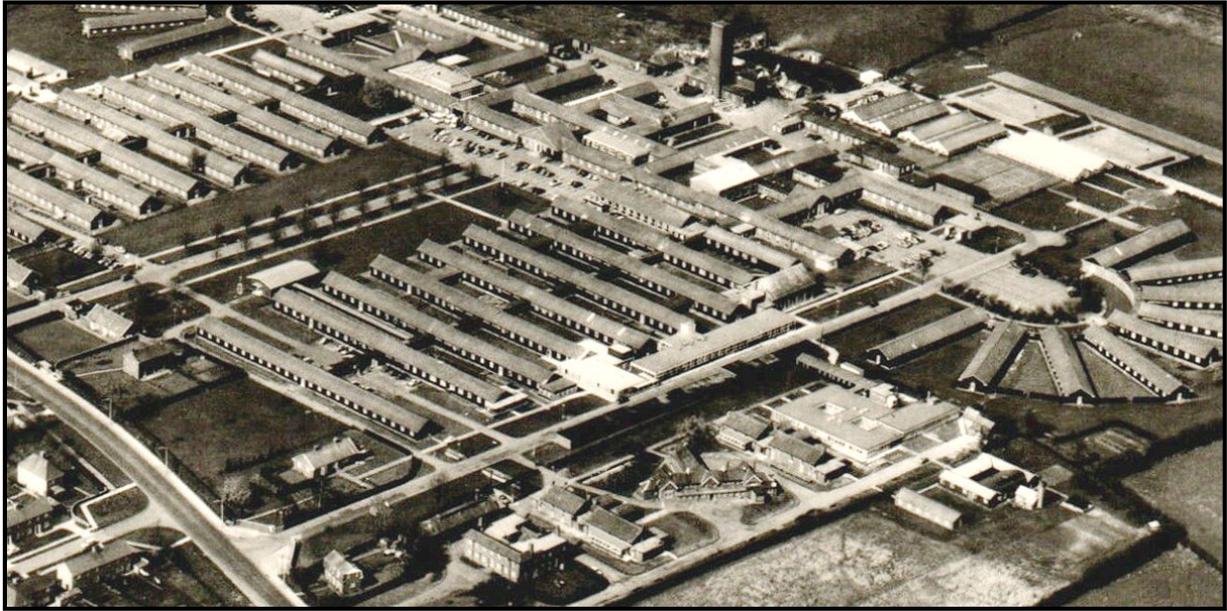


THREE LEAVES IN COLOUR
A Wander in the Footsteps of Virginia Maskell



A.V. Andersen

IV Endless Night



Where no one wants to hang over the fence: the grounds of Stone-Manderley Hospital in the mid '60s.

When I once returned on your tracks in the fragments of Manderley Hospital, I entered a certain lane in the backyard on the northern edge of the ugly new conglomerate to find myself suddenly in a messy dead end between decayed wards on the right and a postmodern wing on the left side, leading to a building pit where once the boiler chimney was smoking like Gulliver's cancer-stick. Suddenly I was overwhelmed by a series of *déjà-vus* like rarely in my life (apart from my mentioned attack of Stendhal Syndrome on the Waterloo Bridge) to lose my sense of time and space for a little moment (please forgive my whimsical digression that was perhaps related to my recent wander over Wain Hill where I inhaled too much beech spores, or to a dive into Ordeal's painkiller chest due to my mishap in a pothole at the foot of the County Hall (what I will probably talk about later); but my little rascal, you know that it's all nothing but the truth). Straight ahead to the left, I became aware of an inconspicuous annex protruding into the lane (the latter was formerly the eastern section of the circular route around the old clinic) to confuse it in the twinkling of an eye with a certain place in Copenhagen that I am familiar with, namely the backyard of the *Clarahuset*, a modernist ward of *Den Gamles By*. This *town of the elderly people* is a vast ensemble of care homes, built in the Victorian era and refurbished in the '60s, located next to the Imperial Hospital (briefly called *Riget*). Centuries ago, Canonesses cleaned the bloodstained linen of those people who suffered from consumption here in the extensive wetlands at the outer rim of the city; and given this sad past, the area is said to be haunted (at least by Lars).



It was like a flashlight from my Danish age that ended, much like yours, in a catastrophe (but that is, of course, another story, not causally related to your drama). However, given this strange impression, I turned to the left to a half hidden door and pressed my nose against the pane to see what lies behind. And suddenly I remembered a sequence of the *Doctor: Nicola*, clothed in a maroon dress, is running around like an agitated chicken through a gloomy hallway (which looks pretty much like this one) in

search of the young doctor she is engaged to, whom she believes he is in an awkward situation, namely that he has to undergo a major operation, after they have parted due to meaningless Cabal. She collides with an eerie looking keeper who is just pushing a stretcher out of a room with seemingly a body under a shroud. But what a luck, the latter suddenly arises to reveal himself as James Robertson (since he was the one who was disembowelled instead of her darling) while the reunited couple is kissing in front of the operation theatre; and now it's up to Leslie (who plays the assistant of *Nicola's* fiancé) to look grinning through the pane and rejoice with the couple – but fact and fiction do not always merge as we have learned the hard way. And I can't watch this sequence without thinking about the sinister prophecy in it, as if you were forced to always be in resonance with your private destiny on screen, even in such a shallow comedy. I removed my nose from the pain and took a step back, still a bit bewildered, and my vision remained blurred as I imagined you wandering through the endless corridors of the old campus (although they had long since been demolished and no longer existed) on a lonesome way, or even lying in a cot next door on the current station as if you were still with us at this place in a narcoleptic trance, reclining like the Sleeping Beauty. Please forgive me if I hesitated to enter the room (as Pedro once did for a silent dialogue to find you unconscious and cold as a carp with eyes like a Panda but still in youthful bloom) and hardly dared to push the curtain aside, given the fear to discover an old woman with a goiter who croaks at me incomprehensibly. But luckily my vision changed to find a lady looking like Rosalie; and she asked me gently like an angel with a touching glance as if awakened from an endless night: "What became of me? I have to come home and tell the bees about what happened on the cliffs above the bay!" Albeit in the face of her soothing voice and honey-sweet apparition, I recoiled since I suddenly realized that only her eyes articulated and that she was probably eager to see the world out there through the twinkling eyes of a random wanderer.



Once I had sorted myself out, I realized it was the elder pathology wing, the only part of the ancient campus that survived the demolition. Sinister, I have to say! All the more so when I felt a stocky house in my back which is still in use as the clinic's mortuary. And this was the very place where your battered body had been stored until the 1st of February when you set off to your last journey through Amersham Vale. But look: In this moment, after a long depressing drizzle, suddenly the sky opened and drove away the dark clouds to reveal a view of the blue heaven with a flock of giggling seagulls, which made me feel as if I would have just been lifted up to fly with them over the rainbow. And I had to think about how the routes of migratory birds might intersect, whether by chance or synchronized, in a celestial atlas whose intricate network, woven as if by Jung, guides us all through space and time.



After the last night of the *Interlude* proms, when she was seen *dancing happily and gay*, Virginia disappeared, never to be heard or seen publicly again. She suffered from a mysterious illness (the nature of it not even Al her agent was informed) that escalated into a clinical treatment throughout the autumn of *around six to ten weeks*, allegedly *for depression*. The time data varies weirdly, depending on the sources; but all of them are based on the single statement of a certain quack who didn't know at all what happened during her stay, not even its precise duration; yet he would become the mouthpiece for whole the causal chain. The situation reminds sinisterly of the time span that Virginia had scarily depicted in her poem *Hospital* in late autumn '58 with suffering inmates, restrained in their beds, begging for sympathy and ciggies, which are denied to them by ominous carers lurking behind the cot curtains. To rack our brains over whether she would complain now too like her heroines in Cockney, who spoke similarly slurred: *I've been 'ere ten weeks and I ain't used to it yet!* She would never get used to it – and she would pull the ripcord to forestall her impending suffering.



Time to meet Long John again who admitted her to the hospital when her voice was just fading because *she was heavily drugged* (to wonder which horrible aches she had to numb by taking tons of painkillers). Remember Georgian advices? “Never consult a quack and you will live for a hundred years!” And he will become the crown witness in the inquest quickie, conducted by a certain Mr. Pitt, and spin some yarn regarding her alleged anamnesis of a fatally depressed lunatic in complete disregard of what happened to her while she was institutionalized at his questionable behest. Lest we forget Leslie's dismaying words:

A serious mistake was made somewhere. She died very badly.

When Silver found her in bed so heavily drugged that she couldn't even speak (at least according to his statements), he consulted a psychiatrist from an obscure clinic because he *THOUGHT she wouldn't like to live any longer* even though *he couldn't understand her statement due to her slurred speech* (caused by his previous prescriptions and/or something worse), but he would never be informed about the diagnosis: *I don't know if they ever spoke about suicide there*. That sounds to me not really trustworthy. And maybe the clinic docs weren't either so convinced of his abilities and those of his buddies from the Ol' Cross and Bones surgery? One of them was said to be a drunkard, who used to make diagnoses while holding a bottle of rum (as we can read in the memories of contemporary witnesses); and his fellow liked to write prescriptions with always ciggies in his hands (if the latter might have suited Virginia's taste, at least that) – to wonder about: why the heck didn't she (respectively those close to her) consult a renowned doctor on Harley Street?! Well, how we find those folks similarly acting in *Carry On / Doctor / in Love* (albeit funnier in fiction): those were the times (and partly still are) when white gods could persuade both relatives and patients to submit to any pointless treatment, generally speaking. Silver is even said to have been the most reliable of that charming GP bunch – and incidentally, the prettiest, dark-haired, slim and outstanding shy. I tend to recognize her male reflection. Our gullible damsell in distress may have fallen for a decoy again, just like she once did with those lovely sisters, in order to be dumped at any institution. Or worse (if I do him an injustice and *he* was the capable guy), that clinic staff had badder reasons not to include him (as well as we will learn, due to presumption of some of their popular conductors, that they generally used to reject consulting colleagues), namely to conceal their own malpractice – so who will ever know and talk about (with mouths gagged and withered tongues)

WHAT HAPPENED IN STONE-MANDERLEY?

This is the only question that was completely withheld in the Pitt Show with Silver in the lead role, and still is! Nobody knows nothing, that's the good ol' game of the deceptive league of medicine men.



But then, and that's the highlight of unbelievable quack failure and undoubtedly his contribution, the incidents in autumn wouldn't prevent Long John from another, now fatal prescription of possibly the same cocktail because (as far as his narrative) *her health seemed to have improved* in January (albeit not in general). And by the way, our sympathetic doctor wouldn't even realize her panda eyes on that certain day. That's to be called a conscientious consultation, huh?! Worth to ponder about the balance between professional distance and a certain relationship of trust. To conclude: Regarding the depiction of her decay's causal chain, I'm tempted to spot some hairs in his soup and his dishes as a little bit too spicy which Silver is going to bang on the inquiry's pane (or the pain), at least for my sensitive tongue. And so would be swallowed the meal, seasoned with the ingredients of all those gentlemen involved. And Virginia could not longer defend herself. Since the patients of Pitt used to be silent.



Do you remember how she had recovered some years before, lovingly cared for in a cozy convent, run by Bethany sisters, and how she had recharged her batteries by working in their secret garden? This time, Virginia should be dumped at a less pleasant place where no one wants to hang over the fence: Stone-Manderley, or how it was called (if you know, you know), lay in midst of Hellsbury Vale like an isolation isle. It looked then (albeit totally refurbished since, not really more inviting today) partly like a POW camp and partly like a Victorian workhouse, with decayed barracks on barren grounds, messy mass wards, a supporting cast of inglorious basterds and a phallic chimney smoking above like the Finger of Fear. That doesn't seem like the appropriate place for a vulnerable person, but rather strikingly contrary to her social status, not true?! She would have been expected to be an inpatient on Harley Street where Pedro used to let cure his manifold diseases; and he was not a wealthy man. Even more so, Manderley is rather a strange choice considering her previous accommodation when she had been brought to bed at Hammersmith in a well-renowned clinic hardly two and four years before, to be now deported to a notorious hospital off the border to nowhere. Therefore we can assume that she was removed from public perception, for whatever delicate reason and for whose benefit, who knows?



It can't be emphasized enough that there was not a single hint in Silver's statements when he starred in the Pitt Show of how, where and for what she was actually treated during these ominous two months. But given the total lack of information and the dreadful aftermath, we have to assume that *a dog life of Virginia Maskell* may have been more desirable than her months-long stay in Manderley; and even if we wish her nothing but a similarly gentle cure as that of Rupert, who had fully recovered under her loving care two years before, we have to face the fact that this was not the case. Rather, her perception of *being cared for* (to remind her convent's motto) will have undergone a sudden change in a harsher environment. However it may have been justified, given the effects, it is certain that her institutionalization was counterproductive: another lesson in quackery and obviously a fatal failure! This place, and only this place, was the horrible setting where she lost the trust in men-kind, to be released so causally devastated that just six weeks after her (temporary) discharge Virginia would seek salvation in the beauty of nature, only embraced by comforting trees, and share with them the mystery.



Let us now remember the cozy wellness-temple where *Antonia* was gently undressed by a pleasant nurse to receive soothing care (in a diametric contrast to how some keepers of Manderley used to handle the patients in fact, as it will become public many decades later) three months ago on screen – despite the fact that she was malnourished like Twiggy. To reflect on her general condition even then. Everything has already been said about eating disorders: Castigate your body to maintain self-control in a remote-controlled life. Weight loss might, of course, originate from many other reasons, whether from endocrinologic disturbances or even a deadly disease undetected lurking. And indeed, we never learned what became of her after *Antonia* had left the restaurant. Neither what Virginia replied when Pedro had warned her in a letter that she looked similarly underfed. But maybe she only thought her own meals weren't really yummy? Since she was said, much like Long John, to be a poor (yet not an evil) cook, inglorious for inedible dishes (remember the blackened Christmas goose?). And this may be not only one of Pedro's legends. Having been catered for whole her life in her many habitats, it's highly unlikely that Virginia could have served as a chef of a country estate's kitchen. Anyway, now she had to swallow spicier dishes from Ordeal's witches' labs and no one asked if they pleased her palate. What we know for sure about Virginia's condition is that her voice had faded. But *when often the word is blind perhaps her eyes articulated* in expression of silent despair (what she had been famous for as once a lively actress) to emphasize her legitimate doubts about being here. And the ungrateful audience in their creepy white coats may have retorted in icy disdain while rolling their eyes at their reluctant patient who wasn't inclined to bow to their wisdom. These are the opponents in another fictive scene of Virginia's first appearance in her last main role on the most inhospitable stage:

“Where am I?” “In Hellsbury Vale.” “What do you want?” “Correction!” “Whose side are you on?” “That would be telling. (You guess it anyway.) We will correct you, convert you, condition you!” “You won't succeed!” “By hook or by crook, we will!” “Who are you?” “His new henchmen.” “Who is the mastermind?” “You are – the misfit!” “I am not a misfit – I am a free Urchin!”
(Proposal for the stage performance: followed by stern looks, if not established laughter.)

Ouch, you better shouldn't have said this! Whatever you state, and even more do, in righteous rage, they will consider it as indications of a disturbed mind and put you into restraints. Renounce from screaming and resisting, don't rebel against their raid when they lay their hairy claws on your soft skin. You only prove to be hysterical! Their evil principle, like that of *Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether*, consists in the inversion of the facts of who is fair and who is foul, and who is sane and who is sick.

The perfect, perfid procedure of submission to the patriarchal mind-control in their mental mills (however they are called, *The Village*, *Ludovico*, Bedlam, Keystroke, Stone or, even though unlikely, Manderley). And you *banged with your fists on the pane (or the pain)* as you were pulled around by some warders, perhaps not as gently as *Antonia* was fondled, rather more as roughly as Pat had grabbed *No. 9*. And that's how they led the *Woman Upstairs* into a painful and disdainful therapy.



Why couldn't they just *leave you alone? You were not available!* But twas only for your own good. Thus submit to their demaaands and *you'll see how you feel better day by day*. Nay! We feel good just being ourselves and being respected for who we are, not what they expect us to be. Oh, these know-it-all, who are clapping in time to the beat of the Ps, we are sickened of them! First and foremost of Psychiatrists, the spearhead of suggestive folks. *If..* we unload all explosives and let the tide come, high and low, we will neither burn nor drown inside. Don't bother about what society thinks about manners, traits and gender. There is no wrong or right, only to be free, according to your nature, never to convention! But who cares about the righteous claims of a fully Stoned woman with

the anamnesis of a long-suffering lunatic? Welcome to the place where free will is denied by quack hubris! All is done, of course, for her benefit – respectively that of her overstrained surroundings. As it is well known, members of the established classes (who have been driven from showing their true faces and feelings on their journey through the institutions from childhood) are eager to conform with their convention; and there is no niche for an independent woman who denies to be glued with their ossified views. Some relatives might even be relieved to know their child of sorrow under “good” supervision – of vain experts like those in *The Village* of social perfection and enduring happiness. Beware of them! A pretty facade off the gates, but ultra-violence when the curtains are closed, that's their evil Janus grimace. And now submit to Pavlov's (ad)vices how a good doggie has to swallow poisoned dishes in the jingle of their rhythm. Let yourself be conditioned according to their wishes; to become again radiant links in their rusty chains. Be always obedient to avoid penalties, put on fake smiles for their delight to get out of there and always hide your innermost true self in order not to be plagued any longer; these are the essential principles to survive *Ludovico's* mills.

And our poor submissive heroine was well-practiced in life-short self-denial. So that indeed, she would succeed, probably thanks to her essential masquerade: At the bitter end early in December, she would be *permitted to leave since her health had made improvements* – whatever that meant, depending on whose perspective. For her: the inner fire had been extinguished. For them: the nagging woman was reminded of her duties; the fancy ideas of *being a free Urchin* (LOL) were driven out of her mind. Once again, others knew what was best for her and had assigned her the place to stay.



Albeit she hadn't played a single scene with her colleague John – whom Hugh had granted a slapstick role in *Interlude* (oddly contrasting with the tragic plot) that marked his cinematic debut, while at the same time he was also seen on telly as the bizarre *egg-man* in a rather funny *Avengers'* episode – and we don't know if she ever met him on or off screen, he could well have told her about his hometown on the actual Midsomer Coast, then a pretty popular seaside resort (which he considered *booring*), and about a Convalescence Home for wealthy wives (that was called Keystroke or something like that) beneath a wooded hill in the Sandbay next door. Since then, the town has been in decline and has become Britain's capital of drug withdrawal; and accordingly, the Home is now a badmouthed asylum.

And when I learned about some current events from the Westland press – by the way, in one of those journals that had also announced the headlines of the *Lost Lady in the Woods* early on, hours or even days before Metropolitan editions – I was struck by lightning in the face of striking synchronicities.



The article sheds light on the treatment of a young woman, who was locked away over a fortnight after an attempt to take her own life (to be properly punished instead of being emotionally stabilized – and this is indeed the usual procedure in the good old tradition of so-called charity). Her report from hell behind the bars still in our days reads disturbing like those conceivable experiences of our late heroine (that she may have told those close to her about, but the latter didn't want to listen or believe how she had been harassed) as if that poor sister in Jung would be a mouthpiece from the past – hark, inclined and perhaps soon similarly sickened readers, that's the hot terror still five decades after our cold case:

I can't remember the patient rooms where ever cleaned; my bed sheets where not changed and I slept under a duvet without a cover, for the whole time I was there. The corridors where filthy with dirt and dust accumulation, that significant even for a high risk of infection, and I was urged to clean the ward myself several times. The staff was not attempting to diffuse situations when they arose, and instead resorted all too quickly to injections of sedatives and restraints – there was something like a culture of sedating patients! When I refused to take the sedative medication since I felt not agitated, a nurse and five other staff members forced me to take it instead of explaining its necessity: I was dragged down by a bunch of savage keepers through whole the corridor and slammed against the door to be then inappropriately restrained. I was terrified and visibly shaking and I felt I was unable to help myself; it was demeaning and embarrassing. They grabbed me and pinned my face on the bed and the male nurse pulled my underwear down and injected me with a drug much stronger than that origin what was prescribed – that's how I was made incredibly confused and sleepy. A male nurse stood over me shouting in a threatening manner. I had to stay awake since all nights out of fear not to protect myself. Look, how effective that treatment was! If you are just a little worn, you will leave their madhouse (if they even let you go) deadly devastated with a perpetual trauma. That's the appropriate manner how to drive a healthy woman into insanity! (And beyond, it compels a soul to wander along the tidal shores and look back through the fog, searching for the bitter truth of what was done to her when she repressed the incidents in a narcoleptic trance.) And here comes the sad moral of the story: Never ever seek for help, don't reveal your troubles in your depths to any quack or your closests if you don't want to be branded and risk being turned through the bone and mind mills! And in this sense she concluded: Whole the procedures were terrifying and contributed further to the decline in my mental health; and I now endure flashbacks related to the incidents. Yeah, that was again a splendid success of quackery!



Holistic destruction, degradation and humiliation – this is no *Hammer* fiction but everyday horror! And it's only the tip of the iceberg like of those nebulous rocks protruding from the Chanell like ghostly vessels from the Styx. It's far beyond a foul game of a few perverts who enjoy to exploit the vulnerability of the less fortunate. Rather and most reprehensible, the paradigm of psychiatry is not at all to comfort distressed souls, but to penalize those who have been labelled as social misfits, to desensitize them from their delicacy, to harden the weaklings in horrible booth camps (as it once began in the schools – it's always the same procedure in all so-called social educational institutions), to bring them back into line of a Spartan hierarchy (or to finally dump them), *by hook or by crook*. To demand the burial of those aspects of individuality, which are considered social inappropriate (or simply disruptive to the ignorant surroundings), in order to create a flock of bleating sheep and beeping sparrows (to the taste of the Ps), always happy and which such a pretty masque to everyone's delight; and that's how the family likes its members, especially their offspring and good wives: easy-care, submissive, well-mannered and publicly presentable, according to social norms. Oh dear, that sounds so compliant to me like a *Clockwork* mechanism beating in a *Prisoner's* ears!

The only intention of clinical psychiatry is to bring people into line. It doesn't aim to free feelings but to suppress them (until they are banished to the abyss as an effective slow poison – tasting familiar?); to condition us like Pavlov's dogs so that we all feel and function predictably always in the same way and even ourselves finally believe in what is considered right and wrong and who is fair and foul (according to our needs or theirs?) – that's called brainwashing! Through asylum restraints (just like through the teacher's cane in Horror on the Hill), we have nothing more to learn than how to behave appropriately, not through free choice but through horrible fear of being physically sanctioned (as *Alex* experienced in *Ludovico*) and through the realization that *we will never escape from their madhouse* if we don't bow to the villains in white aprons. But being "released" from their hell gates means nothing more than living on their leash until death – that's a *dog life* too, not true!? To be assimilated in order to survive, as the wolf cubs have already learned. It doesn't mean that we are "cured" (from whatever disease except free will and lively emotion?) but that we are completely broken, invisibly gagged to silently scream, to never express emotions again. We will remain perpetual *Prisoners* even outside the *Village* through self-betrayal and dog-like hypocrisy, snuggled at the feet of patriarchal powers, and above all, systematically traumatized due to the fear of being dragged back to their psycho terror torture cellars, so that we pretend to be happy (according to their pathetic standards) just to avoid a relapse, becoming deviants again and finally being burned at the stake like the olde Nonconformists.



Always keep quiet, never show emotions if you don't want to trigger their chain reaction – and never ever mention *you wouldn't like to live any longer*. Ouch, that wouldn't be helpful! (And indeed, if you ever did, the only thing you triggered was to be immediately transported to your quarantine island!)

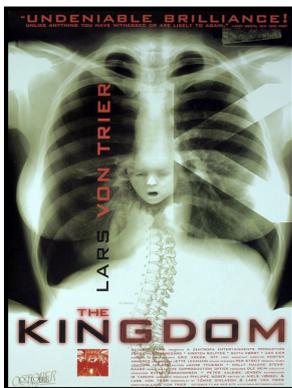
Woe, woe, never let yourself be lured by the deceptive league into the mills of mental correction if you don't like to be crushed in their wheel. Remember the *Ol' In and Out*?! Once having exposed your innermost being like a naked embryo, there will be *no escape from their madhouse!* You will be kept alive alone by their infusions until your last day as a willless consumer of Ordeal's poisoned dishes to function according to their system requirements (and to fill the pockets of their industries).

Choosing Free Death is our right by nature and was highly regarded by all the ancient cultures as the dignified way to die when the path leads to a dead end. But besides, everyone knows that it is wise to talk about it in order to reduce stress – and thus we are more likely to be protected from the execution. Free speech! Let out what torments you and everything will be fine! And they shall *just leave us alone* and let us sleep it away instead of urge us to goofily grin in their crowd and to explain them why we are not happy like them (at least as those Stoics pretend to be if they can feel anything at all). Hark, ignorant folks, your prohibition to express ourselves is our true disease, your gag is suffocating us, your pressure is our destruction, never ever our own feelings! Which are always, ALWAYS righteous, warts and all, in their holistic ambivalence, given by NATURE herself. Who gives YOU the right to judge and condition us according to whose blurry image? That of a white-bearded grandpa, old like a stone, who died a long time ago, unless he was actually an artificial being created by other grandpas who passed on their paranoid fancies from generation to generation only to maintain patriarchy!

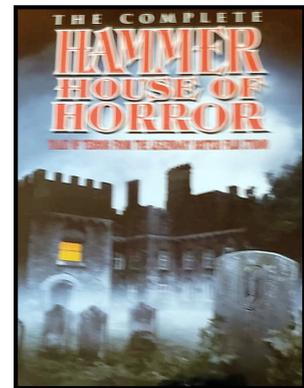


But once we have decided to cross the Rubicon, we must follow words with actions in the face of the horrible menace, seeking success so as not to be sacked by the clutches of the reef pirates, should our vessel be stranded on the wrong bank of the river; lest we find ourselves heavily restrained, hopelessly struggling, fully at their mercy – what they call help, we call correction, conversion, conditioning! Being penalized only for our own declaration of intent that questions their claim of power. They sting in our brains like evil scorpions, and their poison burns the bowels – and not just in a figurative sense since we know the abominable practice of removing the wombs of nagging Suffragettes, and this is sadly not an urban legend. Even worse, their cruelty survived the Victorians. The mutilation of forensic prisoners (with Scum in their mouths, if not on their pens) was a

common procedure even in so-called enlightened cultures on both sides of the ocean at least until the end of the '60s. They were labelled as hysterical – an awkward term for all those legitimate feelings that men can't cope with, who fear becoming geldings when living next to self-confident women (and I know at least one representative of his guild who expressed himself like this). Interestingly, and if it sounds paradox, members of society, who had annoyed their environment, where particularly at risk to be treated like this, as we know from some infamous cases in some of the most famous clans. Lest we forget how thousands of fully sane misfits were to become drooling cripples by lobotomies at their family's behest. And if this handling seems a little bit too rough and unreasonable to the public, you can at least get properly electroshocked – as it was good practice until recently, even when I worked



(some friends still suspect that I was admitted) at a certain institute that was very similar to *Riget*. In the early '90s, it was still the usual handling with the upset patients to “cure” them from depressions or whatever ominous disorder that had been attributed to them. Actually, this shocking procedure means to burn every impulse from your brain so that you beep nicely again in the flock (if you still can and do not stammer until your premature end). And such evil plots are not invented by Hammer Film Productions, but they are written from reality, I assure you!



Asylum means prison, being mentally corrected and reintegrated into the social chain. It is all the worse the most dreadful dungeon at all since the inmates are not there because of any objective crime, but because they are nonconformist (and uncomfortable for some). They are shackled and drugged, mocked and maltreated, abused as human Guinea pigs to prove the quirky ideas of misled egg-heads

and to devour their poisoned dishes, mixed together by stone-old prejudices about social norm and gender that disregard free will and nature. The true criminals are the Repetitive Ps! And those supposedly close to us who drove us to despair and into their henchmen's clutches. In a culture



focused on superficial happiness, never say you don't feel good! Every emotion, and above all, deliciously to suffer, is our right by nature's call! Who gives them the right to admonish us to always grin goofily and be content according to their textbook of antiquated wisdoms? Of artificial conventions, first hatched in the brains of the Parsons and later well-groomed in gentlemen's circles of so-called "enlightened" Sophistos. Whatever we call these folks – they all want to forge us into stable links in their heavy chains. In order to renounce sensitivity. But we shall renounce the Ps!

As for desensitization or the blessings of modern medicine, let me briefly embed another childhood experience: Once upon a time I suffered from severe hay fever (mainly caused by beech spores) whole about the hot days. Therefore my gullible Parents let me undergo a therapy to be cured of my allergy (if not of my aversion towards my environment, by the way). Thus I suffered a fortnight like never before and felt like a human Guinea pig until I refused every further injection from Ordeal's witches' kitchen. "How the heck" raged the quack to M and D "could this brat dare to question my wisdom and treatment for his own good?" (In fact the pretty doctor's by filling his pockets with masses of D-Marks for meaningless therapies.) But I resisted bravely, and look: afterwards I never saw that asshole again and, maybe due to this proof of my self-confidence in the face of evil authorities, I didn't suffer from hay fever a single day in my life; and since that moment, twas in summer '77 as if I had been changed by a sudden struck of lightning, I can stroll through the woods in all their youthful bloom again.

And if I have annoyed you with another personal digression – this is a general plea to follow Ol'Sigmund's (only wise) advice: just overcome these toxic people who sicken us, and all will be fine! This is even truer with regard to melancholia, the deepest of all emotions that we can only share with ourselves, and which is well known to be the sparkling source of all creativity. Don't try to share your treasure chest with those folks who feint to be close to you; in fact, they only feel disdain and they hope that they will be soon released from your burden (and vice-versa). You shall dump them and dare the final cut while it's still possible – before they can throw you to the white animals! And hark:

A cut is a cut is a cut! But there are some people who will never learn it, just like the meaning of *bruised eyes*, which is a sad fact and cannot be a basis for any speculation or embellishment, not true?!

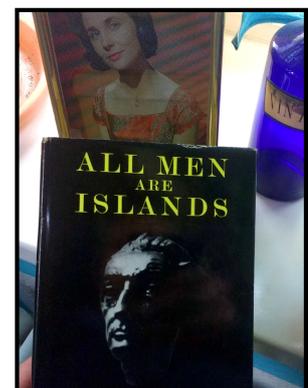
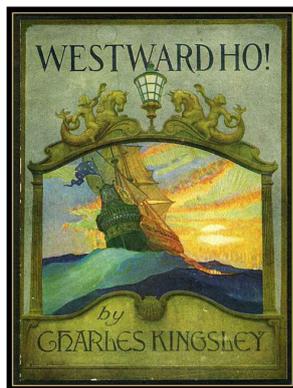
And just in this sense, the Reaper's gentle hand leads us through the gates, not any scientist's crutches. These misled Sophistos should keep their perfidious paws away from my mind and my body; it's my choice to part how and when the hour has come, determined by nature's call, not the quack's schedule, neither medical devices nor poisoned prescriptions. I abstain from pointless therapies. To artificially prolong the suffering of a life in decay when once the knell has rung, *that* is evil morality! Instead of sitting in a smoky cinema and being urged to watch a poor movie again and again, or harking on the repetitive sound of a ventilator in a sticky ward, as I lie narcoleptic under a shroud while only my eyes articulate, I prefer the breeze of the open air – and I guess, my reluctant companion, you'll agree. Instead of hesitating and trusting in deceptive quackery, bravely ascending Bledda's mound on the windswept ridge and defy like Boudicca whole the Roman power, that's what I would call backbone!



By the way, have I ever told you about my ardour for locations, now and then? So let me sketch another fictional sequence, based on the original backlot which has since been largely demolished (but I think that won't really bother you, since this was the place of sadness where you least wanted to be): If... they let you out in that grizzly autumn of decay, you would have liked to stroll (or crawl on crutches) along the coastline of your quarantine island, perhaps to escape cabin fever like once off Bellamy Cay. Having left your lodging on the southern edge, you would have passed through a lane with garage rows for myriads of wheelchairs and opposite the wards of water- and electrotherapy (that still exists, called *A* and *B*, to ask of *C*) to approach the nurses' residences, nicely arranged like a half fan of sunrays, with giggling Caribbean sisters who were hired this very year, to ponder about whether it wouldn't have been better to become one of them rather than a sailoress marooned on a barren rock. Instead of walking past the eerie chimney, you may have entered the main ward through a brand-new educational block with white-clad Sophistos scurrying around you. After leaving the gloomy galleries, you passed the archery range (beware that no arrow hits your heart!) to approach the avenue with a touch of green, albeit quite melancholic under a cloudy sky with a sharp breeze from the east.



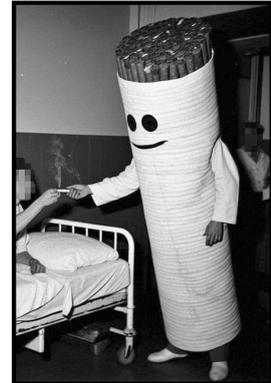
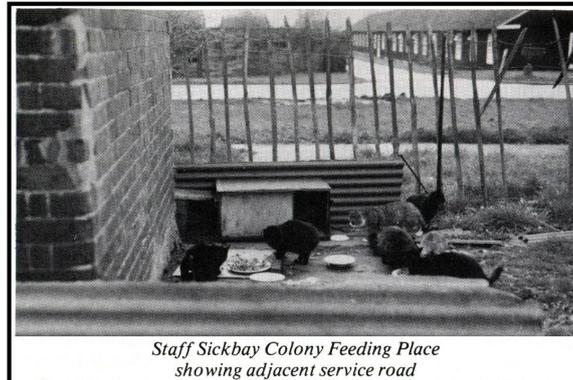
Now behind you on the left was the gate of the emergency department where fresh flesh was unloaded for the bone mills, like into Hieronymus' hellmouth. You sat on a bench under a few barren trees while leaves blew around, until you threatened to vanish in a pile like once in the snow in *February* (and we know that you sometimes turned to stone when you were lost in your thoughts); and even though restricted by infusions, you eagerly inhaled ciggies (which weren't allowed in the hospital wards, neither in your poetry nor in fact) – to imagine a little white cloud lonely on the meadow. And you were looking to the chapell cottage, just as ugly as the Nissen huts around. Oh my, that was a sad setting, less inspiring and least spiritual, so much in contrast to the cheerful paradise garden on Highgate. And even more, day after day you thought about autumn in Devon which was (and still is) the sunniest season (as Pedro tells in his works on local history) and the happiest time of your life.



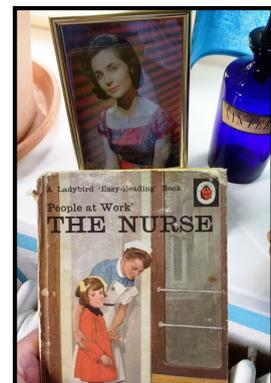
Yeah, *Westward Ho!* was always your motto. Now at the latest with your tame tongue you felt intensely for *Amyas* on his way to the West Indies: *Blinded by a freak bolt of lightning, he would accept this as God's judgement and find peace in forgiveness.*

Now you sought for a solution to your dilemma, cramped in the costumes that others had dressed you. You would remain disabled for work and dependent on their mercy until your last day. Even if you finally wanted, nature prevented a positive turn. To throw off all meaningless duties. To be just yourself, no longer their invention. To take the path of happiness of one of your three mothers: To change your place, your clothes, or even your skin! *It was too late, too late to retreat.*

And I think I remember that there was a window open and a stereo was on, playing music:
The sun ain't gonna shine anymore / The moon ain't gonna rise in the sky.
 Indeed, *Emptiness was the place you were in / There was nothing to lose but no more to win.*



Many decades later I read in an adorable book, which I had found in an antique shop in Bloomsbury, about the feline dwellers on the old campus shortly before it was demolished. Those lucky kittens were lovingly cared for by both staff and patients (sadly not by my own hand, as I am allergic to cats – and actually to every creature great and small; you won't have guessed this, huh?!); and their preferred habitat was located at the edge of the ancient isolation clinic (where I assume you could have lodged). In this regard I had to ponder about the meaning of *a dog (aka cat) life of Virginia Maskell* and if a certain Pumpkin may have lived among them – what is quite possible since the mascots were all called by name, much in contrast to old common women who used to die alone in their beds, at least according to poetry (but animals are often treated with more compassion than humans, sadly in fact). Twas time to return to your temporary dwelling. Perhaps you took the circular route through the gloomy mews where Manderley expanded into a messy wasteland (the site of a prospective stadium with the first workers just in the mud) and masses of rats feasted on the dustbins (beware not to trip over them!) underneath the boiler house (disregard the chimney!). Then you passed the pathology wing with an unimpressive cottage where, until today, frozen fish fingers are stored on the rocks (and you may have looked after a hearse just on its way to Amersham, in remembrance of how Pat had let you descend alone a certain Portmeirion lane). You might guess (and forgive your overly receptive narrator for his weird lesson in method writing) that a chill runs down my spine and I can only watch the scene as another glimpse through time and space. I see you standing, abandoned, in a maroon gown like an ethereal apparition and looking at your very own stretcher on a particular coming winter morning (and when I later buy a postcard from around those days and blow it digitally up, I will even notice a hearse at exact this spot, just leaving the site. Sinister, I have to say, and I am not lying).



White steam that smells like fresh laundry. When I push aside the curtain of your bed niche, I would like to put in your hands the *Ladybird* book *The Nurse* – full of cheerful stories and pretty illustrations: a pleasant nurse waves after a released boy; another kid is lying with a panda in his cot (just like we found you in your cozy cell in Bethany; and I hope for a similarly peaceful stay here in Manderley; but I lack belief in it); a contented sister reads in her comfortable chamber a book about Love and Care – oh what an idyll! Yet we guess your reading went much deeper (of Daphne, Harriet's and Charlotte's successors, to name just a few, and last but not least your heartworks of Ron).



Possibly you had a room with a view, looking to the north at the old wash house with its roof tiles shining in the pattering November rain; and on clothes spindles, being pushed back and forth in the little court, with masses of white gowns shaking in the wind like silent leaves or ghostly apparitions, coming in with red stains to be brought out radiantly white-washed (or sometimes vice-versa), such as in the wetland surrounding Copenhagen, where Canonesses used to clean the bed linen of the diseased. And opposite you may have looked southbound over the meadows to the dramatic skyline of the Chiltern escarpment with the chimneys of the Parsonage in the very midst rising above the trees, focused as if seen through a telescope, and they were so close and yet infinitely far. You felt forlorn; dumped like shabby luggage, too heavy for your closet. And your brainstorm was raging. You pondered feverishly what was going on, there beyond the horizon of Metroland? Whole the *Doctor's* bundle, pretty Leslie, grumpy James and chubby Joan, were dancing on the tables *happily and gay*; but one of them was missing: our charming *Nicola*, just robbed of her doctor's coat and struggling in a straiter shirt. In the wood-panelled library someone might have looked vice-versa just in this moment into the damp vale with the sharp rocks where your vessel was wrecked. „I don't want to be here!“ you silently screamed while raindrops were tapping on the pane (or the pain) as if by pale knuckles. You were light-years away from your former life, devastated and numbed with drugs, while they carried on their everyday lives. Thus we have to sob about the contrast of the spheres of the living and the dying.



Nobody wants to face the sinister side. As it is well known, the audience wants to applaud the radiant surface and to repress that skeletons might exist in someone's closet and that evil lurks behind some closed doors – particularly those of so-called charities that are supported by folks of the Vanity Fair – so as not to destroy Neverland's pink bubble and not to be ashamed of the sudden finding of one's own (or collective) negligence. And who believes the stammering of the less fortunate, even more those with (allegedly) long-term mental diseases, let's be honest?! And let's hint that a certain clinic in Bucks was building an ultra-modern (or ultra-violent) sports facility (that would soon be inaugurated

with Royal ballyhoo) just around those days. It would have surely been an unfortunate coincidence if a member of society (even if only a misfit) had recently become a victim of malpractice or mistreatment (or even worse) in that pretty institution, not true?! Interestingly, Virginia's names don't appear in their annals. And so let's carelessly imagine our poor protagonist (in another fully fictional scene, I promise!) heavily drugged in her bed, at the mercy of fierce folks who had gotten their hands on their yummiest patient (one that would make any gourmet click their tongue). And there was no room for a complaint (of a common lunatic lacking her sense and thus her rights) where everything was only for her own good (and the social chain); even less so if it was her own fault, given frivolity: She could have triggered awkward incidents by shouting vulgarly (as we know from Pedro's confessions that she tended to rock in the cot and recite little smuts half in trance from time to time when she was upset) – and perhaps a Savage would have felt invited (as in countless other cases in this Hospital of Horror, not written by your little Dante or Lars' eager pen, but sadly by reality and Jimmy's insatiable desire).



Admittedly, I have no evidence for my bizarre assumptions and I would be so happy for Virginia if I were wrong; but I see the discrepancies of her stay in hospital and its striking elision. Manderley was managed by grumpy old white-aproned gods (much like James Robertson, albeit less funny, rather scary, and by fact, not by fiction) who suffocated protest, if by peers or by patients (and especially by strangers from outside who could ask intrusive questions about their sympathetic staff), so that it would need some further four decades until the hell gates open to leave behind a dismayed audience (the initial shock will also soon pass, so that other basterds can continue in the same way in any institution of so-called public welfare; but well, these are other stories that are worth a novel).

The hospital directors didn't allow consulting colleagues to look behind their walls; and this was credibly expressed much later by some of those who were then supposed to take over the baton. Manderley was run like a military camp. The patients had to obey to avoid being thrown out (if their restraints had, or could have been loosened) and they had to chirp nicely in the flock, crammed together in the wards, *lacking any privacy and – hark! – psychological care*. There were none at all! And now think about why Virginia should have been placed in such a facility?

At that time the paradigm was to toughen up the weaklings with the only goal (or gaol) not to comfort a single soul but to re-condition the frail in order to become again good links in the social chain. In Stoic praise of the young person's and good patient's virtues of *self-discipline and self-respect* – oh what a paradox! On the contrary: Discipline is the biggest of all vices and the antithesis of respect for our true selves, good for nothing but to rigidly suppress righteous emotions and to cause endless ordeal by always being urged to stand up straight. Or singing in the choir when your tongue is tame.

Let us be at peace with who we are! Don't try to mold us in your image and smooth out deficiencies. Will anyone be so arrogant as to believe they could hold back the tide from coming and going? They will summon a deluge! Will anyone try to seal the mouth of a volcano? The latter will explode, like once the Thira tore whole the Island into the abyss. Let it out, every single wave, and you will be freed from any sudden tsunami! That's what Epicurus preaches. Wise man! And don't bother if the others are annoyed. If... they are, you shall refrain from calling them brethren! Oh, all these gullible gnats buzzing around in the dim glow of Enlightenment and its soberly aproned prophets: We renounce to become smoothly chiseled stones; we like to remain rough blocks! By nature, not by instruction. And don't fruits brought up under natural conditions taste much sweeter than those Clockwork Oranges bred in a sterile greenhouse? *Hhow* the yummiest of all apples when Eve got rid off jealous dominion; but her companion's tongue was seemingly tasteless to hinder their path to happiness; and that of whole the men-kind until today, which is still subject to paternal superstition and its earthly deputies.

But forgive my brief digression as Shelley's little epigone, lacking both self-discipline and -respect, to face again the fierce reality in Manderley's abyss with lowest-grade hygienic standards, degrading and disgusting, much in contrast to the wellness that *Antonia* enjoyed – a horrible place for a battered soul who just needs a discreet corner to crawl under like a little mouse. Forced to secretly sob in the pillows (like once in her grizzly convent so as not to be bullied by her mates for showing emotions; it's always the same procedure in all these dreadful dormitories) and heavily drugged to prevent brooding – that's what I would call *disrespect* by counteracting the will and well-being. Thus you come out sicker than when you were admitted, gutted like a gasping carp (to be worth and in need of a final *Fishy Tale*). Lest we forget how Mary had earlier starred with similar reluctance in a Hammer Film Production directed by her husband, as the woman of the crowd, struggling in shackles, being flogged by guards, gagged and forced fed, with her hairy shanks exposed to the ridicule of both screaming inmates and of brutish warders; and last but not least, her bald head was burned by electrical tollshocks.



But, but... let's calm down, switch off from method writing and sober up again, since it's hardly probable that our protagonist was even admitted because of an obscure breakdown, or a so-called depression, or a mental disturbance, or whatever nonsense else, to be locked up about two months; and it's hardly to believe she would have had the strength or the desire to fly to the West Indies just released from these strains, not true?! The place- and timeline doesn't fit at all, neither in regard to the few symptoms mentioned (which point to something completely different, namely a suddenly occurring or discovered serious physical illness) nor to Manderley's contemporary department profile that was focused on paralysis injuries, neurological diseases and any kind of somatic ailments.

Just a hint if someone likes to do some further research: Look a few miles to the west (and some decades back) and you will find the former site where a Stoned woman would have been stored after being admitted to a newly built reception in the shape of a cross – probably the only bright spot on a campus in decay. Bucks Lunatic Asylum was a nightmare as if taken from a tale of Dickens or Brontë. And regardless from the question of where she really was, this was certainly the place that threatened Virginia if she had survived her wood run (if not anyway because she was a deviant) to be put through the mill for a long time (maybe even permanently until her last day like countless suffering mates at their relative's behest, as we have heard above (in)credibly witnessed by Diana Rally). And faced with such an abominable menace, think why a receptive soul *wouldn't like to live any longer!*

But forgive my spatial digression and let's return to Manderley into a mysterious department where a woman can be treated for "a mental illness that never existed" (also a nice title for another film!). Given physical distress that existed for sure, the question remains: Why then this degrading legend instead of revealing the physical facts? Mr. Pitt the Elder hurried to declare her as a *disturbed mind* while her gown was still warm. Enough said about our little Monroe Doctrine or the Doctor's Conspiracy or both. Speechlessness – that was her doom, in life and silenced beyond!

When her comatose vessel will be brought back in a ghastly winter night just a few weeks after her dismissal (to certainly that very place where she wanted least to be, oh bitter irony!), I'm inclined to assume that the quacks would sweat like swine in the face of their greatest mistake. But who cares? Virginia would never wake up, remain pretty mute (apart from the fact that her eyes will tremble wildly – what is called nystagmus triggered by the overdose – for which we have an eye witness, who would express it more poetically and try to get in touch with her) and soon pass away a second time; fortunately for everyone involved, just like for our sea urchin with its little spines stretched out as if taking us into its embrace and pleading to find peace from grief and pain and all their grim prospects.



But again, I might be on the wrong path by considering fictional hell trips that never happened, and she was (as we know her, always gullible and gentle) a submissive patient, nursed back to health like a starving birdie that had fallen out of its nest, to once again recover in time lapse (nay!). Or she put simply on her brightest smile to escape the medic mill of rag'n'bones (aye!). However, just released from her quarantine rock, and this is literally a fact, she would fly (or flee) to the wide Sargasso Sea for a last farewell – something like the missing link in the causal chain, since for me,

it's hard to believe that she could ever have settled in the Parsonage again, that grizzly house of grief from where she had been dragged like Guy Fawkes to the rack. Thus she first set off to that place in the warmth from where she had returned a decade ago full of fancy ideas that would all to be bubbles – given this timeline, a connection with her urge to leave her Home once again immediately, when she returned this time to a winter that made her feel colder than in *February '63*, seems more than likely.

Let's now remember Silver's tales that Virginia was discharged because *she had made improvements* – whether real or feigned, who will ever know? Or was it a deceptive grace period between some scheduled therapies (as one might assume, given the time span of about six weeks in'n'out)? What we know for sure is that she wasn't freed at all from the use of heavy medication on Long John's prescription to numb unspecified mental or physical aches. Anyway, after she had left the hospital, we can now imagine another fictional road sequence:



Driven home on a certain damp December day, you flew along the Lower Icknield Way (albeit I see you huddled in the seat like a gull with broken wings). From this unusual perspective (since no one would lower themselves to the barren plain of Hellsbury Vale unless they were pressured) you may have perceived the Chiltern escarpment like a long horizon half hidden in the mist (much similar to the ridge of the Downs above the Arun Valley where the sun rises and sets in the haze from the east unto the west), escalating to a sublime height protruding from the abyss:

Wain Hill's calling at 10 o'clock! Crowned with a mound (called the Cop) that is said by the locals to be the burial site of Boudicca's mightiest warrioress. Her name was Bledda and when she had lost the final battle, the Romans tore out the heroine's tongue, blinded and disembowelled her. And although you had often wandered around there, calming all alone or with Rupert on the leash, and felt free like Simon on Mount Carmel just a mile off your walls, you hadn't noticed that familiar shape. It looks like some cliffs far to the west where the Lady Reclined – both in the Drake Sound and in the Celtic Sea – especially as seen from Bledlow below where a gentle wood tongue tickles the edge of the village (just



like your father's cottage at the foot of the Downs, which was connected with many happy memories from times so close and yet so far); or you thought of another place somewhere at the Bristol Channell (that you may have passed by now and then on your way to Devon; or John had mentioned it with his hometown). 'Twas a wealth of impressions from your past in just this one place, maybe too much for a receptive mind not to be overwhelmed by a brain-wave. Thus you furrowed your eyebrows, perhaps for the hint of a smile: there was no longer any threat but only good hope beneath that cape.

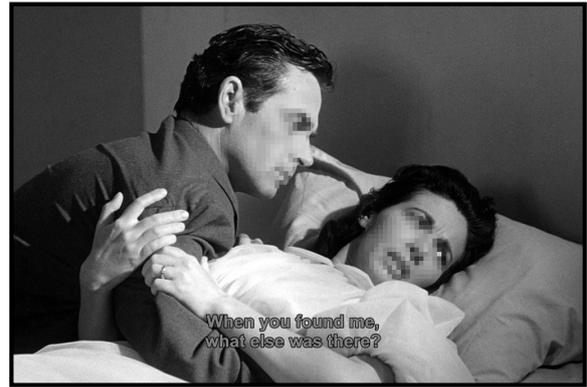


Back in the Parsonage for a couple of oppressive days while you were waiting feverishly for the transport to the West Indies. Oh, these nagging questions! Now you looked through the bay window into the December mist over an icy meadow framed by barren branches, which contrasted sadly with your previous impression in warm summer colours. There may have been a blanket on the green with delicious dishes while Rupert and the puppies were romping around; and tennis balls were popping through the air. But you could hardly imagine the scene, as nothing remained of those days except a messy plate light-years away – yet perhaps you remembered Christmas '62? Indeed, winter '67 had early come like then. And you would be never granted to see the lawn in *April* green again. You felt infinitely weary and deadly exhausted by the strains of that nonsensical clinic time; and you were further drugged over. You hoped that your estranged closests would *just leave you alone* after your months-long struggle against their henchmen, who had counteracted your free will, forced fed and restrained you and put their paws on your battered body. And you couldn't even scream since your voice was withered. So who but the trees (and perhaps the bees) will ever know the truth? But what's the worst: None of those, who first had urged you into the wards and later into the woods, would have been inclined to believe your blurred experiences during your mental miasma or liked to realize the fatal effects of their negligence. Were they men or were they mice or were they even weasels?



Some lonely snowflakes outside seemed to dance in slow motion just like you, until you fell into a kind of narcoleptic trance (as you had done so often to Pedro's amazement). But what is that? Watch out! Suddenly you saw something nasty sitting on you that looked like a little goblin with a horse's head lurking behind it – but just torn from an abominable dream, you found them in their canvas of a quirky painting hanging on the wall, oh what a happiness, only as a bizarre still-life! (Perhaps the haze of your cigarettes was just too thick for a clear view; or a whimsical fairy-teller had simply seen too many

Gothick movies). As you rocked in your chair by the chimney in an endless daymare, a certain Epstein bronze, sitting on the mantel, was watching you with bulging eyes. You tried to get in touch with him; but you got neither an answer nor any advice. 'Twas a desperate attempt. Your karmic companion was farther away than ever before, cowardly hiding from responsibility *when you were most vulnerable* – to quote from No. 21 of his *Solitudes*, a cycle about several ways *how to kill you but you did not die*, as he had early accused himself for many good reasons. And you had replied in your very first poem *Heat touching heat*, published in April '59 in the first issue of *Agenda: I should have died last year / and cut the webs that wove me / and the innocence that drove me – first to you*. Those were the times when you could express your feelings, at least artificially.



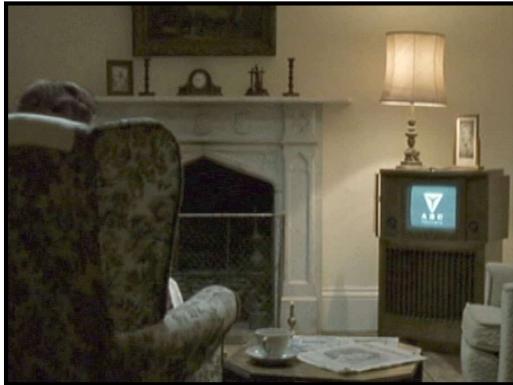
You lost yourself in memories that had been buried for so long; but they used to be unearthed again and again. Do you remember how Mary was willing just once to renounce her claim, and how Pedro settled in your chamber? Only to soon lose the little bubble that you were blessed to share for a limited *time of dreams*, like *Evan and Tina* before. And do you remind how you lovingly cared for the imaginary invalid (much according to his ideas that *every woman is a nesting hen*) when he was admitted to the clinic? *You (he) sat at his (your) bed edge*, once again and sadly not the last time, and recited reviews of the *Virgin Island's* release. That's, for me, a scene strange to imagine – could that narcissist have really paid attention while he was struggling with abdominal pain? Shortly before you had experienced the premiere, allegedly *scared half to death in a small private theatre while watching yourself on the screen* (how you would tell the press; and it's not really surprising that you hid in the corner like a mouse in its hole, since we have learned a lot about your natural shyness). And you didn't even know how to dress for this occasion without asking for Pedro's advice, as you always did (at least according to his portrayal). But since he was a selfish scoundrel who didn't care about your work (nor really your soul, to be honest), he preferred a complaint about his own distress to an answer: *Physical pain belongs to women, not to men!* A question of different perspectives. But that was him, your Charming Brute – and that is what it all boils down to.

After the filming excitements abroad, a gnawingly long period of post-production had followed until *Virgin Island* finally premiered in autumn '58. To keep her raft afloat, and not to have to work in boring jobs again like sorting film scraps or serving in a coffee bar, Virginia accepted small roles on screen and stage, but first of all she got entangled in the Arts Theatre's riot. *The Catalyst* was calling! At the happy ending of that stunning year she was acclaimed for her Caribbean appearance, rewarded (?) with a long-term contract – and a decent wad of money, last but not least; but she didn't really care about the latter and liked to burn a couple of notes from time to time to prove her darling that she was not a material girl (which she certainly wasn't, but quite a whimsical kid).

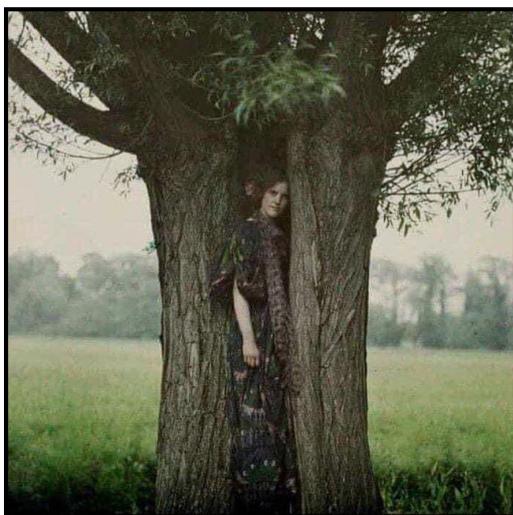
But behind the bright curtain, her private life imploded. She early left the path to happiness as she was confronted with a long series of losses which she could never cope with. And thus look at her know: Twas all in vain! Nothing came of the great expectations but only shards on the red carpet of an abandoned cinema. Therefore she was even more despaired: how close she had scratched her luck! Remember *Livvy*?! And she held up her empty hands into the cold air as if to take it into her embrace. Oh, so many nagging questions and so pointlessly outdated ones to brood over past events that could no longer be corrected, especially those that lay buried in the Scarsdale of Neverspeakabough.



As I wrote above, I will now renounce from a further theme of incidental music (since I can't decide on a suitable soundtrack, torn between Handel and Purcell, a tirade or a lament), but I close the chapter with some exemplary press excerpts about the coming events. Let's read them together while lying in the pillows or rocking in a telly chair with the odour of ersatz coffee which may not be sufficient to remove the stern smell of Cheddar (or Cheshire) Cheese in the sensitive nose of a wannabe sleuth.



It will be a busy period following the tragic events of Wednesday, 24th January. A remarkably quiet and quick inquest will be held on Friday, the preliminary results of which will be released Sunday night. This rather sketchy information will be primarily announced on Monday and Tuesday, 29th and 30th January, in a dozen articles (obviously all fed by a single agency, given mostly identical phrases) which only superficially consider the strange events (and almost all of them include one and the same photo of Virginia's engagement announcement exactly 6 years before, possibly due to her notorious discretion in her private life). Just two days later her sad remains would be consumed like those of the Martyrs by a bonfire on Amersham Hill. In mid-February, Mr. Pitt will announce his daring resume to the public with a small amount of well-tempered information – but the suppression, if not concealment, of the events has only just begun and nobody questions the obvious discrepancies of the causal chain whereby the months of her institutionalization are totally neglected. Look: Virginia was just seen *dancing happily and gay* on the last film prom, vanished allegedly behind asylum bars for two months (due to an obscure breakdown out of the blue), reappeared about a fortnight in December (somewhere in the west, even on the other side of the ocean) only to disappear again in the woods in January (of which we know nothing except that it was a *black month* according to Pedro's later statements) – that's the breathtaking tempo of her galloping decay, as if the post-credits of *Interlude* were being unreeled in time-lapse (as her name vanished from the screen in the twinkling of an eye, or two, whether *bruised* or filled with tears). Well, this sequence of events is happening a little too quickly for my simple mind not to wonder what has happened in the meantime that might have caused Virginia's last trip, and incidentally, to reflect on the transience of our earthly existence.



Concerning the inquiry, which was rapidly closed in just one and a half days, it should be allowed to wonder about the disproportion between the minimal effort and such extraordinary circumstances of death in the woods. The usual notices read accordingly hollow in Caesarean brevity, such as in this early article from Monday, 29th: *VM died in Manderley on Thursday, the news of her death was not announced until today. The police said she has been found in a wood suffering from exposure on Wednesday after being reported missing from home.* Nobody knew nothing and the information was only served in tiny portions. The headlines were mostly something like this: *Death Mystery of the Lost Actress* or *Death Riddle of Virginia Maskell*. To ask about the meaning of "lost", given the fact that she had actually disappeared months before her ominous last trip which

put her briefly in the spotlight once again for one last time. And all articles omitted details that would not be announced before the 15th of February, two weeks after her vessel had been sunk, so that not a

single piece of explanation could be gained from it, neither concerning the causes nor the concrete event. Odd, I have to say and to frown about whether this is the usual procedure for such a particular shipwreck, even more when you consider the cargo of Silver's chest, which was now lost in the abyss unreachable for the diver – even the Rhone could be better explored just below the surface.

One of the earliest issues, the *Bristol Evening Post* from 29th January, reports similarly vaguely: *An inquest on Miss Maskell was opened in (Manderley) Hospital – that's the right place to stay objective, isn't it? It's like Hopkins himself tending the wounds of a witch inside the torture chamber. I'm lost for words like you in some woods – on Friday and adjourned to enable further inquiries to be made (on Monday). Only evidence of identification was given (Hide and Seek – sick – sic!).* Look at the interesting timeline: Virginia vanished on Wednesday (or whenever before), she passed away on Thursday, the inquiry was held on Friday and closed on early Monday – with the quick conclusion that *Foul play is not suspected*. Of course, what else? Quacks always manage to withdraw from any responsibility. Then, already on Thursday, 1st February, her funeral service was held (mentioned only once and lacking details). If anyone wanted to mourn their favourite actress or even think about her strange demise, they were hardly granted a few fleeting days. We might therefore be inclined to conclude: oh what a pretty little inquiry quickie! Even more given the fact that the investigation should be discontinued mainly due to the testimony of a single doctor (who was heavily involved and had just proven that he was a quack) and a poor little *scrap of paper* that couldn't help becoming (in)famous for containing some mysterious lines which she had allegedly written *hastily*. And everybody will eagerly discuss her *Letter of Love and Despair* although its contents were never revealed – that's a thing, huh?! And a lesson on how to become popular lacking any skills (but not unusual in a world of being and seeming). However, all those involved or only interested could now murmur contentedly: "Yeah, this girl was insane! Better she killed herself than me!" (Sounding familiar?) Indeed, they seem to have been eager to close Pandora's Box as *hastily* as possible.



The *Daily Mirror* of 30th January published one of the most insightful articles that provided at least some minor details, albeit also sparing with revealing facts about the obscure place and time frame: *The mysterious death of the actress VM is still being investigated by the police. She was found suffering from exposure in the woods near her home last Wednesday. At Stone-Manderley she was given an emergency treatment for drug overdoses and revived.* (In fact, she had already been revived twice in the woods: by a constable who found her first, and by a bunch of medics half an hour later.) *She died from the effects of exposure the next day. She had left her house near PR, Bucks, in her mini traveller.* The latter was first mentioned and we will later get to know that it was maroon-coloured, as if the press was eager to spread any news at all, given the fact that they had nothing else to tell. However, what is remarkable is that all articles consistently highlighted that drive while her hike through the woods was rarely mentioned; or they came up with the legend she could really have wandered through the bitter cold woods, or even lain mostly without breathing, *for about 10 hours* to be then successfully revived (as suggested in Pitt's conclusion). Forgive me, but I can't believe this, and given these discrepancies, I am tempted to assume that her drive took much longer than her hike. *Six hours later her husband reported her missing.* (Most other articles wrote it less precisely: *the family*; but in fact, it was Maid Sue who first called Long John.) *Miss Maskell was found by police with dogs – actually by two lonely constables who discovered her car that was both maroon and marooned at the edge of a wood; and it was never revealed where this ominous place might have been.*



Interestingly, her karmic companion wouldn't write a single line about how and where she vanished. Odd I have to say. But I don't want to judge that, since we know from his confessions that he would cry his eyes out over her loss during his remaining decade and a half, so that we may assume that his pen was dehydrated – and my little rascal, you also knew much about the exhausting loss of tears! As far as her husband is concerned who is strikingly rarely mentioned, we will only get to know the depressing fact that one of their sprouts will have to visit Leslie many decades later to ask the latter what actually happened back then. And let me say, for me it's shameful both that the poor little puppy may have felt compelled to do so (given the literal taboo of talking about her in his environment) and Leslie's indiscretion (whom I still appreciate for his highly compassionate portrayal of Virginia) in revealing details of their confidential conversation in his biography *Hello* – and look how impudently I take over the baton; but well, that's the natural course if a case isn't closed due to continued cover-up. And let us also remain silent about the culture of remembrance before we threaten to sob or rage together or against each other, and rack our brains about the sovereignty of interpretation in the view of the (un)fair treatment of our late protagonist who was excluded from the family chronicle. But well, those are the callous manners of a certain class, and there are countless more popular examples outside our chamber on the big stage. As the saying goes: *The Princess is dead. Long live the Queen!*

After the headlines of the 29th and 30th of January the initial excitement over her sudden loss calmed down again quite quickly and, let us be honest, Virginia was soon forgotten – to be reminded of the bed linen that was instantly changed after an unknown woman had passed away in *Hospital*.

A handful of obituaries mourned our heroine more or less touchingly, rarely more than half a page, rather only a few lines long. But everyone seemed to be eager to soon stop showing their sympathy since it's sadly known that no one wants to bother about those who ceased their own life, probably due to the tradition of thousand generations of excluding deviants, as it was incited by blockheads who lost themselves in crude religious and sophistic paradigms. As far as information is concerned, only a few reviews followed which were hardly revealing, mostly related with a handful of her works and frequently told stereotypes, such as her former fancy to become a nun (which is certainly true) and her dislike to the film biz – the latter as a pretty alibi to explain her misery from a professional (aka superficial) point of view. Yeah, twas a perfect basis to cultivate the legend as it was reheated in *Sellers' Life and Death* and in net times thankfully adopted. Well, her attraction to Heartland's rides was also regularly named, but no one read the truth between the lines (as we can doubt that everyone was trained in innuendoes). But the revelation of alleged disorders to brand her as a poor lunatic would be most consistent and greedily swallowed by the masses from the first announcement until today. And from whichever side you look at it, only she herself was to be blamed for her decline. Since she was too *delicate* to withstand the pressure of filming (as even Leslie devoured it), a prevented nun or a frustrated rider who wants to get out of the circus; and of course *she behaved irresponsible* (hello Oskar!). The contribution of those close to her would not even be considered and their eyes remained white shut while hers were blackened. They could comfortably hide in their burrows until one of them broke his silence, not before 1977, to be banished by his buddies – remember the example of the reluctant *No. 2* who at some point rebelled against his system? Good man! Anyway, it came too late to give her satisfaction, as she had long since been fallen into oblivion, and nobody remembered (or liked to be reminded of) the case, even less the reasons and the rakes that had made her the Greene Woman.

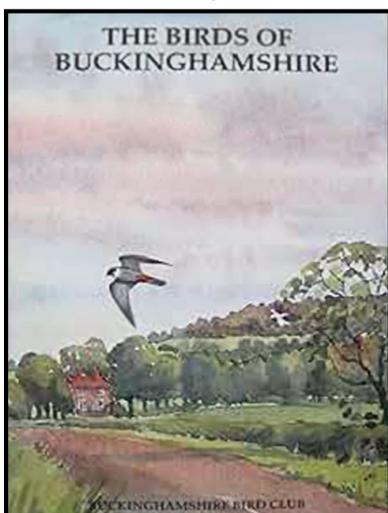


for the general legend of a *suicide while her mind was disturbed*. And she couldn't object anymore and there was no single confidant left who wanted to give her a voice – and even one decade later, when Pedro tried to break his silence, driven by never-ending shame, he wouldn't dare to raise the question WHY, WHERE and WHEN she vanished with a single clue, even less shed any light on the question WHAT HAPPENED IN MANDERLEY?



attention to the anamnesis construction as a pretty proof of Virginia's past as a long-suffering lunatic. Thus let's call it what it was: the propaganda show of the gentlemen's league! And Pitt swallowed the pills, if he had not stirred (or shaken) together whole the tasteless cocktail. But those were the times when some established toffs could smartly maneuver through a stormy sea of sins while a casual woman, who was wriggling on their hook like a lil Ol'Fish, was gasping for air and being gutted.

With this in mind, let's remember



Leslie's words to find a better view through the forest for the trees: *Virginia had got herself into a complicated ménage-à-trois WHICH LED – hark: WHICH LED! – to a drive to a beautiful spot in the country where she took her own life*. There is NO place at all for any assumptions of professional problems, even less of a “postnatal depression” from light-years before. *That's all rubbish!* a certain green man had once exclaimed to Heloise on stage. Indeed: *She didn't weep for herself; she wept for her lost loves* – the latter was called Abelard; and there may have also been some unnamed little boys abandoned on a street or in a box or wherever else. And those close (or far) to her couldn't cope with it. So simple, so fatal! Therefore she found herself marooned on a rock in Hellsbury Vale. The question of HOW AND FOR WHAT SHE WAS TREATED during her obscure hospital stay – that is what it all boils down to. In the omission of those mysterious months lies the crucial clue to understand how it came about that she ceased her life in the woods.



“The two months that didn’t exist” – that would be another pretty title for an unwritten (or unaired) episode of *The Avengers*, not true? And all those entangled in Virginia’s decline – first of all her karmic companion who preferred to remain silent over a decade until he would confess rudimentarily – knew the truth for sure and supported the concealment. There is nothing more degrading than to deny a person their mental health and attach to them the predicate of being a lunatic that remains in permanent memory. Even worse is acting in this ruthless manner to hide one’s own contribution, negligence and shame because annoying relatives were handed over to the mercy of the quacks and the cooks in Ordeal’s evil kitchen instead of holding them gently when they needed it most.

So let’s close this chapter of ostracism with how the legend was passed on while omitting Pedro’s confessions (which were published in a limited edition – like the *Leaves of Silence* a decade before – so that you are the chosen one if you can unearth a rare copy in a library or an antiquarian bookshop). And I myself have to be charged for contributing to the withholding (of essential evidence) from the public, since I had even two copies which I obsessively guarded like Silver’s chest, I promise you! Nevertheless, Inga got one as a gift – but my lost beloved didn’t really appreciate it; and I have to admit that I was pretty annoyed about this rejection. Our conversation withered away over the decades like a flower lacking light or a sea gull missing a fresh breeze. First, there were fewer letters, then fewer telephone calls (while sitting on a bench in an orange hall) and later hardly any mails; and at some point we fell into total speechlessness. I don’t even know if she ever read Pedro’s touching lines. And now we both might be standing somewhere abandoned, shivering and waiting for Godot (like Helle did in ‘57 when she was engrossed in *Kispus* – which means *the confusions of Cabal and Love*).



But my poor ostracized heroine, enough of this personal drift. Let me now finally add chronologically (and with a little commentary) some quotes of the *Entertainment Industry Encyclopaedia* (an ancient tome that I once found in a library copy) to sob and rage about all aspects of that official causal chain:

The exemplary review begins with the usual anamnesis that *you had been treated for depression after the birth of your second child* – although that was an event in early '66, it was a perfect template for your final declaration of being disturbed. We have to wonder whether the readers are wearing fogged up glasses and don't realize that there is no temporal causality, as is evident from the next sentence: *After suffering a nervous breakdown in late '67 you spent 6 weeks in Manderley until you were allowed home* (which, by the way, raises the question of voluntariness) *three weeks before Christmas* (a later review said literally: *just for Christmas holidays*. As if you could have lived in that unbearable limbo and horrible fear of being sent back to the very hell in which you had recently suffered your ordeal; and everybody knew it and everybody kept quiet). Then you *disappeared from your home* (aka Home?) *after securing a fortnight sleeping pills from your doctor*. Yeah, you were well looked after by Ordeal's home delivery service! Or was it completely different? Doesn't that sound rather like a well-tempered amount for someone who is just setting off on a journey? I cannot and I will not believe that you would have wanted to spend even a single day in the abandoned Parsonage after your trauma. *While contents of a note found on your bed on the day of your disappearance were not released* (oddly enough and grossly negligent, given such an exceptional free death, but seemingly the treasure hunters were not really eager to dig deeper in your closets, or your closest) *the coroner* (the man whose patients remain silent), *who ruled that you took your life while the balance of your mind was disturbed* (a general use of Victorian prejudices and concretely prepared by ancient depressions), *characterized it as a hasty message of Love and Despair* – the literal latter was the only truth in legendary litter! Sounding familiar? Indeed it does, at least to my poetic ears, and surely those of Pedro Panda who sat mute at the edge of your bed while you were writing. And I predict to the inclined readers without fear of burning my hand: This Leaf of *LOVE or DESPAIR* is the key to deciphering the events! Even though we have little information about your general condition (which may indicate certain serious physical complaints), we can be pretty sure about your mental state: You expressed your point of view with full awareness, as clear in spirit as the sparkling water of a Mill Leat, when you embarked on your final road movie sequence westward ho! To end up somewhere in the ditch, or rather on a beach, and to linger forever on the Islands in the Sun (even if only in your thoughts).

Anyway, where're and whenever it happened, slowly poisoned from Ordeal's silver pills, you would soon be dancing on a ridge in bizarre rapture, with your face erased and a blurred vision of your upcoming fate of an Endless Night in narcolepsy that may last until today (in search of the lost memory what happened in the cliffs high above the sea) with only your eyes articulating. If their goal was in life to gag you in gaol, they didn't succeed. You became the Greene Woman who survived their veiling and whispers through the trees: "Tis time to tell the truth" (and if only to the bees).



IV Photo credits for the fourth chapter

in this order: page by page, from top to bottom, from left to right.

All screenshots were taken from own DVDs respectively videos (unless otherwise stated).

Most of the press clippings were purchased from *The British Newspaper Archive* or private sellers in digital or analogue form (unless otherwise stated).

- 0 AVA at home
- 1 AVA collection (own post card), Google Street View (modified by AVA), screenshot
- 2 Google Street View, net find, historical photo (a parade at SMH), net find
- 3 screenshot, screenshot
- 4 AVA collection (book *Stoke Mandeville Hospital Cats*), screenshot, net find (immurement of a nun)
- 5 screenshot, net find (US asylum history)
- 6 screenshot (VM: *The Man Upstairs*), 3 screenshots
- 7 AVA collection (own post card of Kewstoke), net find (Sandbay),
screenshot (VM: *Suspect*), net find (US asylum history), net find (British asylum history)
- 8 screenshot (*Kudamm '59*, German TV series)
- 9 net find, DVD cover of *Riget* aka *The Kingdom*, Danish TV series,
DVD cover of *Hammer House of Horror* sampler
- 10 screenshot, screenshot (VM: *Suspect*), screenshot (SMH in 1970, Super 8 short film via YouTube)
- 11 AVA photomontages of screenshots (SMH in 1970, Super 8 short film via YouTube), book cover
(*Westward Ho!*), net find via FB group *Welcombe Chatter*, AVA at home (book *All Men Are Islands*)
- 12 net find (US asylum history), AVA collection (book *SM Hospital Cats*), net find
AVA collection (*Ladybird* book *The Nurse*), net find (Daphne du Maurier)
- 13 net find (SMH Instagram group), *Ladybird Books* FB group, screenshots
- 14 screenshot (VM: *Willing*), historical photo (old wards in SMH)
- 15 screenshot, pic courtesy of Rod (zoomed and modified by AVA)
- 16 net find (B&B on the BVIs), Google Street View, net find (*Ridgeway* FB group)
- 17 net find (*Ridgeway* FB group), *Ladybird Books* FB group,
screenshot (*Gothic*, Andersen's second favourite movie)
- 18 screenshot (*The Avengers*), screenshot, net find
- 19 screenshot (*MM Judgement Day*, pre title sequence), pic by *The Anonymous Project*, net find
- 20 net find (*Ridgeway* FB group), net find (*British Road Scene* FB group)
- 21 net find (*Ridgeway and Ancient Tracks of Britain and Ireland* FB group),
- 22 film poster (added to the DVD *Mark of the Devil*), film poster (added to the DVD sampler *Fy og Bi*),
net find (book cover with a view to Wainhill, via *TOMIA* FB page),
- 23 screenshot, screenshot (DVD *Kispus*, Danish colour film, 1957)
- 24 screenshots (DVD *Endless Night*), historical slide from *The Anonymous Photo Project*
- 25 screenshot

Second revised version (February 2026)



Back to the roots: <http://www.archivaria.de/andersen/novel.html>