

Introduction

Marilynne Robinson's epistolary novel *Gilead* (2004) opens in a moment of quiet. The text is a letter from the elderly Reverend John Ames to his six-year-old son, Robby, for whom Ames is writing a personal history and 'begats'.¹ Robinson's prose slows when Ames' final illness develops and it pauses when he pauses. Yet despite the primacy of the Reverend's voice, the novel begins with Ames' silence. 'You reached up', he writes at the end of the first page, addressing the young son sitting on his lap, 'and put your fingers on my lips and gave me that look [...] a kind of furious pride, very passionate and stern' (G 3). Robby's gesture may be small here, but it is rooted in a quiet that I argue is central to the development of *Gilead* and its partner novels *Home* (2008) and *Lila* (2014). By putting his fingers to his father's lips, Robby ends the need for speech and begins to communicate non-verbally, immersing father and son in a companionable and communicative quiet that lasts until the novel's final page. Their exchange is not silent, then, but quiet: a state better conceived as a mode of conversation than the complete absence of sound and an aesthetic of narrative that I argue Robinson develops in her fiction.

This book defines quiet as an aesthetic of narrative that is driven by reflective principles and places Robinson within a vibrant contemporary American trend. No definition yet exists of 'the quiet novel' and I use the term provocatively. At first appearance, 'quiet' is a contradictory description of any literary form. The novel, like all literature, facilitates discussion and the exchange of ideas to such an extent that any description of the form as quiet risks suggesting that the novelist has nothing to say or that the quiet of the text is representative of the author's failure to speak. However, as Rebecca Solnit suggests, 'Books are solitudes in which we meet' and although reading is best

conducted in silence, the quiet of the novel is better conceived as a mode of conversation that occurs at a reduced volume rather than the complete absence of sound.² Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy writes similarly about the act of listening: '[t]o be listening is always to be on the edge of meaning.'³ For Nancy, the ways in which noise can 're-sound' within the individual reflects, if not the condition of being present, then the embodiment of presence as it arrives 'in waves on a swell' at the edges of conscious experience.⁴ This book conceives of quiet in similar aesthetic terms. Just as Nancy believes that listening adds to the individual's sense of self in the present, and just as Solnit suggests that reading is a meeting of selves in solitude, so I suggest that quiet can be conceived philosophically: as an interior mode of discussion, a discrete articulation of selfhood and, perhaps most importantly, a resonant way of processing and paying attention in the present.

The quiet contemporary American novel makes two critical interventions. Chapter 1 maps the neglected history of quiet fictions and argues that from Hester Prynne to Clarissa Dalloway, from *Bartleby* to William Stoner, quiet characters fill the novel in the Western tradition. The introvert is a disruptive presence in many nineteenth-century texts, for example, including those by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville where quiet is associated with a failure to speak or an absence of mind. In the early twentieth century, quiet protagonists were integral to the 'novel of consciousness' favoured by many writers including Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust who equated quietness of character with a rich and dramatic internal life. As a phrase, this study also observes that 'the quiet novel' has a long and untraced history, dating back 150 years. The British journal, *London Society*, featured the first printed reference to the term in 1868; the first reference to the quiet novel in American periodicals was published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1884.⁵ These early reviewers hint at a quiet aesthetic and, perhaps understandably, leave the idea undeveloped. Yet throughout its long history, many critics have used 'the quiet novel' sometimes to denote praise but most often as a phrase that dismisses and derides the work of writers whose novels seem disengaged from the noise of their wider society. *The quiet contemporary American novel* finally takes up the long-referred-to idea of quiet fiction to ask what it means for a novel to be quiet and how we might specifically read for quiet in the American novel, which critics so often describe as noisy.⁶

My second point of intervention is to demonstrate how the novel's quiet undercurrent functions as an aesthetic in contemporary American fiction. Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* and its partner novels, *Home* and *Lila*, Lynne Tillman's *American Genius; a comedy* (2006), Richard Powers' *The Echo Maker* (2006), Paul Harding's *Tinkers* (2010) and its partner novel, *Enon* (2013), Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) and Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011) are central to my analysis. While these novels are stylistically diverse, they are united, I argue, by a quiet that is central to the development of their prose style. The narrators of these novels enjoy quiet activities such as meditating, praying, writing, reading and studying, cultivating a rich internal life and entertaining a wide range of religious, political and social theories, ideas and philosophies. They are preachers (*Gilead; Home; Tinkers*), scholars (*American Genius; The Echo Maker; Tinkers; Open City*) and writers (*Leaving the Atocha Station; Open City*); in many cases, the quiet protagonist is a combination of all three. Each novel is also set in a quiet location: small towns (*Gilead; Home; The Echo Maker; Tinkers; Enon*), isolated communities (*American Genius*) and the art galleries and libraries of a city (*Open City; Leaving the Atocha Station*). Yet equally important is the idea that quiet novels are not restricted to remote locations so much as their protagonists seek out spaces for reflection in which they can contemplate and interpret the noise of the present from a distance.⁷

As later chapters in this study will demonstrate, the nine novels at the centre of this book are part of a far larger contemporary trend in which the interior lives of introverted, scholarly and often reclusive characters are prioritised. Geraldine Brooks' *March* (2005), Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge: A Novel in Stories* (2008), Denis Johnson's *Train Dreams* (2012) and Alice Munro's *Dear Life* (2012) share a preoccupation with quiet people and quiet locations. Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* (2013) and Rabih Alameddine's *An Unnecessary Woman* (2014) feature passionate and sometimes angry defences of antisocial female narrators whose lives have 'quieted' through old age.⁸ Outside of North America, Austrian novelist Robert Seethaler's *A Whole Life* (2015) shares the quiet contemporary American novel's preoccupation with the rural lives of previous generations. Set in the Austrian Alps at the end of the First World War, Seethaler's protagonist prefers the ways in which everything works 'more slowly, even more quietly' in the seclusion of his location and the narrator continually highlights the protagonist's will to exist almost 'entirely without noise'.⁹

Fundamentally, and as Henry Mills Alden notes in the epigraph to this study, critics will most likely read a novel as quiet when it lacks narrative event. Caleb Crain's debut novel *Necessary Errors* (2013), for example, explores the 'quiet' aftermath of political activity through the story of a young novelist who arrives in Prague in the months following the Velvet Revolution of December 1989 and is 'comfortable with only one pleasure, reading'.¹⁰ Similarly devoid of major incident and event, Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?* (2012) and Tao Lin's *Taipei* (2013) play out the quiet implicit in explorations of interiority through unstable, closely focalised, metafictional narratives filled with quasi-autobiographical content. Even the 'cognitive turn' in the American novel, the subject of Chapter 4, that began with Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* (1999) and continued through Powers' *The Echo Maker*, Rivka Galchen's *Atmospheric Disturbances* (2008) and John Wray's *Lowboy* (2009), privileges the quieter states of consciousness and, as I argue, might be read for its quieter qualities. Informed by developments in neuroscience made at the turn of the twenty-first century, these fictional dramatisations of cognitive operations attempt to subdue 'the full range of cultural noise' within the quiet of the mind.¹¹ Although these novels are then characterised by a feverish narrative instability that many quiet fictions lack, they share an essential eventlessness that is common to all quiet prose.

A burgeoning critical interest in these fictions is further reflected by the Pulitzer Prize committee's tendency to reward quieter narratives. Following *Gilead*'s victory in 2005, Brooks' *March* won in 2006, Strout's *Olive Kitteridge* in 2008, Harding's *Tinkers* in 2010 and Johnson's *Train Dreams* was nominated in 2012, a year when no prize was awarded. As much as a trend is apparent academics and reviewers seem increasingly receptive to quiet fictions. These novels are well reviewed, often become bestsellers and are sometimes saved from obscurity by a devoted readership. The 2006 republication of John Williams' neglected novel *Stoner* (1965), for instance, received widespread attention for the 'quietness' of its prose, while critics praise the English language translation of Karl Ove Knausgård's trilogy *My Struggle* (2009–11) for the author's ability to sustain a reader's attention through 3,600 pages in which 'nothing happens. Really: nothing happens at all.'¹² Central to my discussion of quiet fiction, therefore, is the idea that quiet is as much a method of engagement as a distinct trend in literature and a growing number of contemporary readers are reading for quiet as imaginative respite from a

twenty-first-century culture that seems increasingly defined by its noise.

Indeed, I am interested in quiet's contemporary applications because the term remains so undefined. Reviews of Knausgård's *My Struggle* reveal a telling divide between readers who choose quiet texts and those who prefer noise: the author has been described both as 'Norway's Proust' and as a 'boring' and 'artless author-of-the-week', whose writing is an unfortunate consequence of Norway's movement for 'slow' activities.¹³ Similarly, when Paul Harding's debut novel, *Tinkers* – which I analyse at length in Chapter 3 – received the Pulitzer in 2010, it was widely unknown and reviewed only fleetingly by major publications.¹⁴ *Tinkers* had been rejected by many publishers before it was finally distributed by Bellevue Literary Press, with Harding receiving feedback that he was 'just another graduate' of the Iowa Writers' Workshop with a 'quiet little novel' he wanted to publish.¹⁵ In certain circles, quiet remains a buzzword for unmarketable, unfashionable and unprofitable fiction. When Harding published *Enon* as a 'partner' novel to *Tinkers* in 2013, reviewers again read its quiet prose with suspicion. Harding's second novel is set in the same world as *Tinkers* and is named after the tiny village in which its precursor is based. Yet reviewers described *Enon* as a 'risky' follow-up, a novel that 'should be boring' but somehow manages to enthrall through a profoundly 'unusual' narrative, which, like *Tinkers*, has very little narrative 'event'.¹⁶

Several contemporary novelists who share Harding's history of rejection have also felt forced to write in defence of their 'quiet' publications. Andrew Ladd, a novelist and editor for literary magazine *Ploughshares*, criticises the industry's 'schizophrenic' relationship with quiet novels, describing them as the 'quagmire' of literary publishing.¹⁷ Canadian novelist Emily St. John Mandel published a similar complaint in August 2013 and, in a conversation conducted via email, notes that publishers often describe her fiction as 'too quiet'. Rather than reject the term entirely, Mandel suggests that the quiet novel is better characterised by its 'distilled' and 'unshowy' prose and 'a sense of grace' that values reflection over action.¹⁸ Indeed, Mandel further observes that each quiet novel seems like a 'minor political act' that pushes against the prevailing norms of society. 'Quiet novels', she notes, stand 'in opposition to the unquiet contemporary world' and write a history of the contemporary through alternate means of communication.¹⁹

In 2012, Oregon-based novelist and editor Laura Stanfill went several steps further when she opened a regional press to publish the ‘quiet’ novels rejected by larger publishers in New York. Speaking again via email, Stanfill explained:

I launched my press around this idea because many of my writer friends write quiet novels, and we all kept getting the same feedback from agents or editors – too quiet. If we all like to read and write quiet novels, then maybe we shouldn’t be relying on New York to acknowledge and celebrate our tastes.²⁰

As a direct result of criticism from corporate publishers, Forest Avenue Press distributes what Stanfill describes as ‘[q]uiet books for a noisy world’ and accepts publications based on an appraisal of their opposition to ‘the high-concept novel’ popular with more mainstream companies. ‘In quiet novels’, Stanfill claims, ‘the hero’s journey is usually an interior one, where the character is changed by the world, rather than charging out to change the world.’²¹ In different but arguably cognate ways, Ladd, Mandel and Stanfill contribute to a burgeoning literary conversation that is yet to account for the deeper motivations of writing a quiet text but that has begun to pay attention to the trend beyond its status as a marketing albatross.

Another reason to write about the quiet novel in its contemporary form is that after a century and a half of imprecise allusions, which I discuss at length in Chapter 1, ‘the quiet novel’ has entered the vocabulary of literary criticism. In his introduction to the 1990 translation of *Eugénie Grandet* (1833) by Honoré de Balzac, Christopher Prendergast, describes the text as a ‘quiet novel of provincial life’.²² Similarly, Hans Geppert describes *Der Stechlin* (1898), the final novel by German novelist Theodor Fontane, as a quiet novel ‘full of conversation on the “old” and “new”’.²³ Indeed, the plot of *Der Stechlin* shares similarities with Robinson’s *Gilead* and Harding’s *Tinkers*; Fontane details the life of a widowed, elderly protagonist who lives modestly and in seclusion. Tellingly, of course, very little happens in *Der Stechlin* that might be described as action and Geppert, like many critics, uses ‘quiet’ to describe an outmoded, outdated way of life. For Virginia Brackett and Victoria Gaydosik, Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden* (1855) is quiet because it tells the story of Reverend Harding and ‘his struggle with conscience [...] without need for grandiose action.’²⁴ Notably, literary critics also reference quiet as a mode of

reflection that might stage ethical debates in different contexts. James Gunn describes English writer H. G. Wells' *Star Begotten* (1937) as a 'quiet novel' about the complex relationship between religion and evolution, while Sharon Monteith describes Madison Jones' *A Cry of Absence* (1971) as 'quiet' for depicting white moderates' fear of racial change in 1950s Tennessee.²⁵ Edging closer to this book's conception of quiet, Joseph Ward describes the problem of speech in James Agee's *A Death in the Family* (1948) as a reflection on interior discord and suggests that the modern symphony of car engines and telephones 'are dramatic, symbolic, and melodic disruptions' that challenge the calm aesthetic of an otherwise 'quiet novel'.²⁶

Any similarity between the novels listed above is fleeting: today, critics use 'the quiet novel' as a formal description for many reasons. Sometimes the phrase denotes a rural, domestic or old-fashioned setting; often the narrative will follow a conservative, elderly or religious protagonist. Indeed, by grouping these critics together, their use of the phrase seems more disparate than ever. Narrative quiet is referenced by reviewers and critics, maligned by publishers and addressed infrequently through blog posts and online essays. Although literary critics have singled out particular texts as quiet, as a phrase, 'the quiet novel' is rarely interrogated or defined and has no common usage.

Perhaps, then, the absent literary history of quiet and quiet narratives reveals the potentiality of a quiet aesthetic. Of greater relevance to this study and the aesthetic of quiet it proposes, Kevin Everod Quashie's *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (2010) is the first study of its kind and the only work of criticism to conceive of 'quiet' in a way that is similar to my own. Focusing more specifically on mid- to late twentieth-century African American writers, Quashie argues that black culture 'is or is supposed to be loud' and suggests that quiet provides black authors with a potential site of resistance because of its marginalisation as a mode of expression.²⁷ Extending Quashie's notion of quiet's counter-cultural potential, *The quiet contemporary American novel* proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 maps the neglected history of quiet fictions and speculates about the potentiality of quiet as a literary aesthetic. Chapter 2 engages with the problem of 'event' as a noisy narrative device and discusses the opposition of quiet texts to narratives written in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 ('9/11'), an event that heralded to many the beginning of a noisy century. This study is concerned with how quiet manifests in an early twenty-first-century context, at a moment when

globalisation, terrorism, and overseas military intervention began to merge with the phenomena of 24-hour news cycles, social media and the online 'noise' of the Internet to produce a kind of mental overstimulation and anxiety which many claim to be dissonant. This is not to state that the twenty-first century is noisier than any previous era, but to note the kinds of sounds that society deems to be noisy and to question how noise is then recreated in fiction.

Successive chapters of *The quiet contemporary American novel* conceive of quiet differently, applying a distinct lens to pairs of 'quiet' texts in order to account for the diversity of the term and its aesthetic applications. In Chapter 3, I move as far from the loud of '9/11' as a quiet narrative can travel to discuss the subjective depictions of temporality portrayed in the fiction of Marilynne Robinson and Paul Harding. Chapter 4 argues that cognitive fictions by Richard Powers and Lynne Tillman expand the focus of the quiet novel, uncovering the complex and often discordant recesses of human consciousness and challenging the traditional division between what is internally and externally felt. Finally, Chapter 5 brings together the varied strands of this monograph to discuss what happens to the quiet novel when Teju Cole and Ben Lerner set their quiet novels in the noisy environment of the city.

The quiet contemporary American novel is the first book to define 'the quiet novel' as a literary term. However, its summation is not prescriptive. Quiet can mean many things to one writer and an author's attention to quiet can vary both between novels and within one text. To accommodate and link a wide range of texts and themes, I therefore identify four common features that unite the quiet American novel in its contemporary form. First, the quiet novel represents the life of a quiet protagonist and an introvert. As protagonists, they privilege thought over action and spend most of their time in contemplation. Second, the protagonist will seek out quiet spaces in which to pursue quiet activities. The quiet novel is often set in rural towns but, if moved to the city, characters frequent art galleries, universities and bookshops. Third, consciousness will be a central character or a theme, providing a catalyst for narrative action that is independent of national or topical event. What has previously been referred to as the novel of consciousness, the psychological or confessional novel therefore finds new life through the perspectives of quiet characters who, in a culture trained to praise extroversion and spontaneity, are noticeably and notably quiet, if not dull. Fourth, and most important

of all, is this central claim: the quiet novel is a novel where very little happens. It is a novel with 'no plot', as *The New York Times* claimed in 1898 because the narrative forsakes event and action for the interior exploration of consciousness.²⁸

The fourth point I make here is the most important but also the most challenging to define. At first sight, these criteria appear unworthy of note because a dull protagonist in a fiction where very little happens is not devised to attract attention. The discussion of ideas, the recall of memory, reported speech and the minutiae of everyday routine fill the quiet narrative; it is therefore wrong to claim that entirely nothing happens. However, within a culture that privileges drama, noise and contingency, the cultivation and representation of reflective states distinguishes the quiet text. Very little happens in the quiet novel that is external to the protagonist's consciousness and quiet novels are driven by processes of reflection that retrieve a sense of self or what Virginia Woolf famously calls 'moments of being' from the rush of contemporary experience.²⁹ In this way, reading for quiet in contemporary fiction has the potential to question the social efficacy of action by shedding light on the intellectual processes which critics often deem too quiet to be political. That is not to say that quiet forms of expression are always successful as a form of protest, or that a quiet aesthetic is necessarily 'good'. Yet it is to argue that loud need not be the norm, reflection is an undervalued facet of and response to contemporaneity and reading for quiet can begin a nuanced discussion that contemporary discourse sometimes loudly shuts down.

Notes

- 1 Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (London: Virago, 2006), p. 9.
- 2 Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby* (New York: Penguin, 2013), p. 54.
- 3 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 7.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 5 Henry Mills Alden, 'Miss Tommy', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 69.414 (November 1884), p. 141.
- 6 I refer to noisy and loud novels interchangeably, in part because critics do not use either with regularity. Although loud is perhaps more accurately the antonym of quiet, noise better expresses the perceived dissonance of contemporary existence and the kinds of sounds or, as I argue, ideas that fiction is expected to represent.

- 7 Another book might identify a parallel trend in British and Irish literature, though key examples only echo the discursive potential of any canon of 'quiet' fictions. John McGahern's *That They May Face the Rising Sun* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002) depicts one year in a rural, lakeside community and has been celebrated for a tone that is 'serene, often subdued, and frequently still', a novel where 'little happens', in which McGahern references only one dated event. Ray Ryan, 'John McGahern, *That They May Face the Rising Sun*', in *The Good of the Novel*, ed. Liam Mellvaney and Ray Ryan (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 201. Jon McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002) portrays a day in the life of a single street, moving between the inner worlds of each resident. Michael Cannon's *Lachlan's War* (London: Penguin, 2006) is set in a fictional Scottish village in 1941 where the events of the Second World War are just flickers at the edge of the central solitary life. Similarly, Simon Robson's *Catch* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2010) is a quiet novel about one day in the life of a married woman who has become fixated on that one day and the time she will spend away from her husband. Julian Barnes' award-winning novel, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), is particularly quiet, constituted by one man's regrets following a lifetime of indecision and portrays 'the littleness of life that art exaggerates'. Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending* (London: Vintage, 2011), p. 93.
- 8 Rabih Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman* (New York: Grove Press, 2013), p. 50. Strout's and Munro's books are short story collections; indeed, *Olive Kitteridge* is a story cycle. Another study could also be written about quiet in the short story, a form which might, in fact, be quieter than the novel because of its brevity, marginalisation in mainstream publishing and review culture and what Martin Scofield describes as a "lightness" and mobility' that encourages impressionism, immediacy and a lack or at least a reduction of narrative event. See: 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story*, ed. Martin Scofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 8.
- 9 Robert Seethaler, *A Whole Life*, trans. Charlotte Collins (London: Picador, 2015), pp. 3, 5.
- 10 Caleb Crain, *Necessary Errors* (New York: Penguin, 2013), p. 33.
- 11 Joseph Tabbi, *Cognitive Fictions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. xv.
- 12 Arifa Akbar, 'John Williams' Stoner Enjoys Renaissance', *The Independent* (4 June 2013), <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/john-williams-stoner-enjoys-renaissance-8642782.html>; Emma Brockes, 'Welcome to the Summer of Nothingness: how one book made it hip to be bored', *The Guardian* (5 June 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/emma-brockes-column/2014/jun/05/summer-karl-ove-knausgard-book-hip-to-be-bored>.

- 13 Hermione Hoby, 'Norway's Proust and a Life Laid Bare', *The Observer* (1 March 2014), 36; William Deresiewicz, 'Why has "My Struggle" been anointed a literary masterpiece?' *The Nation* (2 June 2014), <http://www.thenation.com/article/179853/why-has-my-struggle-been-anointed-literary-masterpiece>.
- 14 Briefly noted in *The New Yorker* as outdated and 'adamantine', Harding garnered more attention from his inclusion on year-end lists for *NPR* and, again, in *The New Yorker*, through a blog appropriately titled 'Double Take'. 'Tinkers', *The New Yorker* (12 January 2009), http://www.newyorker.com/arts/reviews/brieflynoted/2009/01/12/090112crbn_brieflynoted2#ixzz1rSoOSryf. See also the apology printed in *The New York Times* which suggests that *Tinkers* was 'not on our radar' at the time of its publication. Gregory Cowles, 'Tinkers by Paul Harding: The One That Got Away', *The New York Times* (12 April 2010), http://www.newyorker.com/arts/reviews/brieflynoted/2009/01/12/090112crbn_brieflynoted2.
- 15 Paul Harding, quoted in Motoko Rich, 'Mr. Cinderella: From Rejection Notes to the Pulitzer', *The New York Times* (18 April 2010), <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/19/books/19harding.html?pagewanted=all>.
- 16 Joseph M. Schuster, 'Post-40 Bloomers: The Risky Fiction of Paul Harding', *The Millions* (9 September 2013), <http://www.themillions.com/2013/09/post-40-bloomers-the-risky-fiction-of-paul-harding.html>; Kevin McFarland, 'Paul Harding: *Enon*', *The AV Club* (16 September 2013), <http://www.avclub.com/review/paul-harding-ienoni-102847>; John Barron, 'Enon by Paul Harding', *Chicago Tribune* (15 September 2013), http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-09-15/features/ct-prj-0915-enon-paul-harding-20130915_1-paul-harding-printers-row-journal-enon.
- 17 Andrew Ladd, 'Blurbese: "Quiet"', *Ploughshares* (27 July 2012), <http://blog.pshares.org/index.php/blurbese-quiet/>. Via email, Ladd admitted many reservations and few positives about the term and was broadly disparaging about the reviewers who use it. Ladd, e-mail communication with the author (12 September 2013).
- 18 Mandel names *Open City* and *Gilead* as the only contemporary examples of quiet fictions and novels by Paul Yoon, Tove Jansson and Ruth Park to demonstrate the trend's international value. Mandel, 'On the Pleasures and Solitudes of Quiet Books', *The Millions* (27 August 2013), <http://www.themillions.com/2013/08/on-the-pleasures-and-solititudes-of-quiet-books.html>.
- 19 Mandel, e-mail communication with the author (1 September 2013). Our discussion took place before the publication of Mandel's fourth novel, *Station Eleven* (2014), which won the Arthur C. Clarke Award in 2015 and was nominated for the National Book Award, the PEN/Faulkner

- Award and the Bailey's Prize for Fiction. Notably, *Station Eleven* was also described as 'a quiet novel' by *The New York Times* and other publications, which noted the text's rendition of a 'quiet apocalypse'. Alexandra Alter, 'The World is Ending', *The New York Times* (5 September 2014), <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/06/books/station-eleven-joins-falls-crop-of-dystopian-novels.html>.
- 20 Laura Stanfill, e-mail communication with the author (2 September 2013).
- 21 Stanfill, interviewed by Stefanie Freele, 'The Makings of a Regional Press: In Conversation with Laura Stanfill', *Late Night Library* (20 November 2013), http://latenightlibrary.org/the_makings_of_a_regional_press_laura_stanfill/.
- 22 Christopher Prendergast, 'Introduction', in his *Eugenie Grandet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. xx.
- 23 Hans Vilmar Geppert, "'A Cluster of Signs": Semiotic Micrologies in Nineteenth-Century Realism: Madame Bovary, Middlemarch, Effi Briest', *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, 73:3 (1998), p. 249. A footnote in Jay Clayton's *The Pleasures of Babel: Contemporary American Literature and Theory* (1993) also refers to Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) as a quiet novel about a widow of sixty-four who moves to the suburbs after a lifetime in Harlem. Clayton, *The Pleasures of Babel: Contemporary American Literature and Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 166.
- 24 Virginia Brackett and Victoria Gaydosik (eds), 'The Warden', in their *The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century British Novel* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), p. 468.
- 25 James Gunn, *Paratexts: Introductions to Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2013), p. 191; Sharon Monteith, 'Civil Rights Fictions', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American South*, ed. Sharon Monteith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 169.
- 26 Joseph Anthony Ward, *American Silences: The Realism of James Agee, Walker Evans, and Edward Hopper* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2010), p. 106.
- 27 Kevin Everod Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), p. 11.
- 28 'Ada Cambridge's New Novel', *The New York Times*, Saturday Review of Books and Art (25 June 1898), p. 2.
- 29 Woolf first mentions 'moments of being' in her essay, 'A Sketch of the Past', which formed the basis of her posthumously published memoirs, *Moments of Being* (1985). Although Woolf never defines the phrase, she provides examples of these moments, defining them as flashes of

intense awareness that increase the individual's consciousness of their ongoing experience. Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1985), pp. 61-138.