

Beneath him the ground upheaves. The river tugs him; he looks for the quick-moving pattern, for the flitting, liquid scarlet. Between a pulse-beat and the next he shifts, going out on crimson with the tide of his inner sea. He is far from England now, far from these islands, from the waters salt and fresh. He has vanished; he is the slippery stones underfoot, he is the last faint ripple in the wake of himself. He feels for an opening, blinded, looking for a door: tracking the light along the wall.

Hilary Mantel, *The Mirror and the Light* (2020), Part Six, II

Patrick slid back down in his chair and sprawled in front of the view. He noticed how his tears cooled as they ran down his cheeks. Washed eyes and a tired and empty feeling. Was that what other people meant by peaceful? There must be more to it than that, but he didn't claim to be an expert. He suddenly wanted to see his children, real children, not the ghosts of their ancestors' childhoods, real children with a reasonable chance of enjoying their lives. He picked up the phone and dialled Mary's number. He was going to change his mind After all, that's what Thomas said it was for.

Edward St Aubyn, *At Last* (2011), Ch. 14

He came to a halt just where the waves broke and he stood there in his nakedness like a deity, resplendent and grinning. Then he grasped his thick penis and began to urinate into the water. The flow came out so abundantly that it made a fat, glittering jet, like a rope of gold he was casting into the sea. He looked at me with black eyes full of malevolent delight while the golden jet poured unceasingly forth from him until it seemed impossible that he could contain any more. The water bore me up, heaving, as if I lay on the breast of some sighing creature while the man emptied himself into its depths. I looked into his cruel, merry eyes, and I waited for him to stop.

Rachel Cusk, *Kudos* (2018)

But the hands of one of the men were already at K.'s throat, while the other thrust the knife deep into his heart and twisted it there, twice. With failing eyes, K. saw the two of them, cheek by cheek, close in front of his face, watching the final act. 'Like a dog!' he said: it was as if the shame of it would outlive him.

Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, 'The End'

Aber an K.s Gurgel legten sich die Hände des einen Herrn, während der andere das Messer ihm tief ins Herz stieß und zweimal dort drehte. Mit brechenden Augen sah noch K., wie die Herren, nahe vor seinem Gesicht, Wange an Wange aneinandergelehnt, die Entscheidung beobachteten. »Wie ein Hund!« sagte er, es war, als sollte die Scham ihn überleben.

Franz Kafka, *Der Prozeß*, 'Ende' (1925)

He was a moment silent.—She turned her eyes toward him for the first time since his re-entering the room. His colour was varying—& he was looking at her with all the Power & Keenness, which she believed no other eyes than his, possessed. “No Truth in any such report!”—he repeated.—“No Truth in any part of it?”—“None.”—He had been standing by a chair—enjoying the relief of leaning on it—or of playing with it;—he now sat down—drew it a little nearer to her—& looked, with an expression which had something more than penetration in it, something softer;—Her Countenance did not discourage.—It was a silent, but a very powerful Dialogue;—on his side, Supplication, on her’s acceptance.—Still a little nearer—and a hand taken and pressed—and “Anne, my own dear Anne!”—bursting forth in the fullness of exquisite feeling—and all Suspense & Indecision were over.—They were re-united. They were restored to all that had been lost.

Jane Austen, ms cancelled ending of *Persuasion*, II Ch. X

“... For you alone, I think and plan. Have you not seen this? Can you fail to have understood my wishes? I had not waited even these ten days, could I have read your feelings, as I think you must have penetrated mine. I can hardly write. I am every instant hearing something which overpowers me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones of that voice when they would be lost on others. Too good, too excellent creature! You do us justice, indeed. You do believe that there is true attachment and constancy among men. Believe it to be most fervent, most undeviating, in

F. W.”

“I must go, uncertain of my fate; but I shall return hither, or follow your party, as soon as possible. A word, a look, will be enough to decide whether I enter your father’s house this evening or never.”

Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (1816), II Ch. X

That storm roared frenzied, for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks: it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance. Not till the destroying angel of tempest had achieved his perfect work, would he fold the wings whose waft was thunder—the tremor of whose plumes was storm.

Peace, be still! Oh! a thousand weepers, praying in agony on waiting shores, listened for that voice, but it was not uttered—not uttered till; when the hush came, some could not feel it: till, when the sun returned, his light was night to some!

Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life.

Madame Beck prospered all the days of her life; so did Père Silas; Madame Walravens fulfilled her ninetieth year before she died. Farewell.

Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (1853), Ch. XLII

“But you said to me,” returned Estella, very earnestly, “‘God bless you, God forgive you!’ And if you could say that to me then, you will not hesitate to say that to me now,—now, when suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape. Be as considerate and good to me as you were, and tell me we are friends.”

“We are friends,” said I, rising and bending over her, as she rose from the bench.

“And will continue friends apart,” said Estella.

I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861-2), Ch. LIX

‘I am greatly changed, I know; but I thought you would like to shake hands with Estella, too, Pip. Lift up that pretty child and let me kiss it!’ (She supposed the child, I think, to be my child.)

I was very glad afterwards to have had the interview; for, in her face and in her voice, and in her touch, she gave me the assurance, that suffering had been stronger than Miss Havisham’s teaching, and had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be.

Charles Dickens, cancelled ms ending to *Great Expectations*

“After so many years, it is strange that we should thus meet again, Estella, here where our first meeting was! Do you often come back?”
“I have never been here since.”

Great Expectations, Ch. LIX

One would say that being good means representing virtuous and aspiring characters, placed in prominent positions; another would say that it depends for a 'happy ending' on a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks.

Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction' (1884)

“She came here yesterday, and spent the night. But this morning she started for Rome.”

Caspar Goodwood was not looking at her; his eyes were fastened on the doorstep.

“Oh, she started—” he stammered. And without finishing his phrase, or looking up, he turned away.

Henrietta had come out, closing the door behind her, and now she put out her hand and grasped his arm.

“Look here, Mr. Goodwood,” she said; “just you wait!”
On which he looked up at her.

Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), Ch. LV

“She came here yesterday, and spent the night. But this morning she started for Rome.”

Caspar Goodwood was not looking at her; his eyes were fastened on the doorstep. “Oh, she started—?” he stammered. And without finishing his phrase or looking up he stiffly averted himself. But he couldn’t otherwise move.

Henrietta had come out, closing the door behind her, and now she put out her hand and grasped his arm.

“Look here, Mr. Goodwood,” she said; “just you wait!”

On which he looked up at her—but only to guess, from her face, with a revulsion, that she simply meant he was young. She stood shining at him with that cheap comfort, and it added, on the spot, thirty years to his life. She walked him away with her, however, as if she had given him now the key to patience.

Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), Ch. LV

Youtube clip Jane Campion Portrait of a Lady ending

The obvious criticism of course will be that it is not finished — that I have not seen the heroine to the end of her situation — that I have left her *en l'air*. — This is both true and false. The *whole* of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity — it groups together. It is complete in itself — and the rest may be taken up or not, later.

Henry James, *Notebooks*

... I continue to stare at Charles and see no reason this time for fixing the fight upon which he is about to engage. That leaves me with two alternatives. I let the fight proceed and take no more than a recording part in it; or I take both sides in it. I stare at that vaguely effete but not completely futile face. And as we near London, I think I see a solution; that is, I see the dilemma is false. The only way I can take no part in the fight is to show two versions of it. That leaves me with only one problem: I cannot give both versions at once, yet whichever is the second will seem, so strong is the tyranny of the last chapter, the final, the ‘real’ version.

I take my purse from the pocket of my frock coat, I extract a florin, I rest it on my right thumbnail, I flick it, spinning, two feet into the air and catch it in my left hand.

So be it. And I am suddenly aware that Charles has opened his eyes and is looking at me.

John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), Ch. 51

She knew what was required of her. Not simply a letter, but a new draft, an atonement, and she was ready to begin.

BT

London 1999

Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (2001), Part Two

London, 1999

What a strange time this has been. Today, on the morning of my seventy-seventh birthday, I decided to make one last visit to the Imperial War Museum library in Lambeth. It suited my peculiar state of mind.

The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell–tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity.

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1818), II xvi

... I was thinking about the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches, the shoreline of odd stuff caught along the fencing, and I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. The fantasy never got beyond that—I didn't let it—and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be.

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Ch. Twenty-Three