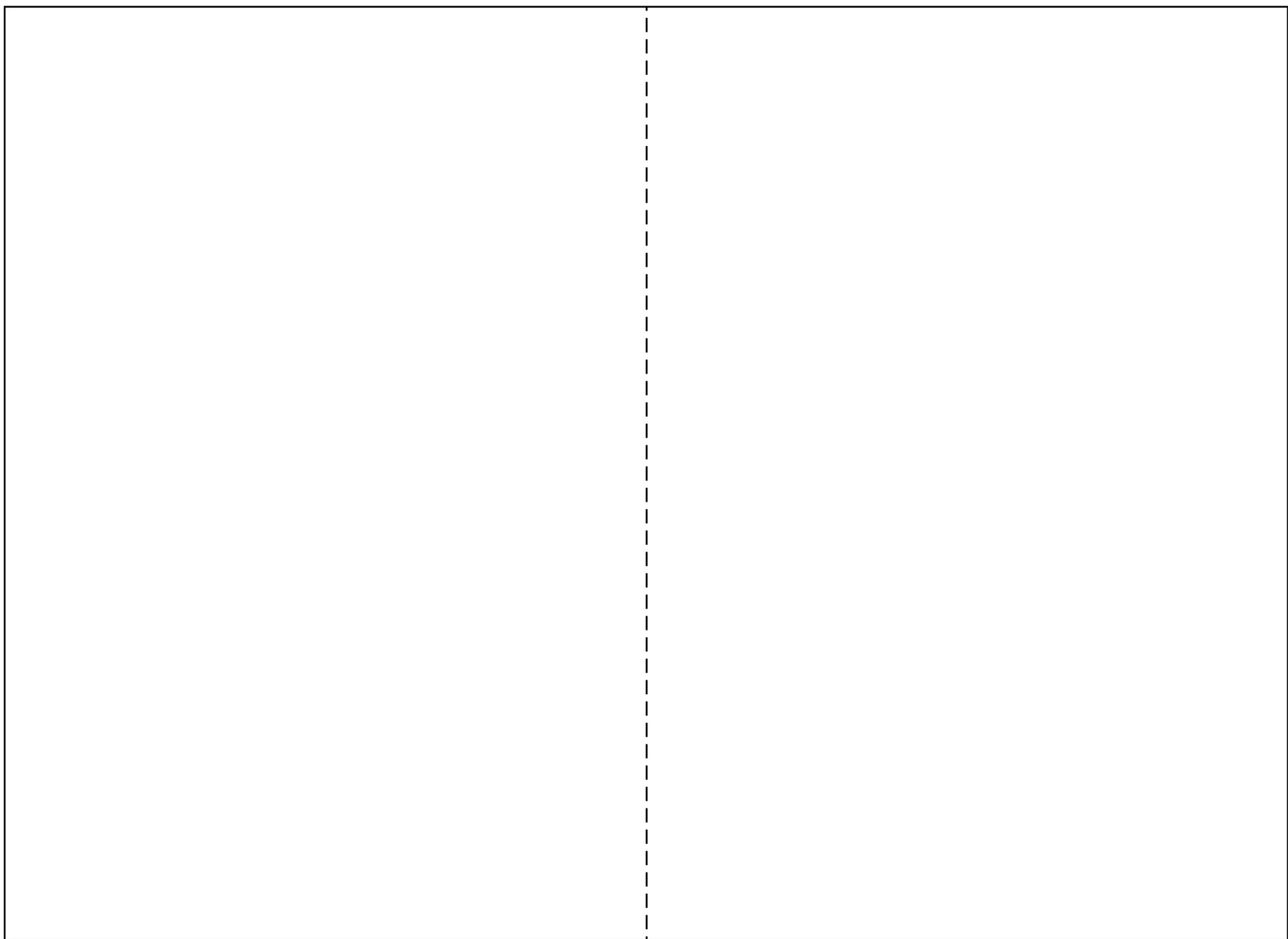


- 1 Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body*,
London: Vintage, 1992; 1994
- 2 Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*,
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- 3 Abe Kobo. *The Woman in the Dunes*,
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- 4 J.M. Coetzee. *Foe*,
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- 5 Olaf Stapledon, *Star Maker*,
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- 6 Arkadi & Boris Strugatsky. *Roadside Picnic*,
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- 7 Michel Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*,
London: Phoenix, 2005
- 8 Thomas Bernhard. *Correction*,
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This is where the story starts, in this threadbare room. The walls are exploding. The windows have turned into telescopes. Moon and stars are magnified in this room. The sun hangs over the mantelpiece. I stretch out my hand and reach the corners of the world. The world is bundled up in this room. Beyond the door, where the river is, where the roads are, we shall be. We can take the world with us when we go and sling the sun under your arm. Hurry now, it's getting late. I don't know if this is a happy ending but here we are let loose in open fields.¹

The arc of the moon stayed over my head long after the train had left the station, appearing and disappearing each time the train rounded a curve. I kept my eyes on the moon, and whenever that was lost to sight, I watched the lights of the little towns as they went past the window. I thought of May Kasahara, with her blue woollen hat, alone on the bus taking her back to the factory in the hills. Then I thought of the duck people, asleep in the grassy shadows somewhere. And finally, I thought of the world I was heading back to.

"Goodbye May Kasahara," I said.

Goodbye, May Kasahara: may there always be something watching over you.

I closed my eyes and tried to sleep. But it was not until much later that I was able to get any real sleep. In a place far away from anyone or anywhere, I drifted off for a moment.²

There was no particular need to hurry about escaping. On the two-way ticket he held in his hand now, the destination and time of departure were blanks for him to fill in as he wished. In addition, he realized that he was bursting with a desire to talk to someone about the water trap. And if he wanted to talk about it, there wouldn't be better listeners than the villagers. He would end by telling someone—if not today, then tomorrow.

He might as well put off his escape until sometime after that.³

His mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face.⁴

Two lights for guidance. The first, our little glowing atom of community, with all that it signifies. The second, the cold light of the stars, symbol of the hypercosmical reality, with its crystal ecstasy. Strange that in this light, in which even the dearest love is frostily assessed, and even the possible defeat of our half-waking world is contemplated without remission of praise, the human crisis does not lose but gains significance. Strange, that it seems more, not less, urgent to play some part in this struggle, this brief effort of animalcules striving to win for their race some increase of lucidity before the ultimate darkness.⁵

The sun was broiling hot, red spots floated before his eyes, the air was quivering on the floor of the quarry, and in the shimmer it seemed that the ball was dancing in place like a buoy on the waves. He went past the bucket, superstitiously picking up his feet higher and making sure not to step on the splotches. And then, sinking into the rubble, he dragged himself across the quarry to the dancing, winking ball. He was covered with sweat and panting from the heat, and at the same time, a chill was running through him, he was shuddering, as if he had a bad hangover, and the sweet chalk dust gritted between his teeth. He had stopped trying to think. He just repeated his litany over and over : "I am an animal, you see that. I don't have the words, they didn't teach me the words. I don't know how to think, the bastards didn't let me learn how to think. But if you really are... all powerful... all-knowing...then you figure it out! Look into my heart. I know that everything you need is in there. It has to be. I never sold my soul to anyone! Its mine, it's human! You take from me what it is I want... it just can't be that I would want something bad! Damn it all, I can't think of anything, except those words of his... 'HAPPINESS FOR EVERYBODY, FREE AND NO ONE WILL GO AWAY UNSATISFIED!'"⁶

I bathed for a long time under the sun and the starlight, and I felt nothing other than a slightly obscure and nutritive sensation. Happiness was not a possible horizon. The world had betrayed. My body belonged to me for only a brief lapse of time; I would never reach the goal I had been set. The future was empty; it was the mountain. My dreams were populated with emotional presences. I was, I was no longer. Life was real.⁷

We always go too far, so as not to fall short, we always bring our plans to realization, relentlessly against all opposition and especially against ourselves, we go to the extreme, but without breaking through the final barrier, so Roithamer. We always go on to the absolute limit, we don't shy away from that, just as we don't shy away from death. One day, in a single instant, we'll break through the final barrier, but the moment hasn't come yet. We know how, but we don't know when. It makes no difference whether I go back to England from Austria or back to Austria from England, so Rothamer. We still have a reason not to cross the final barrier. We're tempted to do it, we don't do it, so Roithamer, we keep thinking: do it, don't do it, consistency, inconsistency, until we cross the final barrier. Science for one thing, my plan, the Cone, for another, supreme happiness/supreme unhappiness, in creating and fulfilling something extraordinary we've arrived at nothing more than what everyone also arrives at, nothing but solitude, so Roithamer. When a body is acted upon by external forces besides its

weight it tips over on one side of the base if the (so-called) weight (vector) acts along a line through the so-called center-of-mass that intersects the supporting surface outside the base of the body; in the case of a stable equilibrium, the weight vector points inside the base, in case of an unstable equilibrium it points exactly toward the tilting of the base, "tilting edge of the base" underlined. We always went too far, so Roithamer, so we were always pushing toward the extreme limit. But we never thrust ourselves beyond it. Once I have thrust myself beyond it, it's all over, so Roithamer, "all" underlined. we're always set toward that predetermined moment, "predetermined moment" underlined. When that moment has come, we don't know that it has come, but it is the right moment. We can exist at the highest degree of intensity as long as we live, so Roithamer (June 7). The end is no process. Clearing.⁸

