

No. 5

~~Send this up with
the rest of A Cultural History~~

Handwritten
First Draft. of Castle in the forest
FIRST draft opening
of TCITF

The Castle in the Forest

(B)

I am who I am, but that does not mean I feel myself ~~superior~~ ^{heffent} above all forms of human activity. For an instance, I am intrigued with the notion of writing a novel. That is ~~trivial~~ a sport! Even the gods know how to amuse themselves with novels. Indeed they have been known to descend into the minds of authors when looking for a vehicle by which to express themselves.

~~In that vein, I am intrigued with~~
I would not be part of such a venture, however. The writer's conclusions can be undefendable. Rather, I am more intrigued with the notion of writing a novel (an historical novel!) that would be altogether unlike others, a species of good short work, a sustained piece of storytelling offered by one man to another over the course of a

night in a small room at the periphery of the uproar that is going on in a Konzentrationslager that has just been captured by American soldiers very late in April, 1945. (2)

As the two men converse, a pistol lies on the table. It is situated ~~near~~ close to the younger man who is American, and a doctor, a Captain, ~~and a Jew~~ in rank. He is Jewish, a part of the U.S. Army force, who have just reached the concentration camp a few hours ago and have of course, been appalled by what they saw. Indeed, a few German officers were shot on the spot.

The ^{despite his uniform, is} Jewish doctor, ^{so much a} pacifist ^{in his uniform} ~~has withdrawn~~ from the uproar and the hideousness of the odors, the collective emaciation, and the various other ^{appalling} ~~and pestilential~~ sights. ^{He has, indeed} ~~But he~~, he has ordered his opposite number, a German doctor, considerably older than ~~he~~ himself, (fifty let us say as opposed to thirty odd years) into a small sentry room ^{near the} ~~with a table and a chair~~ ^{near the} barbed-wire enclosures of the camp, and there, though

(dark rooms)
the ~~weight~~, the two succeed in having ⁽³⁾
a conversation, which is to say, a monologue
by the German with occasional interjections
by the Jew.

The older doctor has ~~superior~~ conducted
some exceptional (that is to say, awful) ex-
periments on camp prisoners, and now in
the course of this long evening, ^{alone} ~~as alone~~
with each other as two souls on an island
not large enough for three, the senior,
who is a Nazi of course, ^{indeed an SS man} attempts to explain
his world-view which is immense,
fascinating in its details, positive in its
philosophy, rueful at errors that were
made, ^{yet} ~~and~~ most painfully proud of
the daring achievements that were under-
taken deep into the uncharted regions
of the human and social unknown.

The explanation is ~~so~~ beautiful, ~~so~~
cunning, and ^{prodigiously} ~~so~~ ^{deserves the} ~~so~~ to the young
Jew, for ^{thus} ~~the~~ ^{SS} doctor is not without
a species of charm, and is in addition
quick, wise, immensely sophisticated ~~by comparison~~
~~to our American captain~~, ~~proverbially~~
and witty ~~enough~~ (despite the downfall of
every last one of his schemes) ~~and~~ ^{he} ~~the~~
matters ~~have~~ ^{he} ~~come~~ - even

troubled by the vices inherent in his
achievement. This last, makes him all too human. ④
therefore, By the end of the evening, ~~the~~
the young doctor is unable to listen any
longer. Beneath the pacifist - as one
will always discover - there is a killer.
He picks up ^{this} the revolver from the table
and shoots the ~~SS~~ ^{SS} doctor.

This is, as I say, a novel that appeals
to me. While I will never write it since
I do not wish to be bothered with
the provenance of its publication, I
have nonetheless, a fine title for it. I
would call ~~such a book~~ it: In the Forest.
Yes, Schlossenewald! It
is an ironic name for the camp in
question. It sits on ^{a small} ~~an~~ ^{an} ~~an~~ ^{an}
plain in a relatively ~~unproductive~~ ^{unproductive} ~~poor~~ ^{poor} ~~area~~ ^{area} of
the eastern German lands. No trees
are in sight, ~~and no~~ ^{nor the} hint of a castle
on any horizon. Yet Schlossenewald
is the name ^{that has been} given to the compound by
the remaining German prisoners in the
camp. If there was one pride left to the
prisoners, the best of them at any rate! -
it was that they would not lose
their sense of irony.

(although the reality is richer and more
various than the word ^{demon} can be found the
portion of space and time I choose — or
have been chosen — to occupy. (Even a
devil is obliged to confess that the roots
of ~~his~~ existence are no more defined for us,
the petty gods and fallen gods, than
they are ~~visible~~ ^{perceptible} to men and women.

Still, I know a great deal. Vastly more
than any of you also will read ~~this~~ ^{this}. I
can, for instance, enter into many a mind
and recover the ~~past~~ ^{past} experience of
the person I inhabit. Indeed I can know it
with greater intimacy and definition than
they can. My memory is close to absolute. The
average human has, at best, a critically
impaired memory that is ~~capable~~ ^{difficult} to
function, ~~but my sense of recollection~~ ^{both my sense of recollection}, ~~after all~~, does not
have to sacrifice its richness and its store of
grace in order to fortify my ego. ~~the~~
Angels, demons and devils have no need
of ego. They are, after all, under the
~~near to absolute~~ ^{near to absolute} command of one or the other of the two
divine and wholly opposed ~~spirits~~ ^{spirits}
who intervene with many ^{men, women and children} ~~humans~~ over the
course of that greatly fragmented ~~era~~
we call the course of human history.

I cannot speak for the angels — we
see or feel them rarely (except as they
appear occasionally in the memory of

some of our subjects) — But we, whose ①
perceived as some of the dark presence
around you, are not unlike humans in our
vital position. While we ~~must~~ ^{do not} live in such
a way that we must die (although, of course,
any entity, ^{superior to any} ~~can be exhausted~~ by his
respectful hosts, after centuries, or eons,
or terminal years or never) ~~the~~ our
similarity to humans is that ^{we succeed or} ~~we~~ ^{especially, confidence, success,}
fail our ventures, and ~~success~~ ^{produce}, produce,
aqueable results. We are given higher
positions in the structure. I have had many
~~human~~ clients, men and women, and
some flourished in the exploitation of
Our design, and some produced dire
results. (We could claim that we were
embusched ^{by angels} ~~by angels~~ ^{although it takes}
more than a few angels ^{of that class} ~~to equal one~~
well-established and highly coordinated
Demon) ~~at~~

At any rate, I could speak ^{with confidence} of Gilles de
Rais and the Marquis de Sade ~~for~~ ^{who} for they
went two (my clients) ^{and} did even better
than expected, and I certainly indulged
Robespierre in some of his worst impulses — up
to that time I can name as achievements,
but I had unsuccessful efforts, with
Lomax de Medici and Martin Luther —
indeed I was withdrawn in real case from
my seat of influence, and was replaced by
others. With Goethe, I have

close to an absolute blank. He wrote about
in building Faust certainly, ^{with} his replies to holes, often
chairs me ~~to~~ history, but there was something
impregnable in Goethe's ^{much of} ~~about~~ effort. I
can only lay claim to improving the readability
of ^{Faust} ~~the~~ Part II, of ~~Faust~~ and can probably
claim responsibility for confusing the
great man's mind about what he wished
to accomplish. I certainly led him into
the land of distraction, with all those Greek
and gorgeous, with finally Goethe too
with the angels when he died, and my
career suffered as a result. I was left
to languish with ^{some of the} secondary figures of
history whom, doubtless, I will have cause to
mention later, and I was even provided
(under the name of being in need of
greater seasoning) and so had numerous
clients of petty sin and ^{less} ~~more~~ than
moderate achievement, serving girls who
broke up dull marriages and thereby
ruined the amorous head of household,
common soldiers who hurt the morale
of their company by desertion, workers
who rose in ^{at factory} ~~the~~ and turned corrupt
the mayors of small towns who got into
trouble with little boys, petty barons
and counts who gambled away ancestral
holdings, petty suicide, petty thieves, drunken
pillers, unfaithful wives, flotsam and jetsam

jection, a horde of clientelators, and
for few were there to present a problem, and
and rare was the patrician malefactor who
had an angel to guide him or her, what
I lacked in male or female projects of
interesting complexity or obdurate resistance
to my presence and counsel, I more
than matched with the vast number of
virtually nameless men and women
who were born out of little and usually
amounted to less, and I would have
~~despised~~ despised since grand
projects appealed to me profoundly, but
the Master, the Arch Duke, the Over Ruler, the
Black Lord of our domain, was still ready
to speak to me upon occasion, and while I
could never know whether he was using
me for too little or was truly sincere,
nevertheless, I did hear from him on
occasion in the ^{secret} ~~secret~~ ^{most} center of my
hearing that he had not lost his eye
~~concerning~~ ^{for me}, and that all this was preparation
for what might be the mightiest task any
of us had been engaged in since the first
three centuries of the Church in Rome, yes,
unless a century than that, if I would keep
the faith, pay attention to the minor
wretches and bullying things and drunks
who were my present-day clients, for, 99

a magnificent and mighty time was (10)
coming, and he thought he might even
have a claim for me whose potentialities
were immense. Cude, informed, insignificant
was this person at present, but the family
history was full of the intoxicating stink
of blood scandal (blut-schanda) (being
the German word for incest) the boy in
question, now a young man, was ~~not~~ timid,
terrified of humans, ^{was quite late too early, was,} an voracious reader,
who remained ignorant of most of what he
read, was lazy, prone to temper tantrums,
had an ego comparable only to the size of
~~a small~~ a swollen belly and yet was
desperately afraid of almost all
situations including himself, and so
had to support an immense but wholly
useless and ineffective ego, was, yet,
this boy an absolute unmitigated mess.

I did not dare to ask, but of course
one ~~could~~ ^{could} not hide one's thoughts from ~~the~~ him
~~about~~ ~~any~~ more than except my
clients could conceal the smallest detail
from me. So he added: 'Why, then, boy?
It is because he has an ambition & find
attractive, ~~and it is large~~ It happens to
be the largest ambition ~~one~~ one has ever
encountered in any human being

who is not already insane. So I (11)
want you to take Simon. He will need
endless instruction and bolstering, his
empty terrors must be filled with the most
confident experiences that you can arrange
for him, his dreams must be able to
realize that there is a real ground
waiting for them. He will be your only
client. That is the sign of my commitment
to this way as a project.

And if I fail?

Most of our projects fail. We are
exactly like the Damhoff in that regard.
Damhoff was invariably the word he
encouraged us to use when thinking of him.
Yes, for those who feel confused I can
state that the Dumb One, ^{the fool, the idiot, are} ~~in the group~~
three of ^{the names} ~~the names~~ given by the Devil to God. We can
(discuss this later, but for now, suffice
it that he sees God as a mighty
brute, a creature to his fingertips, yet
an absolute fool who has no notion
of where he is going or how It (the Creator)
will turn out, whereas he, the Arch One,
our Blackbird - has a fine idea of how it
will all end.

This is a preface to my assignment.
I am depressed. The project sounded

prolegionarily difficult, and therefore (12
inaction need of good luck — which
is to say — favorable times, I did not
know yet that the boy was named Adolf
Hitler, but if I had, I would not have
been unduly excited. The First World
War and the disasters that fell upon
Germany right afterwards had not yet
occurred. So there was no sign of
favorable times for this project. I saw
myself therefore as a species of jockey
on a horse ^{of unbelievable long odds, which} that was being entered into
~~as~~ a big race. After we failed, I could
foresee further demotions.

All that is now neither here nor
there. We know after all what happened
to that horse. And I who rode the boy
(with occasional help from the Master) all
the way up ~~to~~ the steps to human glory
(and down again — which is half the tale)
~~am certainly~~ the other half being why I dare
to tell the tale) can at least promise you
that the short novel I considered writing
about the SS doctor and the Jewish doctor
lost my interest about the time I recog-
nized that it was too small for me. I
knew more. It was incumbent on me
to tell it.

(June 4, 1929)

The Castle in the Forest

I am who I am but that does not mean I feel myself above all forms of human effort. For an instance, I am intrigued with the notion of writing a novel. That is a sport! Even the gods know how to amuse themselves with novels. Indeed, they have been known to descend into the minds of authors when looking for a vehicle by which to express themselves.

I would not be part of such a venture, however. The writer one chooses can be undependable. Rather, I am more intrigued with the notion of writing a novel (an historical novel!) that would be altogether unlike

others, a species of good short work, a sustained piece of storytelling offered by one man to another over the course of a night in a small room at the periphery of the uproar that is going on in a Konzentrationslager that has just been captured by American soldiers very late in April, 1945.

As the two men converse, a pistol lies on the table. It is situated close to the younger man who is American and is a doctor, a Captain in rank. He is Jewish, a part of the U.S. Army forces who have just reached the concentration camp a few hours ago and have, of course, been appalled by what they saw. Indeed, a few German officers were shot on the spot.

The Jewish doctor, despite his uniform, is very much a pacifist by temperament. So he has withdrawn from the uproar and the hideousness of the odors, the collective emaciation, and the various other appalling sights and pestilential sniffs. Indeed, he has ordered his opposite number, a

German doctor, considerably older than himself, (fifty, let us say, as opposed to his thirty-odd years) into a small sentry room near one of the barbed-wire enclosures of the camp, and there, through the dark hours, the two succeed in having a conversation, which is to say, a monologue by the German with occasional interjections by the Jew.

The older doctor has conducted some exceptional (that is to say, awful) experiments on camp prisoners, and now in the course of this long evening, as alone with each other as two souls on an island not large enough for three, the senior, who is a Nazi, of course, indeed, an SS man, attempts to explain his worldview which is immense, fascinating in its details, positive in its philosophy, rueful at errors that were made, yet most painfully proud of the daring achievements that were undertaken deep into the uncharted regions of the human and social unknown.

The explanation is beautiful, cunning, and prodigiously disruptive to the young Jew, for this SS doctor is not without a species of charm, and is, in addition, quick, wise, immensely sophisticated and witty (despite the downfall of every last one of his dreams). To make matters worse, of course, he is even troubled by the vices inherent in his achievements. This last makes him all too human.

By the end of the evening, therefore, the young doctor is unable to listen. Beneath the pacifist—as one will always discover—there is a killer. He picks up his revolver and shoots the SS doctor.

This is, as I say, a novel that appeals to me. While I will never write it since I do not wish to be bothered with the provenance of its publication, I have nonetheless a fine title. I would call it The Castle in the Forest. Yes, Schlosswald! It is an ironic name for the camp in question sits on an

empty plain in relatively unproductive potato fields of the eastern german lands. No trees are in sight, or the hint of a castle on any horizon. Yet Schlossenwald is the name that has been given to the compound by the remaining German prisoners in the damp. If there was one pride left to the prisoners—the best of them, at any rate!—it was that they would not lose their sense of irony.

Irony, of course, is vital to the German language. German, after all, is originally the speech of simple folk, good pagan brutes and husbandmen, tribal people ready to hunt, and so full of the sounds of the stomachs and the guts, the bowels of hearty existences, and the bellows of the lungs, the cries of command that one issues to animals. Given latter-day civilization, German also seeks to be as soft as the silk of a sleeve and when it is sentimental, tears that taste of sugar are ready to flow. Irony, therefore, is

vital to the German tongue. The upper intelligentsia of the denizens could not survive without it. How different they are from the French who believe that manner precedes existence and so encourage each other to speak through the nose.

One can perceive that I have given evidence already of not being sufficiently interested in Schlossenwald to embark on such a book. I certainly have forsaken the interesting and dramatic for the speculative. But then, minor entities know too much to restrict themselves to that corsetting of form that is the novel. (If there is deficiency in apprehending what is meant by minor entities, think rather of small gods and lesser devils, of angels good and diabolical. In such a set of categories, (although the reality is richer and more various than the word demon) can be found the portion of space and time I choose—or have been chosen—to occupy. (Even a devil is

obliged to confess that the roots of existence are no more defined for us, the petty gods and fallen gods, than they are perceived by men and women.)

Still, I know a great deal. Vastly more than any of you who will read this. I can, for instance, enter into many a mind and recover the past experience of the person I inhabit. Indeed, I can know it with greater intimacy and definition than they can. My memory is close to absolute. The average human has, at best, a critically impaired memory that is still able to function, but my sense of recollection does not have to sacrifice its riches and its store of nuance in order to fortify my ego. Angels, demons and devils have no need of ego. They are, after all, under the near to absolute command of one or the other of the two divine and wholly opposed Masters who intervene with many men, women, and children over the course of that greatly fragmented war we call the course of human history.

I cannot speak for the angels—we see or feel them rarely (except as they appear occasionally in the memory of some of our subjects)—but we, who are perceived as some of the dark presences around you, are not unlike humans in one vital fashion. While we do not live in such a way that we must die (although, of course, any entity, angel or demon, can be exhausted by his respective Master after after centuries, or eons, or terminal years, or never) our similarity to humans is that we succeed or fail in our ventures, and success, especially continued success, produces agreeable results. We are given higher positions in the structure. I have had many clients, men and women, and some have flourished in the exfoliation of Our design, and some produced dire results. (We could claim that we were ambushed by angels, although it takes more than a few of those clear spirits to equal one well-established and highly coordinated demon.)

At any rate, I could speak with confidence of Gilles de Rais and the Marquis de Sade for they were two of my clients who did even better than expected and I certainly indulged Robespierre in some of his worst impulses—yes, these three I can name as achievements but I had unsuccessful episodes with Lorenzo de Medici and Martin Luther, indeed, I was withdrawn in each case from my seat of influence and was replaced by others. With Goethe, I drew close to an absolute blank. He wrote about us very well and his Mephistopheles in Part One of Faust cheers me with his wit, but there was something impregnable in Goethe's stout spirit. I can only lay claim to injuring much of his readability of Faust, Part II, and can probably take credit for confusing the great man's mind about what he wished to accomplish. It certainly took him enough years and I certainly led him into the land of distraction with all those Greeks and gorgons. His

Mephistopheles certainly dwindled as did his Faust, but Goethe was with angels when he died, and my career suffered as a result. I was left to languish with some of the secondary figures of history whom, doubtless, I will have cause to mention later, and I was even punished (under the name of being in need of greater seasoning) and so had numerous clients of petty origin and less than modest achievement, serving girls who broke up dull marriages and thereby ruined the amorous head of household, common soldiers who hurt the morale of their company by desertion, workers who rose in the factory and turned corrupt, the mayors of small towns who got into trouble with little boys, petty barons and counts who gambled away ancestral holdings, petty suicides, petty thieves, drunken killers, unfaithful wives, flotsam and jetsam, a horde of clients all at once, for few there were to present a problem, and rare was the putative malefactor who had an

angel to guide him or her. What I lacked in male or female projects of interesting complexity or obdurate resistance to my presence and counsel, I more than matched with the vast number of of virtually nameless men and women who were born out of little and usually amounted to less, and I would have despaired since grand projects appealed to me profoundly., but the Maestro, the Arch One, the Over-Ruler, the Black Lord of our domain was still ready to speak to me upon occasion and while I could never know whether he was using me for too little or was truly sincere, nonetheless I did hear from him on occasion in the secret-most center of my hearing that he had not lost his eye concerning me, and that all this was in preparation for what might be the mightiest task any of us had been engaged in since the first three centuries of the Church in Rome, yes, no less a venture than that, if I would keep the faith, pay attention to the minor wretches and bullying

thugs and drunks who were my present day clients, for, yes, a magnificent and mighty time was coming, and he thought he might even have a client for me whose potetialities were immense. Crude, unformed, insignificant was this person at present, but the family history was full of the intoxicating stink of blood scandal (blut-schandal being the German word for incest). The boy in question, now a young man was timid, terrified of humans, had quit school too early, was an avaricious reader who remained ignorant of most of what he read, was lazy, prone to temper tantrums, had an ego comparable to the size of a swollen belly, and yet was desperately afraid of almost all situations including himself, and so had to support an immense but wholly useless and inefficient ego, was, yes, this boy was an absolute unmitigated mess.

I did not dare to ask, but of course could not hide one's thoughts from him any more than any of my clients could conceal the smallest whim from me. So he added: Why this boy? It is because he has an ambition I find attractive. It happens to be the largest ambition one has ever encountered in any human being who is not already insane. So I want you to take him on. He will need endless instruction and bolstering, his empty terrors must be filled with the most confident experiences you can arrange for him, his dreams must be able to realize there is a real ground waiting for them. He will be your only client. That is a sign of my commitment to this boy as a project.

And if I fail?

Most of our projects fail. We are exactly like the Dumkopf in that regard. Dumkopf was the invariably the word he encouraged us to use when

thinking of Him. Yes, for those who can feel confused, I can state that the Dumb One, His Fool, the Idiot, are three of the names given by the Devil to God. We can discuss this later, but for now, suffice it that he sees God as a mighty brute, creative to his fingertips, but an absolute fool who has no notion of where He is going or how It (the Creation) will turn out. Whereas he, the Arch One, our Black Lord, has a fine idea of how it will all end.

This is as preface to my assignment. I was depressed. The project sounded prodigiously difficult, and therefore much in need of good luck—which is to say, favorable times. I did not know yet that the boy was named Adolf Hitler, but if I did, I would not have been unduly excited. The First World War and the disasters that fell upon Germany right afterward had not yet occurred. So there was no sign of favorable times for this project. I saw myself therefore as a species of jockey on a horse of unbelievably long odds

who was being entered into a big race. After we failed, I could foresee further demotions.

All that is now neither here nor there. We know, after all, what happened to that horse. And I who rode the boy (with occasional help from the Master) all the way up the steps to human glory (and down again—which is half the tale, the other half being why I dare to tell the tale) can at least convince you that the short novel I considered writing about the SS doctor and the Jewish doctor lost my interest about the time I recognized that it was too small for me. I knew more. It was incumbent on me to tell it.

(June 4, 1999)

First Draft of Norman Mailer's "Castle in the Forest" hand-written and typed, dated June, 1999;
Enclosed in an envelope on which Mailer has written: "Handwritten First Draft of Castle in the forest [space] FIRST draft of opening of TCITF"

This 12-page draft, written in ink by Mailer, and dated June 4, 1999 on the final page, was written six months before Mailer wrote another opening to the novel, a 150-page draft, written between December 1999 and April 2000 in Provincetown, Massachusetts, at the home of J. Michael and Donna P. Lennon, where Mailer went most days to escape the telephone and other interruptions at his home a half-mile away at 627 Commercial Street.

The June 1999 draft described here, did not appear as the opening of *The Castle in the Forest*, when it was published by Random House on January 23, 2007. Rather, it became the basis for the novel's conclusion, titled, "An Epilogue," and appears on pages 403-07 of the first edition. Both the June draft and the published epilogue presents a mise en scène in an unnamed concentration camp in Germany, on April 30, 1945, immediately after the camp had been liberated by the American Army. In a cubicle of a camp building, a young American Army doctor, a psychiatrist with the rank of Captain, is interrogating a German Army officer, a man who has been involved in the hideous medical experiments performed on the camp's prisoners. In the earlier version, the officer is a middle-aged medical doctor; in the published version, he is not a doctor but "a charming SS man, tall, quick, blue eyed, witty." In both versions, the American doctor shoots ^{and kills} the German with his .45 pistol, after a long conversation about the camp, the experiments, and the end of the War.

Both scene's are narrated by D.T., a senior devil, that the Maestro (Lucifer himself) had sent to Germany in the early 1930s to give aid and comfort and tactical prompts to various Nazi

leaders, including Hitler himself, although eventually, the Maestro took over these duties. In both versions, D.T. elaborates on the various nefarious activities he has been involved in over the previous 15 years. He also notes that he is the narrator of the entire novel. In the June 1999 version, he shares his earlier work assisting various historical monsters—Gilles de Rais, Robespierre, the Marquis de Sade—and also his less successful work with Lorenzo de Medici, Martin Luther, Goethe, and also “numerous clients of petty origin.” There are many other correspondences, and many differences in the two versions, but the earlier one is a vivid and singular presentation of Mailer’s original plan for the novel’s scope and focus.

The June, 1999 manuscript is unique and extraordinarily valuable. Written to be the opening of Mailer’s final work of fiction, it was replaced but not forgotten, and then rewritten and repurposed to become the basis for the dramatic close of this major work. What was to have been Alpha, became Omega, the completion of a circular, Ouroboros plot.

The manuscript was given to Lawrence Schiller, among many other documents, as a gift, shortly before Mailer’s death.