Somewhere Towards the End

Diana Athill

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Extract

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Near the park which my bedroom overlooks there came to stay a family which owned a pack of pugs, five or six of them, active little dogs, none of them overweight as pugs so often are. I saw them recently on their morning walk, and they caused me a pang. I have always wanted a pug and now I can't have one, because buying a puppy when you are too old to take it for walks is unfair. There are dog-walkers, of course; but the best part of owning a dog is walking with it, enjoying its delight when it detects the signs that a walk is imminent, and its glee when its lead is unsnapped and it can bound off over the grass, casting cheerful looks back at you from time to time to make sure that you are still in touch. Our own dog is as old in dog years as I am in human ones (mine amount to eighty-nine), and wants no more than the little potter I can still provide, but I enjoy watching other people's animals busy about their pleasures.

Brought up with dogs, I am baffled by those who dislike them. They have been domesticated for so long that cohabiting with us is

as natural to them as the jungle is to the tiger. They have become the only animal whose emotions we can truly penetrate: emotions resembling our own excepting in their simplicity. When a dog is anxious, angry, hungry, puzzled, happy, loving, it allows us to see in their purest form states which we ourselves know, though in us they are distorted by the complex accretions of humanity. Dogs and humans recognize each other at a deep and uncomplicated level. I would so like to begin that process all over again with a little black-velvet-faced pug – but no! It can't be done.

And another thing that can't be done became apparent this morning. I had seen in Thompson & Morgan's plant catalogue a photograph of a tree fern which cost £18, reasonable for something so exotic. A few years ago I fell in love with the tree ferns in the forests of Dominica, and since then I learnt that they, or their cousins, can survive in English gardens, so now I ordered one from that catalogue by phone. It arrived today. Of course I knew that I would not receive a mature tree as shown in the photograph, but I was expecting a sizeable parcel, probably by special delivery. What came, by ordinary post, was a box less than twelve inches long containing a three-inch pot, from which four frail little leaves are sprouting. Whether tree ferns grow quickly or slowly I don't know, but even if it is quickly, it is not possible that I shall ever see this one playing the part I envisaged for it in our garden. I shall pot it on towards that end as far as I can, hoping to see it reach a size at which it can be planted out, but virtuous though planting for the future is supposed to be, it doesn't feel rewarding. It made me think of a turn of phrase often used by Jean Rhys, usually about being

drunk: 'I was a bit drunk, well very.' She never in fact said 'I was a bit *sad*, well very' about being old, but no doubt she would have done if she had not hated and feared it too much to speak of it.

Jean was one of my object lessons, demonstrating how not to think about getting old. The prospect filled her with resentment and despair. Sometimes she announced the defiant intention of dyeing her pretty grey hair bright red, but she never did so; less, I think, for the sensible reason that it would have made her look grotesque than because she lacked the energy to organize it. Sometimes – very rarely – drink made her feel better, but more often it turned her querulous and tetchy. She expected old age to make her miserable, and it did, although once she was immersed in it she expressed her misery by complaining about other and lesser things, the big one itself being too much to contemplate – although she did once say that what kept panic at bay was her suicide kit. She had depended on sleeping pills for years and had saved up a substantial cache of them in the drawer of her bedside table, against the day when things got too bad. They did get very bad, but after her death I checked that drawer and the cache was intact.

My second object lesson was the Bulgarian-born, Nobel-Prize-winning writer, Elias Canetti, whose defiance of death was more foolish than Jean's dismay. He had a central European's respect for the construction of abstract systems of thought about the inexplicable, which is uncongenial to many English minds, and which caused him to overvalue his own notions to the extent of publishing two volumes of aphorisms. I never met him, but I knew those books because André Deutsch Limited, the firm in which I worked,

published them. During the long years he spent here as a refugee from Nazi Germany, Canetti had taken so violently against the British, I think because they had failed to recognize his genius (the Nobel Prize was yet to come), that he determined never to be published in this country. However Tom Rosenthal, who took over our firm towards the end of its days, had once done him a kindness which he remembered, so he finally agreed to let us have his books on condition that we began with the two lots of aphorisms and followed the American editions, which he had approved, to the last comma, including the jacket copy. This left his English editor (me) nothing to do except read the books, but that was enough to get my hackles up. Many of the aphorisms were pithy and a few were witty, but as a whole what pompous self-importance! The last straw was when his thinking turned to nonsense and he declared, as he did in several of these snippets, that he 'rejected death'.

Later I came to know a former lover of his, the Austrian painter Marie-Louise Motesiczky, a woman who sailed into her eighties gracefully in spite of much physical pain as a result of a severe case of shingles, and a life-story that might well have flattened her. She deserves more than passing attention.

I met her by chance. Mary Hernton, a friend who was looking for a bedsitter in Hampstead, told me she had found a wonderful room in the house of an extraordinary old woman. The room, though wonderful, was not right for her purposes, but the woman had impressed Mary so much that she had invited her to tea and wanted me to meet her. What was so remarkable about her? I would see when I met her, and anyway Mary thought she had been

Canetti's mistress: her shelves were full of books owned by him and the room had once been his. I did join them for tea, and I too was impressed by Marie-Louise. She was funny, warm, charming and indiscreet. When she learnt that I published Canetti she became excited, disregarding the fact that I had never met him, and plunged at once into telling me how they had been friends and lovers for over twenty years before she learnt that he had a wife and daughter. She knew it sounded improbable, but she had lived a secluded life looking after her mother, who had come with her to England from Vienna just before Hitler invaded Austria (they were members of a rich and distinguished Jewish family). Her seclusion seemed to have spared her the knowledge of Canetti's many other women: she never said anything to me suggesting that she knew about them, only that the revelation of his being married had brought their affair to a sudden and agonizing end. The more she told me, the more it seemed to me that Canetti and her mother, who had died quite recently at a great age, had consumed her life and had left her in emptiness . . . except that there was no real feeling of emptiness about Marie-Louise.

Mary had told me that she thought Marie-Louise painted, but when quite soon I visited her in her large Hampstead house, which was full of interesting objects and paintings, I could see nothing that looked as though it had been done by her. She did, however, make a passing reference to her work, so I asked if I might see some of it. I asked nervously – very nervously – because nothing is more embarrassing than being shown paintings that turn out to be dreadful. She led me – and this boded ill – into her bedroom, a

large, high-ceilinged room, one whole wall of which was an enormous built-in cupboard. This she opened, to reveal racks crammed with paintings, two of which she pulled out. And I was stunned.

This sweet, funny, frail old woman was indeed a painter, the real thing, up there with Max Beckmann and Kokoschka. It was difficult to know how to take it, because one couldn't say 'Oh my god, you really are a painter!', while if one took her for granted as what she was, one would feel impertinent commenting on her work. I can't remember what I did say, but I must have scrambled through it all right because thereafter she was always happy to talk about her work, for which I was grateful. She was wonderful to talk with about painting, and it explained why there was no feeling of emptiness about her. She was an object lesson on the essential luck, whatever hardships may come their way, of those born able to make things.

There was, however, something to worry about, because what were all those paintings doing, languishing in a bedroom cupboard? It turned out that there were two or three in European public collections and that there had been a show of her work at the Goethe Institute not long ago, but still it was a ridiculous situation for which one couldn't help concluding that Canetti and her mother had been largely responsible. Both were cannibals, Canetti because of self-importance, her mother because of dependence. (Once, she told me, when she said to her mother that she was going out for twenty minutes to buy some necessity, her mother wailed 'But what shall I do if I die before you get back?') Though the fact that during the years of her life in England, German expressionist

painting, to which her work was related, had been held in little esteem, may also have contributed to her abdication from the art scene.

But worry was wasted. Although she had been taken advantage of by her two loves, Marie-Louise was a skilful manipulator of everyone else. No sooner did she meet anyone than she began diffidently asking them for help. Could you tell her a good dentist, or plumber, or dressmaker? Might she ask you to help her with this tax return? Always in a way suggesting that you were her only hope. It was quite a while before it dawned on me that a considerable part of the population of Hampstead was waiting on her hand and foot, so that worry wasn't really necessary, and by the time I met her a young friend of hers called Peter Black was well on the way to convincing a great Viennese gallery, the Belvedere, that it must give her the major exhibition that she deserved. I was able to help her write tactful letters to them when she disliked the catalogue descriptions they were providing, which earned me an invitation to the opening. (I also, which pleased me even more, persuaded our National Portrait Gallery to reverse its rejection of her portrait of Canetti. They had told her coldly that they were not interested in portraits of unknown people, and – although I ought not to say it – the letter in which I told them who Canetti was without showing that I knew they didn't know, was a masterpiece. I wish I had kept a copy. The portrait is now there.)

The exhibition in Vienna was a wonderful occasion. Seeing those paintings hung where they ought to be was like seeing animals which had been confined in cages at a zoo released into their

natural habitat. I am sure Marie-Louise did not wish to be pleased with anything that her native city did for her (it had murdered her beloved brother, who had stayed behind to help his fellow Jews), but although she made a game attempt at dissatisfaction with details, she could not conceal her pleasure at the whole.

At one of our last meetings before her death I asked her if Canetti had meant it literally when he declared that he would not accept it. Oh yes, she said. And she confessed that there was a time when she was so enthralled by the power of his personality that she had allowed herself to think 'Perhaps he will really do it – will become the first human being not to die.' She was laughing at herself when she said this, but a little tremulously. I think she still felt that his attitude was heroic.

To me it was plain silly. It is so obvious that life works in terms of species rather than of individuals. The individual just has to be born, to develop to the point at which it can procreate, and then to fall away into death to make way for its successors, and humans are no exception whatever they may fancy. We have, however, contrived to extend our falling away so much that it is often longer than our development, so what goes on in it and how to manage it is worth considering. Book after book has been written about being young, and even more of them about the elaborate and testing experiences that cluster round procreation, but there is not much on record about falling away. Being well advanced in that process, and just having had my nose rubbed in it by pugs and tree ferns, I say to myself, 'Why not have a go at it?' So I shall.



All through my sixties I felt I was still within hailing distance of middle age, not safe on its shores, perhaps, but navigating its coastal waters. My seventieth birthday failed to change this because I managed scarcely to notice it, but my seventy-first did change it. Being 'over seventy' is being old: suddenly I was aground on that fact and saw that the time had come to size it up.

I have lived long enough to have witnessed great changes in being old as far as women are concerned – smaller ones for men, but for them less was needed. In my grandmothers' day a woman over seventy adopted what almost amounted to a uniform. If she was a widow she wore black or grey clothes that disregarded fashion, and even if she still had a husband her garments went a bit drab and shapeless, making it clear that this person no longer attempted to be attractive. My paternal grandmother, who was the older of the two, wore floor-length black garments to her dying day, and a little confection of black velvet and lace on her head, a 'cap'

such as full-blown Victorian ladies wore. (Judging by the skimpiness of my own hair in old age, which comes from her side of the family, she had good reason for adhering to that particular fashion.) Even one of my aunts, my mother's eldest sister, never wore anything but black or grey after her husband's death in the 1930s, and deliberately chose unsmart shapes for her garments. The abrupt shortening of skirts in the 1920s contributed to the preservation of this 'uniform', because no one at any age wants to look grotesque, and grotesque is what old legs and bodies would have looked in 'flapper' fashions, so in my youth old women were still announcing by their appearance that they had become a different kind of person. After the Second World War, however, reaction against the austerity it had imposed led to far greater flexibility. For a while *Vogue* ran a feature called 'Mrs Exeter' to persuade elderly women that they could wear stylish clothes, and this demonstration soon became unnecessary, so pleased were women to choose clothes to suit their shapes and complexions rather than to conform to a convention. Nowadays an old woman would obviously be daft if she dressed like a teenager, but I have a freedom of choice undreamt of by my grandmothers. There have been days when I went shopping in my local Morrisons wearing something a bit eccentric and wondered whether I would see any raised eyebrows, only to conclude that I would probably have to wear a bikini before anyone so much as blinked.

Even more than clothes, cosmetics have made age look, and therefore feel, less old. Until quite recently they could be a danger, because women who had always worn a lot of make-up tended to

continue to do so, blind to the unfortunate effect it could have on an inelastic and crêpy skin. One of my dearest old friends could never get it into her head that if, when doing herself up for a party, she slapped on a lot of scarlet lipstick, it would soon come off on her teeth and begin to run into the little wrinkles round the edge of her lips, making her look like a vampire bat disturbed in mid-dinner. Luckily today's cosmetics are much better made and more subtle in effect, so that an ancient face that would look absurd if *visibly* painted can be gently coaxed into looking quite naturally better than it really is. Having inherited a good skin from my mother, I still receive compliments for it, but nowadays I know that at least half its 'goodness' is thanks to Max Factor. Appearance is important to old women, not because we suppose that it will impress other people, but because of what we ourselves see when we look in a mirror. It is unlikely that anyone else will notice that the nose on an old face is red and shiny or the broken veins on its cheeks are visible, but its owner certainly will, and will equally certainly feel a lift in her spirits when this depressing sight is remedied. And even if how one sees oneself is not wholly how one is, it does contribute a great deal towards it. I know for sure that I both feel and behave younger than my grandmothers did when they were old.

In spite of this, however, the most obvious thing about moving into my seventies was the disappearance of what used to be the most important thing in life: I might not look, or even feel, all that old, but I had ceased to be a sexual being, a condition which had gone through several stages and had not always been a happy one, but which had always seemed central to my existence.

It had started when I was four or five in a way which no doubt appeared comic to onlookers but which felt serious enough to me, with the announcement that I was going to marry John Sherbroke. He was a little boy who lived a few houses up from us on the street beside Woolwich Common (my father, an officer in the Royal Artillery, was presumably an instructor at the Military Academy there at the time, and John's father was also a Gunner). I can't remember John at all, except for his name, and that he was my Intended. His successor is clearer in my memory because of his beautiful, sad brown eyes and the glamour bestowed on him by his great age – he was Denis, the gardener's boy at the Hall Farm where we had gone to live under the wing of my mother's parents. I doubt whether I ever spoke to Denis, but I did, with great daring, spit on his head out of the lavatory window when he was working the pump by the back door. He was followed by loves with whom I did communicate – indeed I and my brother spent much time with them: Jack and Wilfred, sons of the head cow-man at the farm, remembered even more clearly than Denis because of the amount of time I put into trying to decide which I loved best.

Those two were the first beneficiaries of my romantic phase, in which love took the form of daydreams. The object of my passion would be placed in a situation of great danger – his house on fire, perhaps, or he was being swept away in a flood – and I would rescue him, the dream's climax being that when he recovered consciousness he would open his eyes to find me leaning over him, my cloud of black hair enveloping him like a cloak (I was a skinny child with a mouse-coloured bob, but I confidently expected to

improve with time). Jack and Wilfred lasted until I was nine, when they were ousted by the first love I chose for real reasons: David, who was far kinder, braver and more sensible than the rest of us and was also a familiar friend and companion. He, too, was liable to be rescued, though rather guiltily because of how silly he would have thought it, had he known. He told his mother I was a good sport, which was thrilling at the time, though as I entered my teens it did begin to pall.

Then, at fifteen, I fell in love as an adult. It was with Paul (I called him that in *Instead of a Letter*, so he can keep the name here), who came during one of his Oxford vacations to earn a bit of money by coaching my brother for an exam. He dispelled daydreams by being the real thing, but he did not dispel romance. I loved, I assumed love equalled marriage, and I was certain that once I was married to the man I loved I would be faithful to him for the rest of my life. I did have the occasional, fleeting daydream about my beautiful white wedding, but to embroider my romanticism beyond that, once I was old enough to hold Paul's attention and we became engaged, was not easy, partly because of how everyone went on at me about how poor we would be and how I would have to learn to be a good housewife. Paul, who had gone into the RAF, was still only a pilot-officer whose pay was £400 a year, which seemed to him and me enough to have a good time on, whatever 'they' said, but still the warnings were sobering; though less so than something which happened about six months after we announced our engagement.

We went, with his sister, to a party with a group of rather louche friends of Paul's – I didn't know where he had picked them up, and

was disconcerted by them from the start because they were drinking harder and talking more crudely than anyone I had met hitherto. One of them had brought along an extravagantly sexy-looking girl who made a dead set at Paul the moment she saw him, and to my incredulous dismay he responded. After an extremely uncomfortable hour or two he shovelled the task of seeing me home onto his embarrassed sister, and he ended the evening, I was sure, in bed with that girl. During the following two weeks I heard nothing from him, and felt too crushed to write or call myself, and when he let me know that he was about to fly down from Grantham to spend the weekend at Oxford with me, as he often did, I was more anxious than relieved.

During the Saturday evening we drank too much and he collapsed into almost tearful apology. He had behaved horribly, he was so ashamed of himself he couldn't bear it, I must, must believe that it had meant absolutely nothing, that girl had turned out to be a ghastly bore (what a slip-up! Suppose she hadn't been?). Never again would he do anything like that because I was and always would be the only woman he really loved, and so on and so on. It was better than silence had been, but it was not good.

Next morning we took a taxi to 'our' pub in Appleton and dismissed it before we got there in order to dispel our headaches by walking the last mile, although it was a bitterly cold and windy winter day. Paul seemed relaxed, scanning the fields on either side of the muddy lane for fieldfares; I was dismally silent, mulling over his apology. It had meant nothing: yes, I accepted that. But his declaration that such a thing would never happen again: no, that I

was unable to believe. I don't remember being as shocked as I ought to have been at his doing it under my nose, thus betraying a really gross indifference to my feelings. I had a humble opinion of my own importance, carefully fostered by a family which considered vanity a serious sin, so in such a situation I tended to blame myself as not being worthy of consideration, and I wasn't consciously thinking of that although I am now sure that it was gnawing away at me. What I knew I was thinking about was how this flightiness of Paul's must be handled. I remember thinking that once we were married I would have to learn to be *really clever*. 'It will be all right for quite a time,' I thought. 'He will go on coming back to me while we are like we are now. But when I get old – when I'm *thirty*' – and I saw a flash of my own face, anxious and wrinkled under grey hair – 'then it will be dangerous, then he could fall in love with one of them.' Would I learn to be clever *enough*? I'd have to. The whole of that day remained dismal, but not for a moment did it occur to me that I might not want to marry him, and soon our relationship was restored to its usual enjoyable state.

So I don't think there was ever a time in my adult life when I didn't realize that men were quite likely to be technically unfaithful to women, although it was not until Paul had finally jilted me that I saw that women, too, could be cheered up by sex without love. I 'recovered' from Paul in that I fell in love again, twice, and heavily, but both times it felt 'fatal', something impossible to avoid, and anyway I longed for it, but which was bound to bring pain. The first time it was with a married man much older than myself, and I never envisaged him leaving his wife for me. No doubt if he

had suggested it I would have accepted, but I admired him far too much to expect it: I was his wartime fling, or folly (there's nothing like a whiff of death in the air to intensify desire, the essence of life – I remember him whispering in amazement 'I'd resigned myself to never feeling like this again'), while she was his good and blameless wife who had just become the mother of their first child, so leaving her would prove him cruel and irresponsible which I was sure he was not. I would not have loved him so much if he had been.

My second after-Paul love was available, even eligible, but his very eligibility seemed to make him too good to be true. He liked me a lot. For a time he almost thought he was in love with me, but he never quite was and I sensed almost from the beginning that it was going to end in tears, whereupon I plunged in deeper and deeper. And it did end in tears quite literally, both of us weeping as we walked up and down Wigmore Street on our last evening together. With masochistic abandon I loved him even more for his courage in admitting the situation and sparing me vain hopes (and in fact such courage, which takes a lot of summoning up, is something to be grateful for, because a broken heart mends much faster from a conclusive blow than it does from slow strangulation. Believe me! Mine experienced both.)

That, for me, was the end of romantic love. What followed, until I met Barry Reckord in my forty-fourth year, was a series of sometimes very brief, sometimes sustained affairs, always amiable (two of them very much so), almost always cheering-up (two of the tiny ones I could have done without), and none of them going deep

enough to hurt. During those years, if a man wanted to marry me, as three of them did, I felt what Groucho Marx felt about a club willing to accept him: disdain. I tried to believe it was something more rational, but it wasn't. Several of the painless affairs involved other people's husbands, but I never felt guilty because the last thing I intended or hoped for was damage to anyone's marriage. If a wife ever found out – and as far as I know that never happened – it would have been from her husband's carelessness, not mine.

Loyalty is not a favourite virtue of mine, perhaps because André Deutsch used so often to abuse the word, angrily accusing any writer who wanted to leave our list of 'disloyalty'. There is, of course, no reason why a writer should be loyal to a firm which has supposed that it will be able to make money by publishing his work. Gratitude and affection can certainly develop when a firm makes a good job of it, but no bond of loyalty is established. In cases where such a bond exists – loyalty to family, for example, or to a political party – it can become foolishness if betrayed by its object. If your brother turns out to be a murderer or your party changes its policies, standing by him or it through thick or thin seems to me mindless. Loyalty unearned is simply the husk of a notion developed to benefit the bosses in a feudal system. When spouses are concerned, it seems to me that kindness and consideration should be the key words, not loyalty, and sexual infidelity does not necessarily wipe them out.

Fidelity in the sense of keeping one's word I respect, but I think it tiresome that it is tied so tightly in people's minds to the idea of sex. The belief that a wife owes absolute fidelity to her husband has

deep and tangled roots, being based not only on a man's need to know himself to be the father of his wife's child, but also on the even deeper, darker feeling that man *owns* woman, God having made her for his convenience. It's hard to imagine the extirpation of that: think of its power in Islam! And woman's anxious clamour for her husband's fidelity springs from the same primitive root: she feels it to be necessary proof of her value. That I know only too well, having had the stuffing knocked out of me so painfully when Paul chose to marry someone else. But understanding doesn't mean approving. Why, given our bone-deep, basic need for one another, do men and women have to put so much weight on this particular, unreliable aspect of it?

I think now of Isaac Bashevis Singer's story, 'The Peephole in the Gate', about a young man who saw his sweetheart home on the eve of their marriage, couldn't resist taking one last look at her through the peephole – and there she was, being soundly and obviously enjoyably kissed by the porter. End of betrothal – though the narrator does slyly remind the young man that he had it off with a serving maid that same afternoon. The story goes on to suggest how much simpler, and probably better, two people's lives would have been if that sexual infidelity had never come to light: a theme which Singer, that wise old bird, returns to several times, always with his characteristic trick of leaving the pronouncement of a moral judgement in the hands of the reader. Given his deep attachment to his religious background, I can't be sure that he would have agreed with the judgement I produce – but after all, he *does* ask for it. Yes, there are some things, sexual infidelities among them, that

do no harm if they remain unknown – or, for that matter, are known and accepted, and which is preferable depends on the individuals and their circumstances. I only have to ask myself which I would choose, if forced to do so, between the extreme belief that a whole family's honour is stained by an unfaithful wife unless she is killed, and the attitude often attributed to the French, that however far from admirable sexual infidelity is, it is perfectly acceptable if *conducted properly*. Vive la France!

This attitude I shared, and still share, with Barry, with whom, after I had finally shed the scars of a broken heart (by 'writing them out', as I will explain later), I eventually settled down into an extraordinarily happy loving friendship, which remained at its best for about eight years until it began to be affected not by emotional complications, but by Time. This was not a sudden event, but its early stage, which took place during my mid- and late fifties, was followed by a reprieve, which made it possible to ignore its significance. Gradually I had become aware that my interest in, and therefore my physical response to, making love with my dear habitual companion, was dwindling: familiarity had made the touch of his hand feel so like the touch of my own hand that it no longer conveyed a thrill. Looking back, I wonder why I never talked about this with him, because I didn't. I simply started to fake. Probably this was because the thought of 'working at' the problem together, as I supposed a marriage counsellor would suggest, struck me as unlikely to solve it. Tedious and absurd: that was how I envisaged such a procedure. If something that had always worked naturally now didn't work – well, first you hoped that faking

it would bring it back, which sometimes it did, and when that stopped happening you accepted that it was over.

That acceptance was sad. Indeed, I was forced into it, at a time when our household was invaded by a ruthless and remarkably succulent blonde in her mid-twenties and he fell into bed with her. There was one sleepless night of real sorrow, but only one night. What I mourned during that painful night was not the loss of my loving old friend who was still there, and still is, but the loss of youth: 'What she has, god rot her, I no longer have and will never, never have again.' A belated recognition, up against which I had come with a horrid crunch. But very soon another voice began to sound in my head, which made more sense. 'Look,' it said, 'you know quite well that you have stopped wanting him in your bed, it's months since you enjoyed it, so what are you moaning about? Of course you have lost youth, you have moved on and stopped wanting what youth wants.' And that was the end of that stage.

Soon afterwards came the reprieve, when I found, to my amusement and pleasure, that novelty could restore sex. I described in *Instead of a Letter* how after an early, real and long-lasting sorrow my morale had begun to be restored by an affair with a man I called Felix, which did not involve love but was thoroughly enjoyable otherwise. Now, as I approached my sixties, it happened again, and my life as a sexual being was prolonged by seven years while Barry went his own way, our companionship having become more like that of brother and sister than of lovers. A second man with whom I had little in common won himself a place in memory made warm by gratitude. After him there was no reprieve, nor did I want one.