Buried Narratives: The Pleasures of Repression in American Fiction

“How remarkably well you are looking today. But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.”

*Edgar Allan Poe, The Cask of Amontillado* (1846)

He had been left, by the death of his parents in India, guardian to a small nephew and a small niece, children of a younger, a military brother whom he had lost two years before.

*Henry James, The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

And, as we had expected all along, within three days, Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening.

*William Faulkner, A Rose for Emily* (1930)

On that terrible February night that Marion remembered so vividly, a slow quarrel had gone on for hours. There was a scene at the Florida, and then he attempted to take her home, and then she kissed young Webb at a table; after that there was what she had hysterically said. When he arrived home alone he turned the key in the lock in wild anger.

The little man Helen had consented to dance with at the ship’s party, who had insulted her ten feet from the table . . .

*F. Scott Fitzgerald, Babylon Revisited* (1935)

They passed a large cotton field with five or six graves.

*Flannery O’Connor, A Good Man is Hard to Find* (1953)

In this one [rape fantasy] I’m not in the apartment where I live now, I’m back in my mother’s house in Leamington and the fellow’s been hiding in the cellar, and he grabs my arm when I go down stairs to get a jar of jam, and he’s got hold of the axe too, out of the garage . . . Funny, I couldn’t tell you at all what the man looks like but I know exactly what kind of shoes he’s wearing, because that’s the last I see of him, his shoes going up the coal chute, and they’re the old-fashioned kind that lace up the ankles, even though he’s a young fellow. That’s strange, isn’t it?

*Margaret Atwood, Rape Fantasies* (1977)

He’s saying how when he was twelve years old he fell into a well in the vicinity of the farm he grew up on. It was a dry well, lucky for him. . . . He says how late that afternoon, after he’d been located, his dad hauled him out with a rope.

*Raymond Carver, Where I’m Calling From* (1988)

I’ll never forget you. Your husband will beat you with an extension cord and the bus will pull away leaving you standing there in tears, but you were my mother.

*Denis Johnson, Work* (1992)