Ultima Thule, Vladimir Nabokov

DO YOU remember the day you and I were lunching (partaking of nourishment) a couple of years before your death? Assuming, of course, that memory can live without its headdress? Let us imagine—just an "apropositional" thought—some totally new handbook of epistolary samples. To a lady who has lost her right hand: I kiss your ellipsis. To a deceased: Respecterfully yours. But enough of these sheepish vignettes. If you don't remember, then I remember for you: the memory of you can pass, grammatically speaking at least, for your memory, and I am perfectly willing to grant for the sake of an ornate phrase that if, after your death, I and the world still endure, it is only because you recollect the world and me. I address you now for the following reason. I address you now on the following occasion. I address you now simply to chat with you about Falter. What a fate! What a mystery! What a handwriting! When I tire of trying to persuade myself that he is a half-wit or a kvak (as you used to Russianize the English synonym for "charlatan"), he strikes me as a person who... who, because he survived the bomb of truth that exploded in him... became a god! Beside him, how paltry seem all the bygone clairvoyants: the dust raised by the herd at sunset, the dream within a dream (when you dream you have awakened), the crack students in this our institute of learning hermetically closed to outsiders; for Falter stands outside our world, in the true reality. Reality!—that is the pouter-pigeon throat of the snake that fascinates me.
Remember the time we lunched at the hotel managed by Falter near the luxuriant, many-terraced Italian border, where the asphalt is infinitely exalted by the wisteria, and the air smells of rubber and paradise? Adam Falter was still one of us then, and, if nothing about him presaged... what shall I call it?—say, seerhood—nevertheless his whole strong cast (the caromlike coordination of his bodily movements, as though he had ball bearings for cartilages, his precision, his aquiline aloofness) now, in retrospect, explains why he survived the shock: the original figure was large enough to withstand the subtraction.

Oh, my love, how your presence smiles from that fabled bay—and nevermore!—oh, I bite my knuckles so as not to start shaking with sobs, but there is no holding them back; down I slide with locked brakes, making "hoo" and "boohoo" sounds, and it is all such humiliating physical nonsense: the hot blinking, the feeling of suffocation, the dirty handkerchief, the convulsive yawning alternating with the tears—I just can't, can't live without you. I blow my nose, swallow, and then all over again try to persuade the chair which I clutch, the desk which I pound, that I can't boohoo without you. Are you able to hear me? That's from a banal questionnaire, which ghosts do not an-swer, but how

willingly our
death-cell-mates respond for them; "I know!" (pointing skyward at random), "I'll be glad to tell you!"
Your darling head, the hollow of your temple, the forget-me-not gray of an eye squinting at an incipient
kiss, the placid expression of your ears when you would lift up your hair... how can I reconcile myself to
vour disappearance, to this gaping hole, into which slides everything—my whole life, wet gravel, objects,
and habits—and what tombal tailings can prevent me from tumbling, with silent relish, into this abyss?
Vertigo of the soul. Remember how, right after you died, I hurried out of the sanatorium, not walking
but sort of stamping and even dancing with pain (life having got jammed in the door like a finger), alone
on that winding road among the exaggeratedly scaly pines and rhe prickly shields of agaves, in a green
armored world that quietly drew in its feet so as not to catch the disease. Ah, yes—everything around
me kept warily, attentively silent, and only when I looked at something did that something give a start
and begin ostentatiously to move, rustle, or buzz, pretending not to notice me. "Indifferent nature," says
Pushkin. Nonsense! A continuous shying-away would be a more accurate description.

What a shame, though. You were such a darling. And, holding on to vou from within by a little
button, our child went with you. But, my poor sir, one does not make a child to a woman when she has
tuberculosis of the throat. Involuntary translation from French into Ha-dean. You died in your sixth
month and took the remaining twelve weeks with you, not paying off your debt in full, as it were. How
much I wanted her to bear me a child, the red-nosed widower informed the walls. Etes-vous tout a fait
certain, docteur, que la science ne connait pas de ces cas exceptionnels ou Venfant nait dans la tombe?
And the dream I had: that garlicky doctor (who was at the same time Falter, or was it Alexander
Vasilievich?) replying with exceptional readiness, that yes, of course it sometimes did happen, and that
such children (i.e., the posthumously born) were known as cadaverkins.

As to you, never once since you died have you appeared in my dreams. Perhaps the authorities
intercept you, or you yourself avoid such prison visits with me. At first, base ignoramus that I was, I
feared—superstitiously, humiliatingly—the small cracklings that a room always emits at night, but that
were now reflected within me by terrifying flashes which made my clucking heart scuttle away faster
with low-spread wings. Even worse, however, was the nighttime waiting, when I would lie in bed, trying
not to think how you might suddenly give me an answering knock if I thought about it, but this only
meant complicating the mental parenthesization, placing brackets within braces (thinking about trying
not to think), and the fear within them grew and grew. Oh, how awful was the dry tap of the phantasmal

fingernail inside the tabletop, and how little it resembled, of course, the intonation of your soul, of your life. A vulgar ghost with the tricks of a woodpecker, a disincarnate humorist, a corny cobold taking advantage of my stark-naked grief! In the daytime, on the other hand, I was fearless, and would challenge you to manifest your responsiveness in any way you liked, as I sat on the pebbles of the beach, where once your golden legs had been extended; and, as before, a wave would arrive, all out of breath, but, as it had nothing to report, it would disperse in apologetic salaams. Pebbles like cuckoo eggs, a piece of tile shaped like a pistol clip, a fragment of topaz-colored glass, something quite dry resembling a whisk of bast, my tears, a microscopic bead, an empty cigarette package with a yellow-bearded sailor in the center of a life buoy, a stone like a Pompeian's foot, some creature's small bone or a spatula, a kerosene can, a shiver of garnet-red glass, a nutshell, a nondescript rusty thingum related to nothing, a shard of porcelain, of which the companion fragments must inevitably exist somewhere—and I imagined an eternal torment, a convict's task, that would serve as the best punishment for such as I, whose thoughts had ranged too far during their life span: namely, to find and gather all these parts, so as to re-create that gravy boat or soup tureen—hunchbacked wanderings along wild, misty shores. And, after all, if one is supremely lucky, one might restore the dish on the first morning instead of the trillionth— and there it is, that most agonizing question of luck, of Fortune's Wheel, of the right lottery ticket, without which a given soul might be denied eternal felicity beyond the grave.

On these early spring days the narrow strip of shingle is unadorned and forlorn, but strollers would pass along the promenade above, and this person or that, no doubt, must have said, on observing my shoulder blades, "There's Sineusov, the artist—lost his wife the other day." And I would probably have sat like that forever, picking at the desiccated jetsam, watching the stumbling foam, noting the sham tenderness of elongated serial cloudlets all along the horizon and the wine-dark washes of warmth in the chill blue-green of the sea, if someone indeed had not recognized me from the sidewalk.

However (as I fumble among the torn silks of phrase), let me re-turn to Falter. As you have by now remembered, we went there once, on a torrid day, crawling like two ants up a flower-basket ribbon, because I was curious to take a look at my former tutor (whose lessons were limited to witty polemics with the compilers of my manuals), a resilient-looking, well-groomed man with a large white nose and a flossy parting in his hair; and it was along this straight line that he later traveled to business success, while his father, Ilya Falter, was only the senior chef at Menard's in St. Petersburg: il y a pauvre

Ilya, turn-Ing on povar, which is "man cook" in Russian. My angel, oh my angel, perhaps our whole earthly existence is now but a pun to you, or a grotesque rhyme, something like "dental" and "transcendental" (remember?), and the true meaning of reality, of that piercing term, purged of all our strange, dreamy, masquerade interpretations, now sounds so pure and sweet that you, angel, find it amusing that we could have taken the dream seriously (although you and I did have an inkling of why everything disintegrated at one furtive touch—words, conventions of everyday life, systems, persons— so, you know, I think laughter is some chance little ape of truth astray in our world).

I was now seeing him after an interval of twenty years; and how right I had been, when approaching the hotel, to construe all of its classical ornaments—the cedar of Lebanon, the eucalyptus, the banana tree, the terra-cotta tennis court, the enclosure for cars beyond the lawn—as a ceremonial of fortunate fate, as a symbol of the corrections that the former image of Falter now required! During our years of separation (quite painless for us both) he had changed from a poor, wiry student with animated night-dark eyes and a beautiful, strong, sinistral handwriting into a dignified, rather corpulent gentleman, though the liveliness of his glance and the beauty of his large hands were undimin-ished— only I would never have recognized him from the back, for, instead of the thick, sleek hair and shaven nape, there was now a nimbus of black fluff encircling a sun-browned bald spot akin to a tonsure. With his silk shirt, the color of stewed rutabaga, his checked tie, his wide pearl-gray pants, and his piebald shoes, he struck me as being dtressed up for a fancy-dress ball; but his large nose was the same as ever, and with it he infallibly caught the light scent of the past when I came up, slapped him on his muscular shoulder, and posed him my riddle. You were standing a little way off, your bare ankles pressed together on their high cobalt-blue heels, examining with restrained but mischievous interest the furnishings of the enormous hall, empty at that hour—the hippopotamus hide of the armchairs, the austere bar, the British magazines on the glass-topped table, the frescoes, of studied simplicity, depicting scanty-breasted bronzed girls against a golden background, one of whom, with parallel strands of stylized hair falling along her cheek, had for some reason gone down on one knee. Could we conceive that the master of all this splendor would ever cease to see it? My angel.... Meanwhile, taking my hands in his, squeezing them, puckering the skin between his brows and fixing me with dark, nar rowed eyes, he was observing that life-suspending pause observed by those who are about to sneeze but are not quite sure if they will succeed... but he succeeded, the past burst into light, and he loudly pronounced my

nickname. He kissed your hand, without bending his head, and then, in a benevolent fuss, obviously
enjoying the fact that I, a person who had seen better days, had now found him in the full glory of the
life he had himself created by the power of his sculptitory will, he seated us on the terrace, ordered
cocktails and lunch, introduced us to his brother-in-law, Mr. L., a cultured man in a dark business suit
that contrasted oddly with Faker's exotic foppishness. We drank, we ate, we talked about the past as
about someone gravely ill, I managed to balance a knife on the back of a fork, you petted the wonderful
nervous dog that feared its master, and after a minute of silence, in the midst of which Falter suddenly
uttered a distinct "Yes," as if concluding a diagnostic deliberation, we parted, making each other
promises that neither he nor I had the least intention of keeping. You didn't find anything remarkable
about him, did you? And to be sure—that type has been done to death: throughout a drab youth
supported his alcoholic father by giving lessons, and then slowly, obsti nately, buoyantly achieved
prosperity; for, in addition to the not very profitable hotel, he had flourishing interests in the wine
business. But, as I understood later, you were wrong when you said that it was all somewhat dull and
that energetic, successful fellows like him always reek of sweat. Actually, I am madly envious now of the
early Faker's basic trait: the precision and power of his "volitional substance," as-you remember?—poor
Adolf put it in a quite different context. Whether sitting in a trench or in an office, whether catching a
train or getting up on a dark morning in an unheated room, whether arranging business connections or
pursuing someone in friendship or enmity, Adam Falter not only was always in possession of all his
faculties, not only lived every moment cocked like a pistol, but was always certain of unfailingly
achieving today's aim, and tomorrow's, and the whole gradual progression of his aims, at the same time
working economically, for he did not aim high, and knew his limitations exactly. His greatest service to
himself was that he deliberately disregarded his talents, and banked on the ordinary, the commonplace;
for he was endowed with strange, mysteriously fascinating gifts, which some other, less circumspect
person might have tried to put to practical use. Perhaps only in the very beginning of life had he
sometimes been unable to control himself, intermixing the humdrum coaching of a schoolboy in a
humdrum subject with unusually elegant manifestations of mathematical thought, which left a certain
chill of poetry hanging about my schoolroom after he had hurried away to his next lesson. I think with
envy that if my nerves were as strong as his, my soul as resilient, my willpower as condensed, he would
have imparted to me nowadays the essence of the superhuman discovery he recently made—that is, he
would not have feared that the information would crush me; I, on the other hand,

would have been
sufficiently persistent to make him tell me everything to the end.

A slightly husky voice hailed me discreetly from the promenade, but, as more than a year had
passed since our luncheon with Falter, I did not immediately recognize his humble brother-in-law in the
person who now cast a shadow on my stones. Out of mechanical politeness I went up to join him on the
sidewalk, and he expressed his deepest et cetera: he had happened to stop by at my pension, he said,
and the good people there had not only informed him of your death, but also indicated to him from afar
my figure upon the deserted beach, a figure that had become a kind of local curiosity (for a moment I
felt ashamed that the round back of my grief should be visible from every terrace), "We met at Adam
Ilyich's," he said, showing the stumps of his in-. cisors and taking his place in my limp consciousness. I
must have proceeded to ask him something about Falter.
"Oh, so you haven't heard?" the prattler said in surprise, and it was then that I learned the
whole story.

It happened that the previous spring Falter had gone on business to a particularly viny Riviera
town, and, as usual, stopped at a quiet little hotel, whose proprietor was a debtor of his of long
standing. One must picture this hotel, tucked up in the feathered armpit of a hill overgrown with
mimosa, and the little lane, not fully built up yet, with its half-dozen tiny villas, where radio sets sang in
the small human space between the Stardust and the sleeping oleanders, while crickets zinked the night
with their stridulation in the vacant lot under Faker's open third-story window. After having passed a
hygienic evening in a small bordello on the Boulevard de la Mutualite, he returned at about eleven to
the hotel, in an excellent mood, clear of head and light of loin, and immediately went up to his room.
The star-ashed brow of night; her expression of gentle insanity; the swarming of lights in the old town;
an amusing mathematical problem about which he had corresponded the year before with a Swedish
scholar; the dry, sweet smell that seemed to loll, without thought or task, here and there in the hollows
of the darkness; the metaphysical taste of a wine, well bought and well sold; the news, recently received
from a remote, unattractive country, of the death of a half-sister, whose image had long since wilted in
his memory—all of this, I imagine, was floating through Fal-ter's mind as he walked up the street and
then mounted to his room; and while taken separately none of these reflections and impressions was in
the least new or unusual for this hard-nosed, not quite ordinary, but superficial man (for, on the basis of
our human core, we are divided into professionals and amateurs; Falter, like me, was an amateur), in
their totality they formed perhaps the most favorable medium for the flash, the

unearthly lightning, as
catastrophic as a sweepstakes win, monstrously fortuitous, in no way foretold by the normal function of
his reason, that struck him that night in that hotel.

About half an hour had passed since his return when the collective slumber of the small white
building, with its barely rippling crapelike mosquito netting and wall flowers, was abruptly—no, not
interrupted, but rent, split, blasted by sounds that remained unforgettable to the hearers, my darling—
those sounds, those dreadful sounds. They were not the porcine squeals of a mollycoddle being
dispatched by hasty villains in a ditch, not the roar of a wounded soldier whom a savage surgeon
relieves of a monstrous leg—no, they were worse, far worse.... And if, said later the innkeeper,
Monsieur Paon, one were going to make comparisons, those sounds resembled most of all the
paroxysmal, almost exultant screams of a woman in the throes of infinitely painful childbirth—a woman,
however, with a man's voice and a giant in her womb. It was hard to identify the dominant note amid
the storm rending that human throat—whether it was pain, fear, or the clarion of madness, or again,
and most likely of all, the expression of an unfathomable sensation, whose very unknowability imparted
to the exultation bursting from Faker's room something that aroused in the hearers a panical desire to
put an immediate stop to it. The newlyweds who were toiling in the nearest bed paused, diverting their
eyes in parallel and holding their breath; the Dutchman living downstairs scuttled out into the garden,
which already contained the housekeeper and the white shimmer of eighteen maids (only two, really,
multiplied by their darting to and fro). The hotel keeper, who, according to his own account, had
retained full presence of mind, rushed upstairs and ascertained that the door behind which continued
the hurricane of howling, so mighty that it seemed to thrust one back, was locked from within and
would yield neither to thump nor entreaty. Roaring Falter, insofar as one could assume it was indeed he
that roared (his open window was dark, and the intolerable sounds issuing from within did not bear the
imprint of anyone's personality), spread out far beyond the limits of the hotel, and neighbors gathered
in the surrounding darkness, and one rascal had five cards in his hand, all trumps. By now it was
completely incomprehensible how anyone's vocal cords could endure the strain: according to one
account, Faker screamed for at least fifteen minutes; according to another and probably more accurate
one, for about five without interruption. Suddenly (while the landlord was deciding whether to break
down the door with a joint effort, place a ladder outside, or call the police) the screams, having attained
the ultimate limits of agony, horror, amazement, and of that other quite un-definable something, turned

into a medley of moans and then stopped altogether. It grew so quiet that at first those present
conversed in whispers.

Cautiously, the landlord again knocked at the door, and from behind it came sighs and unsteady
footfalls. Presently one heard someone fumbling at the lock, as though he did not know how to open it.
A weak, soft fist began smacking feebly from within. Then Monsieur Paon did what he could actually
have done much sooner—he found another key and opened the door.

"One would like some light," Falter said softly in the dark. Thinking for an instant that Falter had
broken the lamp during his fit, the landlord automatically checked the switch, but the light obediently
came on, and Falter, blinking in sickly surprise, turned his eyes from the hand that had engendered light
to the newly filled glass bulb, as if seeing for the first time how it was done.
A strange, repulsive change had come over his entire exterior: he looked as if his skeleton had
been removed. His sweaty and now somehow flabby face, with its hanging lip and pink eyes, expressed
not only a dull fatigue, but also relief, an animal relief as after the pangs of monster-bearing. Naked to
the waist, wearing only his pajama bottoms, he stood with lowered face, rubbing the back of one hand
with the palm of the other. To the natural questions of Monsieur Paon and the hotel guests he gave no
answer; he merely puffed out his cheeks, pushed aside those who had surrounded him, came out on the
landing, and began urinating copiously right on the stairs. Then he went back, lay down on his bed, and
fell asleep.

In the morning the hotel keeper called up Mrs. L., Falter's sister, to warn her that her brother
had gone mad, and he was bundled off home, listless and half-asleep. The family doctor suggested it
was just a slight stroke and prescribed the correspondent treatment. But Falter did not get better. After
a time, it is true, he began walking about freely, and even whistling at times, and uttering loud insults,
and grabbing food the doctor had forbidden. However, the change remained. He was like a man who
had lost everything: respect for life, all interest in money and business, all customary and traditional
feelings, everyday habits, manners, absolutely everything. It was unsafe to let him go anywhere alone,
for, with a curiosity quite superficial and quickly forgotten but offensive to others, he would address
chance passersby, to discuss the origin of a scar on someone's face or a statement, not addressed to
him, that he had overheard in a conversation between strangers. He would take an orange from a fruit
stand as he passed, and eat it unpeeled, responding with an indifferent half-smile to the jabber of the
fruit-woman who had run after him. When he grew tired or bored he would squat on

the sidewalk
Turkish fashion and, for something to do, try to catch girls' heels in his fist like flies. Once he
appropriated several hats, five felts and two panamas, which he had painstakingly collected in various
cafes, and there were difficulties with the police.

His case attracted the attention of a well-known Italian psychiatrist, who happened to have a
patient at Falter's hotel. This Dr. Bonomini, a youngish man, was studying, as he himself would willingly
explain, "the dynamics of the psyche," and sought to demonstrate in his works, whose popularity was
not confined to learned circles, that all psychic disorders could be explained by subliminal memories of
calamities that befell the patient's forebears, and that if, for example, the subject were afflicted by
megalomania, to cure him completely it sufficed to determine which of his great-grandfathers was a
power-hungry failure, and explain to the great-grandson that the ancestor being dead had found eternal
peace, although in complex cases it was actually necessary to resort to theatrical representation, in
costumes of the period, depicting the specific demise of the ancestor whose role was assigned to the
patient. These tableaux vivants grew so fashionable that Bonomini was obliged to explain to the public
in print the dangers of staging them without his direct control.

Having questioned Falter's sister, Bonomini established that the Falters did not know much
about their forebears; true, Ilya Falter had been addicted to drink; but since, according to Bonomini's
theory, "the patient's illness reflects only the distant past," as, for instance, a folk epic "sublimates" only
remote occurrences, the details about Fal-ter pere were useless to him. Nevertheless he offered to try
to help the patient, hoping by means of clever questioning to make Falter himself produce the
explanation for his condition, after which the necessary Ancestors could become deducible of their own
accord; that an explanation did exist was confirmed by the fact that when Falter's intimates succeeded
in penetrating his silence he would succinctly and dismis-sively allude to something quite out of the
ordinary that he had expe-rienced on that enigmatic night.

One day Bonomini closeted himself with Falter in the latter's room, and, like the knower of
human hearts he was, with his horn-rimmed glasses and that hankie in his breast pocket, managed
apparently to get out of him an exhaustive reply about the cause of his nocturnal howls. Hypnotism
probably played its part in the business, for at the subse-quent inquest Falter insisted that he had
blabbed against his will, and that it rankled. He added, however, that never mind, sooner or later he
would have made the experiment anyway, but that now he would definitely never repeat it. Be that as it

may, the poor author of The Heroics of Insanity became the prey of Falter's Medusa. Since the intimate
en-counter between doctor and patient seemed to be lasting abnormally lang, Eleonora L., Falter's
sister, who had been knitting a gray shawl on the terrace, and for a long time already had not heard the
psychiatrist's release-inducing, high-spirited, or falsely cajoling little tenor, which at first had been more
or less audible through the half-open French window, entered her brother's room, and found him
examining with dull curiosity the alpine sanatoriums in a brochure that had probably been brought by
the doctor, while the doctor himself sprawled half on a chair and half on the carpet, with a gap of linen
showing between waistcoat and trousers, his short legs spread wide and his pale cafe-au-lait face
thrown back, felled, as was later determined, by heart failure. To the questions of the officiously
meddling police Falter replied absently and tersely; but, when he finally grew tired of this pestering, he
pointed out that, having accidentally solved "the riddle of the universe," he had yielded to artful
exhortation and shared that solution with his inquisitive interlocutor, whereupon the latter had died of
astonishment. The local newspapers caught up the story, embellished it properly, and the person of
Falter, in the guise of a Tibetan sage, for several days nourished the not overparticular news columns.
But, as you know, during those days I did not read the papers: you were dying then. Now,
however, having heard the story of Falter in detail, I experienced a certain very strong and perhaps
slightly shame faced desire.

You understand, of course. In the condition I was in, people with out imagination—i.e., deprived
of its support and inquiry—turn to the advertisements of wonder-workers; to chiromancers in comedy
tur bans, who combine the magic business with a trade in rat poison or rubber sheaths; to fat, swarthy
women fortune-tellers; but particularly to spiritualists, who fake a still unidentified force by giving it the
milky features of phantoms and getting them to manifest themselves in silly physical ways. But I have
my share of imagination, and therefore two possibilities existed: the first was my work, my art, the
consolation of my art; the second consisted of taking the plunge and believing that a person like Falter,
rather average when you come down to it, despite a shrewd mind's parlor games, and even a little
vulgar, had actually and conclusively learned that at which no seer, no sorcerer had ever arrived.
My art? You remember him, don't you, that strange Swede or Dane—or Icelander, for all I
know—anyway, that lanky, orange-tanned blond fellow with the eyelashes of an old horse, who
introduced him self to me as "a well-known writer," and, for a price that gladdened you (you were
already confined to your bed and unable to speak, bin would write me funny trifles

with colored chalk
on slate—for instance, that the things you liked most in life were "verse, wildflowers, and for eign
currency"), commissioned me to make a series of illustrations for the epic poem Ultima Thule, which he
had just composed in his Ian guage. Of course there could be no question of my acquainting myself
thoroughly with his manuscript, since French, in which we agonizingly communicated, was known to him
mostly by hearsay, and he was un able to translate his imagery for me. I managed to understand only
that his hero was some Northern king, unhappy and unsociable; that his kingdom, amid the sea mists,
on a melancholy and remote island, was plagued by political intrigues of some kind, assassinations, insur
rections, and that a white horse which had lost its rider was flying along the misty heath.... He was
pleased with my first blanc et noir sample, and we decided on the subjects of the other drawings. As he
did not turn up in a week as he had promised, I called his hotel, and learned that he had left for America.
I concealed my employer's disappearance from you, but did not go on with the drawings; then
again, you were already so ill that I did not feel like thinking about my golden pen and traceries in India
ink. But when you died, when the early mornings and late evenings became especially unbearable, then,
with a pitiful, feverish eagerness, the awareness of which would bring tears to my own eyes, I would
continue the work for which I knew no one would come, and for that very reason that task seemed to
me appropriate—its spectral, intangible nature, the lack of aim or reward would lead me away to a
realm akin to the one in which, for me, you exist, my ghostly goal, my darling, such a darling earthly
creation, for which no one will ever come anywhere; and since everything kept distracting me, fobbing
upon me the paint of temporality instead of the graphic design of eternity, tormenting me with your
tracks on the beach, with the stones on the beach, with your blue shadow on the loathsome bright
beach, I decided to return to our lodging in Paris and settle down to work seriously. Ultima Thule, that
island born in the desolate, gray sea of my heartache for you, now attracted me as the home of my least
expressible thoughts.

However/ before leaving the Riviera, I absolutely had to see Falter. This was the second solace I
had invented for myself. I managed to convince myself that he was not simply a lunatic after all, that not
only did he believe in the discovery he had made, but that this very discovery was the source of his
madness, and not vice versa. I learned that he had moved to an apartment next to my pension. I also
learned that his health was flagging; that when the flame of life had gone out in him it had left his body
without supervision and without incentive; that he would probably die soon. I learned, finally, and this

was especially important to me, that lately, in spite of his failing strength, he had grown unusually talkative and for days on end would treat his visitors (and alas, a different kind of curiosity-seeker than I got through to him) to speeches in which he caviled at the mechanics of human thought, oddly meandering speeches, exposing nothing, but almost Socratic in rhythm and sting. I offered to visit him, but his brother-in-law replied that the poor fellow enjoyed any diversion, and had the strength to reach my house.

And so they arrived—that is, the brother-in-law in his inevitable shabby black suit, his wife Eleonora (a tall, taciturn woman, whose clear-cut sturdiness recalled the former frame of her brother, and now served as a kind of living lesson to him, an adjacent moralistic picture), and Falter himself, whose appearance shocked me, even though I was prepared to see him changed. How can I express it? Mr. L. had said that he looked as if his bones had been removed; I, on the other hand, had the impression that his soul had been extracted but his mind intensified tenfold in recompense. By this I mean that one look at Falter was sufficient to understand that one need not expect from him any of the human feelings common in everyday life, that Falter had utterly lost the knack of loving anyone, of feeling pity, if only for himself, of experiencing kindness and, on occasion, compassion for the soul of another, of habitually serving, as best he could, the cause of good, if only that of his own standard, just as he had lost the knack of shaking hands or using his handkerchief. And yet he did not strike one as a madman—oh, no, quite the contrary! In his oddly bloated features, in his unpleasant, satiated gaze, even in his flat feet, shod no longer in fashionable Oxfords but in cheap espadrilles, one could sense some concentrated power, and this power was not in the least interested in the flabbiness and inevitable decay of the flesh that it squeamishly controlled.

His attitude toward me now was not that of our last brief encounter, but that which I remembered from the days of our youth, when he would come to coach me. No doubt he was perfectly aware that, chronologically, a quarter of a century had passed since those days, and yet as though along with his soul he had lost his sense of time (without which the soul cannot live), he obviously regarded me—a matter not so much of words, but of his whole manner—as if it had all been yester day; yet he had no sympathy, no warmth whatever for me—nothing, not even a speck of it. They seated him in an armchair, and he spread his limbs strangely, as a chimpanzee might do when his keeper makes him parody a Syb arite in a recumbent position. His sister settled down to her knitting, and during the whole course of the conversation did not once raise her short-haired gray head.

Her husband took two newspapers—a local one, and one from Marseilles—out of his pocket, and was
also silent. Only when Falter, noticing a large photograph of you that happened to be standing right in
his line of sight, asked where were you hiding did Mr. L. say, in the loud, artificial voice people use to
address the deaf, and without looking up from his newspaper: "Come, you know perfectly well she is
dead."

"Ah, yes," remarked Falter with inhuman unconcern, and, address ing me, added, "Oh well, may
the kingdom of heaven be hers—isn't that what one is supposed to say in society?"
Then the following conversation began between us; total recall, rather than shorthand notes,
now allows me to transcribe it exactly.

"I wanted to see you, Falter," I said (actually addressing him by first name and patronymic, but,
in narration, his timeless image does not tolerate any conjunction of the man with a definite country
and a genetic past), "I wanted to see you in order to have a frank talk with you. I wonder if you would
consider it possible to ask your relatives to leave us alone."
"They do not count," abruptly observed Falter. "When I say 'frank,' " I went on, "I presuppose
the reciprocal possibility of asking no matter what questions, and the readiness to answer them. But
since it is I who shall ask the questions, and expect answers from you, everything depends upon your
consent to be straightforward; you do not need that assurance from me."
"To a straightforward question I shall give a straightforward an- swer," said Falter.
"In that case allow me to come right to the point. We shall ask Mr. and Mrs. L. to step outside
for a moment, and you will tell me verba- tim what you told the Italian doctor."
"Well, I'll be damned,"
said Falter.

"You cannot refuse me this. In the first place, the information won't kill me—this I guarantee
you; I may look tired and seedy but don't you worry, I still have enough strength left. In the second
place, I promise to keep your secret to myself, and even to shoot myself, if you like, immediately after
learning it. You see, I allow that my loquac- ity may bother you even more than my death. Well, do you
agree?" "I refuse absolutely," replied Falter, and swept away a book from the table next to him to make
room for his elbow. "For the sake of somehow starting our talk, I shall temporarily ac-cept your refusal.
Let us proceed ab ovo. Now then, Falter, I under-stand that the essence of things has been revealed to
you." "Yes, period," said Falter.

"Agreed—you will not tell me about it; nevertheless, I draw two important deductions: things do
have an essence, and this essence can be revealed to the mind."
Falter smiled. "Only do not call them deductions, mister. They are but flag stops.

Logical
reasoning may be a most convenient means of mental communication for covering short distances, but
the curvature of the earth, alas, is reflected even in logic: an ideally rational progres-sion of thought will
finally bring you back to the point of departure where you return aware of the simplicity of genius, with
a delightful sensation that you have embraced truth, while actually you have merely embraced your own
self. Why set out on that journey, then? Be content with the formula: the essence of things has been
revealed— wherein, incidentally, a blunder of yours is already present; I cannot explain it to you, since
the least hint at an explanation would be a lethal glimpse. As long as the proposition remains static, one
does not notice the blunder. But anything you might term a deduction already exposes the flaw: logical
development inexorably becomes an envelopment."

"All right, for the present I shall be content with that much. Now allow me a question. When a
hypothesis enters a scientist's mind, he checks it by calculation and experiment, that is, by the mimicry
and the pantomime of truth. Its plausibility infects others, and the hypothesis is accepted as the true
explanation for the given phenomenon, until someone finds its faults. I believe the whole of science
consists of such exiled or retired ideas: and yet at one time each of them boasted high rank; now only a
name or a pension is left. But in your case, Falter, I suspect that you have found some different method
of discovery and test. May I call it 'revelation' in the theological sense?"
"You may not," said Falter.

"Wait a minute. Right now I am interested not so much in the method of discovery as in your
conviction that the result is true. In other words, either you have a method of checking the result, or the
awareness of its truth is inherent in it."
"You see," answered Falter, "in Indochina, at the lottery drawings, the numbers are extracted by
a monkey. I happen to be that monkey. Another metaphor: in a country of honest men a yawl was
moored at the shore, and it did not belong to anyone; but no one knew that it did not belong to anyone;
and its assumed appurtenance to someone rendered it invisible to all. I happened to get into it. But
perhaps it would be simplest of all if I said that in a moment of playfulness, not mathematical
playfulness, necessarily—mathematics, I warn you, is but a perpetual game of leapfrog over its own
shoulders as it keeps breeding—I kept combining various ideas, and finally found the right combination
and exploded, like Berthold Schwartz. Somehow I sur vived; perhaps another in my place might have
survived, too. However, after the incident with my charming doctor I do not have the least de sire to be
bothered by the police again."

"You're warming up, Falter. But let's get back to the point: what exactly makes you certain that
it is the truth? That monkey is not really a party to the cast lots."
"Truths, and shadows of truths," said Falter, "in the sense of spe cies, of course, not specimens,
are so rare in the world, and available ones are either so trivial or tainted, that—how shall I put it?—that
the recoil upon perceiving Truth, the instant reaction of one's whole be ing, remains an unfamiliar, little-
studied phenomenon. Oh, well, some times in children—when a boy wakes up or regains his senses
after a bout with scarlet fever and there is an electric discharge of reality, rel ative reality, no doubt, for
you, humans, possess no other. Take any truism, that is, the corpse of a relative truth. Now analyze the
physical sensation evoked in you by the words 'black is darker than brown,' or "ice is cold.' Your thought
is too lazy even to make a polite pretense of raising its rump from its bench, as if the same teacher were
to enter your classroom a hundred times in the course of one lesson in old Rus-sia. But, in my childhood,
one day of great frost, I licked the shiny lock of a wicket. Let us dismiss the physical pain, or the pride of
discovery, if it is a pleasant one—all that is not the real reaction to truth. You see, its impact is so little
known that one cannot even find an exact word for it. All your nerves simultaneously answer 'yes!'—
something like that. Let us also set aside a kind of astonishment, which is merely the unaccustomed
assimilation of the thingness of truth, not of Truth itself. If you tell me that So-and-so is a thief, then I
combine at once in my mind a number of suddenly illuminated trifles that I had myself ob-served, yet I
have time to marvel that a man who had seemed so upright turned out to be a crook, but unconsciously
I have already absorbed the truth, so that my astonishment itself promptly assumes an inverted form
(how could one have ever thought honest such an obvious crook?); in other words, the sensitive point of
truth lies exactly halflway between the first surprise and the second."
"Right. This is all fairly clear."

"On the other hand, surprise carried to stunning, unimaginable dimensions," Falter went on,
"can have extremely painful effects, and it is still nothing compared to the shock of Truth itself. And that
can no longer be 'absorbed.' It was by chance that it did not kill me, just as it was by chance that it struck
me. I doubt one could think of checking a sensation of such intensity. A check can, however, be made ex
post facto, though I personally have no need for the complexities of the ver-ification. Take any
commonplace truth—for instance, that two angles equal to a third are equal to each other; does the
postulate also include anything about ice being hot or rocks occurring in Canada? In other words, a given
truthlet, to coin a diminutive, does not contain any other related truthlets and, even less, such ones that
belong to differ-ent kinds or levels of knowledge or thought. What, then, would you

say about a Truth
with a capital Tthat comprises in itself the explanation and the proof of all possible mental affirmations?
One can believe in the poetry of a wildflower or the power of money, but neither belief predetermines
faith in homeopathy or in the necessity to exterminate antelope on the islands of Lake Victoria Nyanza;
but in any case, hav-ing learned what I have—if this can be called learning—I received a key to
absolutely all the doors and treasure chests in the world; only I have no need to use it, since every
thought about its practical significance automatically, by its very nature, grades into the whole series of
hinged lids. I may doubt my physical ability to imagine to the very end all the consequences of my
discovery, and namely, to what degree I have not yet gone insane, or, inversely, how far behind I have
left all that is meant by insanity; but I certainly cannot doubt that, as you put it, 'essence has been
revealed to me.' Some water, please."

"Here you are. But let me see, Falter—did I understand you cor rectly? Are you really henceforth
a candidate for omniscience? Excuse me, but I don't have that impression. I can allow that you know
some thing fundamental, but your words contain no concrete indications of absolute wisdom."
"Saving my strength," said Falter. "Anyway, I never affirmed that I know everything now—
Arabic, for example, or how many times in your life you have shaved, or who set the type for the
newspaper which that fool over there is reading. I only say that I know everything I might want to know.
Anyone could say that—couldn't he?—after hav ing leafed through an encyclopedia; only, the
encyclopedia whose exact title I have learned (there, by the way—I am giving you a more elegant
definition: I know the title of things) is literally all-inclusive, and therein lies the difference between me
and the most versatile scholar on earth. You see, I have learned—and here I am leading you to the very
edge of the Riviera precipice, ladies don't look—I have learned one very simple thing about the world. It
is by itself so obvious, so amusingly obvious, that only my wretched humanity can consider it monstrous.
When in a moment I say 'congruent' I shall mean some thing infinitely removed from all the
congruencies known to you, just as the nature itself of my discovery has nothing in common with the
nature of any physical or philosophical conjectures. Now the main thing in me that is congruent with the
main thing in the universe could not be affected by the bodily spasm that has thus shattered me. At the
same time the possible knowledge of all things, consequent to the knowledge of the fundamental one,
did not dispose in me of suf ficiently solid apparatus. I am training myself by willpower not to leave the
vivarium, to observe the rules of your mentality as if nothing had happened; in other words, I act like a

beggar, a versifier, who has re ceived a million in foreign currency, but goes on living in his base ment,
for he knows that the least concession to luxury would ruin his liver."

"But the treasure is in your possession, Falter—that's what hurts. Let us drop the discussion of
your attitude toward it, and talk about the thing itself. I repeat—I have taken note of your refusal to let
me peek at your Medusa, and am further willing to refrain from the most evident inferences, since, as
you hint, any logical conclusion is a confinement of thought in itself. I propose to you a different method
for our questions and answers: I shall not ask you about the contents of vour treasure; but, after all, you
will not give away its secret by telling me if, say, it lies in the East, or if there is even one topaz in it, or if
even one man has ever passed in its proximity. At the same time, if you answer 'yes' or 'no' to\a
question, I not only promise to avoid choosing that particular line for a further series of related
questions, but pledge to end the conversation altogether."

"Theoretically, you are luring me into a clumsy trap," said Falter, shaking slightly, as another
might do when laughing. "Actually, it would be a trap only if you were capable of asking me at least one
such question. There is very little chance of that. Therefore, if you enjoy pointless amusement, fire
away."
I thought a moment and said, "Falter, allow me to begin like the traditional tourist—with an
inspection of an ancient church, familiar to him from pictures. Let me ask you: does God exist?" "Cold,"
said Falter.
I did not understand and repeated the question. "Forget it," snapped Falter. "I said 'cold,' as
they say in the game, when one must find a hidden object. If you are looking under a chak or under the
shadow of a chair, and the object cannot be in that place, because it happens to be somewhere else,
then the question of there existing a chair or its shadow has nothing whatever to do with the game. To
say that perhaps the chair exists but the object is not there is the same as saying that perhaps the object
is there but the chair does not exist, which means that you end up again in the circle so dear to human
thought."
"You must agree, though, Falter, that if as you say the thing sought is not anywhere near to the
concept of God, and if that thing is, ac-cording to your terminology, a kind of universal 'title,' then the
con-cept of God does not appear on the title page; hence, there exists no true necessity for such a
concept, and since there is no need for God, no God exists."

"'Then you did not understand what I said about the relationship between a possible place and
the impossibility of finding the object in it. All right, I shall put it more clearly. By the very act of your

mentioning a given concept you placed your own self in the position of an enigma, as if the seeker himself were to hide. And by persisting in your question, you not only hide, but also believe that by sharing with the sought-for object the quality of'hiddenness' you bring it closer to you.
How can I answer you whether God exists when the matter under discussion is perhaps sweet peas or a soccer linesman's flag? You are looking in the wrong place and in the wrong way, cher monsieur, that is all the answer I can give you. And if it seems to you that from this answer you can draw the least conclusion about the uselessness or necessity of God, it is just because you are looking in the wrong place and in the wrong way. Wasn't it you, though, that promised not to follow logical patterns of thought?"

"Now I too am going to trap you, Falter. Let's see how you'll man age to avoid a direct statement. One cannot, then, seek the title of the world in the hieroglyphics of deism?"
"Pardon me," replied Falter, "by means of ornate language and grammatical trickery Moustache-Bleue is merely disguising the ex pected non as an expected out. At the moment all I do is deny. I deny the expediency of the search for Truth in the realm of common theol ogy, and, to save your mind empty labor, I hasten to add that the ep ithet I have used is a dead end: do not turn into it. I shall have to terminate the discussion for lack of an interlocutor if you exclaim 'Aha, then there is another, "uncommon," truth!'—for this would mean that you have hidden yourself so well as to have lost yourself."

"All right. I shall believe you. Let us grant that theology muddies the issue. Is that right, Falter?"
"This is the house that Jack built," said Falter.
"All right, we dismiss this false trail as well. Even though you could probably explain to me why it is false (for there is something queer and elusive here, something that irritates you), and then your reluctance to reply would be clear to me."
"I could," said Falter, "but it would be equivalent to revealing the gist of the matter, that is, exactly what you are not going to get out of me."
"You repeat yourself, Falter. Don't tell me you will be just as eva sive if, for instance, I ask you: can one expect an afterlife?"

"Does it interest you very much?"
"Just as much as it does you, Falter. Whatever you may know about death, we are both mortal."
"In the first place," said Falter, "I call your attention to the follow ing curious catch: any man is mortal; you are a man; therefore, it is also possible that you are not mortal. Why? Because a specified man (you or I) for that very reason ceases to be any man. Yet both of us are indeed mortal, but I am

mortal in a different way than you."
"Don't spite my poor logic, but give me a plain answer: is there even a glimmer of one's identity
beyond the grave, or does it all end in ideal darkness?"

"Bon," said Falter, as is the habit of Russian emigres in France. "You want to know whether
Gospodin Sineusov will forever reside within the snugness of Gospodin Sineusov, otherwise Moustache-
Bleue, or whether everything will abruptly vanish. There are two ideas here, aren't there? Round-the-
clock lighting and the black inane. Actually, despite the difference in metaphysical color, they greatly
resemble each other. And they move in parallel. They even move at considerable speed. Long live the
totalizator! Hey, hey, look through your turf glasses, they're racing each other, and you would very much
like to know which will arrive first at the post of truth, but in asking me to give you a yes or no for either
one or the other, you want me to catch one of them at full speed by the neck—and those devils have
awfully slippery necks—but even if I were to grab one of them for you, I would merely interrupt the
competition, or the winner would be the other, the one I did not snatch, an utterly meaningless result
inasmuch as no rivalry would any longer exist. If you ask, however, which of the two runs faster, I shall
retort with another question: what runs faster, strong desire or strong fear?"
"Same pace, I suppose."

"That's just it. For look what happens in the case of the poor little human mind. Either it has no
way to express what awaits you—I mean, us--after death, and then total unconsciousness is excluded,
for that is quite accessible to our imagination—every one of us has experienced the total darkness of
dreamless sleep; or, on the contrary, death can be imagined, and then one's reason naturally adopts not
the notion of eternal life, an unknown entity, incongruent with anything terrestrial, but precisely that
which seems more probable—the familiar darkness of stupor. Indeed, how can a man who trusts in his
reason admit, for in-stance, that someone who is dead drunk and dies while sound asleep from a chance
external cause—thus losing by chance what he no longer really possessed—again acquires the ability to
reason and feel thanks to the mere extension, consolidation, and perfection of his unfortunate
condition? Hence, if you were to ask me only one thing: do I know, in human terms, what lies beyond
death—that is, if you at-tempted to avert the absurdity in which must peter out the competition
between two opposite, but basically similar concepts—a negative reply on my part would logically make
you conclude that your life cannot end in nothingness, while from an affirmative you would draw the
opposite conclusion. In either case, as you see, you would remain in exactly the same situation as
before, since a dry 'no' would prove to you that I know no more than you about the

given subject, while
a moist 'yes' would suggest that you accept the existence of an international
heaven which your reason
cannot fail to doubt."

"You are simply evading a straightforward answer, but allow me to observe
nevertheless that on
the subject of death you do not give me the answer 'cold.' "
"There you go again," sighed Falter. "Didn't I just explain to you that any
deduction whatsoever
conforms to the curvature of thought? It is correct, as long as you remain in the
sphere of earthly
dimensions, but when you attempt to go beyond, your error grows in proportion to
the distance you
cover. And that's not all: your mind will construe any answer of mine exclusively
from a utilitarian
viewpoint, for you are unable to conceive death otherwise than in the image of your
own gravestone,
and this in turn would distort to such an extent the sense of my answer as to turn
it into a lie, ipso facto.
So let us observe de corum even when dealing with the transcendental. I cannot
express myself more
clearly—and you ought to be grateful for any evasiveness. You have an inkling, I
gather, that there is a
little hitch in the very formulation of the question, a hitch, incidentally, that
is more terrible than the
fear itself of death. It's particularly strong in you, isn't it?" "Yes, Falter. The
terror I feel at the thought of
my future uncon sciousness is equal only to the revulsion caused in me by a mental
foreview of my
decomposing body."

"Well put. Probably other symptoms of this sublunary malady are present as well? A
dull pang in
the heart, suddenly, in the middle of the night, like the flash of a wild creature
among domestic
emotions and pet thoughts: 'Someday I also must die.' It happens to you, doesn't
it? Hatred for the
world, which will very cheerfully carry on without you. A basic sensation that all
things in the world are
trifles and phantas-mata compared to your mortal agony, and therefore to your life,
for, you say to
yourself, life itself is the agony before death. Yes, oh yes, I can imagine
perfectly well that sickness from
which you all suffer to a lesser or greater degree, and I can say one thing: I fail
to understand how
people can live under such conditions."

"There, Falter, we seem to be getting somewhere. Apparently, then, if I admitted
that, in
moments of happiness, of rapture, when my soul is laid bare, I suddenly feel that
there is no extinction
beyond the grave; that in an adjacent locked room, from under whose door comes a
frosty draft, there
is being prepared a peacock-eyed radiance, a pyramid of delights akin to the
Christmas tree of my
childhood; that everything—life, patria, April, the sound of a spring or that of a
dear voice—is but a
muddled preface, and that the main text still lies ahead—if I can feel that way,

Falter, is it not possible to
live, to live— tell me it's possible, and I'll not ask you anything more."
"In that case," said Falter, shaking again in soundless mirth, "I un-derstand you even less. Skip
the preface, and it's in the bag!" "Un bon mouvernent, Falter—tell me your secret." "What are you
trying to do, catch me off guard? You're crafty, I see. No, that is out of the question. In the first days—
yes, in the first days I thought it might be possible to share my secret. A grown man, unless he is a bull
like me, would not stand it—all right; but I wondered if one could not bring up a new generation of the
initiated, that is, turn my attention to children. As you see, I did not immediately overcome the infection
of local dialects. In practice, however, what would happen? In the first place, one can hardly imagine
pledging kiddies to a vow of priestly silence lest any of them with one dreamy word commit
manslaughter. In the second place, as soon as the child grows up, the information once imparted to him,
accepted on faith, and al-lowed to sleep in a remote corner of his consciousness may give a start and
awake, with tragic consequences. Even if my secret does not always destroy a mature member of the
species, it is unthinkable that it should spare a youth. For who is not familiar with that period of life
when all kinds of things—the starry sky above a Caucasian spa, a book read in the toilet, one's own
conjectures about the cosmos, the deli-cious panic of solipsism—are in themselves enough to provoke a
frenzy in all the senses of an adolescent human being? There is no reason for me to become an
executioner; I have no intention of annihilating en-emy regiments through a megaphone; in short, there
is no one for me to confide in."

"I asked you two questions, Falter, and you have twice proved to me t he impossibility of an
answer. It seems to me useless to ask you about anything else—say, about the limits of the universe, or
the origin of life. You would probably suggest that I be content with a speckled minute on a second-rate
planet, served by a second-rate sun, or else you would again reduce everything to a riddle: is the word
'heterolo-gous' heterologous itself."
"Probably," agreed Falter, giving a lengthy yawn. His brother-in-law quietly scooped his watch
out of his waistcoat and glanced at his wife.
"I lore's the odd thing, though, Falter. How does superhuman knowledge of the ultimate truth
combine in you with the adroitness of a banal sophist who knows nothing? Admit it, all your absurd
quibbling was nothing more than an elaborate sneer."
"Oh well, that is my only defense," said Falter, squinting at his sister, who was nimbly extracting
a long gray woolen scarf from the sleeve of the overcoat already being offered to him by his brother-in-
law. "Otherwise, you know, you might have teased it out of me. However," he added, inserting the

wrong arm, and then the right one in the sleeve, and simultaneously moving away from the helping shoves of his assistants, "however, even if I did browbeat you a little, let me console you: amid all the piffle and prate I inadvertently gave myself away—only two or three words, but in them flashed a fringe of abso lute insight—luckily, though, you paid no attention."

He was led away, and thus ended our rather diabolical dialogue. Not only had Falter told me nothing, he had not even allowed me to get close, and no doubt his last pronouncement was as much of a mockery as all the preceding ones. The following day his brother-in-law's dull voice informed me on the telephone that Falter charged 100 francs for a visit; I asked why on earth had I not been warned of this, and he promptly replied that if the interview were to be repeated, two conversations would cost me only 150. The purchase of Truth, even at a discount, did not tempt me, and, after sending him the sum of that unexpected debt, I forced myself not to think about Falter any more. Yesterday, though....

Yes, yesterday I received a note from Falter himself, from the hospital: he wrote, in a clear hand, that he would die on Tuesday, and that in parting he ventured to inform me that—here- followed two lines which had been painstakingly and, it seemed, ironically, blacked out. I replied that I was grateful for his thoughtfulness and that I wished him interesting posthumous impressions and a pleas ant eternity.

But all this brings me no nearer to you, my angel. Just in case, I am keeping all the windows and doors of life wide open, even though I sense that you will not condescend to the time-honored ways of appa ritions. Most terrifying of all is the thought that, inasmuch as you glow henceforth within me, I must safeguard my life. My transitory bodily frame is perhaps the only guarantee of your ideal existence: when I vanish, it will vanish as well. Alas, with a pauper's passion I am doomed to use physical nature in order to finish recounting you to myself, and then to rely on my own ellipsis...