Antaeus autumn 1988 C = changed from original

NORMAN MAILER

Lipton's

The Journal from which these excerpts are taken went on for close to one hundred thousand words. I would usually write in it on Mondays and Tuesdays after a heavy pot weekend—marijuana was referred to by the not very opaque alias of Lipton's. Begun on December 1, 1954, the Journal has entries until March 4, 1955. Anyone more curious about the origins might take a look at the Fourth Advertisement in my book *Advertisements for Myself* (Putnam, New York, 1959).

December 1, 1954

Perhaps the writer is less sensitive than his audience. That is, he reacts with less intensity to experience than people who are not creative. Thus the writer, seeing coldly, but able to see, touches upon matters which move him very little, and move his audience much. It is perfectly conceivable that the stupid man feels worlds of experience he can never communicate; he is actually far more sensitive than the intelligent, "sensitive" man.

December 1, 1954

The reason "insensitive" people very often react negatively to sex or shocking matters in books is because it is actually more real to them. They are more sensitive to it. So, Stanley Rinehart. He must excise the presence of *The Deer Park* because he reacts to it more than I do.*

December 8, 1954

Medicine may be witchcraft as fully as psychoanalysis. There is still no understanding of why the germ flourishes in this human and not in that at any moment. To say that the resistance is low is merely a fancy, societal, and untruthful way of describing X. But the idea of "germs" accomplishes much—including other things, it gives intellectual backing to the sexual inhibitions which society must generate to protect itself.

**Stanley Rinehart was the publisher who broke the contract on* The Deer Park *when it was in galleys.*

December 17, 1954

What worries me today and other days is that I am playing an enormous deception on myself, and I embark on these thoughts only to make myself more interesting, more complex to other people, more complex to myself. My vanity is so enormous. Perhaps I do all this to demonstrate to my audience that I too can create mystic spiritual characters. But on the other hand, these remarks can be merely my fear of what lies ahead. I love the world so much, I am so fascinated by it, that I dread the possibility that some day I may travel so far that I wish to relinquish it. What is important is that I think for the first time in years I'm growing quickly again.

December 17, 1954

Jazz is easy to understand once one has the key, something which is constantly triumphing and failing. Particularly in modern jazz, one notices how Brubeck and Desmond, off entirely on their own with nothing but their nervous system to sustain them, wander through jungles of invention with society continually ambushing them. So the excitement comes not from victory which is the pleasure of swing (more later) but from the effort merely to keep musically alive. So, Brubeck, for example, will to his horror discover that he has wandered into a musical cliché (society) and it is thrilling to see how he attempts to come out of it, how he takes the cliché, plays with it, investigates it, pulls it apart, attempts to put it together into something new (for in every cliché there is an ocean of truth once we truly look at it) and sometimes succeeds, and sometimes fails, and can only go on, having left his record of defeat at that particular moment. That is why modern jazz despite its apparent lyricalness is truly cold, cold like important conversations or Henry James. It is cold and it is nervous and it is under tension, just as in a lunch between an editor and an author, each makes mistakes and successes, and when it is done one hardly knows what has happened and whether it has been for one's good or for one's bad, but an "experience," (a communication between the soul and the world) has taken place. It is also why I find classical music less exciting for that merely evokes the echo of a past "experience"—it is a part of society, one of the noblest parts, perhaps, but still not of the soul. Only the echo of the composer's soul remains. And besides it consists too entirely of triumphs rather than of life.

January 25, 1955

It is no accident so many socialists came from the middle class in this country. They hate our society, and the Soviet even more, if, like me, they

are anti-Stalinist leftists, but what leaves them so unappetizing and so unsatisfying even to themselves, as I was always so dissatisfied with the yawning holes in my intellectual structures, is that they wish to replace society by another society. Their thoughts, programs, predictions, and analyses invariably have a square, blunt, brick-building quality. Even Malaquais, who is the best Socialist thinker I have ever come across, thinks in finite blocks. His thought, of course, has the nobility of a cathedral, but he's filled every square inch of the cathedral with a tile, and so his new thought can merely replace one tile by another, but he will never build a cathedral which dissolves into light. For all the beauty of his conceptions, a dark oppressive gloom breathes out of the doors and no one wants to enter poor Malaquais' cathedral. He is left the gloomy caretaker of it. One reason he cannot chase me away entirely is that I'm the village boy who wandered in one evening and stayed to admire the cathedral for many years, asking the caretaker every day, "Don Malaquais, tell me about the saints, and why is this stone this color?" I was a naughty boy, and I was forever quitting his lessons to throw stones at the bats, but what he cannot bear, dear Malaquais, is the silence now that I am gone. Timidly, terrified, like a shy old miser, he is making the endless preparations necessary to go out and buy a new hat. He has no real hope he'll be detained in the village and find a place to build a new cathedral, he knows he'll go back to the old one and watch the bats multiply, but it is so gloomy in there. Even Fra Jean has to get a bit of air.

C *January 25, 1955*

Prose on wings, tra-la, tra-la. What I started to say in the previous note is that radical socialists present tools of analysis that bourgeois society unaided could never have come up with, but because socialists think sociostatically, so capitalists can turn their thoughts to their own advantage. Norman Thomas is always complaining that the Republican and Democratic parties have stolen his program, and indeed they have. Marxism for all its grandeur and its revolutionary ethic—its ultimate anarchism which nearly all socialists have forgotten—approached the problem of society as a materialistic conception. But capitalists are also materialists. So they could adopt Marxism to their needs, improve their sociostatic techniques, shore up the crazy house and keep the warped mirrors from cracking . . . yet.

January 25, 1955

So, modestly, I see my mission. It is to put Freud into Marx and Marx into Freud. Put Tolstoy into Dostoyevsky and Dostoyevsky into Tolstoy.

Open anarchism with its soul-sense to the understanding of complexity, and infuse complex gloom with the radiance of anarchism. As Jenny Silverman said of me once, "The little *pisherke* with the big ideas." Pint-sized Hitler. Yes.

January 26, 1955

The pompous man, the extraordinarily pompous man, is trying to teach people. He wears a mask which is the caricature of himself. (Indeed, *one's personality is always the caricature of oneself.*) So the pompous man is at bottom a loather of society, a potential destroyer. He is so bound to society that he cannot express himself in another way, but a part of him is always saying, "Look at me, look how ridiculous I am. If you are taken in by what I once believed, then you will look like me, and will be able to teach only by driving people away."

January 27, 1955

For some time I have wanted to write a note about the Negro prejudice of southerners. I wonder if their rage at Negro advancements is due to their unconscious belief in the myth—which may well be right—that the black has a happy sex life, happier than the white, and so is recompensed for his low state in society by his high state in the fuck. The scales are balanced. Therefore, to the white southerner, an improvement in Negro rights is to tip the scale in the Negro's favor. People of lower status are considered to have equal status when the private benefits are added in.

January 27, 1955

Word mirrors! (Better word for echo than reversals.) Be and ebb.

January 27, 1955

. . . on Sunday morning I could remember nothing of the tremendous insights I felt I had had on Saturday night. Again I felt depressed, and the *Dissent* meeting was hanging over me. That came on Sunday afternoon, and was deeply depressing. I felt I didn't belong there. All these bitter rationalists, with their rationalist talents—they would turn on me if they knew what an anarchist I am. And indeed Lewis Coser spoke approvingly of how Clara Thompson and the Sullivanites were riding Reich out of business under the auspices of the Pure Food and Drug Act. (What a perfect title for a law for once.)

Anyway, the meeting was unbearably dull. I kept despairing of socialism. These people are well-meaning, they are even courageous, but they are pale, they are scholars, bitter scholars, they are deeply middle-

class, they are the essence of social democracy even when they are to the left of it. Their socialism is not a desire for justice, a passion for equality, but the intellectual urge to order society. I kept feeling I should speak up, and kept deciding not to. It would have been disruptive, and I would have been defeated. After all, if I had won—which is inconceivable—I should have had to take over the magazine, which I certainly don't want to, and so I felt merely a spoiler, a wrecker, a renegade. I knew that I could stay with them only by accommodating my personality, giving articles to *Dissent* which would be stimulating for them because I would only go a very small distance.

Yet with Howe and Coser I get the feeling that they are deeply dissatisfied, that they wish to move on, and I expect more tolerance from them than from the others. Anyway, before the meeting was over, I left—my only suggestion which was more than a joke being that the *Dissent* covers remain the orange-red of the last issue—which was carried. But all afternoon, first in the delicatessen—what else would Jewish socialists do before a meeting?—then in Plastrik's home, I felt a stranger and alien. I fled with Mike Harrington who is a Catholic Anarchist masquerading as a socialist, tried out a few of my milder ideas on him in the taxi, for which I got half-response, half-worry, and then home to Adele.

January 27, 1955
24 pages today—To my memory, the greatest number I've done in a day.

February 1, 1955
Depression is coming on, distrust of this journal, distrust of myself and my ideas. Again I worry—Is this all a monster rationalization? Am I full of shit? Also, I'm hungry again. I interrupt to go down for supper.

February 1, 1955
Jesus, I'd rather be a genius than a saint (but in my mind the sentence kept coming out reversed—I'd rather be a saint than a genius). The psychopath, I'm afraid reluctantly, I must relinquish—at least temporarily.

February 2, 1955
I've spent the last few hours rereading the Journal and find it less exciting than I thought, and quite unpublishable in its present form (which had been at the back of my mind). But there is a lot in it. I have

to develop it. One thing I notice is that the wild mystical plunge of the early pages simmers down after a while. I think the early pages merely express the great relief of being able to use words like God, soul, saint, genius, and so forth—at last I was going to allow myself to revel in the cliché. But I write this note totally off everything. Off Lipton's—it's three days now, off Seconal—two days. Feelings of sexual vigor are returning, and with them, more quiet confidence. One thing which bucked me up is that in going over *The Deer Park* I found I could add sentences to it which had the nice literary style of the book. So, apparently, I'm not stylistically drained. What I felt as I was writing Deer Park lines this morning was the old feeling of a fine tension.

I can probably generalize on the effects of Lipton's and Seconal. Lipton's releases vast amounts of exciting material and trivial material with very little selection. It enables me to work at a tremendous rate, but everything is equally exciting to me. Which is mystically, philosophically valid, but is almost impossible for a novelist to deal with—at least in my present stage. That is, I could not write novels on it, although it might be good to turn to it when I got writing blocks. The Seconal is what is bad for it is beginning to give me bad letdowns and deep depressions. Except I know how to handle those too, now. If I can't sleep. I must just sit up and read instead of trying to fight myself into sleep. Enough for today. I think I'll lay off the Journal for a few days.

February 7, 1955
After lunch, and how I hated giving up time for lunch. So many ideas I had while I bolted my food, and so many of them must be lost.

February 8, 1955
Hemingway's peculiar weakness is that he's a Taker, his heroes are all Takers. His idea of courage is that you can take it. It never seems to have occurred to him once that courage might also consist of giving.

February 21, 1955
Saw *Mutiny on the Bounty* and some Keystone Chaplin films last night. What a genius Chaplin is. How he expresses all the body frustrations of sexual repression. He wipes his nose on a rag, wipes the rag on a dish, hands the dish to a whore in a dirty restaurant. He hitches his ass, he *rolls* his eyes, he strikes and is struck, and always, sex, sex, sex. We laugh in roars and waves. (Roar, horror, aura.) And the captions are incredible. In one skit, standing before his wife who dominates him completely, he

grins sheepishly, struts and says, "Every day I get better and better, but every night I get worse."

February 21, 1955

And Laughton. What an incredible sense of the homosexual sadist, the sex-repressing officer. *Mutiny on the Bounty* is the source of *The Caine Mutiny*, but with what a dramatic difference. For Fletcher Christian is the man who goes native, while Bligh, totally sadistic before sexual expression (the most minor infraction of discipline) is also the great mother figure once he gets in the boat with the men who have elected to come with him. Now he knows sex will not be in the air, and so he can be a great seaman.

college, at a Faculty tea, I had listened for an hour to a professor's wife who was so blessed as to have known John Dos Passos. My adolescent crush on the profession of the writer had been more lasting than I could have guessed. I had even been so simple as to think that the kind of people who went into publishing were still most concerned with the few writers who made the profession not empty of honor, and I had been taking myself seriously, I had been thinking I was one of those writers.

Instead I caught it in the face and deserved it for not looking at the evidence. I was out of fashion and that was the score; that was all the score; the publishing habits of the past were going to be of no help for my Deer Park. *And so as the language of sentiment would have it, something broke in me, but I do not know if it was so much a loving heart, as a cyst of the weak, the unreal, and the needy, and I was finally open to my anger. I turned within my psyche I can almost believe, for I felt something shift to murder in me. I finally had the simple sense to understand that if I wanted my work to travel further than others, the life of my talent depended on fighting a little more, and looking for help a little less. But I deny the sequence in putting it this way, for it took me years to come to this fine point. All I felt then was that I was an outlaw, a psychic outlaw, and I liked it, I liked it a good night better than trying to be a gentleman, and with a set of emotions accelerating one on the other, I mined down deep into the murderous message of marijuana, the smoke of the assassins, and for the first time in my life I knew what it was to make your kicks.*

I could write about that here, but it would be a mistake. Let the experience stay where it is, and on a given year it may be found again in a novel. For now it is enough to say that marijuana opens the senses and weakens the mind. In the end, you pay for what you get. If you get something big, the cost will equal it. There is a moral economy to one's vice, but you learn that last of all. I still had the thought it was possible to find something which cost nothing. Thus, The Deer Park *resting at Putnam, and new good friends found in Harlem, I was off on that happy ride where you discover a new duchy of jazz every night and the drought of the past is given a rain of new sound. What has been dull and dead in your years is now tart to the taste, and there is sweet in the illusion of how fast you can change. To keep up with it all, I began to log a journal, a wild set of thoughts and outlines for huge projects—I wrote one hundred*

thousand words in eight weeks, more than once twenty pages a day in a style which came willy-nilly from the cramp of the past, a lockstep jargon of sociology and psychology that sours my teeth when I look at those pages today. Yet this journal has the start of more ideas than I will have again; ideas which came so fast and so rich that sometimes I think my brain was dulled by the heat of their passage. (With all proportions kept, one can say that cocaine may have worked a similar good and ill upon Freud.)

The journal wore down by February, about the time The Deer Park *had once been scheduled to appear. By then I had decided to change a few things in the novel, nothing in the way of lawyer's deletions, just a few touches for style. They were not happy about this at Putnam. Minton argued that some interest in the book would be lost if the text were not identical to Rinehart's page proofs, and Ted Purdy, my editor, told me more than once that they liked the book "just the way it is." Besides, there was thought of bringing it out in June as a summer book.*

Well, I wanted to take a look. After all, I had been learning new lessons. I began to go over the page proofs, and the book read as if it had been written by someone else. I was changed from the writer who had labored on that novel, enough to be able to see it without anger or vanity or the itch to justify myself. Now, after three years of living with the book, I could at last admit the style was wrong, that it had been wrong from the time I started, that I had been strangling the life of my novel in a poetic prose which was too self-consciously attractive and formal, false to the life of my characters, especially false to the life of my narrator who was the voice of my novel and so gave the story its air. He had been a lieutenant in the Air Force, he had been cool enough and hard enough to work his way up from an orphan asylum, and to allow him to write in a style which at its best sounded like Nick Carraway in The Great Gatsby *must of course blur his character and leave the book unreal. Nick was legitimate, out of fair family, the Midwest and Princeton—he would write as he did, his style was himself. But the style of Sergius O'Shaugnessy, no matter how good it became (and the Rinehart* Deer Park *had its moments) was a style which came out of nothing so much as my determination to prove I could muster a fine style.*

If I wanted to improve my novel, yet keep the style, I would

(H) homeodynamic — (S) sociostatic
romantic — realist
saint — psychopath
sex — love
liquor — Lipton's
bisexual — unisexual
pro — con
prick — cunt
journalist — novelist

cf
Hip + square
+
Natural
archotomy

53

23

Temple

718-
643-
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Liptons

April 11

917-604-
1113

Q = possible direct quote
I = Key information
C = Context