

Not Yet

(7 min)

In the late '30s, there used to be any number of dirty jokes circulating about Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor, but they worked their way out of the side of one's mouth. It was the time, after all, of eight-page cartoon books featuring Popeye and his King Kong prong, or Olive Oyl having one on the house (or the horse). Now, in the years of Bill Clinton, the jokes are on the Internet or come to you by e-mail: How is Clinton different from the Titanic? Why, only 240 women went down on the Titanic. What is the new game in the White House? It's swallow the leader. Monica Lewinsky told a friend, "You could say I earned my presidential knee-pads."

In America, the mood was almost gay. A trifle nauseated, but gay, like a rough trip on an amusement ride. Once again, the American spirit was investing in a matter about which few knew anything yet the ignorant were certain they would keep being rewarded. If Clinton had to resign, then we'd have a new media era. The old one, after all, was getting dull.

On Cape Cod, a land much exposed to wind and tide, there is a local expression: "If you don't like the weather, wait ten minutes." The Clinton

Journalism

Forty years ago
10 min

10 min

Taken one by one, it is true that reporters tend to be hardheaded, objective, and unimaginative. Their intelligence is sound but unexceptional and they have the middle-class penchant for collecting tales, stories, legends, accounts of practical jokes, details of negotiation, bits of memoir—all those capsules of fiction that serve the middle class as a substitute for ethics and/or culture. Reporters, like shopkeepers, tend to be worshipful of the fact that wins and so covers over the other facts. In the middle class, the remark “He made a lot of money” ends the conversation. If you persist, if you try to point out that the money was made by digging through his grandmother’s

grave to look for oil, you are met with a middle-class shrug. "It's a question of taste whether one should get into the past" is the winning reply.

In his own person there is nobody more practical than a reporter. He exhibits the same avidity for news that a businessman will show for money. No bourgeois will hesitate to pick up a dollar, even if he is not fond of the man with whom he deals: so, a reporter will do a nice story about a type he dislikes, or a bad story about a figure he is fond of. It has nothing to do with his feelings. There is a logic to news—on a given day, with a certain meteorological drift to the winds in the mass media, a story can only ride along certain vectors. To expect a reporter to be true to the precise detail of an event is kin to the sentimentality that asks a fast revolving investor to be faithful to a particular stock in his portfolio when it is going down and his others are going up.

But here we come to the end of our image. When the middle class gather for a club meeting or a social function, the atmosphere is dependably dull, whereas ten reporters come together in a room for a story are slightly hysterical, and two hundred reporters and photographers congregated for a press conference are as void of dignity, even stuffed-up, stodgy, middle-class dignity, as a slew of monkeys tearing through the brush. There is reason for this, much reason: There is always urgency to get some quotation that is usable for their story and, afterward, find a telephone. The habitat of a reporter, at its worst, is identical to spending one's morning, afternoon, and evening transferring from the rush hour of one subway train to the rush hour of another. ~~In time even the best come to remind one of the rush hour.~~ An old fight reporter is a sad sight—he looks like an old prizefight manager, which is to say, he looks like an old cigar butt.

Nor is this true only of sports reporters. They are gifted with charm compared to political reporters, who give off an effluvium which is unadulterated cancer gulch. I do not think I exaggerate. There is an odor to any Press Headquarters that is unmistakable. One may begin by saying it is like the odor in small left-wing meeting halls, except it is worse, far worse, for there is no poverty to put a guilt-free iron into the nose; on the contrary, everybody is getting free drinks, free sandwiches, free news releases. Yet there is the unavoidable smell of flesh burning quietly and slowly in the service of a machine. Have any of you never been through the smoking car of an old coach early in the morning when the smokers sleep and the stale air settles into congelations of gloom? Well, that is a little like the scent of Press

40x4
160 lbs.
2 min 40

Headquarters. Yet the difference is vast, because Press Headquarters for any big American event is invariably a large room in a large hotel, usually the largest room in the largest hotel in town. Thus it is a commercial room in a commercial hotel. The walls must be pale green or pale pink, dirty by now, subtly dirty like the toe of a silk stocking. (Which is incidentally the smell of the plaster.) One could be meeting bureaucrats from Tashkent in the Palace of the Soviets. One enormous barefaced meeting room, a twenty-foot banner up, a proscenium arch at one end, with high Gothic windows painted within the arch—almost never does a window look out on the open air. (Hotels build banquet rooms on the *inside* of their buildings—it is the best way to fill internal space with revenue.)

This room is in fever. Two hundred, three hundred, I suppose even five hundred, reporters get into some of these rooms, there to talk, there to drink, there to bang away on any one of fifty standard typewriters, provided by the people on Public Relations who have set up this Press Headquarters. It is like being at a vast party in Limbo—there is tremendous excitement, much movement, and no sex at all. Just talk. Talk fed by cigarettes. One thousand to two thousand cigarettes are smoked every hour. The mind must keep functioning fast enough to offer up stories. (Reporters meet as in a marketplace to trade their stories—they barter an anecdote they cannot use about one of the people in the event in order to pick up a different piece that is usable by their paper. It does not matter if the story is true or altogether not true—it must merely be suitable and not too mechanically libelous.) So they char the inside of their bodies in order to scrape up news which can go out to the machine, that enormous machine, that intellectual leviathan which is obliged to eat, each day, tidbits, gristle, gravel, garbage cans, charlotte russe, old rubber tires, T-bone steaks, wet cardboard, dry leaves, apple pie, broken bottles, dog food, shells, roach powder, dry ball-point pens, grapefruit juice. All the trash, all the garbage, all the slop, and a little of the wealth go out each day and night into the belly of that old American goat, our newspapers.

So the reporters smell also of this work, they smell of the dishwasher and the pots, they are flesh burning themselves very quietly and slowly in the service of a machine that feeds goats, that feeds the Goat. One smells this collective odor on the instant one enters their meeting room. It is not a corrupt smell, it does not have enough of the meats, the savory, and the vitality of flesh to smell corrupt and fearful when it is bad, no, it is more the smell of excessive respect for power, the odor of flesh gutted by avidities that are electric and empty. I sup-

pose it is the bleak smell one could find on the inside of one's head during a bad cold, full of fever, badly used, burned out of mood. The physical sensation of a cold often is one of power trapped corrosively inside, coils of strength being liquidated in some center of the self. The reporter hangs in a powerless-power—his voice directly, or via the rewrite desk indirectly, reaches out to millions of readers; the more readers he owns, the less he can say. He is forbidden by a hundred censors, most of them inside himself, to communicate notions that are not conformistically simple, simple like plastic is simple, that is to say, monotonous. Therefore a reporter forms a habit equivalent to lacerating the flesh: He learns to write what he does not naturally believe. Since he did not start, presumably, with the desire to be a bad writer or a dishonest writer, he ends by bludgeoning his brain into believing that something which is half true is in fact—since he creates a fact each time he puts something into a newspaper—nine-tenths true. A psyche is debauched—his own; a false fact is created. For which fact, sooner or later, inevitably, inexorably, the public will pay. A nation that forms detailed opinions on the basis of detailed fact which is askew from the subtle reality becomes a nation of citizens whose psyches are skewed, item by detailed item, away from *any* reality.

So great guilt clings to reporters. They know they help to keep America slightly insane. As a result perhaps they are a shabby-looking crew. The best of them are the shabbiest, which is natural if one thinks about it—a sensitive man suffers from the prosperous life of his lies more than a dull man. In fact the few dudes one finds among reporters tend to be semi-illiterates, or hatchet men, or cynics on two or three payrolls who do restrained public relations in the form of news stories. But this is to make too much of the extremes. Reporters along the middle of the spectrum are shabby, worried, guilty, and suffer each day from the damnable anxiety that they know all sorts of powerful information a half hour to twenty-four hours before anyone else in America knows it, not to mention the time clock ticking away in the vault of all those stories that cannot be printed or will not be printed. It makes for a livid view of existence. It is like an injunction to become hysterical once a day. Then they must write at lightning speed. It may be heavy-fisted but true, it may be slick as a barnyard slide, it may be great, it may be fill—what does it matter? The matter rides out like oats in a conveyor belt, and the unconscious takes a ferocious pounding. Writing is of use to the psyche only if the writer discovers something he did not know he knew in the act itself of writing. That is why a few men will go through hell in order to keep writing—Joyce ~~and~~

~~Proust~~, for example. Being a writer can save one from insanity or cancer; being a bad writer can drive one smack into the center of the plague. Think of the poor reporter, who does not have the leisure of the novelist or the poet to discover what he thinks. The unconscious gives up, buries itself, leaves the writer to his cliché, and saves the truth, or that part of it the reporter is yet privileged to find, for his colleagues and his friends. A good reporter is a man who must still tell you the truth privately; he has bright harsh eyes and can relate ten good stories in a row standing at a bar.

Still, they do not quit. That charge of adrenaline once a day, that hysteria, that sense of powerless-power close to the engines of history—they can do without powerless-power no more than a gentleman junkie on the main line can do without his heroin, Doctor. You see, a reporter is close to the action. He is not *of* the action, but he is close to it, as close as a crab louse to the begetting of a child. One may never be President, but the photographer working for his paper has the power to cock a flashbulb and make the eyes of JFK go blink!

By the following night, Gary had a guy who would sell the guns. But they had to meet him. That meant carrying the guns in the car. Gary didn't have a license and her Mustang still had last year's license plates. Both cars had the crappy kind of look a State Trooper would pull over for nothing. So they had quite an argument before they fi-

nally put the pistols in her trunk and started out. They brought the kids along. The kids might be insurance against a State Trooper waving them over for too little.

On the other hand, Sunny and Jeremy made her awfully aware of his driving tonight. That definitely got Nicole nervous. He finally swung into the Long Horn Cafe, a taco joint between Orem and Pleasant Grove, to make a phone call. Only he couldn't get ahold of the guy who was to peddle the guns. Gary was getting more and more upset. It looked like the evening was going to get totally squandered. A sweet early summer night.

He came back out of the Long Horn and looked in the car for another phone number, then started tearing pages out of the book. By the time he finally found the number, his guy was out. Sunny and Jeremy were beginning to make a lot of noise. Next thing she knew, Gary spun out of the Long Horn and headed back toward Orem. He was going 80. She was petrified for the kids. Told him to pull over.

He slammed to the shoulder. A screeching halt. He turned around, and started spanking the kids. They hadn't even been making a sound the last minute. Too scared of the speed.

She started hitting Gary right there, hit him with her fists as hard as she could, hollered for him to let her out of the car. He grabbed her hands to hold her down, and then the kids started screaming. Gary wouldn't let her out. Then this really dumb-looking guy walked by. She must have sounded as if Gary was killing her, but the fucker just stopped and said, "Anything wrong?" Then walked on.

Nicole wouldn't stop hollering. Gary finally wedged her into the space between the bucket seats and got his hand over her mouth. She was trying not to pass out. He had his other hand on her throat to hold her down. She couldn't breathe. He told her then that he would let her go if she promised to be quiet and go home. Nicole mumbled, Okay. It was the best she could get out. The moment he let go, she started yelling. When his hand came back to her mouth, she bit real hard into the flesh near his thumb. Tasted the blood.

Somehow, she didn't know how, she got out of the car. She couldn't remember later if he let her go, or if she just got away. Maybe

Gary,
any car
will live
into

He's come
home
with
some
guns.

Explains
it all

that he
steal
them
after he
selling

them
for
money
and

He needs
money
to buy
a white
truck.

Garrett

he let her go. She ran across the street to the middle of the highway divider, a kid in each hand, and started walking. She would hitchhike.

Gary began to follow on foot. At first he let her try to bum a ride, but a car almost stopped for her, and so Gary tried to pull her back to the Mustang. She wouldn't budge. He got smart and tried to yank one of the kids away. She wouldn't let loose, hung on with all she had. Between them, it must have been stretching the kids. Finally a pickup truck pulled over and a couple of guys came over with a chick.

The girl happened to be an old friend Nicole hadn't seen in a year. Pepper, her first girl friend ever. Yet, Nicole couldn't even think of the last name, she was that upset.

Gary said, "Get out of here, this is a family matter." Pepper looked at Gary, just as tall as she could be, and said, "We know Nicole, and you ain't family." That was all of it. Gary let go and walked up the street toward her car. Nicole got the kids into the truck with Pepper, and they took off. The moment she remembered how once she had wanted everything to be good for Gary, she started crying. Nicole couldn't help it. She cried.

Nicole spent the night at her great-grandmother's house, where he would never think of looking for her. In the morning, she went back to her mother's, and Gary called not long after, and said he was coming over. Nicole was scared. She put in a call to the police, and, in fact, was talking to the dispatcher when Gary walked in. So she said into the phone, "Man, get them out here as fast as you can."

She didn't know if Gary had come to drag her away. But he just stood at the kitchen sink. She told him to go away and leave her alone, and he just kept looking at her. He had a look as if everything inside him hurt, man, really hurt. Then he said, "You fight as good as you fuck."

She was trying hard not to smile, but, in fact, it made her a little less afraid of him. He came over and put his hands on her shoulders. Again, she told him to leave. To her surprise, he turned around and went. He practically passed the cops as they were coming in.

By afternoon, she regretted not letting him stay. She was really afraid he would not come back. A voice in her head kept sounding like an echo in a tunnel. It said, "I love him, I love him."

He showed up after work with a carton of cigarettes and a rose. She couldn't help but smile. She went on the porch to meet him, and he handed her a letter.

Dear Nicole,

I don't know why I did this to myself. You are the most beautiful thing I've ever seen and touched . . .

You just loved me and touched my soul with a wondrous tenderness and you treated me so kindly.

I just couldn't handle that. There's no bullshit or meanness about you and I couldn't deal with an honest spirit like yours that didn't want to hurt me . . .

After she read the letter, they sat on the porch for a while. Didn't say too much. Then Nicole went in and got the kids, picked up their diapers, and left with him.

greasy
pole
Dursaleli

10 min

Fredin's log
Confessions

THE HUMANISTS

WP May 24, 99

1

She didn't start her war but she influenced its style.

Both of his parents committed suicide

Milosevic, as many of us have been told by now, ¹⁵ grew up an orphan. And his wife's mother might as well have been the protagonist in a Greek tragedy. A Yugoslav partisan, she was captured by the Nazis, tortured, surrendered crucial information, was released, and then was executed by the leader of her partisan this same man group, who happened to be her father.

It is obviously a family history to push beyond the measure of just about all of us. Nonetheless, we use it for political interpretations. Our good Hillary, caught on the cusp between psycho-history and psycho-babble, was heard to remark to Larry King that the Milosevices were looking to turn their inner tragedies out upon the Kosovars.

This about expresses the depth of our comprehension of what we have been up to in Kosovo. What may be more to the point is not Milosevic's personal pain, nor his wife's, but the identity he acquired as a young Communist in a Yugoslav regime at odds with Stalin but nonetheless profoundly influenced by the Soviet sense of virtue. The good Soviet operator was a dedicated bureaucrat who could climb the greasy pole of Party advancement ^{safer than} skillfully ~~enough to beat~~ his fellow tigers. Milosevic had to be one of the wiliest, toughest, most treacherous, canny, tricky, ruthless, and resourceful human beings Madeleine Albright had ever encountered. She, too, had climbed a greasy pole,

2

but it was as a hostess charming up the Beltway's A-list. That was no mean feat either, but it hardly compares to the vertical rise of Master Milosevic. We must face it. She was no match for him. Nor was Clinton, William Cohen, or Sandy Berger. No one of them had ever served ^{all-out} in the Armed Forces.

Combat, for those who get into it, is about as strange and mysterious an experience as first sex. To have, therefore, three such men (plus Madeleine Albright) functioning as our command trust for the Kosovo campaign is analogous to asking a young fellow innocent of carnal experience to become a marriage counselor. A genius ^(or a priest) could probably surmount the difficulty.

Let us look, rather, at Milosevic's strategy. If, before the bombings began, he had already committed all the heinous acts he has since perpetrated, why, he would probably have been doomed. The outrage of the world would have been immense. So, he waited. He set up a trap. Seven months ago, in October, threatened with air strikes by NATO, he made promises about his future conduct in Kosovo which ~~over the next months~~ he resolutely failed to keep.

Negotiations, therefore, began again. They came to climax at Rambouillet. But, he refused to appear. Albright, enraged, ^{may have} decided that he was probably, at bottom, soft. If we not only threatened him again, but, indeed, carried it out, he would give in quickly. So we began the bombing in cooperation with NATO, ^{were ready to} They could use a stunning quick war to gild their 50th Anniversary. We began the show with smart bombs.

3

Milosevic was more than ready. NATO stepped into a trap whose depth is best plumbed by the weight of the malevolent tricks Milosevic had collected in his career. *in America, Europe, or Asia* Did no one anticipate that an all-out ethnic cleansing would now *(this is a question I want to return to later)* begin immediately? Within twenty-four hours, columns of refugees were in motion and the houses, towns and cities of Kosovo were ablaze. "Genocide" had begun.

If Clinton and NATO have done nothing else, they have certainly leached out the power of that word. The Holocaust is the foundation of its meaning. So the word should be used with caution. Cambodia gave us genocide, as did Rwanda, but ethnic cleansing with its loss of homes, passports, town and country, its random *more often random than calculated,* rage and slaughter, is still not equal to the murder of *calculated* millions. Ethnic cleansing is better seen as psychic genocide. For the majority who undergo its travail, the past is amputated from the present.

Bombing, in turn, is another form of psychic genocide. Except that now it is your future which is amputated from your present. You no longer know that you have a future. Your present sense of expectation—what you will do *with your life* tomorrow, or next week, next year—is as crippled as a house with one wall sheared off.

What, then, have we accomplished? So soon as the bombing commenced, *20 to 30* Milosevic's atrocities increased probably by 50 or 100 times over what he had perpetrated before it all began. Yet such chaos and horror was further magnified

*25,000 (30 times)
750,000*
I do not know the exact amount of this ratio but then it was not publicized in any way.

4

by the horror of what NATO was doing to the Serbs. The average Serb, after all, had no more to do with this war than the average Kosovar. Chaos, therefore, was being laid upon chaos. And there was no military plan for a conclusion to the war. Just hopes, plus unconscionable arrogance in NATO's exposition of its good motive.

For that matter, do we want to contemplate Clinton's personal motives too closely? Given how badly he was mucked-up by impeachment nausaeas, it is hard not to believe that apart from his avowed motive that we must fight genocide ~~everywhere~~, he might also have been looking to shift the media's agenda. (Indeed, he has succeeded at that.) On the other hand, those same impeachment details had soiled the Presidency to a point where Clinton could not ask Americans to shed blood. So, he had to give the store away. We will bomb, he said, but we will not use ground troops.

This is now at the core of a prodigious national embarrassment. War is never there to be easily defended, but even so, there is a visceral difference between a combat devoted uniquely to bombing, and participation in a ground war. Ground war is always cruel beyond human comprehension, but there are occasional examples of heroism or sacrifice, and since both of the adversaries lose young men, there is, with all else, a hint of shared sorrow on both sides.
Over the years and decades, that can even permit a reconciliation.

5

Bombing, however, is oppression. If the bombing is done with the notion that our own blood is not to be shed, it is obscene. In large part, people who are bombed will never forgive the aggressor. We can hardly wish to meditate upon the detestation of America that we are seeding in all the poor populations of the world.

Offering his explanation of Clinton's reluctance to send in ground troops, Tony Blair said, "...Kosovo is a very long way from Kansas." It is. It may even be too far away. If we as a nation are not willing to shed our blood to help the Kosovars, then it is time to disabuse ourselves of the notion that we can prevent genocide, actual or psychic. All we can do, using our present methods, is proliferate havoc. ~~We must acknowledge the alternative.~~

What, then, might we have done?

Well, after Rambouillet failed, we could have built up ground troops on the periphery of Kosovo, and given resonance to such a threat by a sustained leaflet-dropping over all of Serbia delineating the outrages Milosevic had committed. Then, if Milosevic still refused to negotiate, a ground war fortified by an air war could have commenced. While there would have been notable European and American casualties, such a war would probably have been won by NATO in short time. Of course, this was the last solution Clinton could afford.

Since the above is armchair strategy, the real question is: What do we do now?

up to here, I stand
by all that I ~~have~~
~~been written~~ what
follows
proved
to be
completely
in fact
not
considerably
less
incisive

6

The answer: Make peace. Negotiate. Milosevic's problems in rebuilding are already great enough to force him to allow the final results to appear ambiguous. If he is looking for future financial credits—and how would he not?—then he cannot afford to claim victory. From NATO's side, not wishing to look too sheepish at descending to a negotiated peace, stories of the outrages committed against the Serbs by the Kosovo Liberation Army are likely to surface. Clinton, in his turn, will be looking to retain enough face to enable his spin-doctors to gain a draw for him. Given that large Clinton heart which suffers so dependably for all of us, he is quite likely to make the cut. NATO, however, may not. So much the worse for NATO. Its primary function ended with the Cold War, and it has proved propagandistic and witless in its desire to work up a second function. It may be better if reconstituted as a serious strike force, an international Foreign Legion ready to die if necessary in the service of Europe and America. *This question I would like to discuss.*

It is true we have to see ready to endanger their lives for a principle
 If there should prove to be insufficient volunteers for such a special, dedicated, and conceivably most mortal army, then let us at least *engage the* recognize that *acknowledging reappraisal that*
 when it comes to standing up to genocide in any form, we are not prepared to sacrifice our sons and daughters, no, our blood is not as ready as our mouth.

Such self-awareness, while humbling, might even be of worth for the future. It can serve to inhibit those acts of programmatic compassion which all

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too few of us ever feel to the quick. Virtuous emotion that is manipulated at national and international levels is odds-on to breed catastrophe.

Norman Mailer

May 19, 1999

- ① the ratio before and after
- ② the knowledge of what would ensue,
 - a) The Serb archbishop + Albright.
 - b) Richard Holbrooke and the warnings

- ③ The engine - The KLA act (Car) ^{Blairst & Chris}
 The greasy pole + 19 leaders, saving a people whose language they did not speak, whose religion they did not share and whose country they had never visited. Why, then? Speculations follow. Spectre of global capitalism.

what does the G-D mean - your betrayal, close friends, etc.

- ? ④ Confusions for the activist, To mix one's guns with a superpower is equal to the marriage ?

Russians & Philosemics (M's strategy)
 Chernomyrdin error

w

10 minutes

Red and Mollie

Saturn V would take off from a plain of gray-green moor and marsh, no factory or habitation within three and a half miles. Saturn V had almost six million pounds of fuel. So it would take the equivalent of thirty thousand strong men to raise it ^{one foot off its pad} ~~an inch~~. It would ^{burn} ~~take~~ liquid oxygen, liquid hydrogen, and a very high grade of kerosene called RP- 1. ~~It had~~

~~hydrazine, unsymmetrical dimethylhydrazine, and nitrogen tetroxide in the Service Module.~~ It was in effect a bomb, thirtythree feet wide ^{the} ~~the~~

length of a long living room. ~~Corporation executives earning \$50,000 a year just begin to think of a thirty-three foot living room for themselves.~~

~~Set on end~~ And it was the height of a football field ~~set on end~~. Sometimes they

described it as a thirty-six-story building (ten feet to a floor) ~~but a football-~~

field was ^{only a near} ~~near~~ measure of size, and this bomb, 363 feet high, 33 feet wide

at the base, would blow if it blew ^{up on the pad by the launch pad} ~~with a force kin to one million pounds~~

of TNT. That was like an old-fashioned bombing raid in World War II-

one thousand planes, each carrying one thousand pounds of bombs. So

Saturn V would devastate an area if ever it went. Flight Control, there ~~was~~

and the Press Site, and the VIP stands ^{had to be} ~~were~~ located ~~therefore~~

empty miles away across barren moors ^{which} ~~that~~, having been built by

^{dumping} dredging fill into marshland, looked ^{already} ~~as if~~ a bomb had gone off on them,

~~already.~~

On the night before the launch of Apollo 11, in the heart of Brevard County, in that stretch which runs from Melbourne through Eau Gallie, and Cocoa, to Titusville, on the coastal strip from Patrick Air Force Base through Cocoa Beach and Cape Canaveral to the Cape Kennedy Air Force Station and above to the Space Center and Launch Pad 39, through all that several hundred square miles of town and water and flat swampy waste of wilderness, through cultivated tropical gardens, and back roads by rivers lined with palms, through all the evening din of crickets, cicadas, beetles, bees, mosquitoes, grasshoppers, and wasps, some portion of a million people began to foregather on all the beaches and available islands and causeways and bridges and promontories that

would give clear view of the flight from six miles and ten miles and fifteen miles away. Tomorrow most of them would need field glasses to follow the flight up from the pad and out of sight over the sea down a chain of Caribbean isles, but they would have a view ^{they} knew tonight that if the skies were clear they would have their view, because they were encamped only where the line of sight was unimpeded to Launch Pad 39 on the horizon. There one could certainly see ^{the head of} Apollo 11 on her Saturn V *big baby*

see her for seven, nine, eleven miles away; she was lit up. A play of giant arc lights, as voluminous in candlepower as the lights for an old-fashioned Hollywood premiere, was directed on the spaceship from every side. On U.S. 1 in Titusville, eleven miles from Cape Kennedy across Merritt Island and the Banana and Indian rivers, all that clear shot across the evening waters, at an artillery range of twenty thousand yards, two hundred football fields away, by an encampment of tourists up from southern Florida, Everglades, Miami, and the Keys; in from Tampa, and Orlando; down from Daytona, St. Augustine, Gainesville, and Jacksonville; come from Fort Myers and Fort Lauderdale, from Sarasota,

St. Petersburg, Lakeland, Ocala, and Tallahassee, come from all the towns of Georgia and points farther north and west as well as every itinerant camper in the area from all of the ambulatory camping-out families of the fifty states, and tourists down on economy flights for a week in cheap hot summer Florida and now slung out in the back seats of rented cars, on U.S. I in Titusville, in an encampment of every variety of camper, was a view of the spaceship across flat land and waters and she looked like a shrine with the lights upon her. In the distance she glowed

for all the world like some white stone Madonna in the mountains, welcoming footsore travelers at dusk. Perhaps it was an unforeseen ~~game~~ ^{dividend}

of the lighting, but America had not had ~~its~~ ^{decades of} movie premieres for nothing,

nor its Rockettes in Radio City ^{with} ~~and~~ fifty million squares tooling the tourist miles over the years to Big Town to buy a ticket to spectacle and back home again. If you were going to have a ^{space} ~~Hollywood~~ premiere ^{with} ~~and~~

arc lights, a million out to watch and a spaceship that looked across the evening flutter like the light on the Shrine of Our Lady outside any church in South Brooklyn or Bay Ridge, then by God you might just as well have

this spectacle on the premiere trip to the moon. That deserved a searchlight or two! And the campers stared across the waters ~~in their bivouac off Route 1 in Titusville, campers sat on the banks of the Indian River at twilight~~ and waited for the tropical night to pass its hold on the hours.

There were new industries in America these years. After five decades of suspense movies, and movies of the Wild West, after the adventures of several generations of men in two world wars and Korea and Vietnam, after sixteen years of *Playboy* and American iconization of the gravity-defying breast and the sun-ripened buttock, after ten years of the greatest professional football, after a hundred years and more of a tradition that the frontier was open and would never close, and after twenty more perplexing technological years when prosperity came to nearly every White pocket, and technology put out its plastic, its superhighways, its supermarkets, its appliances, its suburbs, its smog, and its intimation that the frontier was damn shut, shut like a boulder on a rabbit burrow, America had erupted from this pressure between its love

Yes)

So they were out tonight, some portion of a million, all drawn on the lines of sight in Brevard County, and on every highway and causeway in the area the ground was covered with cars and campers, the shelter-roof extension of one family's tent near to topping the picnic blanket spread out behind the tailgate of the next station wagon, and the open trunk lid of a ~~twelve- or fifteen-year-old Dodge convertible (rusty, top all-~~
~~rent, peeling friction tape and dirty white adhesive tape chasing a flap of a~~
~~patch)~~ stood next to both, part of the family sleeping in the trunk, the others with their good dirty feet out the windows. ^{So it not} It was ~~hardly~~ just middle-class America here tonight, rather every echo of hard trade-union beer-binge paunch-gut-and muscle, and lean whippy redneck honky-tonk clans out to ~~bird~~-watch in the morning with redeye in the shot glass. ^{due name}

^{up there} There were tourists and not inelegant campers that spoke of peanut butter and jelly, watercress, and cucumber-suburban campers-but there was also

^{and} the raw gasoline of expectation in the air, ~~and families of poor Okies.~~

One felt the whole South stirring on this night. ~~Quiet pious Baptists, out~~
~~somewhere on their porches (kin to some of the redneck and Okie-Okie~~

~~for Okeechobee! and working class here)~~ seemed to be waiting over an
 arc of a thousand miles, certainly all the way from Cape Kennedy across
 Florida along the Gulf of Mexico to Houston and the Manned Spacecraft
 Center and back again, all across that belt of Fundamentalist piety, hot
 dry tempers burning like closed-up balefire against the humidity of the
 swamps, religion, and lust ^{together} ~~to work their combat~~ in the tropical nights, yes
 all over the South they had to be praying, ~~yes even more than everywhere~~
 for the safety of this shot, the astronauts part of that family of concern
 which White Southerners could share with each other out of the sweet
 deep wells of their Christian hearts, what was left of them. ~~It was not~~
~~hard to have a vision of mothers and grandmothers looking like spinsters,~~
~~silverrimmed glasses to shield your skin from their eyes of burning faith,~~
~~predictable turkey wattles on the neck~~ They would be praying for
 America tonight--thoughts of America served to replace the tender sense
 of the Virgin in Protestant hearts. And out here on the campgrounds of
 Brevard County, out on all the scorched shoulders and oil-coated grass of
 the available highway, were men getting ready to drink with their wives,

middle-aged, green-eyed Southern mill workers with sunburned freckled
 skin, reddish hair, hard mechanic's muscles in their forearms, wife a
 trinity of worrying mother, fattening slattern, and give-me-a-drink-and-
 I'll-holler-happy sort of bitch. Dutiful work, devotion to family and
 property, their sloven property! mingy propriety ^{and} real raucous bust-outs—
 that sort ^{of} South, married out of high school, oats ^{only} half-sown like three-
 quarters of all America over thirty, and their boys on the hunt through the
 encampment looking for ^{girls} ~~opposite numbers, other boys or--Gods of~~
~~fornication with them! --girls without bank locks on their bloomers.~~ You
 can expect nothing less on a night so filled with heat, human meat,
 bubbles of fear, prayer soft as love, and tropical sex in every sauce. And
 that mill worker with red hair and gray-green eyes, red sunburn, red
 peeling skin on his knotty forearms [—] he could be an astronaut in another
 life. He looks like an older version of Neil Armstrong, maybe, he looks
 like some of them, like Gordon Cooper for sure, or Deke Slayton, or Walt
 Cunningham of Apollo 7, yeah, the mill worker is tonight an American
 all drenched in pride and fear and sorrow [—] his wild rebel yell guaranteed

to diminish each year [—] is riding the range with awe tonight. He has worked with machines all his life, he has tooled cars to the point where he has felt them respond to his care, he has known them and slept beside them as trustingly as if they were hunting dogs, he knows a thousand things about the collaboration between a man and a machine, and he knows what can go wrong.

Machines--all the old machines he has known--are as unreasonable as people. And here, tomorrow, going up three men of whom he could have been one if he had a) not been a drunken fool half his life b) not married young c) had an education d) had twice as many guts and e) been full of real luck rather than cursed family luck, could have been going up with them in a machine with millions of parts, 80 percent electronics which he does not put his hand to, no grease, nut, wrench, and arm in electronics.

Yes, could have been going up in a machine no man could ever sleep next to, or trust, not a machine with millions of parts, ^{after} ~~and~~ ten million fingers

[—]
had worked on them [—] how much evil, error, and deception in millions of

fingers?-he is thinking of his wife, why she alone when drunk and in full lunatic' cohabitation with the all-out rays of the full moon was a hundred thousand fingers of evil herself ^f and his ^{stomach} bowels come near to dropping out of him with awe at the daring of the act in the morning. He has spent his life with machines, they are all he has ever trusted with affectionate trust, for he has had a ^{keen} nose for their ^{occasional} treacheries (more than he can say for women), and now, twelve hours from now, in the full light of nine-thirty in the morning, that Apollo-Saturn is going to go up. He will see a world begin where machines are king and he does not know whether to cry from pride or the all-out ache that he does not really comprehend the new machinery.

And the wife sipping the booze, hot and much too funky is her flesh on this hot night, listening to transistor radio Red has bought her, is moony and full of tears at the heroism of male craziness tomorrow. She wishes [—] floodgates of middle-age sorrow ^{— for} some crack of that holy lightning in her womb: too late now! and trying to love up a warmth for Red, married all these nineteen years, she rears up on the very pinpoint of

spite. She has powers, her family has powers, there's Indian blood in both her grandmas, and bruises, sorrows, slights, and nights of the loveliest now lost in the disappearing wahoo of studs she will never see again, our redneck Molly abloom in this encampment, she thinks on ^a ~~that~~ ^{M.} pinpoint of spite of a curse she could put and will not on the launch tomorrow. For if Saturn were ever to burst and explode ^{she} ~~she~~ sees the flames across the sky: All witch and bitch on a holiday, such pictures encourage the lapping of gentle waters in her. Whereas putting wax on the tip of the needle, and capping the curse, leaves dull lead in her chest. Not to mention the future woman troubles of her gut. She stoppers the bottle and looks on a slant at Red--there'll be an angle soon by which to pick a fight.

And men and women, tired from work and travel, sat in their cars and sat outside their cars on aluminum pipe and plastic-webbing folding chairs, and fanned themselves, and looked across the miles at the shrine. Out a car window projected the sole of a dirty foot. The big toe pointed straight up to Heaven in parallel to Saturn V

~~Our status board indicates the third stage completely pressurized. Eighty-second mark has now been passed. We'll go on full internal power at the fifty-second mark in the countdown. Guidance system goes on internal at 17 seconds leading up to the ignition sequence at 8.9 seconds.~~ We're approaching the sixty-second mark on the Apollo 11 mission. T minus 60 seconds and counting. We have passed T minus 60. Fifty-five seconds and counting. Neil Armstrong just reported back, "It's been a real smooth countdown." We have passed the fifty-second mark. Forty seconds away from the Apollo 11 lift-off. All the second-stage tanks now pressurized. Thirty-five seconds and counting. We are still GO with Apollo 11. Thirty seconds and counting. Astronauts reported, "Feels good." T minus 25 seconds. Twenty seconds and counting. T minus 15 seconds, guidance is internal, 12, 11, 10, 9, ignition sequence start, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, zero, all engines running, LIFT-OFF. We have a lift-off, 32 minutes past the hour. Lift-off on Apollo 11.

But nobody watching the launch from the Press Site ever listened to the last few words. For at 8.9 seconds before lift-off, the motors of Apollo-Saturn leaped into ignition, and two horns of orange fire burst like genies from the base of the rocket. ~~Aquarius never had to worry again about whether the experience would be appropriate to his measure.~~ ^{It's due to} Because of the distance, no one at the Press Site was to hear the sound of the motors until fifteen seconds after they had started. Although the rocket was restrained on its pad for nine seconds in order for the motors to multiply up to full thrust, the result was ~~still~~ ^{continued another long} that the rocket began to rise a full six seconds before its motors could be heard. Therefore the lift-off ~~itself~~ seemed to partake more of a miracle than a mechanical phenomenon, as if all of huge Saturn itself had begun silently to levitate, and was then pursued by flames. ^{long visual}

No, it was more dramatic than that. For the flames were enormous. No one could be prepared for that. Flames flew ~~in a cataract~~ ^{caused} against the cusp of the flame shield, and then ~~sluiced along the paved~~ ^{three miles}

^{along} ~~ground down~~ ^{offered} two opposite channels in the concrete, two underground rivers of flame which poured into the air on either side a hundred feet away, then flew a hundred feet further. Two mighty torches of flame like the wings of a yellow bird of fire ~~flew over a field~~, covered a field with brilliant yellow bloomings of flame, and in the midst of it, white as a ghost, white as the white of Melville's Moby Dick, white as the shrine of the Madonna in half the churches of the world, this slim angelic mysterious ship of stages rose without sound out of its incarnation of flame and began to ascend slowly into the sky, slow as Melville's Leviathan might swim, slowly as we might swim upward in a dream looking for the air. And still no sound. ~~Not for six seconds~~

Then it came, like a crackling of wood twigs over the ridge, came with the sharp and furious bark of a million drops of oil crackling suddenly into combustion, a cacophony of barks louder and louder as Apollo-Saturn fifteen seconds ahead of its own sound cleared the lift tower to a cheer which could have been a cry of anguish from that near-audience watching; then ^{followed} came the earsplitting bark of a thousand machine guns firing at once, and ^{air was blown} ~~Aquarius~~ shook through his feet at the fury of this combat assault, ~~and heard~~ the thunderous murmur of Niagaras of flame roaring ^{conceivably} louder than the loudest thunders ^{any} he had ever heard and the earth began to shake and would not stop, it quivered through his feet ^{while} standing on the wood of the bleachers, an apocalyptic fury of sound equal to some conception of the sound of your death in the roar of a drowning hour, a nightmare of sound, and ^{myself} ~~he~~ heard himself saying, "Oh, my God! oh, my God! oh, my God! oh, my God! oh, my God! oh, my God!" ^{while} ~~but not his voice~~, almost like the Italian girl saying "phenomenal," ^{my} ~~and~~ the sound of the rocket ^{beat} with the true blood of fear in his ears, ~~not in all the intimacy of a forming of heat~~, as if one's ear were in the caldron of a vast burning of air, heavens of oxygen being born and consumed in this ascension of the rocket, and a ~~poor~~ moment of vertigo at the thought that man now had something with which to speak to God — the fire was white as a ~~force~~

as long as the rocket itself, a tail of fire, a face, yes now the rocket looked like a thin and pointed witch's hat, and the flames from its base were the blazing eyes of the witch. Forked like saw the base of the flame which quivered through the lens of the binoculars. Upwards. As the rocket keened over and went up and out to sea, one could no longer watch its stage, only the flame from its base. Now it seemed to rise like a ball of fire, like a new sun mounting the sky, a flame elevating itself.

rocket
from
teeth
the
and
from
sun

Many thousands of feet up it went through haze and the fire feathered the haze in a long trailing caress, intimate as the wake which follows the path of a fingerling in inches of water. Trailings of cloud parted like lips. Then a heavier cloud was punched through with sudden cruelty. Then two long spumes of wake, like two large fish following our first fish — one's heart took little falls at the changes. "Ahhh," the crowd went, "Ahhh," as at the most beautiful of fireworks, for the sky was alive, one instant a pond and at the next a womb of new turns: "Ahhh," went the crowd, "Ahhh!"

feathered
which
of
with
fish
changes

Now, through the public address system, came the sound of Armstrong talking to Launch Control. He was quieter than anyone else. "Inboard cutoff" he said with calm in his voice.

Far in the distance, almost out of sight, like an all-but-transparent fish suddenly breaking into head and tail, the first stage at the rear of the rocket fell off from the rest, fell off and was now like a man, like a sky diver suddenly small. A new burst of motors started up, some far-off glimpse of newborn fires which looked pale as streams of water, pale were the flames in the far distance. Then the abandoned empty stage of the booster began to fall away, a relay runner, baton just passed, who slips back, slips back. Then it began to tumble, but with the slow tender dignity of a thin slice of soap slicing and wavering, dipping and gliding on its way to the floor of the tub. Then the mighty Saturn of the first stage, empty, fuel-voided, burned out, gave a puff, a whiff and was lost to sight behind a cloud. And the rocket, with Apollo 11, and the last two stages of Saturn V was finally out of sight and on its way to an orbit about

huge booster/
rear

the earth in preparation for its trip to the moon

[Signature]

~~The observers and journalists stay, however,~~
the earth. Like the others he stayed and listened to the voices of
the astronauts and the Capcom through the P.A. system.

as they came through

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER: At 3 minutes, downrange 70 miles, 43
miles high, velocity 9,300 feet per second.

ARMSTRONG: We've got skirts up.

CAPSULE COMMUNICATOR: Roger, we confirm. Skirts up.

ARMSTRONG: Tower is gone.

CAPCOM: Roger, tower.

PAO: Neil Armstrong confirming separation and the launch es-
cape tower separation.

~~ARMSTRONG: Houston be advised the visual is GO today.~~

On the way back to Cocoa Beach there was a monumental traffic
jam, and ^{one} Aquarius had time to look at objects by the road. There
was a parked trailer with a twelve-foot inflated rubber rocket — it
looked like a ^{monumental} condom with a painted tip. ~~Down its length ran a~~
~~legend.~~

GOOD
LUCK

A
P
O
L
L
O
11

Montg. (for Montgomery)
Ala.

The radio was playing in the car. Fred Something-or-other from
the Titusville Chamber of Commerce was talking fast. "And when
the folks who were visiting this launch here go home, I want them
to tell everybody how beautiful it was from Titusville."

"Folks," said ^{another} ~~an~~ announcer, "get in on
the Apollo 11 Blast-Off Sale."
America—419 country, An empty land
~~country~~ filled with wonders

18 minutes

Politics is property.

Kennedy
+ gave
McCarthyBackyard
Division
of partyDesert
Kennedy
rejected
McCarthy
+ Humphrey
+ DaleyMassacre
on
rich
Blood

vixons of the Amphitheatre and were forced to watch most of the convention this night from the halls, the ends of the tunnels, the television studios.

Daley had known how to do it. If he had been booed and jeered the first two nights and openly insulted from the podium on Wednesday, despite a gallery already packed in his favor, he was not going to tolerate anything less than a built-in majesty for tonight. Power is addicted to more power. So troughs of pigs were sweet to him as honey to a mouse, and he made certain of the seats.

Shortly after convening, the convention showed a movie thirty-two minutes long, entitled "Robert Kennedy Remembered," and while it went on, through the hall, over the floor, and out across the country on television, a kind of unity came over everyone who was watching, at least for a little while. Idealism rarely moved politicians—it had too little to do with property. But emotion did. It was closer to the land. Somewhere between sorrow and the blind sword of patriotism was the fulcrum of reasonable politics, and as the film progressed, and one saw scene after scene of Bobby Kennedy growing older, a kind of happiness came back from the image, for something in his face grew young over the years—he looked more like a boy on the day of his death, a nice boy, nicer than the kid with the sharp rocky glint in his eye who had gone to work for Joe McCarthy in his early twenties, and had then known everything there was to know about getting ahead in politics. He had grown modest as he grew older, and his wit had grown with him—he had become a funny man as the picture took care to show, wry, simple for one instant, shy and off to the side on the next, but with a sort of marvelous boy's wisdom, as if he knew the world was very bad and knew the intimate style of how it was bad, as only boys can sometimes know (for they feel it in their parents and their schoolteachers and their friends). Yet he had confidence he was going to fix it—the picture had this sweet simple view of him which no one could resent for somehow it was not untrue. Since his brother's death, a subtle sadness had come to live in his tone of confidence, as though he were confident he would win—if he did not lose. That could also happen, and that could happen quickly. He had come into that world where people live with the recognition of tragedy, and so are often afraid of

happiness, for they know that one is never in so much danger as when victorious and/or happy—that is when the devils seem to have their hour, and hawks seize something living from the gambol on the field.

The reporter met Bobby Kennedy just once. It was on an afternoon in May in New York just after his victory in the Indiana primary and it had not been a famous meeting, even if it began well. The Senator came in from a conference (for the reporter was being granted an audience) and said quickly with a grin, "Mr. Mailer, you're a mean man with a word." He had answered, "On the contrary, Senator, I like to think of myself as a gracious writer."

"Oh," said Senator Kennedy, with a wave of his hand, "that too, that too!"

So it had begun well enough, and the reporter had been taken with Kennedy's appearance. He was slimmer even than one would have thought, not strong, not weak, somewhere between a blade of grass and a blade of steel, fine, finely drawn, finely honed, a fine flush of color in his cheeks, two very white front teeth, prominent as the two upper teeth of a rabbit, so his mouth had no hint of the cruelty or calculation of a politician who weighs counties, cities, and states, but was rather a mouth ready to nip at anything which attracted its contempt or endangered its ideas. Then there were his eyes. They were most unusual. His brother Teddy Kennedy spoke of those who "followed him, honored him, lived in his mild and magnificent eye," and that was fair description for he had very large blue eyes, the iris wide in diameter, near to twice the width of the average eye, and the blue was a milky blue like a marble so that his eyes, while prominent, did not show the separate steps and slopes of light some bright eyes show, but rather were gentle, indeed beautiful—one was tempted to speak of velvety eyes—their surface seemed made of velvet as if one could touch them, and the surface would not be repelled.

He was as attractive as a movie star. Not attractive like his brother had been, for Jack Kennedy had looked like the sort of vital leading man who would steal the girl from Ronald Reagan every time, no, Bobby Kennedy had looked more like a phenomenon of a movie star—he could have filled some magical empty space between Mickey

Rooney and James Dean, they would have cast him sooner or later in some remake of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and everyone would have said, "Impossible casting! He's too young." And he was too young. Too young for Senator, too young for President, it felt strange in his presence thinking of him as President, as if the country would be giddy, like the whirl of one's stomach in the drop of an elevator or jokes about an adolescent falling in love, it was incredible to think of him as President, and yet marvelous, as if only a marvelous country would finally dare to have him.

That was the best of the meeting—meeting him! The reporter spent the rest of his valuable thirty minutes arguing with the Senator about Senator ^{George} McCarthy. He begged him to arrange some sort of truce or liaison, but made a large mistake from the outset. He went on in a fatuous voice, sensing error too late to pull back, about how effective two Irish Catholics would be on the same ticket for if there were conservative Irishmen who could vote against one of them, where was the Irish Catholic in America who could vote against two? and Kennedy had looked at him with disgust, as if offended by the presumption in this calculation, his upper lip had come down severely over his two front white teeth, and he had snapped, "I don't want those votes." How indeed did the reporter presume to tell him stories about the benightedness of such people when he knew them only too well. So the joke had been a lame joke and worse, and they got into a dull argument about McCarthy, Kennedy having little which was good to say, and the reporter arguing doggedly in the face of such remarks as: "He doesn't even begin to campaign until twelve."

They got nowhere. Kennedy's mind was altogether political on this afternoon. It did not deal with ideas except insofar as ideas were attached to the name of bills, or speeches, or platforms, or specific debates in specific places, and the reporter, always hard put to remember such details, was forced therefore to hammer harder and harder on the virtues of McCarthy's gamble in entering the New Hampshire primary until Kennedy said, "I wonder why you don't support Senator McCarthy. He seems more like your sort of guy, Mr. Mailer," and in answer, oddly moved, he had said in a husky voice, "No, I'm supporting

you. I know it wasn't easy for you to go in." And even began to mutter a few remarks about how he understood that powerful politicians would not have trusted Kennedy if he had moved too quickly, for his holding was large, and men with large holdings were not supportable if they leaped too soon. "I know that," he said looking into the Senator's mild and magnificent eye, and Kennedy nodded, and in return a little later Kennedy sighed, and exhaled his breath, looked sad for an instant, and said, "Who knows? Who knows? Perhaps I should have gone in earlier." A few minutes later they said goodbye, not unpleasantly. That was the last he saw of him.

The closest he was to come again was to stand in vigil for fifteen minutes as a member of the honor guard about his coffin in St. Patrick's. Lines filed by. People had waited in line for hours, five hours, six hours, more, inching forward through the day and through the police lines on the street in order to take one last look at the closed coffin.

The poorest part of the working-class of New York had turned out, poor Negro men and women, Puerto Ricans, Irish washerwomen, old Jewish ladies who looked like they ran grubby little newsstands, children, adolescents, families, men with hands thick and lined and horny as oyster shells, calluses like barnacles, came filing by to bob a look at that coffin covered by a flag. Some women walked by praying, and knelt and touched the coffin with their fingertips as they passed, and after a time the flag would slip from the pressure of their fingers and an usher detailed for the purpose would readjust it. The straightest line between two points is the truth of an event, no matter how long it takes or far it winds, and if it had taken these poor people six hours of waiting in line to reach that coffin, then the truth was in the hours. A river of working-class people came down to march past Kennedy's coffin, and this endless line of people had really loved him, loved Bobby Kennedy like no political figure in years had been loved.

The organ played somewhere in the nave and the line moved forward under the vast—this day—tragic vaults of the cathedral so high overhead and he felt love for the figure in the coffin and tragedy for the nation in the years ahead, the future of the nation seemed as dark and tortured, as wrenched out of shape, as the contorted blood-spattered painted sculpture of that garish Christ one could

find in every dark little Mexican church. The horror of dried blood was now part of the air, and became part of the air of the funeral next day. That funeral was not nearly so beautiful; the poor people who had waited on line on Friday were now gone, and the mighty were in their place, the President and members of the Congress, and the Establishment, and the Secret Service, and the power of Wall Street; the inside of St. Patrick's for the length of the service was dank with the breath of the over-ambitious offering reverence—there is no gloom so deep unless it is the scent of the upholstery in a mortician's limousine, or the smell of morning in a closed Pullman after executives have talked through the night.

Cigars have been smoked

24

The movie came to an end. Even dead, and on film, he was better and more moving than anything ^{that} which had happened in their convention, and people were crying. An ovation began. Delegates came to their feet, and applauded an empty screen—it was as if the center of American life was now passing the age where it could still look forward; now people looked back into memory, into the past of the nation—was that possible? They applauded the presence of a memory. Bobby Kennedy had now become a beloved property of the party.

Minutes went by and the ovation continued. People stood on their chairs and clapped their hands. Cries broke out. Signs were lifted. Small hand-lettered signs which said, "Bobby, Be With Us," and one enormous sign eight feet high, sorrowful as rue in the throat—"Bobby, We Miss You," it said.

Now the ovation had gone on long enough—for certain people. So signals went back and forth between floor and podium and phone, and Carl Albert stepped forward and banged the gavel for the ovation to end, and asked for

order. The party which had come together for five minutes, after five days and five months and five years of festering discord, was now immediately divided again. The New York and California delegations began to sing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and the floor heard, and delegations everywhere began to sing, Humphrey delegations as quick as the rest. In every convention there is a steamroller, and a moment when the flattened exhale their steam, and "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!" was the cry of the oppressed at this convention, even those unwittingly oppressed in their mind, and not even knowing it in their heart until this instant, now they were defying the Chair, clapping their hands, singing, stamping their feet to mock the chairman's gavel.

Carl Albert brought up Dorothy Bush to read an appreciation the convention would offer for the work of certain delegates. The convention did not wish to hear. Mrs. Bush began to read in a thin mean voice, quivering with the hatreds of an occasion like this, and the crowd sang on, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, his truth goes marching on," and they stamped their feet and clapped their hands, and were loose finally and having their day as they sang the song which once, originally, had commemorated a man who preached civil disorder, then mutiny, and attacked a for in his madness and was executed, John Brown was also being celebrated here, and the Texas and Illinois delegations were now silent, clapping no longer, sitting on their seats, looking bored. Every delegate on the floor who had hated the Kennedys was now looking bored, and the ones who had loved them were now noisier than ever. Once again the party was polarized. Signs waved all over the floor, "Bobby, We'll Remember You," "Bobby, We'll Seek Your Newer World," and the ever-present, "Bobby, We Miss You." Yes they did, missed him as the loving spirit, the tender *germ* in the living plasma of the party. Nothing was going to make them stop: this offering of applause was more valuable to them than any nutrients to be found in the oratorical vitamin pills Hubert ^{Chambers} would yet be there to offer. The demonstration went on for twenty minutes and gave no sign of stopping at all. Dorothy Bush had long ago given up. Carl Albert, even smaller than Georgie Wallace, was now as furious as only a tiny man can be when his hard-earned authority has turned to wax—he glared across the

~~floor at the New York delegation like a little boy who smells something bad.~~

All the same,
 However did they stop the demonstration? Well, convention mechanics can be as perfect as the muscle in a good play when professionals have worked their football for a season. Mayor Daley, old lover of the Kennedys, and politically enough of an enigma six months ago for Bobby to have said in his bloodwise political wisdom, "Daley is the ballgame," Mayor Daley, still flirting with the Kennedys these last three days in his desire for Teddy as Vice President, now had come to the end of this political string, and like a good politician he pulled it. He gave the signal. The gallery began to chant, "We love Daley." All his goons and clerks and beef-eaters and healthy parochial school students began to yell and scream and clap, "We love Daley," and the power of their lungs, the power of the freshest and the largest force in this Amphitheatre soon drowned out the Kennedy demonstrators, stuffed their larynxes with larger sound. The Daley demonstration was bona fide too—his people had suffered with their Mayor, so they screamed for him now and clapped their hands, and Mayor Daley clapped his hands too for he also loved Mayor Daley. Simple narcissism gives the power of beasts to politicians, professional wrestlers and female movie stars.

At the height of the Daley demonstration, it was abruptly cut off. By a signal. ~~"Shut your yaps" was an old button, no matter how the signal came.~~ In the momentary silence, ~~Carl Albert got his tongue in, and put Ralph Metcalfe (Daley's Black Man) who~~ ^{who} was up on the podium already, ~~into voice on the mike, and Metcalfe announced a minute of silence for the memory of Martin Luther King. So New York and California were naturally obliged to be silent with the rest, the floor was silent, the gallery was silent, and before the minute was up, Carl Albert had slipped Dorothy Bush in again, and she was reading the appreciation of the convention for certain delegates. Business had been resumed. The last night proceeded.~~ *In short time,*

*they would nominate Ed Muskie to
 for Vice President to run with Hubert
 Humphrey for President, and in less
 than three months, Richard Nixon would
 be elected.*

answer is that there is also at times,
a marvelous feeling of fate in which
to live.

for granted that he was meant to toil through the years with one foot standing higher than the other. *Why then does he go on? And the*

Every good author who manages to forge a long career for himself must be able, therefore, to build a character that will not be unhinged by a bad reception. That takes art. Few writers have rugged personalities when they are young. In general, the girls seldom look like potential beauty contest winners and the boys show small promise of becoming future All-Americans. They are most likely to be found on the sidelines commencing to cook up that warped, passionate, bitter, transcendent view of life which will bring them later to the attention of the American public, but only later. The young writer usually starts as a loser and so is obliged to live with the conviction that the world he knows had better be wrong or he is wrong. On the answer depends one's evaluation of one's right to survive. Thanks to greed, plastics, mass media, and various abominations of technology—lo, the world is wrong. The paranoid aim of a cockeyed young writer has as much opportunity to hit the target as the beauty queen's wide-eyed lack of paranoia. So occasionally this loser of a young writer ends up a winner, for a while. His vision has projected him forward, he is just enough ahead of his time. But dependably that wretched, lonely act of writing will force him back. Writing arouses too much commotion in one's psyche to allow the author to rest happily.

~~It is not easy to explain such disturbances to people unless they do write.~~ *These bad feelings* Someone who has never tried fiction will hardly be quick to understand that in the study a writer often does feel godlike. ~~There he sits,~~ ensconced in judgment on other people's lives. Yet contemplate the person in the chair; he could be hung over and full of the small shames of what he did yesterday, or what he did ten years ago. Those failures of life, those flashes of old fiascos, wait like ghosts in the huge house of the empty middle-aged self. Sometimes the ghosts even appear and ask to be laid to rest. Consciously or unconsciously, writers must fashion a new peace with the past every day they attempt to write. They must rise above despising themselves. If they cannot, they will probably lose the sanction to appear like god to themselves and render judgment on others.

Yet the writer at work must not tolerate too much good news either. At his desk it is best if he does not come to like himself too much. Wonderfully agreeable memories may appear on certain mornings, but if they have nothing to do with the work they must be banished or they will leave the writer too cheerful, too energetic, too forgiving, too horny. It is in the calm depression of a good judge that one's scribblings

*That
is the
feeling
that
horns
us
back.
Rarely,
however,
does
it
last
for
long.
For
there
we
sit*

move best over the page. Indeed, just as a decent judge will feel that he has injured society by giving an unfair verdict, so does an author have to ask himself constantly if he is being fair to his characters. For if the writer does violate the life of someone who is being written about—that is, proceeds in the ongoing panic of trying to keep a book amusing to distort his characters to more comic, more corrupt, or more evil forms than he secretly believes they deserve—then he may be subtly injuring the reader. That is a moral crime. Few authors are innocent of such a practice; on the other hand not so many artists can be found who are not guilty, also, of softening their portraits. Some novelists don't want to destroy the sympathy their readers may feel for an appealing heroine by the admission that she shrieks at her children. Sales fly out the window. It takes as much literary integrity to be tough, therefore, as to be fair. The trail is narrow. It is difficult to keep up one's literary standards through the long slogging reaches in the middle of a book. The early pleasures of conception no longer sustain you; the writer plods along with the lead feet of habit—the dry breath of discipline, and the knowledge that on the other side of the hill the critics—who also have their talent to express—are waiting. Sooner or later you come to the conclusion that if you are going to survive you had better, where it concerns your own work, become the best critic of them all. There is a saying among boxers that the punch you see hurts less than the one you never came to see. An author who would find the resources to keep writing from one generation to the next does well to climb above his own ego high enough to see every flaw in the work. Otherwise he will never be able to decide what are its true merits.

Let yourself live, however, with an awareness of your book's lacks and short-cuts, its gloss where courage might have produced a little real shine, and you can bear the bad reviews. You can even tell when the critic is not exposing your psyche so much as he is turning his own dirty pockets out. It proves amazing how many evil reviews one can digest if there is a confidence that one has done one's best on a book, written to the limit of one's honesty, even scraped off a little of one's dishonesty. Get to that point of purity and your royalties may be injured by a small welcome but not your working morale. There is even hope that if the book is better than its reception, one's favorite readers will come eventually to care for it more. The prescription, therefore, is simple: one must not put out a job that has any serious taint of the meretricious. At least the prescription ought to be simple, but then how few of us ever do

fashioned for themselves. Nor can I pretend that I have not had this feeling for many years.

1 1/2 men

Speaking at the MacDowell Colony in the early Seventies, I found myself saying: "There is no reason to believe the novelist is not better equipped to deal with the possibilities of a mysterious and difficult situation than anyone else, since he or she is always trying to discover what the nature of reality might be. It's as if the novelist is out there, sprung early, with something most people never contemplate—which is 'How and what is the nature of this little reality before me?' The novelist is the first to ask, 'Do I love my wife? Does she love me? What is the nature of love? Do we love our child? How do we love? Would we die for our child? Or do we let the child die for us?' The novelist has to deal with these unholy questions because living with them is the only way to improve his or her brain. Without improving that brain, without refining the edge of one's perception, it is almost impossible to continue to work as a writer. Because if there is one fell rule in art, it is that repetition kills the soul. So the novelist is out there early with a particular necessity that may become the necessity of us all. It is to deal with life as something God did not offer us as eternal and immutable but rather that it is our human destiny to enlarge what we were given, to clarify a world which is always before us in a manner different from the way we have seen it on the day before." *End*

~~By that measure, nearly everything I have written derives from my sense of the value of fiction. There is little in this book, even when it comes under the formal~~

stead a wasteful, slovenly, slothful, treacherous, cowardly, and monotonous conception of Being will become the future of man—such a fear must for God be insupportable. It is the heart of existential logic that God's ultimate victory over the Devil is no more certain than the Devil's victory over God—either may conquer man and so give Being a characteristic Good or Evil, or indeed each may exhaust the other, until Being ceases to exist or sinks through seas of entropy into a Being less various, less articulated, less organic, more like plastic than the Nature we know. What a fear is this fear in God that He may lose eventually to the Devil! Or, even worse—both will lose! What abysses of anxiety and pits of woe in such a contemplation! Zusya, asking to fear God more, is given instead a vision of God's fear. Like any other man, Zusya draws back in terror.

But is not one of the secrets of the miracle just here? The miracle is revealed to those who can bear to undergo the terror that accompanies it. If intimacy with God is not merely a communion of love but a sharing of the Divine terror, then the beauty of any miracle delivered by God is always accompanied by a fear proportionate to the beauty. Because a miracle is not merely a breach in the laws of nature, but a revelation of the nature of the God behind Nature. If one cannot endure the fear, one does not deserve the revelation. So our taste for miracles has left us. Man in the Middle Ages lived with dread as a natural accompaniment to his day. His senses uninsulated by the daily use of daily drugs (nicotine, caffeine, aspirin, alcohol, so forth), his mind not guarded by a society that was anti-supernatural, medieval man was therefore able to live with gods, devils, angels, and demons, with witches, warlocks, and spirits. Miracles, while terrifying, were nonetheless a mark of merit. One was honored to receive them. Whereas we reach quickly and in terror for the first chemical that will flatten an affect, deaden our senses, damp our madness, or forestall a miracle. Conversely, we also look to a drug to induce a hallucination—because any visitation produced by a drug is exempt from the terror of engaging the supernatural. For we know, even as the experience is upon us, that we are not privy to a vision beyond the lip of death but merely are offered a derangement of the senses produced by chemicals. Our modern pleasure is that one is witnessing not a miracle but miracle-in-a-theater.

"And the Fire Abated"

The tale is told:

The rabbi of Kalev once spent the Sabbath in a nearby village as the guest of one of the Hasidim. When the hour to receive the Sabbath had

IN PREFACE TO THE GOSPEL

(II)

A Jewish Limb of the Judeo-Christian Ethic: Miracles

(1962-63)

Once Zusya prayed to God: "Lord, I love you so much, but I do not fear you enough! Lord, I love you so much, but I do not fear you enough! Let me stand in awe of you like your angels, who are penetrated by your aweinspiring name." And God heard his prayer, and his name penetrated the hidden heart of Zusya as it does those of the angels. But Zusya crawled under the bed like a little dog, and animal fear shook him until he howled: "Lord, let me love you like Zusya again!" And God heard him this time also.

There is an existential logic in this story that leads to a root in the meaning of miracles. Zusya is ambitious, he is intellectually ambitious. He wishes to feel a fear of God because he is secretly confident he will be able to withstand that fear and so acquire more knowledge of the universe, more revelation of the secrets of God and Nature. The request is Faustian. Yet God in revealing Himself further to Zusya terrifies him profoundly. Why? Does He terrify Zusya because He is Jehovah, a God of wrath and rectitude, an essentialist's God? Or is the fear that comes over Zusya a part of the profound fear God feels Himself, a fear that His conception of Being (that noble conception of every human as potentially a creature of courage and compassion, art, tenderness, skill, stamina, and imagination, exactly the imagination to carry His conception of Being out into the dark emptiness of the universe, there to war against other more malignant conceptions of Being), yes, precisely this noble conception will not prevail, and in-

Devil, a principle of Evil whose signature was the concentration camps, whose joy is to waste substance, whose intent is to prevent God's conception of Being from reaching its mysterious goal. If one considers the hypothesis that God is not all-powerful, indeed not the architect of Destiny but rather the creator of Nature, then evil becomes a record of the Devil's victories over God.

The Teaching of the Soul*

Rabbi Pinhas often cited the words: " 'A man's soul will teach him,' " and emphasized them by adding: "There is no man who is not incessantly being taught by his soul."

One of his disciples asked: "If this is so, why don't men obey their souls?"

"The soul teaches incessantly," Rabbi Pinhas explained, "but it never repeats."

If God and the Devil are locked in an implacable war, it might not be excessive to assume their powers are separate, God the lord of inspiration, the Devil a monumental bureaucrat of repetition. To learn from an inner voice the first time it speaks to us is a small bold existential act, for it depends upon following one's instinct which must derive, in no matter how distorted a fashion, from God, whereas institutional knowledge is appropriated by the Devil. The soul speaks once and chooses not to repeat itself, because to repeat a message is to give the Devil in one's psyche a chance to prepare a trap.

For the Sake of Renewal'

Rabbi Pinhas said: "Solomon, the preacher, says: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' because he wants to destroy the world, so that it may receive new life."

If the world, seen through the eyes of Marx, is the palpable embodiment of a vast collective theft—the labor that was stolen from men by other men over the centuries—then one need not retire in terror from the idea that the power of the world belongs to the Devil, and God needs soldiers to overthrow him.

*Buber, "The Early Masters."

'Buber, "The Early Masters."

madness next to practicality, illumination side by side with duty, and arrogance in bed with humility. The Jews first saw God in the desert—that dramatic terrain of the present tense stripped of the past, blind to the future. The desert is a land where man may feel insignificant or feel enormous. On the desert can perish the last of one's sensitivities; one's end can wither in the dwarf's law of a bleak nature. Or, to the contrary, left alone and in fever, a solitary witness, no animal or vegetable close to him, man may come to feel immensely alive, more portentous in his own psychic presence than any manifest of nature.

From the Look-out of Heaven*

At a time of great anguish for Israel, Rabbi Elimelekh brooded more and more on his griefs. Then his dead master, the maggid of Mezritch, appeared to him. Rabbi Elimelekh cried out: "Why are you silent in such dreadful need?" He answered: "In Heaven we see that all that seems evil to you is a work of mercy."

To die before one's time in a gas chamber may offer the good fortune that one does not have to live beyond one's time and be kept alive by medicines that do not reach the disease but only deaden the pain.

In a gas chamber one loses one's life and conceivably saves one's death. If there is eternity, and we possess a soul that can either carry us through life into death, or perish in life and never reach eternity, then the real need for a Messiah would appear where souls are becoming dead rather than lives being lost. By this logic, there would be more unconscious demand for the Messiah in a country at peace than a city at war.

The logic is unassailable if God has no need of Time and merely studies the way we save our souls or lose them. But if there is any urgency in God's intent, if we are not actors working out a play for our salvation but rather soldiers in an army that seeks to carry some noble conception of Being out across the stars, or back into the protoplasm of life, then a portion of God's creative power was extinguished in the camps of extermination. If God is not all-powerful but existential, discovering not only the possibilities but the limitations of His creative powers in the form of the history that is made by His creatures, then one must postulate an existential equal to God, an antagonist, the

*Martin Buber, *Tales from the Hasidim*, "The Early Masters."

do with the money he obtains from the sale of the grain are unholy, then the grain—by this unspoken logic—becomes filled with everything that is evil in the Hasid's soul and so begins to smolder, then bursts into flame. The Hasid is ready to run to the barn; the rabbi restrains him. When the Hasid pauses to listen to the speech of the rabbi, he is in effect ready to relinquish his wealth. So what has been evil in him expires, and what has been heat for the flame in the grain is now cooled. Thus might go the religious logic. The question is whether this logic is utterly without foundation in the real. For philosophically is it not as plausible to assume we have a spirit which is communicable to other people and to the very properties of our environment as it is to assume that spirit does not exist or is not communicable? And is it not equally or almost equally comfortable to assume that a fire may be extinguished by a dramatic shift in mood? Let the burden fall on the philosopher who would prove that the existence of a fire can never be affected by a mood.

Disraeli once made a speech in Commons to the effect that the most damaging mistake a conservative party could make was to persecute the Jews, since they were naturally conservative and turned to radical ideas only when they were deprived of an organic place in society. The statement is certainly not without interest, but may grasp no more than a part of the truth. It is more likely the instinct of the Jews to be attracted to large whole detailed views of society, to seek intellectual specifications of the social machine, and to enter precisely those occupations that subtly can offer institutional, personal, and legislative possibilities to a man of quick wit and sensible cohesive culture. The precise need of the essentialist, the authoritarian, or the progressive is to have a social machine upon which one can apply oneself. Later, having earned sufficient and satisfactory power, one may tinker with the machine. It is small wonder that the four corners of modern Protestantism are pegged on Judaistic notions, upon a set of social ideas given bulk and mass only by a most determinedly circumscribed conception of heaven, hell, divine compassion, and eternal punishment. For modern man, Judaeo-Christian man, the social world before him tends to become all of existence.

Yet if the Jews have a greatness, an irreducible greatness, I wonder if it is not to be found in the devil of their dialectic, which places

come, someone suddenly screamed, and a servant rushed in and cried that the barn in which the grain was stored was on fire. The owner wanted to run out, but the rabbi took him by the hand. "Stay!" he said. "I am going to tell you a story." The Hasid stayed.

"When our master Rabbi Zusya was young," said the zaddik, "he stoked the stoves in the house of the Great Maggid, for this duty was always assigned to the youngest disciples. Once when he was saying the psalms with great fervor just before the coming of the Sabbath, he was startled by screams from within the house. Sparks had fallen from the stove which he had filled with wood, and since no one was in the living room, a fire had started.

"Zusya!" he was reproached. "There's a fire!"

"No matter," he replied. 'Is it not written: And the fire abated!' At that very same moment the fire abated."

The rabbi of Kalev fell silent. The Hasid, whom he still held by the hand, did not dare move. A moment passed and someone called in at the window that the fire in the barn had gone out.

Mood is the earth of the miracle, its garden, its terrain. The mood created by a fire is always in some part Satanic. One senses an avid implacable relentless impatience, a greed to consume, a determination to destroy the material before it, indeed a lunatic intensity within the fire to appropriate the Time embodied in the object that is burning. That is why a fire in a fireplace offers comfort. The fire in this case is smaller than ourselves; the material it consumes, the Time it accelerates, are subservient to the mood of calm and benevolence with which we study the fire. We have the ability at any moment to put it out. We are not confronting the force of the devil but rather devil-in-a-theater. In effect, we are dealing with a commonplace miracle. We invoke the supernatural power of fire, but we control it. To primitive man fire was of course always a miracle, a dangerous miracle. He did not know, he could not know—for he had not yet codified the resources of fire—that he would necessarily be able to control it in every contingency. So he approached fire with profound respect, and prayed to various spirits as he put out a fire in order that the demons in the flame be not offended. How natural for him to assume that the intensity of the fire came from the rabidity of the evil contained within the material. By this understanding, it is not insignificant that the grain of the Hasid catches on fire. The grain is his hoarded wealth, his greed, his covetousness. If his heart has been impure and his plans for what he will

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Truman Capote

When he arrived at the studio in Newark, and saw Dorothy Parker waiting, older, more fragile, close to desperately nervous and certainly not cordial, his feelings were only in a small way hurt that she was not happy to see him again, and showed an obvious preference for Truman Capote. He was, by his own measure, not the same writer she had known before. He had met her, after all, in the season after *The Naked and the Dead* when he went out to Hollywood, and much had been made of him. Now, after this early success, he had gone through a number of years in which people spoke of him as a failure. Since he had written two novels, *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park*, which he thought had received unfair reviews, he had a view of himself that was at odds with others, and he did not like to be snubbed by people who had been friendly to him ten years ago. All the same, it gave justification to his anger. So her unfriendliness left him in a well-balanced position. If it came to it, he would not have to be too friendly on the show.

David Susskind also gave small welcome. "We met a long time ago," Susskind said.

"I remember."

"I do, too," said Susskind in a chilly voice. It had been at a party on a very hot summer night in 1948, and they had talked on a Manhattan roof. Susskind was then a young agent, and he had wanted to sell *The Naked and the Dead* to the movies. Mailer had made fun of him.

"Don't you understand?" he had said to Susskind. "*They* can't make it into a film, and I don't want it made."

Of course, years later, he sold it after all, and *they* had made a very bad film. So he felt at a disadvantage now with Susskind and said, "Maybe I should have listened to you."

Susskind's face showed what he thought of people who were rude years ago and ready to flatter now. Their relations for this night were certainly not off to a good start.

He had only Capote. They had gotten along well on the drive out to Newark, each—they had not met before—intensely curious of the other. Since Mailer's wife accompanied him again, and again was looking her best, he had made a point of having her sit between Truman and himself. Since she was twice Truman's size and had the overpowering sexuality, on occasion—this was such an occasion—of her burgeoning Latin blood, it had been an advantage equal to playing on one's home court.

Truman did much complaining on the trip out. "I didn't want to do this show," he said in a dry little voice that seemed to issue from an unmoistened reed in his nostril. "I told Bennett Cerf it was a mistake, but Bennett thinks television is going to be very important for selling our books. I hope he's wrong," said Truman Capote, and laughed.

Once the show began, Norman thought himself splendid. Unlike the night with Mike Wallace, he felt at his best—thoughts came clearly, he was full of energy, and the others seemed bewildered. Susskind labored in the early minutes to put Dorothy Parker at ease but he was not able to succeed; she simply would not trust him. She spoke in a pained and quavering voice, hardly able to make herself heard. Truman did not add much, and Mailer, pleased with his powers, began to take over. Soon he and Susskind were doing most of the talking, that is, most of the debating, for it was obvious Susskind was irritated by what he had to say. Whenever Norman would launch on a flight of what he considered well-stated criticism of society, Susskind would make a point of looking at his watch. Whenever he could, Susskind tried to give time to the others, but it did not work. The others seemed apathetic. Once, while executing a panegyric about politicians, Norman Mailer flew so high as to say, "They're all whores."

Dottie Parker interrupted then to say with a little real force, "That's a sweeping remark."

"Well," said Mailer, "it may be sweeping, but it certainly is true."

It put Dorothy Parker back into silence—who was she, after all, to defend politicians?—and it irritated Susskind more. After close to an

hour of TV time that felt wholly enjoyable to Mailer, he began to grow irritated at Susskind's efforts to slow him up. Since his host seemed determined to shut off this most interesting part of the show, Norman could see no reason not to allow the host to hang himself, and so he ceased speaking. Susskind began immediately to draw upon Truman Capote, and Capote, having digested a few of the peculiar processes of this odd medium, and measured the possible fit for himself, began at last to speak, and was, Mailer thought, not unamusing. He laughed encouragingly at Truman's remarks; he offered attention. Truman was so tiny that something gallant came to you from the fact of his existence itself. Mailer felt generous indeed. Few moods are as charitable as this sensation of being physically superior to everyone in the room.

In such a state, feeling handsome, vital, and more interesting than anyone had a right to be, he got into a discussion with Truman about the merits of Jack Kerouac. Since Mailer was not without his jealousy of the large attention paid Kerouac that year, he gave a defense of *On the Road* that was built on the basis of calling Kerouac, Jack—that is, he was two-thirds for Jack's virtues and one-third against Jack's vices.

Capote detested Kerouac. As Mailer grew benign, Capote grew precise. He rose at last to his own peroration and invoked the difficulties of the literary craft in contrast to Mr. Kerouac's undisciplined methods of work. Finally, in a tone of fearless and absolute severity, Capote said: "It is not writing. It is only typing."

"I agree," said Dorothy Parker in a hoarse voice.

"Well, I don't," said Mailer, only to give a limp defense. He was empty of vast indignation at this dreadful put-down of Kerouac. He even decided it might look good to let Truman have his winning little moment, certainly better than trying to hog the show.

Open End came to a finish. As they walked off the set, a few technicians were studying the kinescope of what they had just done. Therefore, Parker, Capote, Susskind, Mailer and Mrs. Mailer stopped to watch a minute of it.

Dorothy Parker did not look good on TV. She took one peek at herself, gasped, and said to Susskind, "No, I really don't want to see another instant of it." Solicitous as St. Peter, Susskind led her away.

In contrast, Norman Mailer had the pleasure of seeing himself as he wanted to look. The kinescope caught him as he was making a point, and his face looked forceful, his language was good, yes, he appeared even better on TV, he thought, than in the mirror. "Didn't I

tell you," said Truman, "that you're terrific on this? You're *telegenic*!" It was true. But then, in every intermission, Truman had been telling him how splendidly he was doing.

Truman groaned when the camera shifted to him. There was a medium shot of Truman looking a hint bewildered at the beginning of the show, and he winced as he heard his voice. "I told my publishers I shouldn't go on," he declared with annoyance.

In the limousine on the way back to Manhattan, Truman kept saying, "I shouldn't have done it. I didn't want to, I've never appeared on television, not once—even though I've had many invitations—and I certainly oughtn't to have been here tonight. What I can do is special, it's *very* literary, and I shouldn't attempt to *intrude* my personality. I'm not good at that like you, Norman. Television is good for you."

Mailer lay back in the limousine, enjoying a winner's ride, and his wife said encouragingly to Capote, "You were good, too, Truman. You really got better as it went on."

"Do you think so?" asked Truman. "Do you really think so?"

Now, both Mr. and Mrs. Mailer assured Truman Capote that he was better than he thought he had been.

"Well, at least," said Truman, "I was better than poor Dorothy Parker. When she looked at herself afterward . . ." He shuddered in sympathy. "Wasn't that *Disasterville*?" They laughed, but not in pleasure at her woe so much as in wonder at the clear lines of Judgment itself.

Truman could not quite get out of his bad mood, however. Before they said goodnight he suggested they have a drink with him at El Morocco. Before long, they thought to have supper. Despite all the sandwiches served on *Open End*, they were starved. Truman insisted on treating. A prince, he seemed to hint, must play the host after a sorry loss—it is the only way to come close to one's blood again.

It was late on Sunday night and they had the place to themselves. Under the solicitousness of the waiters and the captain, and finally the manager himself, who all came over to assure Capote of their unremitting attention, under the spell of this wholly superior service Truman was obviously accustomed to receiving whenever he went into El Morocco, his spirits not only revived but turned charming, and he began to offer an attention to Adele Mailer that had her believing in the unique properties of her attractiveness and her wit; yes, Truman was charming. Mailer saw why he had become the in-house author of the most important hostesses in New York, and envied him honestly, the way one good athlete will have respect for another. Just

as a pitcher will think, "If I had as much stuff to my curve, I'd win more games because of my superior ball sense," so did Mailer think wistfully that if he could get to a few of the select parties Truman got to, why, boy, he'd have more to say about society. Of course, how could you be a radical yet intimate to the top drawer of the world—that was the iron warp of irony itself.

They had a fine time. They discovered unexpected points of agreement, and lively places to disagree; they had each had such curiosity about the other after all these years—their first novels had come out within a year of one another; both had been celebrated almost instantly. It was a grand evening, and at the end, Truman announced they would be great friends forever, and thanked them for taking him through what would otherwise have been a terribly depressing night—"God, was I awful on that show," he said as they parted, and he made a face to simulate the gargoyle of godawfulness.

There were not many nights when Norman Mailer went to bed so pleased with his wife, himself, and what they were able to do for each other as on this evening. He woke up early in the morning, enjoyed his breakfast, and could hardly wait for the phone to ring, and the praises of his friends to begin. But when he had heard from his parents (who loved the show), from an aunt and uncle (loved the show),

from his sister, who liked what he had done ("generally") and was somewhat taken with Truman, "what an interesting personality he has, really," she said; and when he had gotten tired of waiting for friends to ring, and called up one instead, there was a pause at the other end, and then the friend said in sorrow, "Oh, man, did Truman take you!"

He called other friends. They seemed not to have seen the show and left a pall equal to the message of the medium itself. He went out on the street for a walk. Since he was living in Greenwich Village, it was not hard to run into a few acquaintances. One stopped, saluted, and said: "It is not writing; it is *only* typing," and gave a long phlegmy laugh as he went on down the street. Another said, "Truman; too much!" A third said, "Could you get me to meet Capote?"

More serious friends were balanced. "In terms of polemical points, I think you made the most. Of course, Capote does suggest real authority."

He called Truman a couple of days later.

"Yes," said Capote, "isn't it the *strangest* thing? Everybody has been telling me how marvelous I was. I can't believe it. 'Norman Mailer is the one who was marvelous,' I say to them, and they reply,

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'Truman, you were *wunderbar*. Don't sell yourself short.' 'Honey,' I told this friend, 'I been short all my life,' " Truman guffawed with pleasure. "It certainly is a mystery," he said complacently.

Mailer couldn't bear it. He finally called *Open End* and asked to see a kinescope. It became his first introduction to our hypothesis that television is not a technological process that reproduces images of real life by way of electronics, but is rather a machine (more or less cosmically operated) to anticipate the judgments and/or anathema of Limbo; the technicians pitch in with camera angles.

He discovered that the nice close-up he had seen of himself immediately after the show was one of the few close-ups they had chosen to give him. The more he talked, and the more Susskind looked at his watch, why, the more they relegated him to medium shots and long shots. There is something pathetic about a man speaking at the bottom of a long shot: He does not sound convinced by himself. He is, after all, at the end of the tunnel.

In contrast, they gave many close-ups to Truman. Capote did not look small on the show but large! His face, in fact, was extraordinary, that young-old face, still pretty and with such promise of oncoming ugliness; that voice, so full of snide rustlings and unforgiving nasalities—it was a voice to knock New York on its ear. The voice had survived; it spoke of horrors seen and passed over; it told of judgments that would be merciless.

Watching the kinescope, Mailer realized at last what an impact Capote had made on the television viewers of New York. They had never seen anyone remotely like him. Once Truman finally opened his mouth, the camera never left his face. The camera would turn to Capote even as Norman was speaking.

His own arguments that had sounded so forceful to him a few nights ago now seemed vague and, with his beard, pious. (He shaved off the beard a week or two later.) Talking about large matters on television with all the passion and all the lack of specific detail these immense theses encouraged, speaking in a voice that came out of the depths of a medium shot, proved to be not nearly so exhilarating to a viewer as it had felt for him in the middle of articulating his thoughts. His obvious pride in his ideas now seemed fatuous. His physical superiority was gone. He was only intense, vague, and a bit out of focus. Whereas Capote took his unforgettable personality and added to it practicality, common sense, and pride. In so misty a medium, the best gift a guest could provide was pearls. The certainty of a pearl! Yes, to light upon a problem and come up with a good one-line answer was

to produce a pearl of the mind. How much interest could viewers have in a point that took five minutes to make? That was something they could not do. It spoke of too good a college education. So they preferred people with a one-line answer, barroom knockouts, one-punch pearls. There is no man or woman on the street whose mind will not produce a pearl from time to time. They loved Truman because he had given them "It is not writing. It is only typing."

From now on, thought Mailer, he would not try to show how intelligent he was; he would look for pearls. That became his latest hypothesis: the light from a TV screen was flattering to a pearl.

Such were a few of Mailer's conclusions after his defeat by Capote.

The next time they met, Truman had a new assurance to put on top of the old one. In these few weeks, he confessed, there had been numerous invitations, all turned down, to appear on other shows; a difference in Truman's idea of himself had begun to appear. That personality he had presented, with all his early bravado, to a most special part of the world was, it seemed, going to be accepted by all the world. He obviously felt stronger already. And Mailer, stunned as any confident contender who has been abruptly knocked out, now felt, measure to measure, weaker. It was obvious to him (for no one understands the future reactions of a snob so well as an unsuccessful snob) that never again would Truman spend a night trying to recoup the losses of his ego out of *this* Mr. and Mrs. Mailer.

From *Pieces and Pontifications* (1982)

~~Opus De Material~~

Lecture Material

Lecture Material

LECTURE MATERIAL

The Spikeword

Responses and Reactions
Miracles + Holocaust Logic

15 min

Miracles + Holocaust Logic