

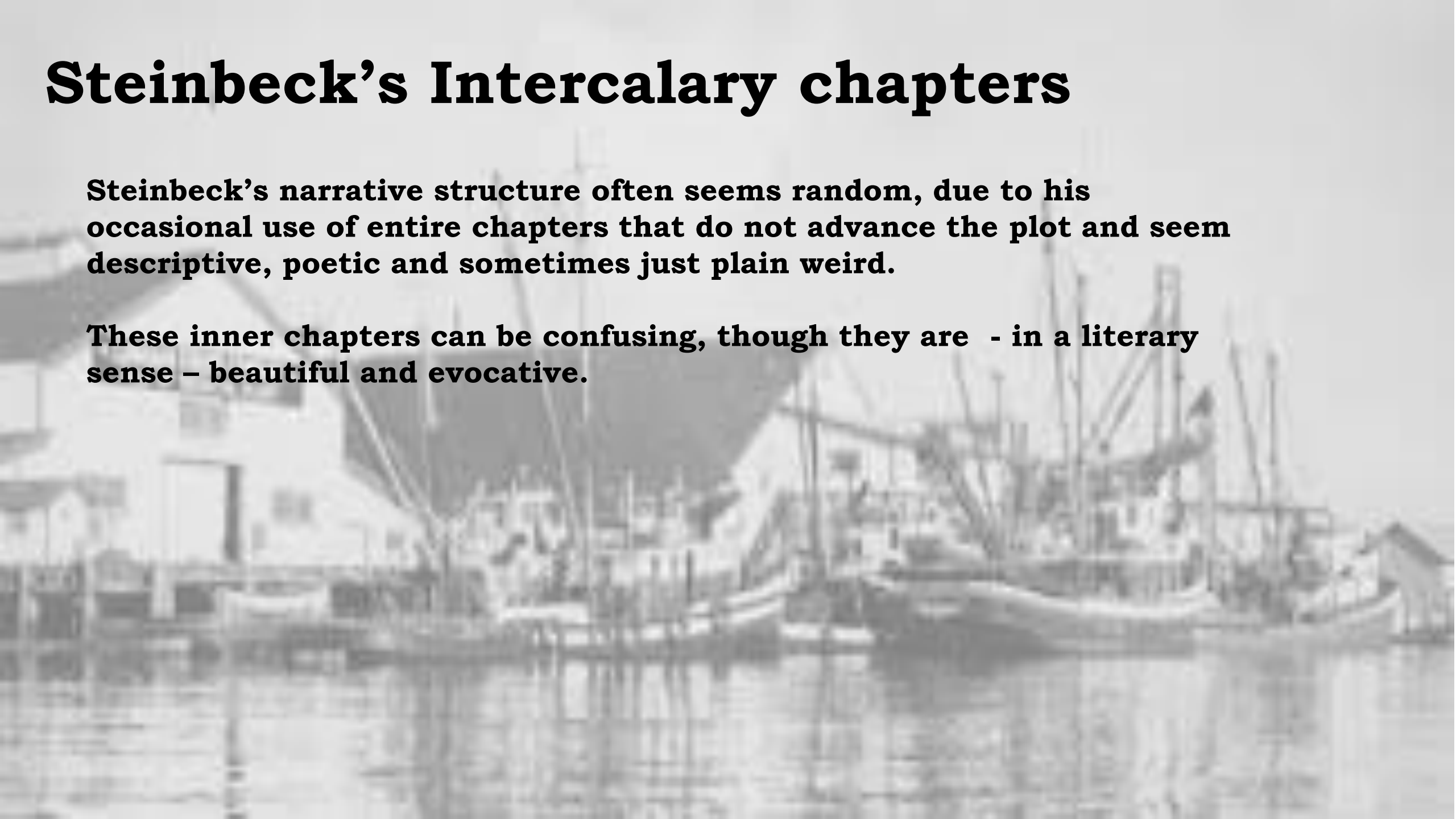
# **Steinbeck's Intercalary chapters**

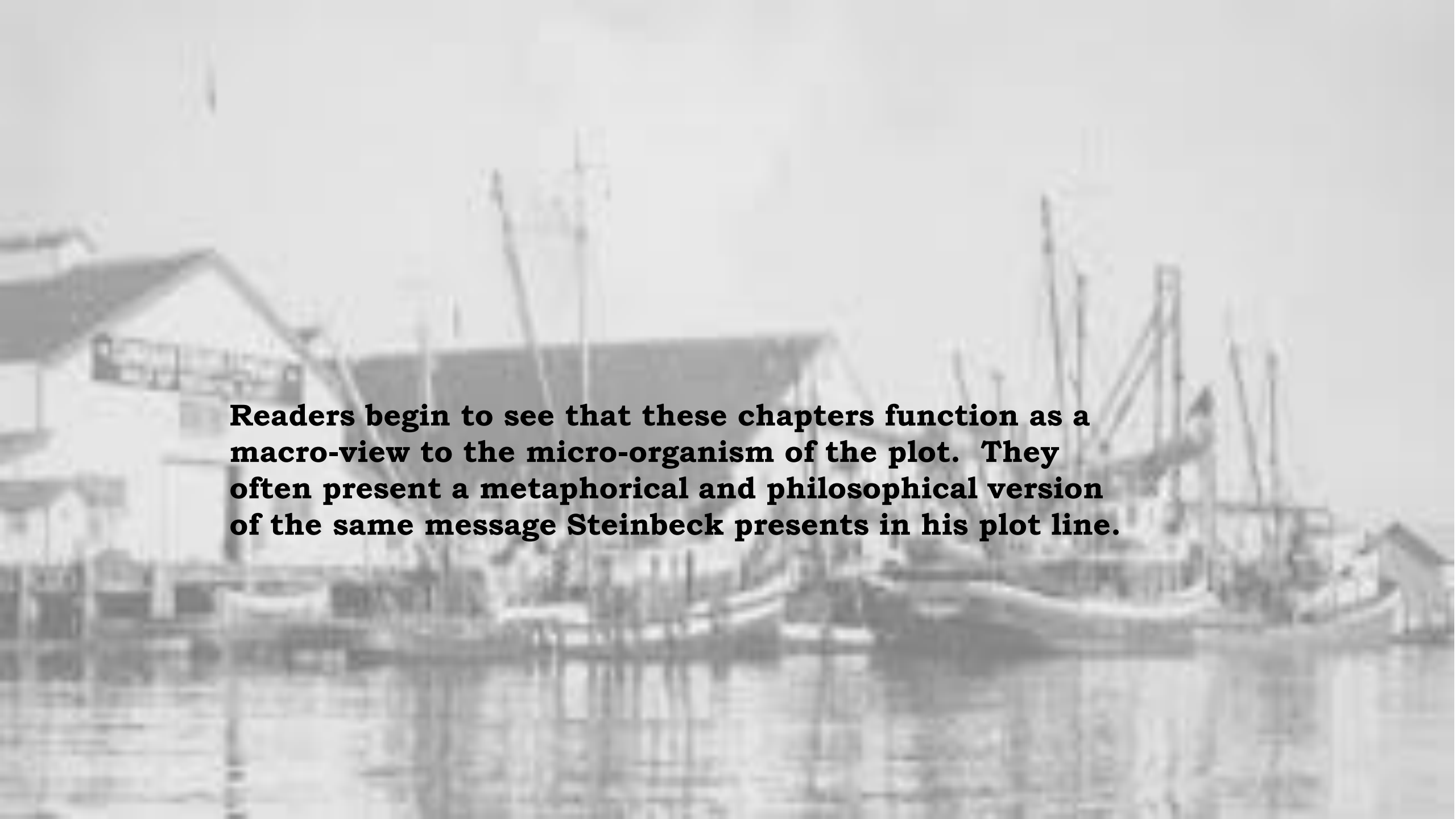


# **Steinbeck's Intercalary chapters**

**Steinbeck's narrative structure often seems random, due to his occasional use of entire chapters that do not advance the plot and seem descriptive, poetic and sometimes just plain weird.**

**These inner chapters can be confusing, though they are - in a literary sense – beautiful and evocative.**





**Readers begin to see that these chapters function as a macro-view to the micro-organism of the plot. They often present a metaphorical and philosophical version of the same message Steinbeck presents in his plot line.**

**Steinbeck scholars also see the influence of Steinbeck's favorite classical music, the music of Bach, Vivaldi, Palestrina, Mozart, etc.**

**The *contrapuntal* nature of this music was a style where two (or more) lines of music are played at the same time. They are harmonically musically related in structure, but independent of one another, and often weave in and out.**

**Scholars believe that Steinbeck was trying to achieve this in his writing. The themes expressed in the plot line (the micro view) are expanded upon by the metaphorical passages in the intercalary chapters (the macro view). The two are independent melodies but mirror each other and work together to create one piece of music.**

**<http://www.nytimes.com/video/arts/1247468479041/counterpoint.html>**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BixPLIWcb0s>**

# Steinbeck's Intercalary chapters

**Steinbeck said of this structure:**

***...the inner chapters were counterpoint – they were pace changers - but the basic purpose was to hit the reader below the belt. With the rhythms and symbols of poetry one can get into a reader – open him up and while he is open introduce...things on an intellectual level which he would not or could not receive unless he were opened up. It is a psychological trick if you wish, but all techniques of writing are psychological tricks.***

# Steinbeck's Intercalary chapters



*“When you collect marine animals there are certain flat worms so delicate that they are almost impossible to capture whole, for they break and tatter under the touch. You must let them ooze and crawl of their own will onto a knife blade and then lift them gently into your bottle of sea water. And perhaps that might be the way to write this book – to open the page and to let the stories crawl in by themselves.”*

*(from the Introduction)*