang again. 'Am I to wait all morning?' Every moment, my mother drew nearer. 'She will be too late,' Jean-Yves said and yet he could not restrain a note of hope that, though it must be so, yet it might not be so. The third, intransigent call. 'Shall I come up to heaven to fetch you down, Saint Cecilia? You wicked woman, do you wish me to compound my crimes by desecrating the marriage bed?'

So I must go to the courtyard where my husband waited in his London-tailored trousers and the shirt from Turnbull and Asser, beside the mounting block, with, in his hand, the sword which his great-grandfather had presented to the little corporal, in token of surrender to the Republic, before he shot himself. The heavy sword, unsheathed, grey as that November morning, sharp as childbirth, mortal. When my husband saw my companion, he observed: 'Let the blind lead the blind, eh? But does even a youth as besotted as you are think

she was truly blind to her own desires when she took my ring? Give it me back, whore.'

The fires in the opal had all died down. I gladly slipped it from my finger and, even in that dolorous place, my heart was lighter for the lack of it. My husband took it lovingly and lodged it on the tip of his little finger; it would go no further. 'It will serve me for a dozen more fiancées,' he said. 'To the block, woman. No--leave the boy; I shall deal with him later, utilizing a less exalted instrument than the one with which I do my wife the honour of her immolation, for do not fear that in death you will be divided.' Slowly, slowly, one foot before the other, I crossed the cobbles. The longer I dawdled over my execution, the more time it gave the avenging angel to descend ...

'Don't loiter, girl! Do you think I shall lose appetite for the meal if you are so long about serving it? No; I shall grow hungrier, more ravenous with each moment, more cruel ... Run to me, run! I have a place prepared for your exquisite corpse in my display of flesh!' He raised the sword and cut bright segments from the air with it, but still I lingered although my hopes, so recently raised, now began to flag. If she is not here by now, her horse must have stumbled on the causeway, have plunged into the sea ... One thing only made me glad; that my lover would not see me die.

My husband laid my branded forehead on the stone and, as he had done once before, twisted my hair into a rope and drew it away from my neck. 'Such a pretty neck,' he said with what seemed to be a genuine, retrospective tenderness. 'A neck like the stem of a young plant.' I felt the silken bristle of his beard and the wet touch of his lips as he kissed my nape. And, once again, of my apparel I must retain only my gems; the sharp blade ripped my dress in two and it fell from me. A little green moss, growing in the crevices of the mounting block, would be the last thing I should see in all the world.

The whizz of that heavy sword. And--a great battering and pounding at the gate, the jangling of the bell, the frenzied neighing of a horse! The unholy silence of the place shattered in an instant. The blade did *not* descend, the necklace did *not* sever, my head did *not* roll. For, for an instant, the beast wavered in his stroke, a sufficient split second of astonished indecision to let me spring upright and dart to the assistance of my lover as he struggled sightlessly with the great bolts that kept her out.

The Marquis stood transfixed, utterly dazed, at a loss. It must have been as if he had been watching his beloved *Tristan* for the twelfth, the thirteenth time and Tristan stirred, then leapt from his bier in the last act, announced in a jaunty aria interposed from Verdi that bygones were bygones, crying over spilt milk did nobody any good and, as for himself, he proposed to live happily ever after. The puppet master, open-mouthed, wide-eyed, impotent at the last, saw his dolls break free of their strings, abandon the rituals he had ordained for them since time began and start to live for themselves; the king, aghast, witnesses the revolt of his pawns.

You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, her hat seized by the winds and blown out to sea so that her hair was her white mane, her black lisle legs exposed to the thigh, her skirts tucked round her waist, one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my father's service revolver and, behind her, the breakers of the savage, indifferent sea, like the witnesses of a furious justice. And my husband stood stock-still, as if she had been Medusa, the sword still raised over his head as in those clockwork tableaux of Bluebeard that you see in glass cases at fairs.

And then it was as though a curious child pushed his centime into the slot and set all in motion. The heavy, bearded figure roared out aloud, braying with fury, and, wielding the honourable sword as if it were a

matter of death or glory, charged us, all three. On her eighteenth birthday, my mother had disposed of a man-eating tiger that had ravaged the villages in the hills north of Hanoi. Now, without a moment's hesitation, she raised my father's gun, took aim and put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband's head.

We lead a quiet life, the three of us. I inherited, of course, enormous wealth but we have given most of it away to various charities. The castle is now a school for the blind, though I pray that the children who live there are not haunted by any sad ghosts looking for, crying for, the husband who will never return to the bloody chamber, the contents of which are buried or burned, the door sealed.

I felt I had a right to retain sufficient funds to start a little music school here, on the outskirts of Paris, and we do well enough. Sometimes we can even afford to go to the Opéra, though never to sit in a box, of course. We know we are the source of many whisperings and much gossip but the three of us know the truth of it and mere chatter can never harm us. I can only bless the--what shall I call it?--the *maternal telepathy* that sent my mother running headlong from the telephone to the station after I had called her, that night. I never heard you cry before, she said, by way of explanation. Not when you were happy. And who ever cried because of gold bath taps?

The night train, the one I had taken; she lay in her berth, sleepless as I had been. When she could not find a taxi at that lonely halt, she borrowed old Dobbin from a bemused farmer, for some internal urgency told her that she must reach me before the incoming tide sealed me away from her for ever. My poor old nurse, left scandalized at home--what? interrupt milord on his honeymoon?--she died soon after. She had taken so much secret pleasure in the fact that her little girl had become a marquise; and now here I was, scarcely a penny the richer, widowed at seventeen in the most dubious circumstances and busily engaged in setting up house with a piano-tuner. Poor thing, she passed away in a sorry state of disillusion! But I do believe my mother loves him as much as I do.

No paint nor powder, no matter how thick or white, can mask that red mark on my forehead; I am glad he cannot see it--not for fear of his revulsion, since I know he sees me clearly with his heart--but, because it spares my shame.

Today's Homework is:

- Read *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) by Angela Carter.
- Write 250 words (noting at least 3 points) on how this version of *Bluebeard* is similar or different to Charles Perrault's version. Be prepared to discuss during the next tutorial. Students will have 2-3 minutes to explain their ideas.

Consider these questions when writing your paragraph for homework and we'll discuss them in the next tutorial.

1. How are the characters different in this version? Is the young woman smarter? Is she less innocent?
2. Does the ending come as a surprise to the reader, considering the version of the tale that we already know?
3. Which version do you prefer and why?

Notes:

Tutorial 3 – Bluebeard's Egg

Today's Key Question(s):

- How are *The Bloody Chamber* and *Bluebeard's Egg* similar / different?
- Does Margaret Atwood's version reflect modern society?
- Why compare texts? What can we learn from doing this?

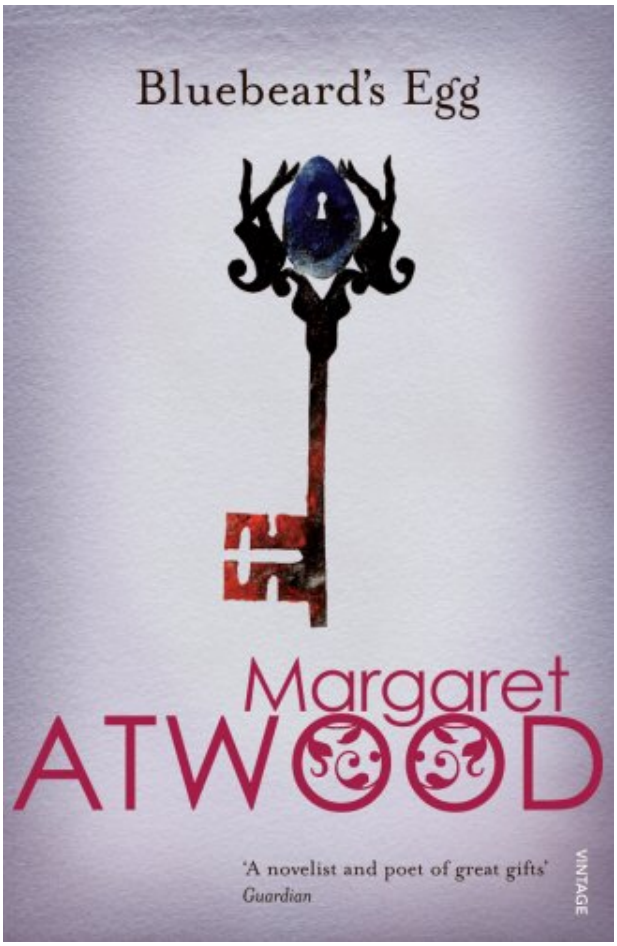
What is the Purpose of Tutorial 4?

- To allow students to begin to critically engage with texts further and to develop their own ideas by comparing and contrasting texts.

Margaret Atwood (1939-)

- Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, and environmental activist. She has published many novels and anthologies of short stories.

- Her short story collection, Bluebeard's Egg was published in 1985. Here, we will look at the tale of the same name which, like Angela Carter's version, is a retelling of Bluebeard.



Bluebeard's Egg
By Margaret Atwood

SALLY STANDS AT the kitchen window, waiting for the sauce she's reducing to come to a simmer, looking out. Past the garage the lot sweeps downwards, into the ravine; it's a wilderness there, of bushes and branches and what Sally thinks of as vines. It was her idea to have a kind of terrace, built of old railroad ties, with wild flowers growing between them, but Edward says he likes it the way it is. There's a playhouse down at the bottom, near the fence; from here she can just see the roof. It has nothing to do with Edward's kids, in their earlier incarnations, before Sally's time; it's more ancient than that, and falling apart. Sally would like it cleared away. She thinks drunks sleep in it, the men who live under the bridges down there, who occasionally wander over the fence (which is broken down, from where they step on it) and up the hill, to emerge squinting like moles into the light of Sally's well-kept back lawn.

Off to the left is Ed, in his windbreaker; it's officially spring, Sally's blue scylla is in flower, but it's chilly for this time of year. Ed's windbreaker is an old one he won't throw out; it still says WILDCATS, relic of some team he was on in high school, an era so prehistoric Sally can barely imagine it; though picturing Ed at high school is not all that difficult. Girls would have had crushes on him, he would have been unconscious of it; things like that don't change. He's puttering around the rock garden now; some of the rocks stick out too far and are in danger of grazing the side of Sally's Peugeot, on its way to the garage, and he's moving them around. He likes doing things like that, puttering, humming to himself. He won't wear work gloves, though she keeps telling him he could squash his fingers.

Watching his bent back with its frayed, poignant lettering, Sally dissolves; which is not infrequent with her. *My darling Edward*, she thinks. *Edward Bear, of little brain. How I love you*. At times like this she feels very protective of him.

Sally knows for a fact that dumb blondes were loved, not because they were blondes, but because they were dumb. It was their helplessness and confusion that were so sexually attractive, once; not their hair. It wasn't false, the rush of tenderness men must have felt for such women. Sally understands it.

For it must be admitted: Sally is in love with Ed because of his stupidity, his monumental and almost energetic stupidity: energetic, because Ed's stupidity is not passive. He's no mere blockhead; you'd have to be working at it to be that stupid. Does it make Sally feel smug, or smarter than he is, or even smarter than she really is herself? No; on the contrary, it makes her humble. It fills her with wonder that the world can contain such marvels as Ed's colossal and endearing thickness. He is just so *stupid*. Every time he gives her another piece of evidence, another tile that she can glue into place in the vast mosaic of his stupidity she's continually piecing together, she wants to hug him, and often does; and he is so stupid he can never figure out what for.

Because Ed is so stupid he doesn't even know he's stupid. He's a child of luck, a third son who, armed with nothing but a certain feeble-minded amiability, manages to make it through the forest with all its witches and traps and pitfalls and end up with the princess, who is Sally, of course. It helps that he's handsome.

On good days she sees his stupidity as innocence, lamblike, shining with the light of (for instance) green daisied meadows in the sun. (When Sally starts thinking this way about Ed, in terms of the calendar art from the service-station washrooms of her childhood, dredging up images of a boy with curly golden hair, his arm thrown around the neck of an Irish setter – a notorious brainless beast, she reminds herself – she knows she is sliding over the edge, into a ghastly kind of sentimentality, and that she must stop at once, or Ed will vanish, to be replaced by a stuffed facsimile, useful for little else but an umbrella stand. Ed is a real person, with a lot more to him than these simplistic renditions allow for; which sometimes worries her.) On bad days though, she sees his stupidity as wilfulness, a stubborn determination to shut things out. His obtuseness is a wall, within which he can go about his business, humming to himself, while Sally, locked outside, must hack her way through the brambles. with hardly so much as a transparent raincoat between them and her skin.

Why did she choose him (or, to be precise, as she tries to be with herself and sometimes is even out loud, *hunt him down*), when it's clear to everyone she had other options? To Marylynn, who is her best though most recent friend, she's explained it by saying she was spoiled when young by reading too many Agatha Christie murder mysteries, of the kind in which the clever and witty heroine passes over the equally clever and witty first-lead male, who's helped solve the crime, in order to marry the second-lead male, the stupid one, the one who would have been arrested and condemned and executed if it hadn't been for her cleverness. Maybe this is how she sees Ed: if it weren't for her, his blundering too-many-thumbs kindness would get him into all sorts of quagmires, all sorts of sink-holes he'd never be able to get himself out of, and then he'd be done for.

"Sink-hole" and "quagmire" are not flattering ways of speaking about other women, but this is what is at the back of Sally's mind; specifically, Ed's two previous wives. Sally didn't exactly extricate him from their clutches. She's never even met the first one, who moved to the west coast fourteen years ago and sends Christmas cards, and the second one was middle-aged and already in the act of severing herself from Ed before Sally came along. (For Sally, "middle-aged" means anyone five years older than she is. It has always meant this. She applies it only to women, however. She doesn't think of Ed as middle-aged, although the gap between them is considerably more than five years.)

Ed doesn't know what happened with these marriages, what went wrong. His protestations of ignorance, his refusal to discuss the finer points, is frustrating to Sally, because she would like to hear the whole story. But it's also cause for anxiety: if he doesn't know what happened with the other two, maybe the same thing could be happening with her and he doesn't know about that, either. Stupidity like Ed's can be a health hazard, for other people. What if he wakes up one day and decides that she isn't the true bride after all, but the false one? Then she will be put into a barrel stuck full of nails and rolled downhill, endlessly, while he is sitting in yet another bridal bed, drinking champagne. She remembers the brand name, because she bought it herself. Champagne isn't the sort of finishing touch that would occur to Ed, though he enjoyed it enough at the time.

But outwardly Sally makes a joke of all this. “He doesn’t *know*,” she says to Marylynn, laughing a little, and they shake their heads. If it were them, they’d know, all right. Marylynn is in fact divorced, and she can list every single thing that went wrong, item by item. After doing this, she adds that her divorce was one of the best things that ever happened to her. “I was just a nothing before,” she says. “It made me pull myself together.”

Sally, looking across the kitchen table at Marylynn, has to agree that she is far from being a nothing now. She started out re-doing people’s closets, and has worked that up into her own interior-design firm. She does the houses of the newly rich, those who lack ancestral furniture and the confidence to be shabby, and who wish their interiors to reflect a personal taste they do not in reality possess.

“What they want are mausoleums,” Marylynn says, “or hotels,” and she cheerfully supplies them. “Right down to the ash-trays. Imagine having someone else pick out your ash-trays for you.”

By saying this, Marylynn lets Sally know that she’s not including her in that category, though Sally did in fact hire her, at the very first, to help with a few details around the house. It was Marylynn who redesigned the wall of closets in the master bedroom and who found Sally’s massive Chinese mahogany table, which cost her another seven hundred dollars to have stripped. But it turned out to be perfect, as Marylynn said it would. Now she’s dug up a nineteenth-century keyhole desk, which both she and Sally know will be exactly right for the bay-windowed alcove off the living room. “Why do you need it?” Ed said in his puzzled way. “I thought you worked in your study.” Sally admitted this, but said they could keep the telephone bills in it, which appeared to satisfy him. She knows exactly what she needs it for: she needs it to sit at, in something flowing, backlit by the morning sunlight, gracefully dashing off notes. She saw a 1940s advertisement for coffee like this once; and the husband was standing behind the chair, leaning over, with a worshipful expression on his face.

Marylynn is the kind of friend Sally does not have to explain any of this to, because it’s assumed between them. Her intelligence is the kind Sally respects.

Marylynn is tall and elegant, and makes anything she is wearing seem fashionable. Her hair is prematurely grey and she leaves it that way. She goes in for loose blouses in cream-coloured silk, and eccentric scarves gathered from interesting shops and odd corners of the world, thrown carelessly around her neck and over one shoulder. (Sally has tried this toss in the mirror, but it doesn’t work.) Marylynn has a large collection of unusual shoes; she says they’re unusual because her feet are so big, but Sally knows better. Sally, who used to think of herself as pretty enough and now thinks of herself as doing quite well for her age, envies Marylynn her bone structure, which will serve her well when the inevitable happens.

Whenever Marylynn is coming to dinner, as she is today – she’s bringing the desk, too – Sally takes especial care with her clothes and make-up. Marylynn, she knows, is her real audience for such things, since no changes she effects in herself seem to affect Ed one way or the other, or even to register with him. “You look fine to me” is all he says, no matter how she really looks. (But does she want him to see her more clearly, or not? Most likely not. If he did he would notice the incipient wrinkles, the small pouches of flesh that are not quite there yet, the network forming beneath her eyes. It’s better as it is.)

Sally has repeated this remark of Ed's to Marylynn, adding that he said it the day the Jacuzzi overflowed because the smoke alarm went off, because an English muffin she was heating to eat in the bathtub got stuck in the toaster, and she had to spend an hour putting down newspaper and mopping up, and only had half an hour to dress for a dinner they were going to. "Really I looked like the wrath of God," said Sally. These days she finds herself repeating to Marylynn many of the things Ed says: the stupid things. Marylynn is the only one of Sally's friends she has confided in to this extent.

"Ed is cute as a button," Marylynn said. "In fact, he's just like a button: he's so bright and shiny. If he were mine, I'd get him bronzed and keep him on the mantel-piece. "

Marylynn is even better than Sally at concocting formulations for Ed's particular brand of stupidity, which can irritate Sally: coming from herself, this sort of comment appears to her indulgent and loving, but from Marylynn it borders on the patronizing. So then she sticks up for Ed, who is by no means stupid about everything. When you narrow it down, there's only one area of life he's hopeless about. The rest of the time he's intelligent enough, some even say brilliant: otherwise, how could he be so successful?

Ed is a heart man, one of the best, and the irony of this is not lost on Sally: who could possibly know less about the workings of hearts, real hearts, the kind symbolized by red satin surrounded by lace and topped by pink bows, than Ed? Hearts with arrows in them. At the same time, the fact that he's a heart man is a large part of his allure. Women corner him on sofas, trap him in bay-windows at cocktail parties, mutter to him in confidential voices at dinner parties. They behave this way right in front of Sally, under her very nose, as if she's invisible, and Ed lets them do it. This would never happen if he were in banking or construction.

As it is, everywhere he goes he is beset by sirens. They want him to fix their hearts. Each of them seems to have a little something wrong – a murmur, a whisper. Or they faint a lot and want him to tell them why. This is always what the conversations are about, according to Ed, and Sally believes it. Once she'd wanted it herself, that mirage. What had she invented for him, in the beginning?

A heavy heart, that beat too hard after meals. And he'd been so sweet, looking at her with those stunned brown eyes of his, as if her heart were the genuine topic, listening to her gravely as if he'd never heard any of this twaddle before, advising her to drink less coffee. And she'd felt such triumph, to have carried off her imposture, pried out of him that miniscule token of concern.

Thinking back on this incident makes her uneasy, now that she's seen her own performance repeated so many times, including the hand placed lightly on the heart, to call attention of course to the breasts. Some of these women have been within inches of getting Ed to put his head down on their chests, right there in Sally's living room. Watching all this out of the corners of her eyes while serving the liqueurs, Sally feels the Aztec rise within her. *Trouble with your heart? Get it removed*, she thinks. *Then you'll have no more problems*.

Sometimes Sally worries that she's a nothing, the way Marylynn was before she got a divorce and a job. But Sally isn't a nothing; therefore, she doesn't need a divorce to stop being one. And she's always had a

job of some sort; in fact she has one now. Luckily Ed has no objection; he doesn't have much of an objection to anything she does.

Her job is supposed to be full-time, but in effect it's part-time, because Sally can take a lot of the work away and do it at home, and, as she says, with one arm tied behind her back. When Sally is being ornery, when she's playing the dull wife of a fascinating heart man – she does this with people she can't be bothered with – she says she works in a bank, nothing important. Then she watches their eyes dismiss her. When, on the other hand, she's trying to impress, she says she's in P.R. In reality she runs the in-house organ for a trust company, a medium-sized one. This is a thin magazine, nicely printed, which is supposed to make the employees feel that some of the boys are doing worthwhile things out there and are human beings as well. It's still the boys, though the few women in anything resembling key positions are wheeled out regularly, bloused and suited and smiling brightly, with what they hope will come across as confidence rather than aggression.

This is the latest in a string of such jobs Sally has held over the years: comfortable enough jobs that engage only half of her cogs and wheels, and that end up leading nowhere. Technically she's second-in-command: over her is a man who wasn't working out in management, but who couldn't be fired because his wife was related to the chairman of the board. He goes out for long alcoholic lunches and plays a lot of golf, and Sally runs the show. This man gets the official credit for everything Sally does right, but the senior executives in the company take Sally aside when no one is looking and tell her what a great gal she is and what a whiz she is at holding up her end.

The real pay-off for Sally, though, is that her boss provides her with an endless supply of anecdotes. She dines out on stories about his dim-wittedness and pomposity, his lobotomized suggestions about what the two of them should cook up for the magazine; *the organ*, as she says he always calls it. "He says we need some fresh blood to perk up the organ," Sally says, and the heart men grin at her. "He actually said that?" Talking like this about her boss would be reckless – you never know what might get back to him, with the world as small as it is – if Sally were afraid of losing her job, but she isn't. There's an unspoken agreement between her and this man: they both know that if she goes, he goes, because who else would put up with him? Sally might angle for his job, if she were stupid enough to disregard his family connections, if she coveted the trappings of power. But she's just fine where she is. Jokingly, she says she's reached her level of incompetence. She says she suffers from fear of success.

Her boss is white-haired, slender, and tanned, and looks like an English gin ad. Despite his vapidity he's outwardly distinguished, she allows him that. In truth she pampers him outrageously, indulges him, covers up for him at every turn, though she stops short of behaving like a secretary: she doesn't bring him coffee. They both have a secretary who does that anyway. The one time he made a pass at her, when he came in from lunch visibly reeling, Sally was kind about it.

Occasionally, though not often, Sally has to travel in connection with her job. She's sent off to places like Edmonton, where they have a branch. She interviews the boys at the middle and senior levels; they have lunch, and the boys talk about ups and downs in oil or the slump in the real-estate market. Then she

gets taken on tours of shopping plazas under construction. It's always windy, and grit blows into her face. She comes back to home base and writes a piece on the youthfulness and vitality of the West.

She teases Ed, while she packs, saying she's going off for a rendezvous with a dashing financier or two. Ed isn't threatened; he tells her to enjoy herself, and she hugs him and tells him how much she will miss him. He's so dumb it doesn't occur to him she might not be joking. In point of fact, it would have been quite possible for Sally to have had an affair, or at least a one- or two-night stand, on several of these occasions: she knows when those chalk lines are being drawn, when she's being dared to step over them. But she isn't interested in having an affair with anyone but Ed.

She doesn't eat much on the planes; she doesn't like the food. But on the return trip, she invariably saves the pre-packaged parts of the meal, the cheese in its plastic wrap, the miniature chocolate bar, the bag of pretzels. She ferrets them away in her purse. She thinks of them as supplies, that she may need if she gets stuck in a strange airport, if they have to change course because of snow or fog, for instance. All kinds of things could happen, although they never have. When she gets home she takes the things from her purse and throws them out.

Outside the window Ed straightens up and wipes his earth-smeared hands down the sides of his pants. He begins to turn, and Sally moves back from the window so he won't see that she's watching. She doesn't like it to be too obvious. She shifts her attention to the sauce: it's in the second stage of a *sauce suprême*, which will make all the difference to the chicken. When Sally was learning this sauce, her cooking instructor quoted one of the great chefs, to the effect that the chicken was merely a canvas. He meant as in painting, but Sally, in an undertone to the woman next to her, turned it around. "Mine's canvas anyway, sauce or no sauce," or words to that effect.

Gourmet cooking was the third night course Sally has taken. At the moment she's on her fifth, which is called *Forms of Narrative Fiction*. It's half reading and half writing assignments – the instructor doesn't believe you can understand an art form without at least trying it yourself – and Sally purports to be enjoying it. She tells her friends she takes night courses to keep her brain from atrophying, and her friends find this amusing: whatever else may become of Sally's brain, they say, they don't see atrophying as an option. Sally knows better, but in any case there's always room for improvement. She may have begun taking the courses in the belief that this would make her more interesting to Ed, but she soon gave up on that idea: she appears to be neither more nor less interesting to Ed now than she was before.

Most of the food for tonight is already made. Sally tries to be well organized: the overflowing Jacuzzi was an aberration. The cold watercress soup with walnuts is chilling in the refrigerator, the chocolate mousse ditto. Ed, being Ed, prefers meatloaf to sweetbreads with pine nuts, butterscotch pudding made from a package to chestnut purée topped with whipped cream. (Sally burnt her fingers peeling the chestnuts. She couldn't do it the easy way and buy it tinned.) Sally says Ed's preference for this type of food comes from being pre-programmed by hospital cafeterias when he was younger: show him a burned sausage and a scoop of instant mashed potatoes and he salivates. So it's only for company that she can unfurl her *boeuf en daube* and her salmon *en papillote*, spread them forth to be savoured and praised.

What she likes best about these dinners though is setting the table, deciding who will sit where and, when she's feeling mischievous, even what they are likely to say. Then she can sit and listen to them say it. Occasionally she prompts a little.

Tonight will not be very challenging, since it's only the heart men and their wives, and Marylynn, whom Sally hopes will dilute them. The heart men are forbidden to talk shop at Sally's dinner table, but they do it anyway. "Not what you really want to listen to while you're eating," says Sally. "All those tubes and valves." Privately she thinks they're a conceited lot, all except Ed. She can't resist needling them from time to time.

"I mean," she said to one of the leading surgeons, "basically it's just an exalted form of dress-making, don't you think?"

"Come again?" said the surgeon, smiling. The heart men think Sally is one hell of a tease.

"It's really just cutting and sewing, isn't it?" Sally murmured. The surgeon laughed.

"There's more to it than that," Ed said, unexpectedly, solemnly.

"What more, Ed?" said the surgeon. "You could say there's a lot of embroidery, but that's in the billing." He chuckled at himself.

Sally held her breath. She could hear Ed's verbal thought processes lurching into gear. He was delectable.

"Good judgement," Ed said. His earnestness hit the table like a wet fish. The surgeon hastily downed his wine.

Sally smiled. This was supposed to be a reprimand to her, she knew, for not taking things seriously enough. *Oh, come on, Ed*, she could say. But she knows also, most of the time, when to keep her trap shut. She should have a light-up JOKE sign on her forehead, so Ed would be able to tell the difference.

The heart men do well. Most of them appear to be doing better than Ed, but that's only because they have, on the whole, more expensive tastes and fewer wives. Sally can calculate these things and she figures Ed is about par.

These days there's much talk about advanced technologies, which Sally tries to keep up on, since they interest Ed. A few years ago the heart men got themselves a new facility. Ed was so revved up that he told Sally about it, which was unusual for him. A week later Sally said she would drop by the hospital at the end of the day and pick Ed up and take him out for dinner; she didn't feel like cooking, she said. Really she wanted to check out the facility; she likes to check out anything that causes the line on Ed's excitement chart to move above level.

At first Ed said he was tired, that when the day came to an end he didn't want to prolong it. But Sally wheedled and was respectful, and finally Ed took her to see his new gizmo. It was in a cramped, darkened room with an examining table in it. The thing itself looked like a television screen hooked up to some complicated hardware. Ed said that they could wire a patient up and bounce sound waves off the heart and pick up the echoes, and they would get a picture on the screen, an actual picture, of the heart in motion. It was a thousand times better than an electrocardiogram, he said: they could see the faults, the thickenings and cloggings, much more clearly.

“Colour?” said Sally.

“Black and white,” said Ed.

Then Sally was possessed by a desire to see her own heart, in motion, in black and white, on the screen. At the dentist’s she always wants to see the X-rays of her teeth, too, solid and glittering in her cloudy head. “Do it,” she said, “I want to see how it works,” and though this was the kind of thing Ed would ordinarily evade or tell her she was being silly about, he didn’t need much persuading. He was fascinated by the thing himself, and he wanted to show it off.

He checked to make sure there was nobody real booked for the room. Then he told Sally to slip out of her clothes, the top half, brassière and all. He gave her a paper gown and turned his back modestly while she slipped it on, as if he didn’t see her body every night of the week. He attached electrodes to her, the ankles and one wrist, and turned a switch and fiddled with the dials. Really a technician was supposed to do this, he told her, but he knew how to run the machine himself. He was good with small appliances.

Sally lay prone on the table, feeling strangely naked. “What do I do?” she said.

“Just lie there,” said Ed. He came over to her and tore a hole in the paper gown, above her left breast. Then he started running a probe over her skin. It was wet and slippery and cold, and felt like the roller on a roll-on deodorant.

“There,” he said, and Sally turned her head. On the screen was a large grey object, like a giant fig, paler in the middle, a dark line running down the centre. The sides moved in and out; two wings fluttered in it, like an uncertain moth’s.

“That’s it?” said Sally dubiously. Her heart looked so insubstantial, like a bag of gelatin, something that would melt, fade, disintegrate, if you squeezed it even a little.

Ed moved the probe, and they looked at the heart from the bottom, then the top. Then he stopped the frame, then changed it from a positive to a negative image. Sally began to shiver.

“That’s wonderful,” she said. He seemed so distant, absorbed in his machine, taking the measure of her heart, which was beating over there all by itself, detached from her, exposed and under his control.

Ed unwired her and she put on her clothes again, neutrally, as if he were actually a doctor. Nevertheless this transaction, this whole room, was sexual in a way she didn’t quite understand; it was clearly a dangerous place. It was like a massage parlour, only for women. Put a batch of women in there with Ed and they would never want to come out. They’d want to stay in there while he ran his probe over their wet skins and pointed out to them the defects of their beating hearts.

“Thank you,” said Sally.

Sally hears the back door open and close. She feels Ed approaching, coming through the passages of the house towards her, like a small wind or a ball of static electricity. The hair stands up on her arms. Sometimes he makes her so happy she thinks she’s about to burst; other times she thinks she’s about to burst anyway.

He comes into the kitchen, and she pretends not to notice. He puts his arms around her from behind, kisses her on the neck. […]

Sally steps away from Ed, smiles at him. “How did you make out with the women today?” she says.

“What women?” says Ed absently, going towards the sink. He knows what women.

“The ones out there, hiding in the forsythia,” says Sally. “I counted at least ten. They were just waiting for a chance. “

She teases him frequently about these troops of women, which follow him around everywhere, which are invisible to Ed but which she can see as plain as day.

“I bet they hang around outside the front door of the hospital,” she will say, “just waiting till you come out. I bet they hide in the linen closets and jump out at you from behind, and then pretend to be lost so you’ll take them by the short cut. It’s the white coat that does it. None of those women can resist the white coats. They’ve been conditioned by Young Doctor Kildare.”

“Don’t be silly,” says Ed today, with equanimity. Is he blushing, is he embarrassed? Sally examines his face closely, like a geologist with an aerial photograph, looking for telltale signs of mineral treasure: markings, bumps, hollows. Everything about Ed means something, though it’s difficult at times to say what.

Now he’s washing his hands at the sink, to get the earth off. In a minute he’ll wipe them on the dish towel instead of using the hand towel the way he’s supposed to. Is that complacency, in the back turned to her? Maybe there really are these hordes of women, even though she’s made them up. Maybe they really do behave that way. His shoulders are slightly drawn up: is he shutting her out?

“I know what they want,” she goes on. “They want to get into that little dark room of yours and climb up onto your table. They think you’re delicious. They’ll gobble you up. They’ll chew you into tiny pieces. There won’t be anything left of you at all, only a stethoscope and a couple of shoelaces.”

Once Ed would have laughed at this, but today he doesn’t. Maybe she’s said it, or something like it, a few times too often. He smiles though, wipes his hands on the dish towel, peers into the fridge. He likes to snack.

“There’s some cold roast beef,” Sally says, baffled.

Sally takes the sauce off the stove and sets it aside for later: she’ll do the last steps just before serving. It’s only two-thirty. Ed has disappeared into the cellar, where Sally knows he will be safe for a while. She goes into her study, which used to be one of the kids’ bedrooms, and sits down at her desk. The room has never been completely redecorated: there’s still a bed in it, and a dressing table with a blue flowered flounce Sally helped pick out, long before the kids went off to university: “flew the coop,” as Ed puts it.

Sally doesn’t comment on the expression, though she would like to say that it wasn’t the first coop they flew. Her house isn’t even the real coop, since neither of the kids is hers. She’d hoped for a baby of her own when she married Ed, but she didn’t want to force the issue. Ed didn’t object to the idea, exactly, but he was neutral about it, and Sally got the feeling he’d had enough babies already. Anyway, the other two wives had babies, and look what happened to them. Since their actual fates have always been vague to Sally, she’s free to imagine all kinds of things, from drug addiction to madness. Whatever it was resulted in Sally having to bring up their kids, at least from puberty onwards. The way it was presented by the first wife was that it was Ed’s turn now. The second wife was more oblique: she said that the child wanted to

spend some time with her father. Sally was left out of both these equations, as if the house wasn't a place she lived in, not really, so she couldn't be expected to have any opinion.

Considering everything, she hasn't done badly. She likes the kids and tries to be a friend to them, since she can hardly pretend to be a mother. She describes the three of them as having an easy relationship. Ed wasn't around much for the kids, but it's him they want approval from, not Sally; it's him they respect. Sally is more like a confederate, helping them get what they want from Ed.

When the kids were younger, Sally used to play Monopoly with them, up at the summer place in Muskoka Ed owned then but has since sold. Ed would play too, on his vacations and on the weekends when he could make it up. These games would all proceed along the same lines. Sally would have an initial run of luck and would buy up everything she had a chance at. She didn't care whether it was classy real estate, like Boardwalk or Park Place, or those dingy little houses on the other side of the tracks; she would even buy train stations, which the kids would pass over, preferring to save their cash reserves for better investments. Ed, on the other hand, would plod along, getting a little here, a little there. Then, when Sally was feeling flush, she would blow her money on next-to-useless luxuries such as the electric light company; and when the kids started to lose, as they invariably did, Sally would lend them money at cheap rates or trade them things of her own, at a loss. Why not? She could afford it.

Ed meanwhile would be hedging his bets, building up blocks of property, sticking houses and hotels on them. He preferred the middle range, respectable streets but not flashy. Sally would land on his spaces and have to shell out hard cash. Ed never offered deals, and never accepted them. He played a lone game, and won more often than not. Then Sally would feel thwarted. She would say she guessed she lacked the killer instinct; or she would say that for herself she didn't care, because after all it was only a game, but he ought to allow the kids to win, once in a while. Ed couldn't grasp the concept of allowing other people to win. He said it would be condescending toward. the children, and anyway you couldn't arrange to have a dice game turn out the way you wanted it to, since it was partly a matter of chance. If it was chance, Sally would think, why were the games so similar to one another? At the end, there would be Ed, counting up his paper cash, sorting it out into piles of bills of varying denominations, and Sally, her vast holdings dwindled to a few shoddy blocks on Baltic Avenue, doomed to foreclosure: extravagant, generous, bankrupt.

On these nights, after the kids were asleep, Sally would have two or three more rye-and-gingers than were good for her. Ed would go to bed early – winning made him satisfied and drowsy – and Sally would ramble about the house or read the endings of murder mysteries she had already read once before […].

* * *

Sally has almost forgotten these games. Right now the kids are receding, fading like old ink; Ed on the contrary looms larger and larger, the outlines around him darkening. He's constantly developing, like a Polaroid print, new colours emerging, but the result remains the same: Ed is a surface, one she has trouble getting beneath.

"Explore your inner world," said Sally's instructor in *Forms of Narrative Fiction*, a middle-aged woman of scant fame who goes in for astrology and the Tarot pack and writes short stories, which are not

published in any of the magazines Sally reads. “Then there’s your outer one,” Sally said afterwards, to her friends. “For instance, she should really get something done about her hair.” She made this trivial and mean remark because she’s fed up with her inner world; she doesn’t need to explore it. In her inner world is Ed, like a doll within a Russian wooden doll, and in Ed is Ed’s inner world, which she can’t get at.

She takes a crack at it anyway: Ed’s inner world is a forest, which looks something like the bottom part of their ravine lot, but without the fence. He wanders around in there, among the trees, not heading in any special direction. Every once in a while he comes upon a strange-looking plant, a sickly plant choked with weeds and briars. Ed kneels, clears a space around it, does some pruning, a little skilful snipping and cutting, props it up. The plant revives, flushes with health, sends out a grateful red blossom. Ed continues on his way. Or it may be a conked-out squirrel, which he restores with a drop from his flask of magic elixir. At set intervals an angel appears, bringing him food. It’s always meatloaf. That’s fine with Ed, who hardly notices what he eats, but the angel is getting tired of being an angel. Now Sally begins thinking about the angel: why are its wings frayed and dingy grey around the edges, why is it looking so withered and frantic? This is where all Sally’s attempts to explore Ed’s inner world end up.

She knows she thinks about Ed too much. She knows she should stop. She knows she shouldn’t ask, “Do you still love me?” in the plaintive tone that sets even her own teeth on edge. All it achieves is that Ed shakes his head, as if not understanding why she would ask this, and pats her hand. “Sally, Sally,” he says, and everything proceeds as usual; except for the dread that seeps into things, the most ordinary things, such as rearranging the chairs and changing the burnt-out lightbulbs. But what is it she’s afraid of? She has what they call everything: Ed, their wonderful house on a ravine lot, something she’s always wanted. (But the hill is jungly, and the house is made of ice. It’s held together only by Sally, who sits in the middle of it, working on a puzzle. The puzzle is Ed. If she should ever solve it, if she should ever fit the last cold splinter into place, the house will melt and flow away down the hill, and then …) It’s a bad habit, fooling around with her head this way. It does no good. She knows that if she could quit she’d be happier. She ought to be able to: she’s given up smoking.

She needs to concentrate her attention on other things. This is the real reason for the night courses, which she picks almost at random, to coincide with the evenings Ed isn’t in. He has meetings, he’s on the boards of charities, he has trouble saying no. She runs the courses past herself, mediaeval history, cooking, anthropology, hoping her mind will snag on something; she’s even taken a course in geology, which was fascinating, she told her friends, all that magma. That’s just it: everything is fascinating, but nothing enters her. She’s always a star pupil, she does well on the exams and impresses the teachers, for which she despises them. She is familiar with her brightness, her techniques; she’s surprised other people are still taken in by them.

Forms of Narrative Fiction started out the same way. Sally was full of good ideas, brimming with helpful suggestions. The workshop part of it was anyway just like a committee meeting, and Sally knew how to run those, from behind, without seeming to run them: she’d done it lots of times at work. Bertha, the instructor, told Sally she had a vivid imagination and a lot of untapped creative energy. “No wonder she

never gets anywhere, with a name like Bertha," Sally said, while having coffee afterwards with two of the other night-coursers. "It goes with her outfits, though." (Bertha sports the macramé look, with health-food sandals and bulky-knit sweaters and hand-weave skirts that don't do a thing for her square figure, and too many Mexican rings on her hands, which she doesn't wash often enough.) Bertha goes in for assignments, which she calls learning by doing. Sally likes assignments: she likes things that can be completed and then discarded, and for which she gets marks.

The first thing Bertha assigned was The Epic. They read *The Odyssey* (selected passages, in translation, with a plot summary of the rest); then they poked around in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, to see how Joyce had adapted the epic form to the modern-day novel. Bertha had them keep a Toronto notebook, in which they had to pick out various spots around town as the ports of call in *The Odyssey*, and say why they had chosen them. The notebooks were read out loud in class, and it was a scream to see who had chosen what for Hades. (The Mount Pleasant Cemetery, McDonald's, where, if you eat the forbidden food, you never get back to the land of the living, the University Club with its dead ancestral souls, and so forth.) Sally's was the hospital, of course; she had no difficulty with the trench filled with blood, and she put the ghosts in wheelchairs.

After that they did The Ballad, and read gruesome accounts of murders and betrayed love. Bertha played them tapes of wheezy old men singing traditionally, in the Doric mode, and assigned a newspaper scrapbook, in which you had to clip and paste up-to-the-minute equivalents. The Sun was the best newspaper for these. The fiction that turned out to go with this kind of plot was the kind Sally liked anyway, and she had no difficulty concocting a five-page murder mystery, complete with revenge.

But now they are on Folk Tales and the Oral Tradition, and Sally is having trouble. This time, Bertha wouldn't let them read anything. Instead she read to them, in a voice, Sally said, that was like a gravel truck and was not conducive to reverie. Since it was the Oral Tradition, they weren't even allowed to take notes; Bertha said the original hearers of these stories couldn't read, so the stories were memorized. "To re-create the atmosphere," said Bertha, "I should turn out the lights. These stories were always told at night." "To make them creepier?" someone offered. "No," said Bertha. "In the days, they worked." She didn't do that, though she did make them sit in a circle.

"You should have seen us," Sally said afterwards to Ed, "sitting in a circle, listening to fairy stories. It was just like kindergarten. Some of them even had their mouths open. I kept expecting her to say, 'If you need to go, put up your hand.'" She was meaning to be funny, to amuse Ed with this account of Bertha's eccentricity and the foolish appearance of the students, most of them middle-aged, sitting in a circle as if they had never grown up at all. She was also intending to belittle the course, just slightly. She always did this with her night courses, so Ed wouldn't get the idea there was anything in her life that was even remotely as important as he was. But Ed didn't seem to need this amusement or this belittlement. He took her information earnestly, gravely, as if Bertha's behaviour was, after all, only the procedure of a specialist. No one knew better than he did that the procedures of specialists often looked bizarre or incomprehensible to onlookers. "She probably has her reasons," was all he would say.

The first stories Bertha read them, for warm-ups ("No memorizing for *her*," said Sally), were about princes who got amnesia and forgot about their true loves and married girls their mothers had picked out for them. Then they had to be rescued, with the aid of magic. The stories didn't say what happened to the women the princes had already married, though Sally wondered about it. Then Bertha read them another story, and this time they were supposed to remember the features that stood out for them and write a five-page transposition, set in the present and cast in the realistic mode. ("In other words," said Bertha, "no real magic.") They couldn't use the Universal Narrator, however: they had done that in their Ballad assignment. This time they had to choose a point of view. It could be the point of view of anyone or anything in the story, but they were limited to one only. The story she was about to read, she said, was a variant of the Bluebeard motif, much earlier than Perrault's sentimental rewriting of it. In Perrault, said Bertha, the girl has to be rescued by her brothers; but in the earlier version things were quite otherwise.

This is what Bertha read, as far as Sally can remember:

There were once three young sisters. One day a beggar with a large basket on his back came to the door and asked for some bread. The eldest sister brought him some, but no sooner had she touched him than she was compelled to jump into his basket, for the beggar was really a wizard in disguise. ("So much for United Appeal," Sally murmured. "She should have said, 'I gave at the office.'")

The wizard carried her away to his house in the forest, which was large and richly furnished. "Here you will be happy with me, my darling," said the wizard, "for you will have everything your heart could desire."

This lasted for a few days. Then the wizard gave the girl an egg and a bunch of keys. "I must go away on a journey," he said, "and I am leaving the house in your charge. Preserve this egg for me, and carry it about with you everywhere; for a great misfortune will follow from its loss. The keys open every room in the house. You may go into each of them and enjoy what you find there, but do not go into the small room at the top of the house, on pain of death." The girl promised, and the wizard disappeared.

At first the girl contented herself with exploring the rooms, which contained many treasures. But finally her curiosity would not let her alone. She sought out the smallest key, and, with beating heart, opened the little door at the top of the house. Inside it was a large basin full of blood, within which were the bodies of many women, which had been cut to pieces: nearby were a chopping block and an axe. In her horror, she let go of the egg, which fell into the basin of blood. In vain did she try to wipe away the stain: every time she succeeded in removing it, back it would come.

The wizard returned, and in a stern voice asked for the egg and the keys. When he saw the egg, he knew at once she had disobeyed him and gone into the forbidden room. "Since you have gone into the room against my will," he said, "you shall go back into it against your own." Despite her pleas he threw her down, dragged her by the hair into the little room, hacked her into pieces and threw her body into the basin with the others.

Then he went for the second girl, who fared no better than her sister. But the third was clever and wily. As soon as the wizard had gone, she set the egg on a shelf, out of harm's way, and then went immediately and opened the forbidden door. Imagine her distress when she saw the cut-up bodies of her two beloved

sisters; but she set the parts in order, and they joined together and her sisters stood up and moved, and were living and well. They embraced each other, and the third sister hid the other two in a cupboard.

When the wizard returned he at once asked for the egg. This time it was spotless. "You have passed the test," he said to the third sister. "You shall be my bride." ("And second prize," said Sally, to herself this time, "is *two* weeks in Niagara Falls.") The wizard no longer had any power over her, and had to do whatever she asked. There was more, about how the wizard met his come-uppance and was burned to death, but Sally already knew which features stood out for her.

At first she thought the most important thing in the story was the forbidden room. What would she put in the forbidden room, in her present-day realistic version? Certainly not chopped-up women. It wasn't that they were too unrealistic, but they were certainly too sick, as well as being too obvious. She wanted to do something more clever. She thought it might be a good idea to have the curious woman open the door and find nothing there at all, but after mulling it over she set this notion aside. It would leave her with the problem of why the wizard would have a forbidden room in which he kept nothing.

That was the way she was thinking right after she got the assignment, which was a full two weeks ago. So far she's written nothing. The great temptation is to cast herself in the role of the cunning heroine, but again it's too predictable. And Ed certainly isn't the wizard; he's nowhere near sinister enough. If Ed were the wizard, the room would contain a forest, some ailing plants and feeble squirrels, and Ed himself, fixing them up; but then, if it were Ed the room wouldn't even be locked, and there would be no story.

Now, as she sits at her desk, fiddling with her felt-tip pen, it comes to Sally that the intriguing thing about the story, the thing she should fasten on, is the egg. Why an egg? From the night course in Comparative Folklore she took four years ago, she remembers that the egg can be a fertility symbol, or a necessary object in African spells, or something the world hatched out of. Maybe in this story it's a symbol of virginity, and that is why the wizard requires it unbloodied. Women with dirty eggs get murdered, those with clean ones get married.

But this isn't useful either. The concept is so outmoded. Sally doesn't see how she can transpose it into real life without making it ridiculous, unless she sets the story in, for instance, an immigrant Portuguese family, and what would she know about that?

Sally opens the drawer of her desk and hunts around in it for her nail file. As she's doing this, she gets the brilliant idea of writing the story from the point of view of the egg. Other people will do the other things: the clever girl, the wizard, the two blundering sisters, who weren't smart enough to lie, and who will have problems afterwards, because of the thin red lines running all over their bodies, from where their parts joined together. But no one will think of the egg. How does it feel, to be the innocent and passive cause of so much misfortune?

(Ed isn't the Bluebeard: Ed is the egg. Ed Egg, blank and pristine and lovely. Stupid, too. Boiled, probably. Sally smiles fondly.)

But how can there be a story from the egg's point of view, if the egg is so closed and unaware? Sally ponders this, doodling on her pad of lined paper. Then she resumes the search for her nail file. Already it's

time to begin getting ready for her dinner party. She can sleep on the problem of the egg and finish the assignment tomorrow, which is Sunday. It's due on Monday, but Sally's mother used to say she was a whiz at getting things done at the last minute.

After painting her nails with *Nuit Magique*, Sally takes a bath, eating her habitual toasted English muffin while she lies in the tub. She begins to dress, dawdling; she has plenty of time. She hears Ed coming up out of the cellar; then she hears him in the bathroom, which he has entered from the hall door. Sally goes in through the other door, still in her slip. Ed is standing at the sink with his shirt off, shaving. On the weekends he leaves it until necessary, or until Sally tells him he's too scratchy.

Sally slides her hands around his waist, nuzzling againt his naked back. He has very smooth skin, for a man. Sally smiles to herself: she can't stop thinking of him as an egg.

"Mmm," says Ed. It could be appreciation, or the answer to a question Sally hasn't asked and he hasn't heard, or just an acknowledgement that she's there.

"Don't you ever wonder what I think about?" Sally says. She's said this more than once, in bed or at the dinner table, after dessert. She stands behind him, watching the swaths the razor cuts in the white of his face, looking at her own face reflected in the mirror, just the eyes visible above his naked shoulder. Ed, lathered, is Assyrian, sterner than usual; or a frost-covered Arctic explorer; or demi-human, a white-bearded forest mutant. He scrapes away at himself, methodically destroying the illusion.

"But I already know what you think about," says Ed.

"How?" Sally says, taken aback.

"You're always telling me," Ed says, with what might be resignation or sadness; or maybe this is only a simple statement of fact.

Sally is relieved. If that's all he's going on, she's safe.

* * *

Marylynn arrives half an hour early, her pearl-coloured Porsche leading two men in a delivery truck up the driveway. The men install the keyhole desk, while Marylynn supervises: it looks, in the alcove, exactly as Marylynn has said it would, and Sally is delighted. She sits at it to write the cheque. Then she and Marylynn go into the kitchen, where Sally is finishing up her sauce, and Sally pours them each a Kir. She's glad Marylynn is here: it will keep her from dithering, as she tends to do just before people arrive. Though it's only the heart men, she's still a bit nervous. Ed is more likely to notice when things are wrong than when they're exactly right.

Marylynn sits at the kitchen table, one arm draped over the chairback, her chin on the other hand; she's in soft grey, which makes her hair look silver, and Sally feels once again how banal it is to have ordinary dark hair like her own, however well-cut, however shiny. It's the confidence she envies, the negligence. Marylynn doesn't seem to be trying at all, ever.

"Guess what Ed said today?" Sally says.

Marylynn leans further forward. "What?" she says, with the eagerness of one joining in a familiar game.

"He said, 'Some of these femininists go too far,'" Sally reports. '"*Femininists*.' Isn't that sweet?"

Marylynn holds the pause too long, and Sally has a sudden awful thought: maybe Marylynn thinks she's showing off, about Ed. Marylynn has always said she's not ready for another marriage yet; still, Sally should watch herself, not rub her nose in it. But then Marylynn laughs indulgently, and Sally, relieved, joins in.

"Ed is unbelievable," says Marylynn. "You should pin his mittens to his sleeves when he goes out in the morning."

"He shouldn't be let out alone," says Sally.

"You should get him a seeing-eye dog," says Marylynn, "to bark at women."

"Why?" says Sally, still laughing but alert now, the cold beginning at the ends of her fingers. Maybe Marylynn knows something she doesn't; maybe the house is beginning to crumble, after all.

"Because he can't see them coming," says Marylynn. "That's what you're always telling me."

She sips her Kir; Sally stirs the sauce. "I bet he thinks I'm a femininist," says Marylynn.

"You?" says Sally. "Never." She would like to add that Ed has given no indication of thinking anything at all about Marylynn, but she doesn't. She doesn't want to take the risk of hurting her feelings.

The wives of the heart men admire Sally's sauce; the heart men talk shop, all except Walter Morly, who is good at by-passes. He's sitting beside Marylynn, and paying far too much attention to her for Sally's comfort. Mrs. Morly is at the other end of the table, not saying much of anything, which Marylynn appears not to notice. She keeps on talking to Walter about St. Lucia, where they've both been.

So after dinner, when Sally has herded them all into the living room for coffee and liqueurs, she takes Marylynn by the elbow. "Ed hasn't seen our desk yet," she says, "not up close. Take him away and give him your lecture on nineteenth-century antiques. Show him all the pigeon-holes. Ed loves pigeon-holes." Ed appears not to get this.

Marylynn knows exactly what Sally is up to. "Don't worry," she says, "I won't rape Dr. Morly; the poor creature would never survive the shock," but she allows herself to be shunted off to the side with Ed.

Sally moves from guest to guest, smiling, making sure everything is in order. Although she never looks directly, she's always conscious of Ed's presence in the room, any room; she perceives him as a shadow, a shape seen dimly at the edge of her field of vision, recognizable by the outline. She likes to know where he is, that's all. Some people are on their second cup of coffee. She walks towards the alcove: they must have finished with the desk by now.

But they haven't, they're still in there. Marylynn is bending forward, one hand on the veneer. Ed is standing too close to her, and as Sally comes up behind them she sees his left arm, held close to his side, the back of it pressed against Marylynn, her shimmering upper thigh, her ass to be exact. Marylynn does not move away.

It's a split second, and then Ed sees Sally and the hand is gone; there it is, on top of the desk, reaching for a liqueur glass.

"Marylynn needs more Tia Maria," he says. "I just told her that people who drink a little now and again live longer." His voice is even, his face is as level as ever, a flat plain with no signposts.

Marylynn laughs. “I once had a dentist who I swear drilled tiny holes in my teeth, so he could fix them later,” she says.

Sally sees Ed’s hand outstretched towards her, holding the empty glass. She takes it, smiling, and turns away. There’s a roaring sound at the back of her head; blackness appears around the edges of the picture she is seeing, like a television screen going dead. She walks into the kitchen and puts her cheek against the refrigerator and her arms around it, as far as they will go. She remains that way, hugging it; it hums steadily, with a sound like comfort. After a while she lets go of it and touches her hair, and walks back into the living room with the filled glass.

Marylynn is over by the french doors, talking with Walter Morly. Ed is standing by himself, in front of the fireplace, one arm on the mantelpiece, his left hand out of sight in his pocket.

Sally goes to Marylynn, hands her the glass. “Is that enough?” she says.

Marylynn is unchanged. “Thanks, Sally,” she says, and goes on listening to Walter, who has dragged out his usual piece of mischief: some day, when they’ve perfected it, he says, all hearts will be plastic, and this will be a vast improvement on the current model. It’s an obscure form of flirtation. Marylynn winks at Sally, to show that she knows he’s tedious. Sally, after a pause, winks back.

She looks over at Ed, who is staring off into space, like a robot which has been parked and switched off. Now she isn’t sure whether she really saw what she thought she saw. Even if she did, what does it mean? Maybe it’s just that Ed, in a wayward intoxicated moment, put his hand on the nearest buttock, and Marylynn refrained from a shriek or a flinch out of good breeding or the desire not to offend him. Things like this have happened to Sally.

Or it could mean something more sinister: a familiarity between them, an understanding. If this is it, Sally has been wrong about Ed, for years, forever. Her version of Ed is not something she’s perceived but something that’s been perpetrated on her, by Ed himself, for reasons of his own. Possibly Ed is not stupid. Possibly he’s enormously clever. She thinks of moment after moment when this cleverness, this cunning, would have shown itself if it were there, but didn’t. She has watched him so carefully. She remembers playing Pick Up Sticks, with the kids, Ed’s kids, years ago: how if you moved one stick in the tangle, even slightly, everything else moved also.

She won’t say anything to him. She can’t say anything: she can’t afford to be wrong, or to be right either. She goes back into the kitchen and begins to scrape the plates. This is unlike her – usually she sticks right with the party until it’s over – and after a while Ed wanders out. He stands silently, watching her. Sally concentrates on the scraping: dollops of sauce supreme slide into the plastic bag, shreds of lettuce, rice, congealed and lumpy. What is left of her afternoon.

“What are you doing out here?” Ed asks at last.

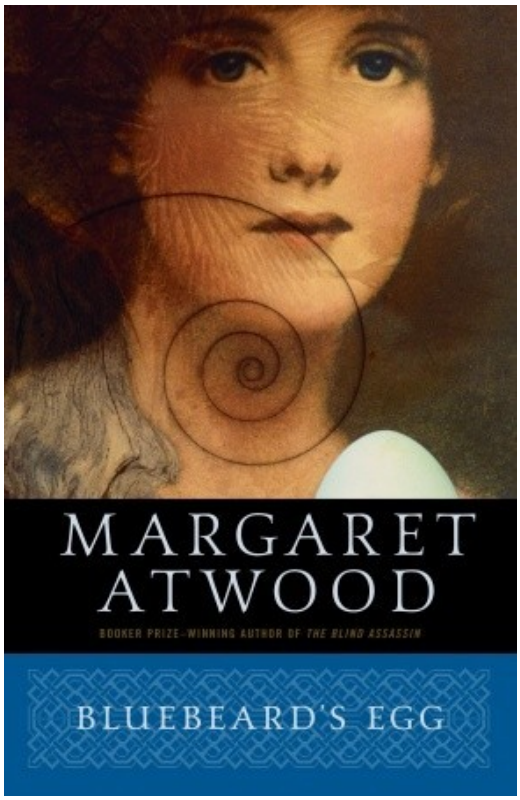
“Scraping the plates,” Sally says, cheerful, neutral. “I just thought I’d get a head start on tidying up.”

“Leave it,” says Ed. “The woman can do that in the morning.” That’s how he refers to Mrs. Rudge, although she’s been with them for three years now: *the woman*. And Mrs. Bird before her, as though they are interchangeable. This has never bothered Sally before. “Go on out there and have a good time.”

Sally puts down the spatula, wipes her hands on the hand towel, puts her arms around him, holds on tighter than she should. Ed pats her shoulder. “What’s up?” he says; then, “Sally, Sally. “If she looks up, she will see him shaking his head a little, as if he doesn’t know what to do about her. She doesn’t look up.

Ed has gone to bed. Sally roams the house, fidgeting with the debris left by the party. She collects empty glasses, picks up peanuts from the rug. After a while she realizes that she’s down on her knees, looking under a chair, and she’s forgotten what for. She goes upstairs, creams off her make-up, does her teeth, undresses in the darkened bedroom and slides into bed beside Ed, who is breathing deeply as if asleep. *As if*.

Sally lies in bed with her eyes closed. What she sees is her own heart, in black and white, beating with that insubstantial moth-like flutter, a ghostly heart, torn out of her and floating in space, an animated valentine with no colour. It will go on and on forever; she has no control over it. But now she’s seeing the egg, which is not small and cold and white and inert but larger than a real egg and golden pink, resting in a nest of brambles, glowing softly as though there’s something red and hot inside it. It’s almost pulsing; Sally is afraid of it. As she looks it darkens: rose-red, crimson. This is something the story left out, Sally thinks: the egg is alive, and one day it will hatch. But what will come out of it.



Today's Homework is:

- Read *Blueberd's Egg* by Margaret Atwood.
- Make notes and write a 250 word paragraph on how the characters of Ed and Sally are portrayed in this tale. How would you describe their character traits? Give examples from the text to support your answer. (At least 4 points). Students will have 4-5 minutes to explain their ideas.

Consider these questions when writing your paragraph for homework and we'll discuss them in the next tutorial.

1. Are the characters realistic?
2. Is Sally's predicament unfair?

Notes:

Tutorial 4 – Bluebeard (film)

Today's Key Question(s):

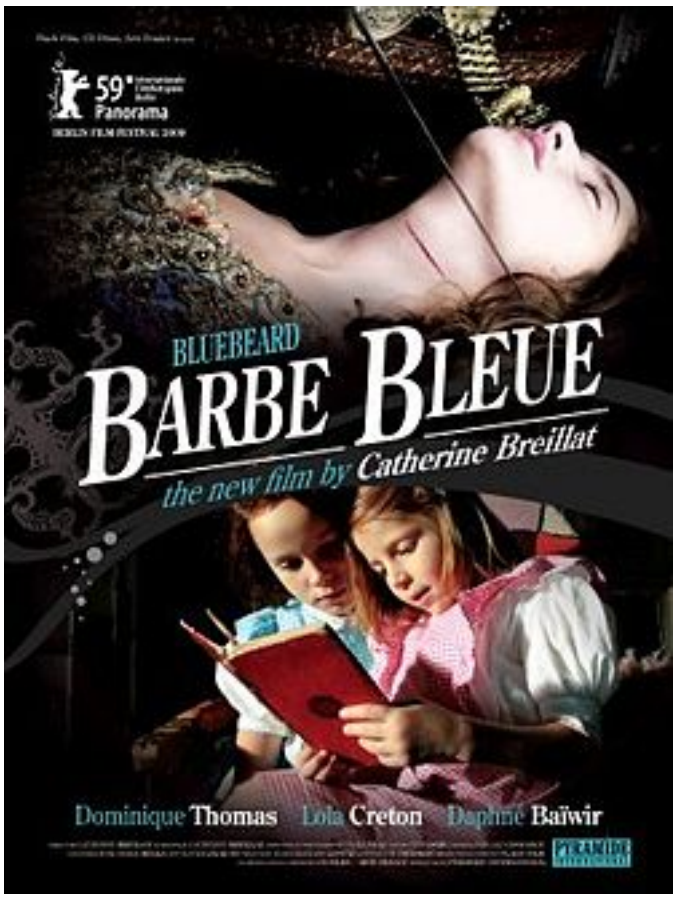
- How is Catherine Breillat's film version of *Barbe Bleue* similar / different to the other versions we have looked at?
-

What is the Purpose of Tutorial 4?

- To facilitate students to draw on what they have learned so far in the tutorials to enable them to develop their level of understanding and engagement with the texts (literary and film).

Catherine Breillat (1948 -)

- Catherine Breillat is a French filmmaker, novelist and Professor of Auteur Cinema at the European Graduate School.
- She has won prestigious awards for her filmmaking.
- Her film *Barbe Bleue* (2009) is a retelling of the Bluebeard tale. The main characters, two sisters, find the book in an attic and read it together. The story both thrills and excites them.



Today's Homework is:

- **Draft Final Assignment**

- Write 600 words comparing two of the versions of Bluebeard we have studied. Discuss how each version reflects a different cultural/historical perspective and the significance of this.
- Students will present their ideas to the group in the next tutorial (5 mins.).

Notes:

Tutorial 5 – Final Assignment Preparation

Today's Key Question(s):

What is the Purpose of Tutorial 5?

- To provide students with feedback on their draft assignment.
- Overview of course and setting final assignment.
- Questions about final assignment.
- Explanation of how to reference sources correctly and create a bibliography etc.

Today's Homework is:

- **Final Assignment (2000 words).**
- **Typed, Double-spaced, Font size 12, Times New Roman.**

Final Assignment:

Compare and contrast Charles Perrault's original version of Bluebeard to one or more contemporary versions. Explore how the two versions are different/similar in light of their different cultural and social contexts.

The Deadline is:

_____

Notes:

Tutorial 6 – Feedback

What is the Purpose of Tutorial 6?

- Reflect on skills learned on the programme with a view to encouraging resilience
- Receive feedback on final assignment

What are the key questions?

- What strengths have I demonstrated in my work and what areas of development are there left for me to address?
- What steps do I need to take to improve my academic output?

Activity 1 – Marking your own work

Using the mark scheme, identify three things you did well and three things you could improve.

What went well?

1.

2.

3.

What could be improved?

1.

2.

3.

Activity 2 – Responding to feedback

Read through your feedback sheet and highlight on your assignment where you received positive feedback (one colour) and areas for improvement (different colour). You might find it helpful to annotate this with a brief comment or two.

Activity 3 – Looking Forwards: Think, Pair Share

1. Think about how you can use this feedback in your future schoolwork.
2. Talk to your partner about how you both plan to make changes to your school work in the future as result of this feedback.
3. Share your ideas as a group.

Appendix 1 – Discussion Phrases

Useful phrases for discussions

1. Asking about or for an opinion

Could you tell me ....?	What do you think about/of ....?
What's your opinion about ...?	Do you think/feel ....?
How do you feel about ....?	May I ask you ....?

2. Asking for an explanation

Could you explain to me ....?	Could someone please tell me ....?
Just tell me the reason why ....?	I don't really understand ....?
I just don't see why/what/how	Are you saying that ....?
What do you mean by that?	I beg your pardon?
I didn't quite get that.	Excuse me, did you say that ....?

3. Giving your opinion

In my opinion/view	If you ask me ....
As far as I can see/*I'm concerned*	It seems to me that ....
I have the/a feeling that	I think/feel/reckon/believe ....
Well, I'd say	If you want my opinion ....
You can take it from me that	First of all/*To start with* I'd like to point out ...
What we have to decide is	There can be no doubt that ....
It's a fact that	Nobody will deny that ....
The way/*As* I see it	Everyone knows ....
Let me put it this/another way	Let's get this clear (first) ....
Sorry to interrupt you, but	The point I'm trying to make is ....
Personally (speaking) I think	I'm absolutely convinced that ....
My view/*point of view* is that	The way I look at/*see* it is this
What I actually meant was	

4. Giving an explanation

Look, it's like this:	What I mean is ....
The reason for this is	The main problem is ....
Just let me explain	Well, the reason is ....
Well, the thing is	Above all we must keep in mind that ....

5. Agreeing with an opinion

I (quite) agree.	I agree completely/entirely.
I couldn't agree (with you) more.	I entirely/completely agree with you on that.
That's true/right.	That's just it.
Quite/Exactly/Precisely/Right/Certainly/Definitely.	You're quite/so right.
I think so, too.	I don't think so either.
That's just my feeling/opinion.	That's just how I see it/*feel about it, too.*
That's a very good/important point.	You've got a good point there.
Yes, of course/*definitely/absolutely*	Marvelous.
That's exactly what I mean/say.	Yes, that's obvious.
That's exactly how I see it.	That's what I think
How very true.	So do I/So am I
Yes, indeed.	I'm all in favor of what you've been saying.

6. Qualified agreement

Yes, perhaps, but	Yes, possibly, although ....
Yes, but on the other hand	Yes, up to a point.
I agree up to a certain point, but	Yes, in a way.
Maybe, I suppose so.	Well, it depends.
I don't think it's as simple as that	I see what you mean, but I think that's not the whole story
You may be right there.	Yes, but there's also another aspect to consider

7. Polite disagreement

I disagree (with you), I'm afraid.	No, I really can't agree, I'm afraid.
I don't quite agree there.	I'm not so certain/*at all sure* if that's true/correct
I'm not (quite) so sure (really).	I'm sorry I can't agree.
Do you really think so/*believe that*?	I'm not convinced that ....
Well, that's one way of looking at it, (but)	Well, I have my doubts about that
You can't really mean that.	You don't really mean that, do you?
I wouldn't say so.	I don't think so.
I don't think you're right/*that's right.*	Surely you don't mean that?
I don't want to argue with you, but	I can't go all the way with you on that point.
Are you seriously suggesting that ...?	I have my problems with what you're saying

Appendix 2 – Essay Writing

To be truly brilliant, an essay needs to utilise the right language. You could make a great point, but if it's not intelligently articulated, you almost needn't have bothered. Developing the language skills to build an argument and to write persuasively is crucial if you're to write outstanding essays every time.

1. General explaining

In order to
Usage: "In order to" can be used to introduce an explanation for the purpose of an argument.
Example: "In order to understand X, we need first to understand Y."

In other words
Usage: Use "in other words" when you want to express something in a different way (more simply), to make it easier to understand, or to emphasise or expand on a point.
Example: "Frogs are amphibians. In other words, they live on the land and in the water."

To put it another way
Usage: This phrase is another way of saying "in other words", and can be used in particularly complex points, when you feel that an alternative way of wording a problem may help the reader achieve a better understanding of its significance.
Example: "Plants rely on photosynthesis. To put it another way, they will die without the sun."

That is to say
Usage: "That is" and "that is to say" can be used to add further detail to your explanation, or to be more precise.
Example: "Whales are mammals. That is to say, they must breathe air."

2. Adding additional information to support a point

Students often make the mistake of using synonyms of "and" each time they want to add further information in support of a point they're making, or to build an argument. Here are some cleverer ways of doing this.

Moreover
Usage: Employ "moreover" at the start of a sentence to add extra information in support of a point you're making.
Example: "Moreover, the results of a recent piece of research provide compelling evidence in support of…"

Furthermore
Usage: This is also generally used at the start of a sentence, to add extra information.
Example: "Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that…"

What's more
Usage: This is used in the same way as "moreover" and "furthermore".
Example: "What's more, this isn't the only evidence that supports this hypothesis."

Likewise
Usage: Use "likewise" when you want to talk about something that agrees with what you've just mentioned.
Example: "Scholar A believes X. Likewise, Scholar B argues compellingly in favour of this point of view."

Similarly
Usage: Use "similarly" in the same way as "likewise".
Example: "Audiences at the time reacted with shock to Beethoven's new work, because it was very different to what they were used to. Similarly, we have a tendency to react with surprise to the unfamiliar."

Another key thing to remember
Usage: Use the phrase "another key point to remember" or "another key fact to remember" to introduce additional facts without using the word "also".

Example: "As a Romantic, Blake was a proponent of a closer relationship between humans and nature. Another key point to remember is that Blake was writing during the Industrial Revolution, which had a major impact on the world around him."

3. Words and phrases for demonstrating contrast

When you're developing an argument, you will often need to present contrasting or opposing opinions or evidence – "it could show this, but it could also show this", or "X says this, but Y disagrees". This section covers words you can use instead of the "but" in these examples, to make your writing sound more intelligent and interesting.

However
Usage: Use "however" to introduce a point that disagrees with what you've just said.
Example: "Scholar A thinks this. However, Scholar B reached a different conclusion."

On the other hand
Usage: Usage of this phrase includes introducing a contrasting interpretation of the same piece of evidence, a different piece of evidence that suggests something else, or an opposing opinion.
Example: "The historical evidence appears to suggest a clear-cut situation. On the other hand, the archaeological evidence presents a somewhat less straightforward picture of what happened that day."

Having said that
Usage: Used in a similar manner to "on the other hand" or "but".
Example: "The historians are unanimous in telling us X, an agreement that suggests that this version of events must be an accurate account. Having said that, the archaeology tells a different story."

Yet
Usage: Use this when you want to introduce a contrasting idea.
Example: "Much of scholarship has focused on this evidence. Yet not everyone agrees that this is the most important aspect of the situation."

4. Acknowledging reservations

Sometimes, you may need to acknowledge a shortfalling in a piece of evidence, or add a proviso. Here are some ways of doing so.

Despite this
Usage: Use "despite this" or "in spite of this" when you want to outline a point that stands regardless of a shortfalling in the evidence.
Example: "The sample size was small, but the results were important despite this."

With this in mind
Usage: Use this when you want your reader to consider a point in the knowledge of something else.
Example: "We've seen that the methods used in the 19th century study did not always live up to the rigorous standards expected in scientific research today, which makes it difficult to draw definite conclusions. With this in mind, let's look at a more recent study to see how the results compare."

In view of/in light of
Usage: These phrases are used when something has shed light on something else.
Example: "In light of the evidence from the 2013 study, we have a better understanding of…"

Nonetheless / Nevertheless
Usage: This is similar to "despite this".
Example: "The study had its limitations, but it was nonetheless groundbreaking for its day."

5. Giving examples

Good essays always back up points with examples, but it's going to get boring if you use the expression "for example" every time. Here are a couple of other ways of saying the same thing.

For instance
Example: "Some birds migrate to avoid harsher winter climates. Swallows, for instance, leave the UK in early winter and fly south…"

To give an illustration
Example: "To give an illustration of what I mean, let's look at the case of…"

6. Signifying importance

When you want to demonstrate that a point is particularly important, there are several ways of highlighting it as such.

Significantly
Usage: Used to introduce a point that is loaded with meaning that might not be immediately apparent.
Example: "Significantly, Tacitus omits to tell us the kind of gossip prevalent in Suetonius' accounts of the same period."

Notably
Usage: This can be used to mean "significantly" (as above), and it can also be used interchangeably with "in particular" (the example below demonstrates the first of these ways of using it).
Example: "Actual figures are notably absent from Scholar A's analysis."

Importantly
Usage: Use "importantly" interchangeably with "significantly".
Example: "Importantly, Scholar A was being employed by X when he wrote this work, and was presumably therefore under pressure to portray the situation more favourably than he perhaps might otherwise have done."

7. Summarising

You've almost made it to the end of the essay, but your work isn't over yet. You need to end by wrapping up everything you've talked about, showing that you've considered the arguments on both sides and reached the most likely conclusion. Here are some words and phrases to help you.

In conclusion
Usage: Typically used to introduce the concluding paragraph or sentence of an essay, summarising what you've discussed in a broad overview.
Example: "In conclusion, the evidence points almost exclusively to Argument A."

Above all
Usage: Used to signify what you believe to be the most significant point, and the main takeaway from the essay.
Example: "Above all, it seems pertinent to remember that…"

All things considered
Usage: This means "taking everything into account".
Example: "All things considered, it seems reasonable to assume that…"

How many of these words and phrases will you get into your next essay?

Taken from: https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/articles/words-phrases-good-essays.html
[Edited version]

Appendix 3 – Referencing correctly

When you get to university, you will need to include references in the assignments that you write, so we would like you to start getting into the habit of referencing in your Brilliant Club assignment. This is really important, because it will help you to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is when you take someone else's work or ideas and pass them off as your own. Whether plagiarism is deliberate or accidental, the consequences can be severe. In order to avoid losing marks in your final assignment, or even failing, you must be careful to reference your sources correctly.

What is a reference?

A reference is just a note in your assignment which says if you have referred to or been influenced by another source such as book, website or article. For example, if you use the internet to research a particular subject, and you want to include a specific piece of information from this website, you will need to reference it.

Why should I reference?

Referencing is important in your work for the following reasons:

- It gives credit to the authors of any sources you have referred to or been influenced by.
- It supports the arguments you make in your assignments.
- It demonstrates the variety of sources you have used.
- It helps to prevent you losing marks, or failing, due to plagiarism.

When should I use a reference?

You should use a reference when you:

- Quote directly from another source.
- Summarise or rephrase another piece of work.
- Include a specific statistic or fact from a source.

How do I reference?

There are a number of different ways of referencing, and these often vary depending on what subject you are studying. The most important to thing is to be consistent. This means that you need to stick to the same system throughout your whole assignment. Here is a basic system of referencing that you can use, which consists of the following two parts:

A marker in your assignment: After you have used a reference in your assignment (you have read something and included it in your work as a quote, or re-written it your own words) you should mark this is in your text with a footnote. (This will be explained during Tutorial 5).

Bibliography: This is just a list of the references you have used in your assignment. In the bibliography, you list your references by the numbers you have used, and include as much information as you have about the reference. The list below gives what should be included for different sources.

Websites – Author (if possible), title of the web page, website address, [date you accessed it, in square brackets].

E.g. Dan Snow, 'How did so many soldiers survive the trenches?', http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3kgjxs#zg2dtfr [11 July 2014].

Books – Author, date published, title of book (in italics), pages where the information came from.

E.g. S. Dubner and S. Levitt, (2006) *Freakonomics*, 7-9.

Articles – Author, 'title of the article' (with quotation marks), *where the article comes from* (newspaper, journal etc.), date of the article.

E.g. Maev Kennedy, 'The lights to go out across the UK to mark First World War's centenary', *Guardian*, 10 July 2014.

Notes