

*"If a story is in you,  
it has to come out."*

— William Faulkner.

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Pages 2 – 6: Detachment

- FICTION -

{Word Count: 2484}

Page 7-8: The Guardian; Nineteen Eighty-Four

- REVIEW -

{Word Count: 513.}

Page 9-11: Writing Commentary

- POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES -

{Word Count: 1482. }

Page 12: Bibliography

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# Detachment

Dear Reader,

*Scott Fitzgerald once explored to his reader that if you show him a hero, he will write you a tragedy. But the truth is, I am no hero, and I would never declare myself as one. So the question that comes to mind for you to ask yourselves is – to truly feel loss, and grief at the absence of another, is that what makes us a hero? To survive such a devastating event? I will leave the decision for you.*

## **A.**

My fingers hovered over the typewriter as my mind freed itself from the thought, detaching itself away from reality and back into the four walls of my bedroom that I had seen so much of in the past three weeks. It had become more of an obsession now, to type as if I were the emanation of a writer he once was.

But it was always an unsuccessful attempt that my mother would constantly dismiss as foolish.

His writings were always tragedies, rather than the supernatural occurrences; some had the courage to escape their minds. And it was something I had always admired him for, that he had the capability of some difference within him.

Soon, I would have to leave for work, to watch sympathetic faces gaze upon me, as if I were a flower after a storm had pugnaciously dissolved the life out of me. What they did not realise is that I did not wish to be looked at that way; I did not wish to have their sympathy. Death was not something shared between you and the world; it was shared between you and the deceased. My devastation was a burden I wish that no other would have to grasp on their own shoulders.

Working at the school was a job I always aspired to achieve, yet never expected to. In a time like my own, the only reasoning behind my gender being able to prosper in such a career was because of *their* absence the males were gone. Some temporarily, some for eternity. The helpless were required to help. Part of me enjoyed the sensation of contributing to society — knowing that my actions were significant; yet another part of me knew the consequences of it. As if I had received a star but there was no sky in which to admire it.

That morning, the children were as lively as ever, their shrieks instantly bringing a smile on my usually cautious face. It was phenomenal how their laughter remained the same throughout a war so cruel. That positivity was still available in this world, even if it only filtered through its youth. Their vulnerability entranced me into remembering my own, on the same chalk filled concrete, only a few years previously. It felt as if it were an eternity now that my own mind was so protected from the harshness of the war, a war that would drown us all years later.

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Everything was brighter, more intensified than I would ever be able to capture in the vision of my current age. The small plain of grass at the corner of our playground had a vibrancy that I no longer have the capability to see, but I did then. His cerulean eyes were easily identifiable as cerulean - yet, in a few years, I doubt I would be able to remember this. They would simply be known in my mind as blue. However, my six year old self was never aware of this – she was simply too preoccupied at the fact that she knew what *cerulean* meant from the lesson the day before. She had written it down on her hand, reciting it for the duration of that evening to impress him the morning after. Even at two thousand, one hundred and thirty six days old, I contained the impulse to impress him with whatever I had the education to know. It was a challenge between the two of us – to recite an interesting fact we remembered from the day previous in order to battle on who had the most intelligence. Most thought it was odd of us when, even at a young age, we knew that females would be required to live at home, while the males were off at work. Either way, challenging him was simply my natural pursuit. No six year old had the capability to hide their impulses.

As soon as my eyes lingered on the gates, they instantly found him. His body was puffed by adolescence back then, but it had simply grown into muscle when he was of age. Either way, I found myself compelled towards it. Compelled towards him.

“Anna!” his youthful, high pitched voice exclaimed, pulling me close, to the extent that I was unable to breathe. It was a common thing for the two of us – to hug when first seeing each other in the morning. However, it was usually a thing between girls, and my friends would warn me that I’d somehow get pneumonia if I went anywhere near a boy, for they were a different species to me, I had never been one to believe such rumours. People died from pneumonia and, surely, if it was something you could die from; all males would have been dead by now if that were the case.

“Charles!” I exclaim back. I knew that my friends would be glancing over, like they did everyday – and the same question would escape their lips as it did every morrow. ‘Why are you hugging Charles again? Do you want to give yourself the boy illness, Anna?’ Looking back at Charles, I offered him a soft smile.

“You’re cerulean,” I said with a nod, a grin on my lips as I awaited his reaction.

“You’re pecan,” he returned with a shrug, his grin wider than my own as he refers to my brown orbs.

“But – how?” I whine, crossing my arms as a pout appears on my lips. “I did not see you write anything down!”

"That's because it's in my head," Charles returned with a shrug, pointing to his skull with his index finger. Before I reply, a concerned expression appears on the male's lips and I am forced to look around, scanning for what possibly could have been wrong.

"Anna, are you okay?"

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"Miss Wiatts, are you okay?" another voice asks, allowing my eyes to flicker open once again. Confusion sweeping in my mind, I quickly sit up to find myself in the nurses' wing at the school - the cold, pecan coloured flannel dropping from my head down to the hem of my skirt.

"Mrs Kennedy," I murmur with a gasp escaping my shocked lips. "What on earth happened?"

"You collapsed on the playground," the woman confesses, "giving the children a shock at that. You mentioned Mr Argent's name, miss."

At the mention of Charles – I tilted my head down in shame. My main goal was to not have any sympathy from the others; yet, here I was, achieving it foolishly from remembering him on the playground we once teased each other on. We never knew of war then – it was a possibility that never filled our six-year-old minds, and rightly so. Death should never be in an innocent's mind.

"I'm fine, Nurse, honestly," I say, forcing a fake smile as my eyes meet her own.

"Are you sure? Because-"

"I said I'm fine," I confirm, composing myself.

Although the intention was never to respond in such an abrupt manner – I simply could not help myself. A rage I rarely found within myself was possessing my thoughts selfishly, and I knew that it was only a matter of time that I would end up saying something that I regretted to the kind, five foot four woman whose face was only inches away from mine. Despite the wary gaze that was cast upon me, I simply cleared my throat before speaking once again.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Mrs Kennedy." I say with a short nod before recomposing myself and standing upwards, making my way down the hall.

Despite any protest within her own eyes, I knew that I needed to get my way out; although in a time like this, all of us had little freedom, I intended to use mine to escape such an awkward situation.

My feet carried down the long, narrow corridor that my footsteps knew so well; it had been the central of my own education as well as that of the children I currently teach, yet the smell of satsumas had never dispersed itself from the area in all of those years. It was a blessing and a curse – remaining somewhere so familiar. Familiarity was supposed to supplement a woman in the war, the papers told us, yet all that familiarity conceived for myself was loss. The loss of him.

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No one dared to explore outside of the building that winter's afternoon; it was below zero, someone had informed my mother, and the rumours of the true temperature bartered throughout the usually vacant hallway, full of fourteen and fifteen-year-old girls and boys who wished to return home as soon as the next lesson had finished; however, everyone situated in the area knew that it was going to be anything but a quick spiral. Final hour Fridays were always taken by Mrs Reed, who would spend the whole sixty minutes discussing the rumours of the war that was in our mists. But many of us found the woman simply an irritancy; of course there would not be a war against every country in the world. The idea itself was preposterous.

"So," Charles says, interrupting my thoughts as his elbow shoves playfully into my own, almost causing my red apple to fall into the dusty, wooden hallway floor which was covered with waste of the other youths, their voices reverberating to the point I barely heard the male's murmur.

"So yourself," I croon back at him, a small frown appearing on my forehead as my eyes look up to meet his. His adolescent curls were gone now; his Brunette hair was much shorter and slicker, for his parents could afford for him to go to the barbers in the city. Most of us would get our mothers to do our own, but he had always been more fortunate than the majority of us. I, myself, could not remember a time my mother and father visited the city, for it was a least twenty miles, which was a substantial distance to travel on foot. That was the reason a large proportion of the other males in our year were not fond of him, but I myself had never found an issue with the now five foot eight boy.

"Don't be like that, An," he says with a small sigh, his eyes quick to dart away from my own to the apple I clutched tightly in my hand. "You know if you dropped it I keep an extra one in my satchel. I know what you're like with your apples."

I never could stay mad at him for long; perhaps it was because he knew me so well, or perhaps it was the dimples that appeared so innocently on his cheeks whenever a grin infatuated them.

"Oh, all right then, go on," I say, my eyes wandering to the crumpled, old window that was only inches away and to the snow beginning to lay outside. Still, in a stage of adolescence, I had found no errors in the world.

Not even with war approaching as if it were a ticking time bomb.

"So, how excited are you about afternoon lesson?" Charles asks with a grin, naturally sliding his right arm around my petite frame as he raises both eyebrows at me in curiosity. "Learning about the world war they believe to begin the summer after this one?"

"What do I think?" I ask with a small amount of laughter escaping my lips. "Charles, you know that us *young ladies* are not meant to think."

"Yet you do," he replies quickly, his tone hushed as he looks down on me. "You always think, Annie. That's what I've always found so fascinating about you."

Taking a deep breath, defeated by his statement, my gaze shifted from the window and over to him once again, my tone bearing the same audacity of his own.

"I think that it's unrealistic to fear such a thing so early on," I say with a simple shrug. "Everything that is destined to happen will do so, there is nothing we can do to stop it."

With a nod, he simply looked away from me once again and took a bite into his own apple; his eyes drifted over to the corner of the room, and I knew exactly what the movement meant; the male was in thought.

"I think I'd join, you know." he says with a nod, placing the core of the apple back into his satchel in the dressing his mother gave him. "If there was a war."

At his sudden comment, I felt the apple in my hand become less of a significance, and my attention quickly shifting to him. All Charles had discussed before was his love to write; the only purpose the male believed he had in life was to write. Going off to fight was nothing to do with writing, and the idea of Charles, *my Charles*, surrendering his life in some imaginary war seemed as if he was simply trying to be one of the heroines in the novels he clutched so dearly to his soul.

"Charles, you cannot be serious!" I exclaim all at once, my tone instantly rising from the absurd ideas fermenting in the idealistic brain of his.

"Come on, A," he says, his eyes rolling. From the clarity in his speech, it is clear that he is more amused than anything at my sudden concern for his life. "Like you said, there's never going to be a war."

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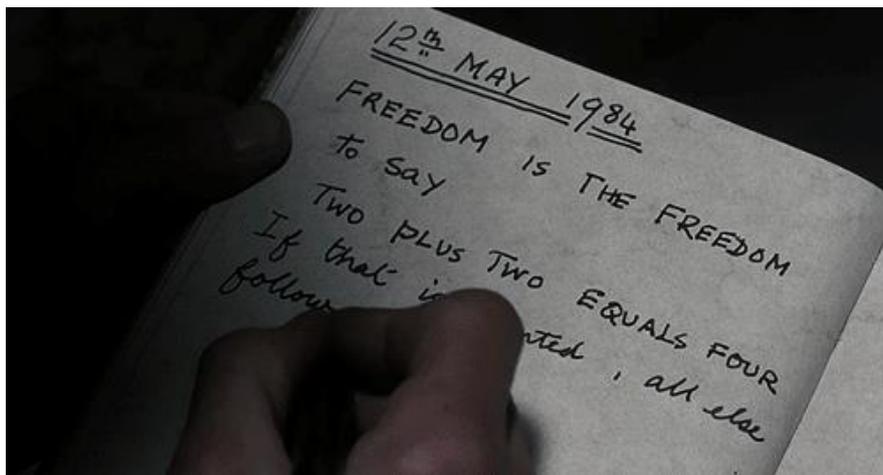
"Miss Waitts," the small, plump six year old said, distracting me from my cluster of reminiscence as the bell shrieked throughout the hall, a small smile on her curious face. "Was the war going on when you were a little girl?"

At the sudden question, I was taken a back. The girl who always smelt like fresh strawberries had always been one for curious questions that everyone wondered how she possibly accumulated, and most staff would simply disregard them. I, however, worked upon her curiosity, aspiring the girl to wonder whatever she wished.

"The only wars we had when I was a child, Matilda, were the wars of our emotions, and the fights the boys would have on this very playing field," I confessed with a small chuckle, nodding to the window I had gazed upon with Charles by my side all those years ago. "Now, time to go to class."

# Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell – a startling premonition of what is to come?

How much of a warning is the novel by Orwell, sixty-seven years later?



Sometimes the strongest of minds succumbs to society's ways. Photo Credit: Tumblr.

Many are aware of the novel known as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell; from movie adaptations to recent theatre productions, thirty-nine-year-old Winston Smith's world has both captured and chilled the hearts of thousands of individuals from its time of publication. Illegally purchasing a diary, the protagonist decides that the year itself must be at least *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as he discusses the faults of the slogan of "The Party," and how he is incapable of ever loving the God-like antagonist of the novel declared to be "Big Brother." Throughout the plot, the twists and turns of Winston's shocking reality are sure to keep your fingers clutched to the sides of the book in an ending likely to perplex your mind further.

The thing which separates *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from any other novel you may have experienced is the prophecy within it – in the times of writing, technology was just at its birth. This new concept sparked the fear of Orwell to write this novel which is so popular today. However, you cannot scan the piece without having one thought in your mind: is *Nineteen Eighty-Four* becoming a reality? Firstly, if we focus our minds on when Syme says to Winston "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?", you cannot help but gaze into our own society. Social Media has become a significant sector within each of our lives, and, similar to Newspeak, we use terminology, or "text speech" in order to shorten what we wish to say; if someone from 1949, the time of publication, were to read some of the terms such as "tyl" or "brb" that our society uses daily, wouldn't it simply be as confusing as "Minipax" and "Minitrue" are to the poles within Orwell's dystopia?

A parallel also considered in many other minds which brings *Nineteen Eighty-Four* close to our own lives, is Big Brother itself; a concept created in the novel that is used by the media very glibly today. However, to a reader of Orwell's novel, the two words will instantly bring us back to the dismay of Winston's days: he methods such as a "telescreen" are very similar

to the way that individuals can be watched in today's society (i.e – closed circuit television.) With the countless technology in our homes, it leads you to wonder whether the glimmer of the laptop light flickering on late at night is truly a malfunction, or society watching your every move. This has been seen in news items as recent as 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016 when the latest version of Investigatory Powers Bill will allow police to hack into people's computers and websites. With news such as this, you cannot help but wonder if Winston's fate in fiction will soon become our own in reality?

Conspiracies aside, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a captivating novel which will allow your mind to spiral into another dimension through the talents of Orwell's mind. But whether it is a warning or simply a farcical creation from the brain of a disappointed Communist is something I will let you decide.

# Writing Commentary

Christopher Booker's *The Seven Basic Plots* declares that there are seven basic plots when we tell stories; in my work, I selected one to work with to create a sophisticated piece of fiction. I mixed tragedy, one of Booker's plots, with romance and war to create a hybrid portraying how the continuation of romance itself throughout a devastating event such as war can be a tragedy within itself; this can be seen from the situation that the protagonist, Anna has found herself in throughout my piece "Detachment." The fact that Anna was feeling romantic attraction while Charles, her fiancé, was fighting in the war resulted in her own tragedy; these two elements, romance and war, fuse together in order to create the female's tragedy which can be seen in the opening, as soon as Anna explains that "His writings were always tragedies" – however, what the girl is unaware of is that she is living a tragedy herself; the death of her husband has created flashbacks in her mind to the point where the loss is controlling her life, even if she finds difficulty in accepting that fact herself, and despite the constant reminders of those around her. I started off my piece with an opening gambit – adding a diegetic layer to my work. Addressing the reader directly was inspired by Jane Austen's novels, such as *Northanger Abbey*.

The main inspiration for this piece was the novel *Atonement* by Ian McEwan. Although I did not extract any specific events or detail, I used the plot of Robbie going off to war and the way that the loss of Robbie the family taints Cecilia's own life to the point that she "detached" herself from everyone that she loved and moved herself away to train to be a nurse. In *Detachment*, Anna adopts a very similar method – Cecilia's career transformed into one career that Robbie wished to have. Anne was quick to adopt Charles' own career choice, as said at the beginning: "It had become more of an obsession now, to type as if I were the phenomenon of a writer he once was."

A final inspiration that helped me to write an extract of *Detachment* was an artist I was listening to throughout the writing process; her name is Daughter, and one of her popular songs - *Tomorrow* - contains lyrics burning with emotion – such as "When the sun comes up, we'll be nothing but dust" and "When the moon, it shines, I will leave two lines. Just find my love. Then find me." These two lines helped inspire *Detachment* by the echoing sadness inside them, and the idea that the one thing Anna wishes to have in her life is her "love," back as she is "detaching (her mind) itself away from reality and back into the four walls of my bedroom that I had seen so much of the past three weeks." It is as if Anna has become the "dust" that Charles became when he died in the war, making it day by day trying to find her love without any signs of success.

Regarding the mode, prose was the obvious choice after coming up with the initial. Prose has always been my strongest form of writing, and I felt I would be able to convey the expression of emotion thereby more strongly than I would have from a short collection of poetry. For *Detachment* to make sense, everything needed to be properly severed – the flashbacks and the current memories, in order for Anna's story to cohere semantically.

However, if any other literary style had been chosen, I would have decided to create a poetry collection of six or so pieces – two on Anna and Charles of children, two at the period of Charles leaving for war and the two becoming engaged; and, finally, Anna coping with the death of Charles, very much like she is at the beginning of *Detachment*. However, prose provided the clearer way of explaining the situation of the young female and her current emotions at that period.

One issue I had throughout the process was the historical accuracy that came with it; while writing *Detachment*, I knew that I wanted to have historical context to, such as World War One, and decided that the Battle of Somme would be the place where Charles died, although it is never mentioned. Because of this, when writing the second flashback in which Anna mentions the two of them are fifteen around the period of 1912, that a nineteen-year-old male would be participating in a war in 1916, where thousands of lives were lost. If I were to improve this side of my writing, I would try to add more historical context to help confirm the period and add in my interest in war history as supporting context.

A second, small issue I had with writing *Detachment* was how to make the flashbacks clearer; these intense visions were inspired by Thomas Traherne's *Centuries of Meditation*. At first, I knew little of how to effectively signal a flashback so that it was clear to the reader that it was back in time. Originally, I had merely changed it into a different font, but, after workshopping was informed that asterisks were an obvious indicator of where a flashback was, so I decided to add them so that it was more coherent to the reader.

The final issue I had with the main part of the Portfolio was the word limit, it is evident that the ending of *Detachment* is a rather abrupt one and, although I made an attempt to make the content and explanations bleaker, I felt as if it got to a point where it simply could not be cut down anymore without the emotional purpose I was trying to convey becoming destroyed; therefore, it was ended on a simple cut of Anna speaking to a child, a similar age to that from her first flashback; however, I believe that the story concludes at a reasonable point where Anna is finally beginning to detach herself from the emotions by which she found herself overwhelmed as she went to return to her classroom and teach the children as her remedy.

However, if I were to continue the piece, the ending would have differed from the way the reader may interpret it currently. There would have been two more flashbacks – one of Charles confessing that he is going to the war and another of Anne receiving the news of Charles' death; the loss would have been a struggle that continued throughout the rest of her life, constantly triggered by war mementos around her and the fact that she never could move out of the room that was once his, or replace the typewriter his fingers once hovered over.

The second piece contains much more positivity; I knew that in my coursework I wanted to do a review of some kind, and, on reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell, I realised that it was a novel I wanted to explore further and compare the dystopia from it to today's society. My main inspiration for this short piece was *The Guardian* itself, as I was aware of the short, two hundred word or so book reviews that they publish and how it was close to the five-hundred-word limit I myself had to work with after the length of *Detachment*. Although the review format could have been something such as a blog, I decided to take a much more academic line to focus on, as *Nineteen Eighty-four* is such a critically acclaimed piece of work.

The specific article I found myself inspired by was Hannah Beckerman's *Lover* review; the review is introduced with a simple synopsis of the novel, as I have done in my own non-fiction piece, to give the reader a clear signal of what the book is about before proceeding to reading the review; it informs the reader who is unaware of the plot just enough to appreciate the analysis. Because of the form itself, I decided to use *direct address* throughout the whole piece of writing in order to get my argument across; unlike my prose, I feel as if this technique of rhetoric discourse is needed in a non-fiction piece if you are trying to get your own perspective across to someone else and get them to understand it. It is, I believe, a part of effective journalistic communication.

In addition to the original two hundred words offered by *The Guardian's* pieces, I elaborated to add my own extra analysis to the novel, comparing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to our own society; if I were to improve this piece, I would have perhaps worked on ways to make it more concise so that I could have structured more of a dialectic in, rather than the non-fiction being rather one-sided. However, it could have not been achieved from the within the word limit.

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