

minor work, and I did not know if I had any real interest in starting another book. I made efforts of course; I collected notes, began to piece together a few ideas for a novel given to bullfighting, and another about a concentration camp; I wrote "~~David Reisman Reconsidered~~" during this time, and "~~The Homosexual Villain~~" read most of the work of the other writers of my generation (I think I was looking for a level against which to measure my third novel) went over the galleys when they came, changed a line or two, sent them back. Keeping half busy I mended a bit, but it was a time of dull drifting. When we came back to New York in October, The Deer Park was already in page proof. By November, the first advertisement was given to Publishers' Weekly. Then, with less than ninety days to publication, Stanley Rinehart told me I would have to take out a small piece of the book—six not very explicit lines about the sex of an old producer and a call girl. The moment one was ready to consider losing those six lines they moved into the moral center of the novel. It would be no tonic for my liver to cut them out. But I also knew Rinehart was serious, and since I was still tired, it seemed a little unreal to try to keep the passage. Like a miser I had been storing energy to start a new book; I wanted nothing to distract me now. I gave in on a word or two, agreed to rewrite a line, and went home from that particular conference not very impressed with myself. The next morning I called up the editor in chief, Ted Amussen, to tell him I had decided the original words had to be put back.

"Well, fine," he said, "fine. I don't know why you agreed to anything in the first place."

A day later, Stanley Rinehart halted publication, stopped all ads (he was too late to catch the first run of Publishers' Weekly which was already on its way to England with a full page for The Deer Park) and broke his contract to do the book. I was started on a trip to find a new publisher, and before I was done, the book had gone to Random House, Knopf, Simon and Schuster, Harper's, Scribners, and unofficially to Harcourt, Brace. Some day it would be fine to give the details, but for now little more than a few lines of dialogue and an editorial report:

Bennett Cerf: This novel will set publishing back twenty years.

Alfred Knopf to an editor: Is this your idea of the kind of book which should bear a Borzoi imprint?

The lawyer for one publishing house complimented me on the six lines, word for word, which had excited Rinehart to break his contract. This lawyer said, "It's admirable the way you get around the problem here." Then he brought out more than a hundred objections to other parts of the book. One was the line, "She was lovely. Her back was adorable in its contours." I was told that this ought to go because "The principals are not married, and so your description puts a favorable interpretation upon a meretricious relationship."

Hiram Hayden had lunch with me some time after Random House saw the book. He told me he was responsible for their decision not to do it, and if I did not agree with his taste, I had to admire his honesty—it is rare for an editor to tell a writer the truth. Hayden went on to say that the book never came alive for him even though he had been ready to welcome it. "I can tell you that I picked the book up with anticipation. Of course I had heard from Bill, and Bill had told me that he didn't like it, but I never pay attention to what one writer says about the work of another . . ." Bill was William Styron, and Hayden was his editor. I had asked Styron to call Hayden the night I found out Rinehart had broken his contract. One reason for asking the favor of Styron was that he sent me a long letter about the novel after I had shown it to him in manuscript. He had written, "I don't like *The Deer Park*, but I admire sheer hell out of it." So I thought to impose on him.

Other parts of the account are not less dreary. The only generosity I found was from the late Jack Goodman. He sent me a photostat of his editorial report to Simon and Schuster, and because it was sympathetic, his report became the objective estimate of the situation for me. I assumed that the book when it came out would meet the kind of trouble Goodman expected, and so when I went back later to work on the page proofs I was not free of a fear or two. But that can be talked about in its place. Here is the core of his report.

Mailer refuses to make any changes . . . [He] will consider suggestions, but reserves the right to make final decisions, so we must make our decision on what the book now is.

That's not easy. It is full of vitality and power, as readable a novel as I've ever encountered. Mailer emerges as a sort of post-Kinsey F. Scott Fitzgerald. His dialogue is uninhibited and the sexuality of the book is completely interwoven with its purpose, which is to describe a seg-

ment of society whose morality is nonexistent. Locale is evidently Palm Springs. Chief characters are Charles Eitel, movie director who first defies the House Un-American Committee, then becomes a friendly witness, his mistress, a great movie star who is his ex-wife, her lover who is the narrator, the head of a great movie company, his son-in-law, a strange, tortured panderer who is Eitel's conscience and, assorted demimondaines, homosexuals, actors.

My layman's opinion is that the novel will be banned in certain quarters and that it may very well be up for an obscenity charge, but this should of course be checked by our lawyers. If it were possible to recognize this at the start, to have a united front here and treat the whole issue positively and head-on, I would be for our publishing. But I am afraid such unanimity may be impossible of attainment and if so, we should reject, in spite of the fact that I am certain it will be one of the best-selling novels of the next couple of years. It is the work of a serious artist. . . .

*The eighth house was G. P. Putnam's. I didn't want to give it to them, I was planning to go next to Viking, but Walter Minton kept saying, "Give us three days. We'll give you a decision in three days." So we sent it over to Putnam, and in three days they took it without conditions, and without a request for a single change. I had a victory, I had made my point, but in fact I was not very happy. I had grown so wild on my diet of polite letters from publishing houses who didn't want me, that I had been ready to collect rejections from twenty houses, publish *The Deer Park* at my own expense, and try to make a kind of publishing history. Instead I was thrown in with Walter Minton, who has since attracted some fame as the publisher of *Lolita*. He is the only publisher I ever met who would make a good general. Months after I came to Putnam, Minton told me, "I was ready to take *The Deer Park* without reading it. I knew your name would sell enough copies to pay your advance, and I figured one of these days you're going to write another book like *The Naked and The Dead*," which is the sort of sure hold of strategy you can have when you're not afraid of censorship.*

*Now I've tried to water this account with a minimum of tears, but taking *The Deer Park* into the nervous system of eight publishing houses was not so good for my own nervous system, nor was it good for getting to work on my new novel. In the ten weeks it took the book to travel the circuit from Rinehart to Putnam, I squandered*

the careful energy I had been hoarding for months; there was a hard comedy at how much of myself I would burn up in a few hours of hot telephone calls; I had never had any sense for practical affairs, but in those days, carrying *The Deer Park* from house to house, I stayed as close to it as a stage-struck mother pushing her child forward at every producer's office. I was amateur agent for it, messenger boy, editorial consultant, Macchiavelli of the luncheon table, fool of the five o'clock drinks, I was learning the publishing business in a hurry, and I made a hundred mistakes and paid for each one by wasting a new bout of energy.

In a way there was sense to it. For the first time in years I was having the kind of experience which was likely to return some day as good work, and so I forced many little events past any practical return, even insulting a few publishers en route as if to discover the limits of each situation. I was trying to find a few new proportions to things, and I did learn a bit. But I'll never know what that novel about the concentration camp would have been like if I had gotten quietly to work when I came back to New York and *The Deer Park* had been published on time. It is possible I was not serious about the book, it is also possible I lost something good, but one way or the other, that novel disappeared in the excitement, as lost as "the little object" in *Barbary Shore*, and it has not stirred since.

The real confession is that I was making a few of my mental connections those days on marijuana. Like more than one or two of my generation, I had smoked it from time to time over the years, but it never had meant anything. In Mexico, however, down in my depression with a bad liver, pot gave me a sense of something new about the time I was convinced I had seen it all, and I liked it enough to take it now and again in New York.

Then *The Deer Park* began to go like a beggar from house to house and en route Stanley Rinehart made it clear he was going to try not to pay the advance. Until then I had had sympathy for him. I thought it had taken a kind of displaced courage to be able to drop the book the way he did. An expensive moral stand, and wasteful for me; but a moral stand. When it turned out that he did not like to bear the expense of being that moral, the experience turned ugly for me. It took many months and the service of my lawyer to get the money, but long before that, the situation had become real enough to drive a spike into my cast-iron mind. I realized

in some bottom of myself that for years I had been the sort of comic figure I would have cooked to a turn in one of my books, a radical who had the nineteenth-century naïveté to believe that the people with whom he did business were 1) gentlemen, 2) fond of him, and 3) respectful of his ideas even if in disagreement with them. Now, I was in the act of learning that I was not adored so very much; that my ideas were seen as nasty; and that my fine America which I had been at pains to criticize for so many years was in fact a real country which did real things and ugly things to the characters of more people than just the characters of my books. If the years since the war had not been brave or noble in the history of the country, which I certainly thought and do think, why then did it come as surprise that people in publishing were not as good as they used to be, and that the day of Maxwell Perkins was a day which was gone, really gone, gone as Greta Garbo and Scott Fitzgerald? Not easy, one could argue, for an advertising man to admit that advertising is a dishonest occupation, and no easier was it for the working novelist to see that now were left only the cliques, fashions, vogues, snobs, snots, and fools, not to mention a dozen bureaucracies of criticism; that there was no room for the old literary idea of oneself as a major writer, a figure in the landscape. One had become a set of relations and equations, most flourishing when most incorporated, for then one's literary stock was ready for merger. The day was gone when people held on to your novels no matter what others might say. Instead one's good young readers waited now for the verdict of professional young men, academics who wolfed down a modern literature with an anxiety to find your classification, your identity, your similarity, your common theme, your corporate literary earnings, each reference to yourself as individual as a carloading of homogenized words. The articles which would be written about you and a dozen others would be done by minds which were expert on the aggregate and so had senses too lumpy for the particular. There was a limit to how much appraisal could be made of a work before the critic exposed his lack of the critical faculty, and so it was naturally wiser for the mind of the expert to masticate the themes of ten writers rather than approach the difficulties of any one.

I had begun to read my good American novels at the end of an era—I could remember people who would talk wistfully about the excitement with which they had gone to bookstores because it was publication day for the second novel of Thomas Wolfe, and in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

have to make my narrator fit the prose, change his past, make him an onlooker, a rich pretty boy brought up let us say by two old-maid aunts, able to have an affair with a movie star only by luck and/or the needs of the plot, which would give me a book less distracting, well written but minor. If, however, I wanted to keep that first narrator, my orphan, flier, adventurer, germ—for three years he had been the frozen germ of some new theme—well, to keep him I would need to change the style from the inside of each sentence. I could keep the structure of my book, I thought—it had been put together for such a narrator—but the style could not escape. Probably I did not see it all so clearly, as I now suggest. I believe I started with the conscious thought that I would tinker just a little, try to patch a compromise, but the navigator of my unconscious must already have made the choice, because it came as no real surprise that after a few days of changing a few words I moved more and more quickly toward the eye of the problem, and in two or three weeks I was tied to the work of doing a new Deer Park. The book was edited in a way no editor could ever have time or love to find; it was searched sentence by sentence, word for word, the style of the work lost its polish, became rough, and I can say real, because there was an abrupt and muscular body back of the voice now. It had been there all the time, trapped in the porcelain of a false style, but now as I chipped away, the work for a time became exhilarating in its clarity—I never enjoyed work so much—I felt as if finally I was learning how to write, learning the joints of language and the touch of a word, felt as if I came close to the meanings of sound and could say which of two close words was more female or more forward. I even had a glimpse of what Flaubert might have felt, for as I went on tuning the book, often five or six words would pile above one another in the margin at some small crisis of choice. (Since the Rinehart page proof was the usable copy, I had little space to write between the lines.) As I worked in this fine mood, I kept sending pages to the typist, yet so soon as I had exhausted the old galley pages, I could not keep away from the new typewritten copy—it would be close to say the book had come alive, and was invading my brain.

Soon the early pleasure of the work turned restless; the consequences of what I was doing were beginning to seep into my stamina. It was as if I were the captive of an illness whose first symptoms had been excitement, prodigies of quick work, and a confidence

that one could go on forever, but that I was by now close to a second stage where what had been quick would be more like fever, a first wind of fatigue upon me, a knowledge that at the end of the drunken night a junkie cold was waiting. I was going to move at a pace deadly to myself, loading and overloading whatever little centers of the mind are forced to make the hard decisions. In ripping up the silk of the original syntax, I was tearing into any number of careful habits as well as whatever subtle fleshing of the nerves and the chemicals had gone to support them.

For six years I had been writing novels in the first person; it was the only way I could begin a book, even though the third person was more to my taste. Worse, I seemed unable to create a narrator in the first person who was not overdelicate, oversensitive, and painfully tender, which was an odd portrait to give, because I was not delicate, not physically; when it was a matter of strength I had as much as the next man. In those days I would spend time reminding myself that I had been a bit of an athlete (house football at Harvard, years of skiing) that I had not quit in combat, and once when a gang broke up a party in my loft, I had taken two cracks on the head with a hammer and had still been able to fight. Yet the first person seemed to paralyze me, as if I had a horror of creating a voice which could be in any way bigger than myself. So I had become mired in a false style for every narrator I tried. If now I had been in a fight, had found out that no matter how weak I could be in certain ways, I was also steady enough to hang on to six important lines, that may have given me new respect for myself, I don't know, but for the first time I was able to use the first person in a way where I could suggest some of the stubbornness and belligerence I also might have, I was able to color the empty reality of that first person with some real feeling of how I had always felt, which was to be outside, for Brooklyn where I grew up is not the center of anything. I was able, then, to create an adventurer whom I believed in, and as he came alive for me, the other parts of the book which had been stagnant for a year and more also came to life, and new things began to happen to Eitel my director and to Elena his mistress and their characters changed. It was a phenomenon. I learned how real a novel is. Before, the story of Eitel had been told by O'Shaugnessy of the weak voice; now by a confident young man: when the new narrator would remark that Eitel was his best friend and so he tried not to find

Elena too attractive, the man and woman he was talking about were larger than they had once been. I was no longer telling of two nice people who fail at love because the world is too large and too cruel for them; the new O'Shaugnessy had moved me by degrees to the more painful story of two people who are strong as well as weak, corrupt as much as pure, and fail to grow despite their bravery in a poor world, because they are finally not brave enough, and so do more damage to one another than to the unjust world outside them. Which for me was exciting, for here and there The Deer Park now had the rare tenderness of tragedy. The most powerful leverage in fiction comes from point of view, and giving O'Shaugnessy courage gave passion to the others.

But the punishment was commencing for me. I was now creating a man who was braver and stronger than me, and the more my new style succeeded, the more was I writing an implicit portrait of myself as well. There is a shame about advertising yourself that way, a shame which became so strong that it was a psychological violation to go on. Yet I could not afford the time to digest the self-criticisms backing up in me, I was forced to drive myself, and so more and more I worked by tricks, taking marijuana the night before and then drugging myself into sleep with an overload of seconal. In the morning I would be lithe with new perception, could read new words into the words I had already, and so could go on in the pace of my work, the most scrupulous part of my brain too sluggish to interfere. My powers of logic became weaker each day, but the book had its own logic, and so I did not need close reason. What I wanted and what the drugs gave me was the quick flesh of associations, and there I was often oversensitive, could discover new experience in the lines of my text like a hermit savoring the revelation of Scripture; I saw so much in some sentences that more than once I dropped into the pit of the amateur: since I was receiving such emotion from my words, I assumed everyone else would be stimulated as well, and on many a line I twisted the phrase in such a way that it could read well only when read slowly, about as slowly as it would take for an actor to read it aloud. Once you write that way, the quick reader (who is nearly all your audience) will stumble and fall against the vocal shifts of your prose. Then you had best have the cartel of a Hemingway, because in such a case it is critical whether the reader thinks it is your fault, or is so in awe of your

reputation that he returns on the words, throttles his pace, and tries to discover why he is so stupid as not to swing on the off-bop of your style.

An example: In the Rinehart Deer Park I had this:

"They make Sugar sound so good in the newspapers," she declared one night to some people in a bar, "that I'll really try him. I really will, Sugar." And she gave me a sisterly kiss.

I happened to change that very little, I put in "said" instead of "declared" and later added "older sister," so that it now read:

And she gave me a sisterly kiss. Older sister.

Just two words, but I felt as if I had revealed some divine law of nature, had laid down an invaluable clue—the kiss of an older sister was a worldly universe away from the kiss of a younger sister—and I thought to give myself the Nobel Prize for having brought such illumination and division to the cliché of the sisterly kiss.

Well, as an addition it wasn't bad fun, and for two words it did a bit to give a sense of what was working back and forth between Sergius and Lulu, it was another small example of Sergius' hard eye for the world, and his cool sense of his place in it, and all this was to the good, or would have been for a reader who went slowly, and stopped, and thought. But if anyone was in a hurry, the little sentence "Older sister" was like a finger in the eye, it jabbed the unconscious, and gave an uncomfortable nip of rhythm to the mind.

I had five hundred changes of this kind. I started with the first paragraph of the book, on the third sentence which pokes the reader with its backed-up rhythm, "Some time ago," and I did that with intent, to slow my readers from the start, like a fighter who throws his right two seconds after the bell and so gives the other man no chance to decide on the pace.

There was a real question, however, whether I could slow the reader down, and so as I worked on further, at some point beginning to write paragraphs and pages to add to the new Putnam galleys, the attrition of the drugs and the possibility of failure began to depress me, and Benzadrine entered the balance, and I was on the way to wearing badly. Because, determined or no that they would read me slowly, praying my readers would read me slowly, there was no likelihood they would do anything of the sort if the reviews were

bad. As I started to worry this it grew worse, because I knew in advance that three or four of my major reviews had to be bad—Time magazine for one, because Max Gissen was the book review editor, and I had insulted him in public once by suggesting that the kind of man who worked for a mind so exquisitely and subtly totalitarian as Henry Luce was not likely to have any ideas of his own. The New York Daily Times would be bad because Orville Prescott was well known for his distaste of books too forthrightly sexual; and Saturday Review would be bad. That is, they would probably be bad; the mentality of their reviewers would not be above the level of their dean of reviewers, Mr. Maxwell Geismar, and Geismar didn't seem to know that my second novel was titled Barbary Shore rather than Barbary Coast. I could spin this out, but what is more to the point is that I had begun to think of the reviews before finishing the book, and this doubtful occupation came out of the kind of inner knowledge I had of myself in those days. I knew what was good for my energy and what was poor, and so I knew that for the vitality of my work in the future, and yes even the quantity of my work, I needed a success and I needed it badly if I was to shed the fatigue I had been carrying since Barbary Shore. Some writers receive not enough attention for years, and so learn early to accommodate the habits of their work to little recognition. I think I could have done that when I was twenty-five. With *The Naked and The Dead* a new life had begun, however; as I have written earlier in this book, I had gone through the psychic labor of changing a good many modest habits in order to let me live a little more happily as a man with a name which could arouse quick reactions in strangers. If that started as an overlarge work, because I started as a decent but scared boy, well I had come to live with the new life, I had learned to like success—in fact I had probably come to depend on it, or at least my new habits did.

When Barbary Shore was ambushed in the alley, the damage to my nervous system was slow but thorough. My status dropped immediately—America is a quick country—but my ego did not permit me to understand that, and I went through tiring years of subtle social defeats because I did not know that I was no longer as large to others as I had been. I was always overmatching myself. To put it crudely, I would think I was dropping people when they were dropping me. And of course my unconscious knew better. There was all the waste of ferocious if unheard discussion between the

armies of ego and id; I would get up in the morning with less snap in me than I had taken to sleep. Six or seven years of breathing that literary air taught me a writer stayed alive in the circuits of such hatred only if he were unappreciated enough to be adored by a clique, or was so overbought by the public that he excited some defenseless nerve in the snob. I knew if *The Deer Park* was a powerful best seller (the magical figure had become one hundred thousand copies for me) that I would then have won. I would be the first serious writer of my generation to have a best seller twice, and so it would not matter what was said about the book. Half of publishing might call it cheap, dirty, sensational, second-rate, and so forth and so forth, but it would be weak rage and could not hurt, for the literary world suffers a spot of the national taint—a serious writer is certain to be considered major if he is also a best seller; in fact, most readers are never convinced of his value until his books do well. Steinbeck is better known than Dos Passos, John O'Hara is taken seriously by people who dismiss Farrell, and indeed it took three decades and a Nobel Prize before Faulkner was placed on a level with Hemingway. For that reason, it would have done no good if someone had told me at the time that the financial success of a writer with major talent was probably due more to what was meretricious in his work than what was central. The argument would have meant nothing to me—all I knew was that seven publishing houses had been willing to dismiss my future, and so if the book did poorly, a good many people were going to congratulate themselves on their foresight and be concerned with me even less. I could see that if I wanted to keep on writing the kind of book I liked to write, I needed the energy of new success, I needed blood. Through every bit of me, I knew *The Deer Park* had damn well better make it or I was close to some serious illness, a real apathy of the will.

Every now and again I would have the nightmare of wondering what would happen if all the reviews were bad, as bad as *Barbary Shore*. I would try to tell myself that could not happen, but I was not certain, and I knew that if the book received a unanimously bad press and still showed signs of selling well, it was likely to be brought up for prosecution as obscene. As a delayed convulsion from the McCarthy years, the fear of censorship was strong in publishing, in England it was critically bad, and so I also knew that the book could lose such a suit—there might be no one of reputation

to say it was serious. If it were banned, it could sink from sight. With the reserves I was throwing into the work, I no longer knew if I was ready to take another beating—for the first time in my life I had worn down to the edge, I could see through to the other side of my fear, I knew a time could come when I would be no longer my own man, that I might lose what I had liked to think was the incorruptible center of my strength (which of course I had had money and freedom to cultivate). Already the signs were there—I was beginning to avoid new lines in the Putnam Deer Park which were legally doubtful, and once in a while, like a gambler hedging a bet, I toned down individual sentences from the Rinehart Deer Park, nothing much, always a matter of the new O'Shaughnessy character, a change from "at last I was able to penetrate into the mysterious and magical belly of a movie star," to what was more in character for him: "I was led to discover the mysterious brain of a movie star." Which "brain" in context was fun for it was accurate, and "discover" was a word of more life than the legality of "penetrate," but I could not be sure if I were chasing my new aesthetic or afraid of the cops. The problem was that The Deer Park had become more sexual in the new version, the characters had more force, the air had more heat, and I had gone through the kind of galloping self-analysis which makes one very sensitive to the sexual nuance of every gesture, word and object—the book now seemed overcharged to me, even a terror of a novel, a cold chisel into all the dull mortar of our guilty society. In my mind it became a more dangerous book than it really was, and my drug-hipped paranoia saw long consequences in every easy line of dialogue. I kept the panic in its place, but by an effort of course, and once in a while I would weaken enough to take out a line because I could not see myself able to defend it happily in a court of law. But it was a mistake to nibble at the edges of censoring myself, for it gave no life to my old pride that I was the boldest writer to have come out of my flabby time, and I think it helped to kill the small chance of finding my way into what could have been a novel as important as *The Sun Also Rises*.

But let me spell it out a bit: originally The Deer Park had been about a movie director and a girl with whom he had a bad affair, and it was told by a sensitive but faceless young man. In changing the young man, I saved the book from being minor, but put a disproportion upon it because my narrator became too interesting, and not enough happened to him in the second half of the book,

and so it was to be expected that readers would be disappointed by this part of the novel.

Before I was finished, I saw a way to write another book altogether. In what I had so far done, Sergius O'Shaugnessy was given an opportunity by a movie studio to sell the rights to his life and get a contract as an actor. After more than one complication, he finally refused the offer, lost the love of his movie star Lulu, and went off wandering by himself, off to become a writer. This episode had never been an important part of the book, but I could see that the new Sergius was capable of accepting the offer, and if he went to Hollywood and became a movie star himself, the possibilities were good, for in O'Shaugnessy I had a character who was ambitious, yet in his own way, moral, and with such a character one could travel deep into the paradoxes of the time.

Well, I was not in shape to consider that book. With each week of work, bombed and sapped and charged and stoned with lush, with pot, with benny, saggy, Milltown, coffee, and two packs a day, I was working live, and overalert, and tiring into what felt like death, afraid all the way because I had achieved the worst of vicious circles in myself, I had gotten too tired, I was more tired than I had ever been in combat, and so as the weeks went on, and publication was delayed from June to August and then to October, there was only a worn-out part of me to keep protesting into the pillows of one drug and the pinch of the other that I ought to have the guts to stop the machine, to call back the galleys, to cease—to rest, to give myself another two years and write a book which would go a little further to the end of my particular night.

But I had passed the point where I could stop. My anxiety had become too great. I did not know anything any more, I did not have that clear sense of the way things work which is what you need for the natural proportions of a long novel, and it is likely I would not have been writing a new book so much as arguing with the law. Of course another man might have had the stamina to write the new book and manage to be indifferent to everything else, but it was too much to ask of me. By then I was like a lover in a bad, but uncontrollable affair; my woman was publication, and it would have cost too much to give her up before we were done. My imagination had been committed—to stop would leave half the psyche in limbo.

Knowing, however, what I had failed to do, shame added

momentum to the punishment of the drugs. By the last week or two, I had worn down so badly that with a dozen pieces still to be fixed, I was reduced to working hardly more than an hour a day. Like an old man, I would come up out of a second stupor with four or five times the normal dose in my veins, and drop into a chair to sit for hours. It was July, the heat was grim in New York, the last of the book had to be in by August 1. Putnam had been more than accommodating, but the vehicle of publication was on its way, and the book could not be postponed beyond the middle of October or it would miss all chance for a large fall sale. I would sit in a chair and watch a baseball game on television, or get up and go out in the heat to a drugstore for sandwich and malted—it was my outing for the day: the walk would feel like a patrol in a tropical sun, and it was two blocks, no more. When I came back, I would lie down, my head would lose the outer wrappings of sedation, and with a crumb of benzedrine, the first snake or two of thought would wind through my brain. I would go for some coffee—it was a trip to the kitchen, but when I came back I would have a scratch-board and pencil in hand. Watching some afternoon horror on television, the boredom of the performers coming through their tense hilarities with a bleakness to match my own, I would pick up the board, wait for the first sentence—like all working addicts I had come to an old man's fine sense of inner timing—and then slowly, but picking up speed, the actions of the drugs hovering into collaboration like two ships passing in view of one another, I would work for an hour, not well but not badly either. (Pages 195 to 200 of the Putnam edition were written this way.) Then my mind would wear out, and new work was done for the day. I would sit around, watch more television and try to rest my dulled mind, but by evening a riot of bad nerves was on me again, and at two in the morning I'd be having the manly debate of whether to try sleep with two double capsules, or settle again for my need of three.

Somehow I got the book done for the last deadline. Not perfectly—doing just the kind of editing and small rewriting I was doing, I could have used another two or three days, but I got it almost the way I wanted, and then I took my car up to the Cape and lay around in Provincetown with my wife, trying to mend, and indeed doing a fair job because I came off sleeping pills and the marijuana and came part of the way back into that world which has the proportions of the ego. I picked up on *The Magic Mountain*,

took it slowly, and lowered The Deer Park down to modest size in my brain. Which events proved was just as well.

A few weeks later we came back to the city, and I took some mescaline. Maybe one dies a little with the poison of mescaline in the blood. At the end of a long and private trip which no quick remark should try to describe, the book of The Deer Park floated into mind, and I sat up, reached through a pleasure garden of velvety light to find the tree of a pencil and the bed of a notebook and brought them to union together. Then, out of some flesh in myself I had not yet known, with the words coming one by one, in separate steeps and falls, hip in their turnings, all cool with their flights, like the touch of being coming into other being, so the last six lines of my bloody book came to me, and I was done. And it was the only good writing I ever did directly from a drug, even if I paid for it with a hangover beyond measure.

That way the novel received its last sentence, and if I had waited one more day it would have been too late, for in the next twenty-four hours, the printers began their cutting and binding. The book was out of my hands.

Six weeks later, when The Deer Park came out, I was no longer feeling eighty years old, but a vigorous hysterical sixty-three, and I laughed like an old pirate at the indignation I had breezed into being with the equation of sex and time. The important reviews broke about seven good and eleven bad, and the out-of-town reports were almost three-to-one bad to good, but I was not unhappy because the good reviews were lively and the bad reviews were full of factual error, indeed so much so that it would be monotonous to give more than a good couple. recount them,

Hollis Alpert in the Saturday Review called the book "garish and gauche." In reference to Sergius O'Shaughnessy, Alpert wrote: "He has been offered \$50,000 by Teppis to sell the rights to his rather dull life story . . ." As a matter of detail, the sum was \$20,000, and it must have been mentioned a half dozen times in the pages of the book. Paul Pickrel in Harper's was blistering about how terrible was my style and then quoted the following sentence as an example of how I was often incomprehensible:

"(he) could talk opening about his personal life while remaining a dream of espionage in his business operations."

I happened to see Pickrel's review in Harper's galleys, and so was able to point out to them that Pickrel had misquoted the sentence. The fourth word was not "opening" but "openly." Harper's corrected his incorrect version, but of course left his remark about my style.

More interesting is the way reviews divided in the New York magazines and newspapers. Time, for example, was bad, Newsweek was good; Harper's was terrible but The Atlantic was adequate; the New York Daily Times was very bad, the Sunday Times was good; the Daily Herald Tribune gave a mark of zero, the Sunday Herald Tribune was better than good; Commentary was careful but complimentary, the Reporter was frantic; the Saturday Review was a scold and Brendan Gill writing for the New Yorker put together a series of slaps and superlatives which went partially like this:

...a big, vigorous, rowdy, ill-shaped, and repellent book, so strong and so weak, so adroit and so fumbling, that only a writer of the greatest and most reckless talent could have flung it between covers.

It's one of the three or four lines I've thought perceptive in all the reviews of my books. That Malcolm Cowley used one of the same words in saying The Deer Park was "serious and reckless" is also, I think, interesting, for reckless the book wasn't two critics, anyway, had the instinct to feel it.

One note appeared in many reviews. The strongest statement of it was by John Hutchens in The New York Daily Herald

Tribune:

the original version reputedly was more or less rewritten and certain materials eliminated that were deemed too erotic for public consumption. And, with that, a book that might at least have made a certain reputation as a large shocker wound up as a cipher

I was bothered to the point of writing a letter to the twenty-odd newspapers which reflected this idea. What bothered me was that I could never really prove I had not "eliminated" the book. Over the years all too many readers would have some hazy impression that I had disemboweled large pieces of the best meat, perspiring in a coward's sweat, a publisher's directive in my ear. (For that matter, I still get an occasional letter which asks if it is possible to see the unbowdlerized Deer Park.) Part of the cost of touching the

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Rinehart galleys was to start those rumors, and in fact I was not altogether free of the accusation, as I have tried to show. Even the six lines which so displeased Rinehart had been altered a bit; I had shown them once to a friend whose opinion I respected, and he remarked that while it was impossible to accept the sort of order Rinehart had laid down, still a phrase like the "fount of power" had a Victorian heaviness about it. Well, that was true, it was out of character for O'Shaughnessy's new style and so I altered it to the "thumb of power" ~~and then other changes became desirable, and the curious are invited to compare the two versions of this particular passage in this collection~~, but the mistake I made was to take a small aesthetic gain on those six lines and lose a larger clarity about a principle.

What more is there to say? The book moved fairly well, it climbed to seven and then to six on The New York Times best-seller list, stayed there for a week or two, and then slipped down. By Christmas, the tone of the Park and the Christmas spirit being not all that congenial, it was just about off the lists forever. It did well, however; it would have reached as high as three or two or even to number one if it had come out in June and then been measured against the low sales of summer, for it sold over fifty thousand copies after returns which surprised a good many in publishing, as well as disappointing a few, including myself. I discovered that I had been poised for an enormous sale or a failure—a middling success was cruel to take. Week after week I kept waiting for the book to erupt into some dramatic change of pace which would send it up in sales instead of down, but that never happened. I was left with a draw, not busted, not made, and since I was empty at the time, worn-out with work, waiting for the quick transfusions of a generous success, the steady sales of the book left me deeply depressed. Having reshaped my words with an intensity of feeling I had not known before, I could not understand why others were not overcome with my sense of life, of sex, and of sadness. Like a starved revolutionary in a garret, I had compounded out of need and fever and vision and fear nothing less than a madman's confidence in the identity of my being and the wants of all others, and it was a new dull load to lift and to bear, this knowledge that I had no magic so great as to hasten the time of the apocalypse, but that instead I would be open like all others to the attritions of half-success and small failure. Something God-like in my confidence began to leave, and I was reduced in

dimension if now less a boy. I knew I had failed to bid on the biggest hand I ever held.

~~Now a few years have gone by, more years than I thought, and I have begun to work up another hand, a new book which will be the proper book of an outlaw, and so not publishable in any easy or legal way. Two excerpts from this novel come later in this collection, and therefore I'll say here only that O'Shaugnessy will be one of the three heroes, and that if I'm to go all the way this time, the odds are that my beat senses will have to do the work without the fires and the wastes of the minor drugs.~~

~~But that is for later, and~~ the proper end to this account is the advertisement I took in The Village Voice. It was bought in November 1955, a month after publication, it was put together by me and paid for by me, and it was my way I now suppose of saying good-bye to the pleasure of a quick triumph, of making my apologies for the bad flaws in the bravest effort I had yet pulled out of myself, and certainly for declaring to the world (in a small way, mean pity) that I no longer gave a sick dog's drop for the wisdom, the reliability, and the authority of the public's literary mind, those creeps and old ladies of vested reviewing.

Besides, I had the tender notion—believe it if you will—that the ad might after all do its work and excite some people to buy the book.

But here it is:

All over America "THE DEER PARK" is getting nothing but

RAVES

"THE YEAR'S WORST SNAKE PIT IN FICTION"

FRANK PETERSON — NEW YORK TIMES

"SORDID AND
CRUMMY"

NORMAN HOGAN
CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

"MORONIC MINDLESSNESS...
... GOLDEN GARBAGE HEAP"

JOHN BUTCHER — N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE

"DISGUSTING"

HOUSTON POST

"EXASPERATING"

WALL ST. JOURNAL

"GAUCHE"

CHAS. SOLO
ATLANTA

"UNFAIR"

Los Angeles Herald Express

"UNDISCRIMINATING"

Argonaut
San Francisco

"EMBARASSING"

San Diego Times

"UNSAVORY"

New Orleans Opinel

"JUNK"

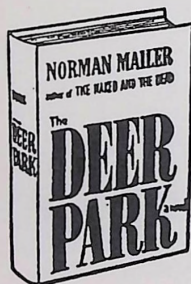
Unity Book Company

"NASTY"— ORVILLE PRESCOTT

"SILLY"— HOLLIS ALPERT

"DULL"— LON TINKLE

"BOTCH"— PAUL PICKREL



'A BUNCH OF BUMS'

SCOTT O'NEAL — LOS ANGELES HERALD NEWS

"THE DEER PARK" \$4.95 & 5.00 — AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL BOOK STORE

THIS ADVERTISEMENT HAS BEEN PAID FOR BY NORMAN MAILER

AUTHOR OF "THE NAKED AND THE DEAD," "MAGNIFICENT BOYS," AND "THE DEER PARK"

The COLD WAR VIII
Imbibing Thursdays

1955

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stood up to welcome us and said, "In case any of you are wondering, you will now be working for CIA."

We laughed. We applauded. He strode across the stage to an easel on which a cloth was draped. Whisking the sheet away, he revealed the first of our scrolls—an organizational chart. With a pointer, he informed us that the Agency had three Directorates which could be envisaged as analogous to three sister corporations, or three regiments of a division: "The Directorate for Plans oversees covert action and gathers intelligence. It directs spies. Learn a new word. Plans *runs* spies, even as you would run a business." Since espionage and counterespionage were Harlot's province, and covert action belonged to my father, the Directorate of Plans was nine-tenths of CIA for me.

Then he went on to speak of the Directorate for Intelligence, which analyzed the material gathered by Plans, and the Directorate for Administration, "which keeps in order the management of the first two directorates." Needless to say, I had no interest in either.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "you one hundred and three men"—he looked about—"or, if I avail myself of the indispensable tool of precision, you one hundred and one men and two women have been chosen for the Directorate of Plans. That is a fine place to be."

~~We cheered. We stood up and cheered him, but not for long because next,~~ Allen Dulles, now Director of Central Intelligence, came through the curtains to speak. On this day, Mr. Dulles had a genial, courteous, even benign warmth of the sort that would enable you to believe in any establishment with which he was associated, whether bank, university, law firm, or branch of government. Dressed in old tweeds with leather patches for the elbows, a nifty bow tie, his pipe in hand, his spectacles as bright with reflected light as intelligence itself, he was quickly successful in giving all one hundred plus of us the same impression he had given me at the wedding.

"Being with you here at the beginning, I can all but promise that you will have lively, worthwhile, exciting careers." We applauded. "Winston Churchill, after Dunkirk, could only offer the gallant British people 'blood, sweat, toil, and tears,' but I can

promise you dedication, sacrifice, total absorption, and—don't let this get out—a hell of a lot of fun." We whooped.

"You are all in Plans, an uncommon group. You will live, most of you, in many countries, you will doubtless see action, you will—no matter how tired and weary—never lose sense of the value of your work. For you will be defending your country against a foe whose resources for secret war are greater than any government or kingdom in the history of Christendom. The Soviet Union has raised the art of espionage to unprecedented heights. Even in times of so-called thaw, they wage their operations with unflagging vigor.

"In order to catch up, we are in the process of building the greatest agency for Intelligence the Western world has seen. The safety of this country depends on no less. Our opponent is formidable. And you, here, have been chosen to be part of the great shield that resists our formidable foe."

You could feel the happiness in the room. No matter the small basement stage with its American flag to one side, we shared, at this moment, the warmth of a venerable theater as the curtain descends to a momentous conclusion.

He was hardly finished, however. It was not Mr. Dulles' style to end on a major note. More agreeable was to remind us that we had been accepted into a fellowship; our privileges entitled us to hear a story at the expense of the leader.

"Years ago," he said, "when I was as young as most of you, I was posted by our foreign service to Geneva during World War I, and I remember one particularly warm spring Saturday in 1917 when I was on watch for the morning duty. There was little to do in the office, and all I could think about was tennis. You see, I had a date for tennis that afternoon with a young lady who was lovely and comely and beautifully composed . . . a veritable knockout!"

Who else could speak in such a way? In this pre-Civil War basement which might, more than ninety years ago, have heard cannonading to the south, Allen Dulles was telling us of Geneva in 1917.

"Just before midday my phone rang. A most heavily accented voice was on the line," said Allen Dulles, "a man who wanted a *responsible* American official to speak to. *Verantwortlich*

was the word he used. He gave his speech in the worst German. One of those importuners, I decided. Someone with a tale of petty woe bound to tell it in the worst accent possible.

"Now, the only American official at the Embassy that morning who happened to be remotely *verantwortlich* was myself. Was I going to play tennis with a lovely English girl, or was I going to eat sauerkraut with some Russian emigré?"

He paused. "Tennis won out. I never saw the fellow."

We waited.

"Too late I learned who the man happened to be. The voice with the dreadful German accent, frantic to talk to a responsible American official, was none other than Mr. V. I. Lenin himself. Not long after our phone call, the Germans sent Mr. Lenin across Bavaria, Prussia, Poland, and Lithuania in a sealed train. He arrived at the Finland Station in Leningrad to bring off in November of the same year nothing less than the Bolshevik Revolution." He paused, giving us sanction to become hilarious at the size of Allen Dulles' miscue.

"Al," a voice cried out, "how could you do that to the team?"

It was my first glimpse of Dix Butler. His face was unforgettable. His head, his massive jaw and neck, his full mouth were as strongly formed as the features in a Roman bust.

Dulles looked pleased. "Profit by my error, gentlemen," he said. "Reread your Sherlock Holmes. The most trivial clue can prove the most significant. When you are on duty, observe every detail. Do the damnedest fine job you can do. You'll never know when the shovel turns up an unexpected gem."

He canted his pipe back into his mouth, parted the stage curtains, and disappeared.

~~Our next speaker offered business. Burns, Raymond James "Ray Jim" Burns, case officer: Japan, Latin America, Vienna. He would be our instructor in an eight-week course on World Communism. He was also captain of the pistol team at Plans. He would, he told us, welcome anyone interested in improving his aim.~~

~~A man of medium height, he was there for us to study. He had short, reddish-brown hair, a trim build, and regular features with an unforgiving twist. His mouth was a short straight cut. He~~

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Men

who work
at Time
have a
life expect-
tancy
which is
not long
said the
young man
from
Newsweek

Junkies

2.

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who
bat out
the poop
for
the other sheet
don't use up
a thing
in
my scheme
of space
said the
young blood
from Yale

3.

But
in the
evenings
 they met
 and had
 beers
 together
 in Irish bars
 which looked
 the proper hair
 of fashion
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 the type

And as they drank
 into
 the warm
 spring
 evenings
 the remembered musk
 of wood-smoke at dusk

 brought
 tenderness
 to
 liberty
 and
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*In Cambridge
and New Haven*

chant
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Junkies

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1956

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Start

Harlot's Ghost

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~~months of pregnancy~~. Her fine features were now enriched by the livelier colors of her character. I could feel the woman within—by which blank check of a phrase I try to pass over the more intimate grasp I now had of what it might mean to go to bed with Kittredge. My night with Ingrid had given some necessary dollop of gross sophistication—I knew that Kittredge was not only this ineffable array of the loveliest manners and graces, but had a body that could shape itself to mine and (here was the gross wisdom) this body might even offer up its secret odor; I assumed that would prove superior to Ingrid's stingy, catlike purchase on the cosmos.

Yes, I was in love, if love is the happy condition of feeling one's hours remarkably well spent even when one does no more than sit in company with the beloved and her husband and listen to a record player while it offers such musical events as Leopold Stokowski conducting the New York Philharmonic through *Boris Godunov*. It was Harlot's contention that Moussorgsky gave infallible insights into the turmoil of late czarist Russia.

Kittredge's taste these days inclined more to *My Fair Lady*. Word had come to Washington that this was the ticket for the season on Broadway, and pregnant Kittredge was now uncommonly interested in hot tickets. To counter Moussorgsky, she gave us Lerner and Loewe. We listened to "I Could Have Danced All Night" until Montague finally asked, "Does a pregnancy circumscribe you all that much?"

"Hugh, stow it," said Kittredge, and the predictable two red spots came to her white cheeks.

"Darling," he said, "you never seemed to care about dancing until now."

And I, traitor to their hearth, was happy that I understood one side of her better than he, and hoped she knew it.

All the same, he was certainly taking close care of my career. I had not been back half a week before he arranged to get me into Intensive Spanish. I was being moved onto the Argentina-Uruguay Desk in the Western Hemisphere Division as my preparation for transfer to the station in Montevideo.

"Why Uruguay?" I asked.

"Because it's small, and you will learn a lot."

Since Montevideo had to be thousands of miles away, it also

occurred to me that he might want his godson somewhat separated from his wife after the baby was born.

"You need a place to learn your trade," he told me. "Uruguay is fine for that. You'll come to know the diplomatic community, meet a few Russians, run a few agents, get a feel for the nuts and bolts. I'm looking down the line to years ahead when you'll be working more closely with me. But first you have to pick up the grammar—all the everyday housekeeping that goes into Station work and some of the dos and don'ts in espionage proper."

I confess that if I had heard *espionage* and *counterespionage* used more than a hundred times in the last year, I still did not know that I had mastered the distinction. "Can I train with you now," I asked, "while I'm at the Uruguay Desk?"

"Yes," he said, "but you'll have to wait. I won't be starting up the Thursdays until we get back from the Keep this summer."

"That's two months away."

"Time spent at the Argentina-Uruguay Desk will be invaluable."

Perhaps it was. I did not think so at the time. I was too busy absorbing whole fat loose-leaf books of geographical, political, economic, cultural, and trade union material. Soon enough, I learned that Uruguay was a small coconut-shaped nation on the Atlantic coast, and considerably further to the south than I had expected, for it was lodged between Brazil and Argentina. Uruguay was temperate in climate—hurrah!—void of jungle—fine with me!—the Switzerland of South America—ugh!—a semisocialist welfare state—paugh!—a land of pampas and cattle with only one large city, Montevideo; the entire country, somewhat under four million people, lived on the export of beef and hides, mutton and wool.

Most of my labor at the Argentina-Uruguay Desk went into coding and decoding cables. It was relevant work for it introduced me to operations I would soon be handling myself. For the rest, I slaved away at Intensive Spanish, suffered the heat of Washington through June and July, waited for Harlot and Kittedge's three weeks at the Keep to be over and his mysterious *Thursdays* to commence, and amused myself in the interim by copious speculations about the appearance of the officers and agents at the Montevideo Station. Since our cable traffic used

AV/ as the digraph for Uruguay, we did not have to put up with such broken-backed orthographic presences as SM/ONION or KU/CLOAKROOM; now we could employ AV/ALANCHE, AV/ANTGARDE, AV/ARICE, AV/ENGE, AV/IATOR, AV/OIDANCE, AV/OWAL, AV/OIRDUPOIS, AV/UNCULAR, and, my favorite, AV/EMARIA. You never knew. AV/ANTGARDE could be a bellhop, and AV/EMARIA a chauffeur in a foreign embassy. I could, of course, given my desk accreditation, have checked their cryptonyms against the 201 file we kept in one corner of the large office room that constituted our Argentina-Uruguay Desk in Cockroach Alley, but there was no need to know, and I felt too new to push it. Older desk officers were introducing me to complex tasks grudgingly, as if they might lose a piece of their substance. I was content to wait. It was calm work after Berlin, and I had small interest. The summer in D.C. was hot. The Thursdays were what I waited for.

They were certainly talked about. Over lunch in the cafeteria one hot day, two senior officers, friends of Cal, offered me disparate evaluations: "Much ado about nothing," said one. "He's so brilliant it's unholy," said the other. "Why, you don't know how fortunate you are to be selected."

The class, now in its third year, had been commenced as a seminar on Thursday afternoons for some of Harlot's staff plus young officers who had been recommended for a few of his projects. Those were Low Thursdays, but once a month, on what soon came to be called the High Thursdays, important guests showed up by invitation, as did visiting professionals whose Company labors had brought them back to D.C. from various lairs abroad.

On all occasions, we would meet around the conference table in Hugh Montague's outer office, a large room on the second floor of the yellow brick villa that Allen Dulles used for his headquarters. Situated on E Street, well away from the Reflecting Pool and Cockroach Alley, it was an elegant building larger than most of the foreign embassies in Washington. Harlot was one of the few high-ranking officers to work in such proximity to Dulles, and so an added zest was brought to the occasion by the importance of our surroundings. Indeed, Allen Dulles would keep popping in and out, a beeper in his breast pocket

prodding him back to his own office, and once, I remember, he made a point of letting us know that he had just gotten off the phone with President Eisenhower.

The lectures on High Thursday were, of course, the most exceptional. Harlot's voice became even more commodious then, and he could not have been more unabashed in his use of rich syntax. How much one learned directly, however, is not easy to measure. He gave no assignments. He might recommend a book from time to time, but never pursued our diligence, no, it was more a matter of sowing the seeds. A few might sprout. Since the Director himself was not only our peripatetic guest but had obviously given his imprimatur, and would often nod at the sheer wonderful glory of the subject—"Ah," one could almost hear Mr. Dulles say, "this wonderfully shrewd and metaphysical and monumental world of Intelligence itself!"—it took no vast acumen on my part to recognize that come a High Thursday, Harlot would teach our group from the top down. His preference was to stimulate his equals: On such occasions, the rest of us could scramble how we might. Low days were of more use to us. Then, the course served, as Harlot once remarked, "to rev up the Mormons." There were five of them, Ph.D.s from state universities in the Midwest, and they were always taking notes, always in crew cut, white shirt with short sleeves, pens in the breast pocket, dark thin ties, eyeglasses. They looked like engineers, and I recognized after a time that they were the galley slaves over in Montague's counterespionage shop at TSS, marooned in prodigiously demanding tasks of cryptography, file-searching, estimate-vetting, etc. To me it reeked of the Bunker, although obviously more purposeful, more lifelong—you could see it in their faces: They were signed up for a career of the highest level of clerking. I was, I admit, snobby, but then, as the son of a Bold Easterner, and thus, by titular descent, a Junior Bold Easterner, Ivy League out of Andover, Exeter, Groton, Middlesex, or Saints Paul, Mark, or Matthew, how could I not begin to feel well installed while listening to Hugh Montague? At full throttle on a High Thursday, he could employ rhetoric that was equal to high adventure. Since memory, for all its vicissitudes, can also be immaculate, I am tempted to swear that, word for word, this has to be close to the way he offered it.

"An understanding of counterespionage presents difficulties to which we must return again and again," he would remark, "but it helps for us to recognize that our discipline is exercised in the alley between two theaters—those separate playhouses of paranoia and cynicism. Gentlemen, select one rule of conduct from the beginning: Too much attendance at either theater is imprudent. One must keep shifting one's seat. For what, after all, are our working materials? Facts. We live in the mystery of facts. Obligatorily, we become expert observers on the permeability, malleability, and solubility of so-called hard facts. We discover that we have been assigned to live in fields of distortion. We are required to imbibe concealed facts, revealed facts, suspicious facts, serendipitous facts."

Rosen had the temerity on this particular High Thursday to interrupt Harlot long enough to ask, "Sir, I know the meaning of the word, but not its application here. What are serendipitous facts?"

"Rosen," said Harlot, "let us search for the answer." Harlot paused. I was all too aware of the way he played with the name. There had been just a hint of mournful woe in the long *o* of Rosen. "Rosen," he said, "assume that you are on a tour of duty in Singapore and a scrumptious blonde, a veritable *bagatelle*, happens to knock on your hotel room door at 2:00 A.M., and she is—let us say it is 90-percent verifiable—not employed by the KGB, but chooses to knock because she likes you. That, Arnold, is a serendipitous fact."

Guffaws popped forth. Rosen managed to smile, indeed, I felt his gleam of happiness at arousing the wit of the master. "I thrive on derision," said his manner.

Harlot resumed. "Gentlemen," he declared, "in the more advanced regions of our work, sound judgment is paramount. Is the apparently unsuccessful operation that we are trying to analyze no more than an error by our opponents, a bureaucratic fumble, a gaffe, or, to the contrary, do we have before us an aria with carefully chosen dissonances?" He paused. He glared at us. Just as a great actor can give the same soliloquy to beggars or kings—it does not matter—he was here to expatiate on a theme. "Yes," he said, "some of you, on such occasions, will be in an unholy rush toward the Theater of Paranoia; others will leave their name at the Cinema of Cynicism. My esteemed Director"—

he nodded in the general direction of Mr. Dulles—"has sometimes assured me that I hold forth at times too long over at Paranoia House."

Dulles beamed. "Oh, Montague, you can tell as many stories on me as I can on you. Let's assume there's nothing wrong with suspicion. It tends to keep the mind alive."

Harlot nodded. Harlot said: "The man with talent for counterespionage, the true *artist*,"—now using the word with as much nesting of his voice as an old Russian lady saying *Pushkin*—"draws on his paranoia to perceive the beauties of his opponent's scenario. He looks for ways to attach facts properly to other facts so that they are no longer separated objects. He tries to find the picture that no one else has glimpsed. All the same, he never fails to heed the warnings of cynicism."

"For cynicism has its own virtues. It is analogous to the oil that wells up from every crushed seed, every damn plan that went wrong." Sitting near Allen Dulles on this day, I heard him grunt in pleasure. It was a small but enjoyable sound. "Hear, hear," he said softly, and I heard him. "Do not," continued Harlot, "attempt to comprehend the KGB, therefore, until you recognize that they have some of the most flexible and some of the most rigid minds in intelligence work, and their people clash with each other, even as some of ours have been known to do. We must always feel the play of forces in our opponent's scheme. It teaches us to beware of divinations that are too comprehensive, too satisfying. Cynicism teaches you to distrust the pleasure you may feel when previously scattered facts come into a nice pattern. If that happens just a little too quickly, you may have come upon your first hint that you are dealing with a precalculated narrative. In a word, disinformation."

Advanced were the High Thursdays, awfully advanced for the Lows. I would ponder some of his conclusions for many a year. If Montague's method of discourse on such days threw the more inexperienced of us over such high hurdles as the Theater of Paranoia and the Cinema of Cynicism, he could on any Low Thursday return us to the threading of a rusty nut to a dirt-grimed bolt. Indeed, the first day of the first Low had us working for two hours to construct a scenario on the basis of a torn receipt, a bent key, a stub of pencil, a book of matches, and a dried flower pressed into a cheap unmarked envelope. These

items, he told us, happened to be the pocket litter left by an agent under suspicion who had decamped in unholy haste from a furnished room. For two hours we fingered these objects, brooded upon them, and offered our theories. I forget mine. It was no better than the others. Only Rosen was to distinguish himself that day. Once all the others had finished their expositions, Arnie continued to look unhappy. "In my opinion," he said, "too many pieces are missing."

"This is the sum of your contribution?" asked Harlot.

"Yessir. Given the paucity of facts, no viable scenario is available."

"Rosen," Harlot told us, "is on the nose. These objects were selected arbitrarily. A correct solution does not exist."

Explanation: The exercise was to alert us to the risk of autointoxication when formulating scenarios. Deductive passions could be loosed all too easily by a dried flower, a cheap envelope, a stub of pencil, the bent key, the torn receipt for \$11.08. Our first lesson had been designed to make us aware (in retrospect) of any subtle discomfort we had ignored in the course of working up our explanation. "Respect that subtle hollow," Harlot told us. "When a scenario feels absolutely right, it is usually right, but if your story feels almost right, yet just a little empty, well, then, it's all wrong." The next Low, he told us, would be devoted to espionage itself. Espionage, plain and simple, as opposed to counterespionage.

2 | Back at the Farm, there had been a course called *Agent Recruitment*; it gave no clear picture of the reality. Montague moved us quickly from conventional formulations to the marrow. "Espionage," he told us, "is the selection and development of agents. That can be comprehended by two words: disinterested seduction."

Taking his pause, he added: "If you see me as an advocate of unbridled carnality, you are in the wrong room. We are speaking of *disinterested* seduction. That is not, if you reflect on it, physical. It is psychological. Manipulation lies at the heart of such seduction.

"In our Judeo-Christian culture, therefore, difficulties arise. Manipulation is Machiavellian, we say, and are content to let the name judge the matter. Yet if a good man working for his beliefs is not ready to imperil his conscience, then the battlefield will belong to those who manipulate history for base ends. This is not an inquiry into morality, so I pursue the matter no further than to say that a visceral detestation of manipulation is guaranteed to produce an incapacity to find agents and run them. Even for those of us who accept the necessity, it may prove difficult. There are case officers who have spent their working lives in foreign capitals but cannot point to a single on-site agent they managed to recruit. Such failure tends to produce the kind of unhappiness you see on the face of a dedicated hunter who dependably fails to bag his deer. Of course, the odds in certain countries are very much against us."

I do not think any of us were too bothered by the idea of manipulation at this point. To the contrary—we wondered: Would we be able to do the job? We sat there in a mixture of anticipation and worry.

"At this point," said Harlot, "you may be thinking: So incredible a purpose, so difficult an achievement! How do I begin? Rest somewhat assured. The Agency knows better than to depend on your first instinctive efforts. Recruitment is usually the product of the time and care that is spent in studying each prospective client or target. If, for example, the condition of steel production in a certain country interests us, then a cleaning woman who has access to the wastebaskets of a high official in machine-tool production can, for the moment, serve us better than a high functionary in Agriculture. There is logic to this work, and to a degree, one can instruct you in it."

Everyone nodded profoundly, as if we had come to the same conclusion.

"Today, we will place ourselves in a specific milieu," Harlot said. "Let us suppose we are stationed in Prague, yet can only

speaking a minimal Czech. How is one to cook the omelette when the pan has no handle? Well, gentlemen, we have a support system. In the labyrinth, we are never alone. It is not expected that you, personally, will try to handle Czech agents who speak nothing but their own tongue. Obviously, there has to be an intermediary whom we can employ, a working native. This fellow is called a principal. The principal agent is the Czech who will solicit his countrymen for you. You will merely guide his work."

"Sir, are you saying that we don't really get out in the field?" asked one of the Junior Bold Easterners.

"In the satellite countries, you won't get out," answered Harlot.

"Then why are we studying recruitment?" he asked.

"To be able to think like a principal. Today, in fact, working in company, we will try to perceive ourselves as one such principal. All of you will now convert into one imaginary Czechoslovakian, an official in the Prague government who has already been recruited by the Agency. Now he—by which, of course, we now mean I, our surrogate principal—is trying to bring in a few more Czechs from nearby government offices. Manipulation commences. The first clue to effective manipulation happens to be the cardinal law of salesmanship. Would any of you be familiar with that precept?"

Rosen's hand shot up. "The customer," he said, "doesn't buy the product until he accepts the salesman."

"How do you know that?"

Rosen shrugged. "My father used to own a store."

"Perfect," said Harlot. "I, as the principal, am there to inspire the putative agent—my client—with one idea. It is that I am good for his needs. If my client is a lonely person with a pent-up desire to talk, what should be my calculated response, therefore?"

"Be there to listen," said several of us at once.

"But what if I am dealing with a lonely man who dwells in isolation out of personal choice?"

"Well, just sit beside him," said one of the Mormons, "enjoy the quiet."

"Clear enough," said Harlot. "In doubt, always treat lonely

people as if they are rich and old and very much your relative. Look to provide them with the little creature comfort that will fatten your share of the will. On the other hand, should the client prove to be a social climber who gnashes his teeth at the mention of every good party he was not invited to, then sympathy won't get you much. Action is needed. You have to bring this person to a gala gathering." Harlot snapped his fingers. "Next problem. The client has just confessed to you a secret or two about his sexual needs. What would you do about that?"

Savage, a former football player from Princeton, said, "Satisfy them."

"Never! Not in the beginning."

We were at a loss. Discussion circulated aimlessly until Harlot cut it off. "Confess to similar sexual needs," he said. "Of course, this assumes our client is not a homosexual." We laughed uneasily. "All right," said Harlot, "I will provide an easier example: Suppose the client is ready to be unfaithful to his wife. Not an uncommon possibility in Czechoslovakia. Well, you, good principal, do not try to provide him with a mistress. Do not complicate the relationship by adding so dramatic and unstable an element as a mistress. Instead . . . well, what does one do? Rosen?"

"I'm temporarily at a loss."

"Savage?"

"Ditto."

"Hubbard?"

It seemed to me that the answer had already been provided. "Perhaps you should confess to the same longing yourself?"

"Yes. Hubbard listens to what I say. Confess to similar sexual needs."

"But we still don't know," said Rosen, "what to do if the client's desires are frankly and actively homosexual."

We went around the room again. It was my day in class. This time I had a small inspiration. "I think you should show sympathy, not identity," I said.

"Keep on," said Harlot.

"I suppose you could say that while not a homosexual yourself, you do have a younger brother who is, so you understand the need."

"Well," said Harlot, "we now have an approach. Let us apply it to other vices. Suppose the client happens to gamble?"

The most effective response, we agreed, would be to tell him that one's father also gambled.

We moved on. What if the client wanted to get his oldest son accepted at a prestigious university? The principal might then have to call on influential friends. Some preparations took years.

"One has, however," said Harlot, "to keep a firm grasp on the intrinsic problem. An exceptional friendship is being forged. One is acting as generously as a guardian angel. That can arouse suspicion in the client. He has to be aware, after all, that his job deals with government secrets. Your official might be as suspicious as a rich girl with a plain face who is being rushed by an enthusiastic suitor. Depend on it. Espionage has its parallels to matchmaking. Ministers sitting on large secrets are the most difficult to woo. One more reason to focus on the easier target—the petty official. Even in such modest purlieus, however, you, as the guardian angel, have to be ready to dissolve the client's distrust as it forms. It is reasonable to assume that the client, in some part of himself, knows what you are up to, but is amenable to your game. Now is the time to talk him into taking the first step—that same first step which will lead him into becoming an espionage agent. The success of this transition—term it the *pass*—depends on one procedure so well established that it is a rule of thumb. Do any of you have a contribution?"

We were silent.

"I guess one has got to move slow," said a Mormon.

"No," said another Mormon, who had done missionary work in the Philippines, "fast or slow, make it seem natural."

"You're on track," said Harlot. "The rule is to reduce the drama."

"Is this always true?" asked Rosen.

"None of what I tell you is true," replied Harlot. "At this point, you are being provided with scenarios to substitute for your lack of experience. Out in the field, count on it, your agents are going to act in unforeseen patterns."

"I know that," said Rosen. "It's just I have this idea that the *pass*, as you call it, can make matters more dramatic."

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"Only in counterespionage," said Harlot. "In time, we will take a look at that arcane subject. For now, however, keep the transition modest, uneventful, dull. Reduce the drama. Request something minor. Your purpose, at this point, is not to net information, but to relax your client's conscience. A salesman, as Mr. Rosen's father can no doubt tell us, wants to keep a potential buyer from wondering whether he really needs the product. What procedure is analogous to our circumstances, Hubbard?"

"Do not let the client recognize how much he's getting into."

"Good. You, the principal, are there to allay anxiety. Warm the soup slowly. 'Look, friend,' you might complain to your budding little agent, 'when I want to speak to someone in your office, the number is not available. I cannot pick up the phone and call them—I have to send a letter. No wonder our socialist economy creeps along. If you could let me borrow your department's telephone registry for one night, it would make my work so much easier.' Well, how can the client refuse after all you've done for him? It is, after all, a modest request. The intraoffice phone book is thin. One can slip it into the torn lining of one's overcoat. So the client brings it out to you, and you get it copied immediately, and return it early the next morning before work. Now what do you do?"

We were silent.

"You let a week go by. If any anxiety was aroused in the client's tender breast, it should have settled. Now, ask for a bit more. Can your friend let you have a look at X report? You happen to know that this X report is sitting on one of the desks in his bureau. Nothing weighty, just something your boss would be pleased to see. It could advance your boss's interests to have such information available to him.

"An unhappy sigh from the client," said Harlot, "but he agrees. The report is carried out in his briefcase that night, and is returned to him in the morning.

"The major shift, however, is yet to come. In order for the client to develop into a reliable agent willing to work in place for years, what now is necessary?"

Rosen had his hand up. So did the Mormons. Soon, every-

one around the table but myself had raised his hand. I was the only one not to realize that the next step would lead our new agent into taking money for his services.

"It is easier," said Harlot, "than you would suppose. Just as many a woman prefers to receive kisses *and* gifts, rather than kisses solo, so your just-hatched agent won't mind being paid for his sins. A little corruption warms the chill. Remember, however, that hypocrisy is indispensable here. Keep to the model of the young lady. Offer presents before you get around to money. Avoid any hint of the crass. Pay off, for instance, some old nagging debt of the client. Just one more favor.

"Sooner than you would believe, our novice agent is ready for a more orderly arrangement. If he senses that he is entering into a deeper stage of the illicit, money can relieve some of his anxiety. For criminals, this is always true, and an agent is, at the least, a white-collar criminal. In our case, he has just emerged from an orderly but hitherto unsatisfactory middle-class life. Money becomes awfully attractive when one is perched on the edge. Strike your bargain then. You, as the principal, can bring in an offer from your boss. In return for regular removal of selected official documents, a weekly stipend can be arranged."

Harlot nodded. "An interesting period commences. Our novice's secret work now provides him with excitement. If he is middle-aged, you could say he is having a fling. If young, he might actually be stimulated by discovery of this potentiality for deceit in himself."

Here, Harlot looked around our conference table. Did I have the impression that his eyes rested just a little longer on mine? His gaze moved on. "I cannot repeat often enough," he said, "the importance of this regular cash stipend. It must, however, not be so large as to show up in a bank account, or a new home. Yet it has to be enough to quiet anxiety. Again, we rely on a rule of thumb. A good measure is to peg the supplements at not less than one-third and not more than one-half of the agent's weekly salary. Regularity of payment serves the same purpose here as dependable meetings with a lady-love. Hysteria, always ready to flare up, is abated to some degree by predictable performance on your side. Questions?"

One of the Mormons put up his hand. "Can you afford to let the agent become witting of who he is working for?"

"Never. If you are able to manage it, don't let him know it is the Company. Especially in an Eastern satellite. His anxiety would be excessive. If, for example, he is a Czech Communist, let him acquire the notion that he is working for the Russians. Or if, like a few Slovaks I know, he is an Anglophile, you might slip across the idea that MI6 is funding all this. If he likes to see himself as a spiritual descendant of Frederick the Great, nominate the BND. Question?"

"What if the new agent doesn't want to take money?" I asked. "What if he hates Communism so much he wants to fight against it? Aren't we abusing his idealism?"

"In the rare case, yes," said Harlot. "But an idealistic agent can burn out quickly, and turn on you. So, the financial connection is, if anything, even more desirable with idealists."

"Isn't the real purpose of the money," Rosen now asked, "to keep the agent intimidated? He has to sign a receipt, doesn't he?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, then we've handcuffed him to the job. There's evidence against him."

"The KGB uses such tactics. We prefer not to," said Harlot. "Of course, there will be times when a signed receipt does *underline* the situation. I would argue, however, that the true purpose of the stipend is to give a sense of participation, even if the agent does not know exactly who we are. When you are living at the end of a network, nothing is more crucial than to feel you are not wholly alone. I repeat: Money confirms—here is our paradox—money confirms the virtue of the vice."

"Let us count our gains," Harlot said. "As principal, you have done your favors, avoided traps, made the pass, put the client on regular stipend, and concealed the source. A perfect performance to this point. Only one major step remains. What might that be?"

"Well, you have to train him," said one of the Junior Bold Easterners, "you know, weapons, illegal entry, one-time pads, all the stuff that's got to be learned."

"No," said Harlot, "training is kept to a minimum. He is not an intelligence officer, but an agent. Use him as you have found him. He will be asked to take out official papers from his office. He will be taught to photograph documents that cannot be

removed. He must never be pushed, however, unless we are desperate to obtain relatively inaccessible material. That is dangerous use of an asset. A good agent ends up not unlike a good hardworking animal on a farm. We teach it not to gallop, but to pull its load. We regulate its diet. The end we seek is an industrious performer who will help us to harvest dependable product on a regular basis year after year. That is a valuable commodity never to be risked for too little, and never to be asked for too much. Underline this in your thoughts: The *stability* of espionage work is the element that generates good results. As far as possible, crises are to be avoided. Therefore, gentlemen, ask yourselves: What is the last step to be taken in the relationship between the principal and the agent?"

I do not know how the next answer came to me. Either I had developed some small ability to read Harlot's thoughts, or was growing familiar with his intellectual style, but I spoke out quickly, wanting credit for the answer. "Withdrawal," I said. "The principal withdraws from a close relation with the agent."

"How," he asked, "do you know that?"

"I can't say," I said. "It just feels right."

"Hubbard, who would have thought it? You are exhibiting the instincts of an intelligence officer." The class laughed, and I flushed, but I knew why he had done this. I had been sufficiently indiscreet once to confess to Rosen that Hugh Montague was my godfather; now the class knew it, and Harlot must have picked that up. "Well," he said, "instincts are indispensable in our occupation, but I will spell it out for those of you who are not as endowed as Hubbard. Some of us have spent a few years here brooding professionally, you might say, on how to keep an agent in quiet working balance. We have come to conclude that sooner or later, the principal must separate himself from his agent. Look upon it as analogous to the shift from early parental warmth to the increasing discipline that a child has to accept as it grows older."

"Does this have anything to do with the agent's sense of his new identity?" asked Rosen.

"Excellent. Identity is no more than how we perceive ourselves. To become an agent, therefore, is equal to assuming a new identity. But, note: With each change of identity, we are

born again, which is to say that we have to take another voyage through childhood. So now the principal will reward the agent only for disciplined behavior. Of course, the agent, if he has been developed properly, should be in less need of an emotional bond than of good advice. He no longer requires a one-sided friendship nearly so much as he can use someone with the skill and authority to steer him through hazards. Given the danger, he wishes to believe that so long as he does exactly as he is told, his new life is safe and moderately prosperous. Of course, he must learn to take precise instructions. Certain precautions may seem onerous, but spontaneity is forbidden. In effect, the agent has a contract, and the free insurance that goes with it. After all, in the event of serious trouble, the principal is ready to pluck the agent and his family out of the country.

"All right, then. Their new roles established, the principal can complete his withdrawal from the agent. They still meet, but less often. After a few years, agent and principal may not even see each other. The agent, furnished with a dead drop, leaves his papers and picks up his instructions. On those rare occasions when it is crucial for the agent to talk to the principal, a meeting is arranged in a safe house, but since this is time-consuming in a hostile land, they usually stay apart. The principal is out breaking ground with new clients.

"This, gentlemen," said Harlot, "is espionage—a middle-class activity that depends on stability, money, large doses of hypocrisy on both sides, insurance plans, grievances, underlying loyalty, constant inclinations toward treachery, and an immersion in white-collar work. See you next week. Before too long, we will come to more damnable stuff—counterespionage. That is where we say farewell to white-collar mentality." He waved at us and walked from the room.

On to Uruguay!

1955

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Advertisements for
appeal
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LITERARY PAIN AND SHAME

Start

(By the time) that

was published in 1955

that is

~~Returning~~ (The Deer Park I had come to recognize by the time I was done that quilly will be a admiration for Hemingway's strength and with distaste for his weaknesses, I was one of the few writers of my generation who was concerned with living in Hemingway's discipline, by which I do not mean I was interested in trying for some ~~second~~ imitation of the style, but rather that I shared with Papa the notion, arrived at slowly in my case, that even if one dulled one's talent in the punishment of becoming a man, it was more important to be a man than a very good writer, that probably I could not become a very good writer unless I learned first how to keep my nerve, and what is more difficult, learned how to find more of it.

Filled with this hard new knowledge that the secret to everything was never to cheat life, I set out immediately to try to cheat life. The Deer Park was done, it would be out in six weeks; I could not keep myself from thinking that twenty good words from Ernest Hemingway would make the difference between half-success and a breakthrough. He would like the book, he would have to—it would be impossible for him not to see how much there was in it. So I cracked the shell of my pride, got his address from a reliable source, and sent him an inscribed copy. But because I was furious with myself for stealing a trick from that Hollywood I knew so well, I turned on my intent, and put the following words on Father Ernest's copy:

TO ERNEST HEMINGWAY

—because finally after all these years I am deeply curious to know what you think of this.

—but if you do not answer, or if you answer with the kind of crap you use to answer unprofessional writers, sycophants, brown-nosers, etc., then fuck you, and I will never attempt to communicate with you again.

~~—and since I suspect that you're even more vain than I am, I might as well warn you that there is a reference to you on page 353 which you may or may not like.~~

About ten days later, the book came back in the mail, same wrapper and maybe the same string enclosing the package. Stamped all over it was the Spanish equivalent of Address Unknown, ~~P~~. So I had the following possibilities to choose from:

1. The address was not correct, and the mail clerk in the Havana post office had never heard of Ernest Hemingway.
2. By Standard-Operating-Procedure, all unsolicited books received by Mr. and Mrs. Hemingway were returned unreceived to insure the minimum of bile for the sender.
3. Good wife Mary saw the inscription first, thought it best to leave the husband to his work, and made a lady's executive decision.
4. Hemingway looked at The Deer Park, decided he wasn't ready to say yes or no, called up his good friend Colonel C. — in the Cuban postal service, had the island searched for shipping paper similar to mine (the original wrapper having been torn by a Latin houseboy on reception), had the best Havana forger copy the handwriting, gave a mordida to the proper authorities for this breach of postal etiquette, and broke a bottle of champagne over the book just before it was stamped by some of the best bureaucratic hands in Havana and sent on its way back to Putnam where Walter Minton put it in his desk, figuring the copy might be worth half a grand to the grandchildren.

Or, 5. The inscription was read, and that carried the day. "If you want to come on that hard, Buster, don't write words like 'deeply curious,'" Papa said, had the original wrapper put back on, stamped it with his private Address Unknown stamp (purchased at

Abercrombie and Fitch) and started to drink fifteen minutes early that day.

This is all fine in its way, but once on television in the eighth round, as I remember, I saw Carmen Basilio take one of Paddy De Marco's best punches, go out on his feet, start to sit down on the canvas, and then with his butt three inches from the ground, Basilio did a one-legged knee stand, pushed up, avoided the knockdown (he had never been knocked down in a fight before or since) and went on to knock out De Marco in a few rounds. The story in the newspapers the next day which I would like to think is true, was that Basilio, when asked why he didn't take an eight-count and get some rest, answered, "I didn't want to start any bad habits."

I could have followed that advice. Moderation is the last virtue I'll capture, and a day or two after the book went off to Hemingway, the broken shell of my pride collapsed into powder, and I sent off inscribed copies to Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly, Philip Rahv, and a dozen others whom I no longer remember, ~~probably from shame. The only one who answered was Moravia, but then we knew each other, and I had told him I didn't want his comment for advertising copy. That particular offer I promote myself ended in failure, and I hope I'm not so hungry again as to send off a lot of which I'm not used to the narrow attention of established~~

This confession off my liver forever, it occurs to me now that I must have carried the memory as a silent shame which helped to push me further and deeper into the next half year of bold assertions, half-done work, unbalanced heroics, and an odd notoriety of my own choice. I was on the edge of many things and I had more than a bit of violence in me.

1959

More than a Bit of Violence
in Me.

~~SECRET~~

To the ghost of his late highness ~~the~~ Senator Joe

Another orphan
said McCarthy
let's have a high mass
and kiss her ass
before we kick
her cunt in,
sister superior.

Oooooooo
Is this poem good for the Jews?
asked Reverend Godspec
of the Inter-Faith Council
for Tolerance
Muscular Dystrophy
and
Communities-of-Cancer

Kick his cunt in too
said McCarthy
Reverend Godspec is
a Communist

You're fucking aye
said all the louts
in all the bars
in Queens
and they were right
for once.

Before in after Sean
1951

ADV FOR MYSELF

338-358

1956

285

THE WHITE NEGRO

Superficial Reflections on the Hipster

STET this page

Our search for the rebels of the generation led us to the hipster. The hipster is an *enfant terrible* turned inside out. In character with his time, he is trying to get back at the conformists by lying low . . . You can't interview a hipster because his main goal is to keep out of a society which, he thinks, is trying to make everyone over in its own image. He takes marijuana because it supplies him with experiences that can't be shared with "squares." He may affect a broad-brimmed hat or a zoot suit, but usually he prefers to skulk unmarked. The hipster may be a jazz musician; he is rarely an artist, almost never a writer. He may earn his living as a petty criminal, a hobo, a carnival roustabout or a free-lance moving man in Greenwich Village, but some hipsters have found a safe refuge in the upper income brackets as television comics or movie actors. (The late James Dean, for one, was a hipster hero.) . . . It is tempting to describe the hipster in psychiatric terms as infantile, but the style of his infantilism is a sign of the times. He does not try to enforce his will on others, Napoleon-fashion, but contents himself with a magical omnipotence never disproved because never tested. . . . As the only extreme nonconformist of his generation, he exercises a powerful if underground appeal for conformists, through newspaper accounts of his delinquencies, his structureless jazz, and his emotive grunt words.

—"Born 1930: The Unlost Generation"
by Caroline Bird

Harper's Bazaar, Feb. 1957

Possible cut - Section 445. (also 3)

STET

~~Florida~~
~~University~~
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Probably, we will never be able to determine the psychic havoc of the concentration camps and the atom bomb upon the unconscious mind of almost everyone alive in these years. For the first time in civilized history, perhaps for the first time in all of history, we have been forced to live with the suppressed knowledge that the smallest facets of our personality or the most minor projection of our ideas, or indeed the absence of ideas and the absence of personality could mean equally well that we might still be doomed to die as a cipher in some vast statistical operation in which our teeth would be counted, and our hair would be saved, but our death itself would be unknown, unhonored, and unremarked, a death which could not follow with dignity as a possible consequence to serious actions we had chosen, but rather a death by *deus ex machina* in a gas chamber or a radioactive city; and so if in the midst of civilization—that civilization founded upon the Faustian urge to dominate nature by mastering time, mastering the links of social cause and effect—in the middle of an economic civilization founded upon the confidence that time could indeed be subjected to our will, our psyche was subjected itself to the intolerable anxiety that death being causeless, life was causeless as well, and time deprived of cause and effect had come to a stop.

The Second World War presented a mirror to the human condition which blinded anyone who looked into it. For if tens of millions were killed in concentration camps out of the inexorable agonies and contractions of super-states founded upon the always insoluble contradictions of injustice, one was then obliged also to see that no matter how crippled and perverted an image of man was the society he had created, it was nonetheless his creation, his collective creation (at least his collective creation from the past) and if society was so murderous, then who could ignore the most hideous of questions about his own nature?

Worse. One could hardly maintain the courage to be individual, to speak with one's own voice, for the years in which one could complacently accept oneself as part of an elite by being a radical were forever gone. A man knew that when he dissented, he gave a note upon his life which could be called in any year of overt crisis. No wonder then that these have been the years of conformity and depression. A stench of fear has come out of every pore of American life, and we suffer from a collective failure of nerve. The

portionate courage. So it is no accident that the source of Hip is the Negro for he has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries. But the presence of Hip as a working philosophy in the sub-worlds of American life is probably due to jazz, and its knifelike entrance into culture, its subtle but so penetrating influence on an avant-garde generation—that postwar generation of adventurers who (some consciously, some by osmosis) had absorbed the lessons of disillusionment and disgust of the twenties, the depression, and the war. Sharing a collective disbelief in the words of men who had too much money and controlled too many things, they knew almost as powerful a disbelief in the socially monolithic ideas of the single mate, the solid family and the respectable love life. If the intellectual antecedents of this generation can be traced to such separate influences as D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Wilhelm Reich, the viable philosophy of Hemingway fit most of their facts: in a bad world, as he was to say over and over again (while taking time out from his parvenu snobbery and dedicated gourmandize), in a bad world there is no love nor mercy nor charity nor justice unless a man can keep his courage, and this indeed fitted some of the facts. What fitted the need of the adventurer even more precisely was Hemingway's categorical imperative that what made him feel good became therefore The Good.

So no wonder that in certain cities of America, in New York of course, and New Orleans, in Chicago and San Francisco and Los Angeles, in such American cities as Paris and Mexico, D.F., this particular part of a generation was attracted to what the Negro had to offer. In such places as Greenwich Village, a ménage-à-trois was completed—the bohemian and the juvenile delinquent came face-to-face with the Negro, and the hipster was a fact in American life. If marijuana was the wedding ring, the child was the language of Hip for its argot gave expression to abstract states of feeling which all could share, at least all who were Hip. And in this wedding of the white and the black it was the Negro who brought the cultural dowry. Any Negro who wishes to live must live with danger from his first day, and no experience can ever be casual to him, no Negro can saunter down a street with any real certainty that violence will not visit him on his walk. The cameos of security for the average white: mother and the home, job and the family, are not even a mockery to millions of Negroes; they are impossible. The Negro

has the simplest of alternatives: live a life of constant humility or ever-threatening danger. In such a pass where paranoia is as vital to survival as blood, the Negro had stayed alive and begun to grow by following the need of his body where he could. Knowing in the cells of his existence that life was war, nothing but war, the Negro (all exceptions admitted) could rarely afford the sophisticated inhibitions of civilization, and so he kept for his survival the art of the primitive, he lived in the enormous present, he subsisted for his Saturday night kicks, relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body, and in his music he gave voice to the character and quality of his existence, to his rage and the infinite variations of joy, lust, languor, growl, cramp, pinch, scream and despair of his orgasm. For jazz is orgasm, it is the music of orgasm, good orgasm and bad, and so it spoke across a nation, it had the communication of art even where it was watered, perverted, corrupted, and almost killed, it spoke in no matter what laundered popular way of instantaneous existential states to which some whites could respond, it was indeed a communication by art because it said, "I feel this, and now you do too."

So there was a new breed of adventurers, urban adventurers who drifted out at night looking for action with a black man's code to fit their facts. The hipster had absorbed the existentialist synapses of the Negro, and for practical purposes could be considered a white Negro.

To be an existentialist, one must be able to feel oneself—one must know one's desires, one's rages, one's anguish, one must be aware of the character of one's frustration and know what would satisfy it. The overcivilized man can be an existentialist only if it is chic, and deserts it quickly for the next chic. To be a real existentialist (Sartre admittedly to the contrary) one must be religious, one must have one's sense of the "purpose"—whatever the purpose may be—but a life which is directed by one's faith in the necessity of action is a life committed to the notion that the substratum of existence is the search, the end meaningful but mysterious; it is impossible to live such a life unless one's emotions provide their profound conviction. Only the French, alienated beyond alienation from their unconscious could welcome an existential philosophy without ever feeling it at all; indeed only a Frenchman by declaring that the unconscious did not exist could then proceed to explore the delicate involutions of consciousness, the microscopically sensuous

and all but ineffable *frissons* of mental becoming, in order finally to create the theology of atheism and so submit that in a world of absurdities the existential absurdity is most coherent.

In the dialogue between the atheist and the mystic, the atheist is on the side of life, rational life, undialectical life—since he conceives of death as emptiness, he can, no matter how weary or despairing, wish for nothing but more life; his pride is that he does not transpose his weakness and spiritual fatigue into a romantic longing for death, for such appreciation of death is then all too capable of being elaborated by his imagination into a universe of meaningful structure and moral orchestration.

Yet this masculine argument can mean very little for the mystic. The mystic can accept the atheist's description of his weakness, he can agree that his mysticism was a response to despair. And yet . . . and yet his argument is that he, the mystic, is the one finally who has chosen to live with death, and so death is his experience and not the atheist's, and the atheist by eschewing the limitless dimensions of profound despair has rendered himself incapable to judge the experience. The real argument which the mystic must always advance is the very intensity of his private vision—his argument depends from the vision precisely because what was felt in the vision is so extraordinary that no rational argument, no hypotheses of "oceanic feelings" and certainly no skeptical reductions can explain away what has become for him the reality more real than the reality of closely reasoned logic. His inner experience of the possibilities within death is his logic. So, too, for the existentialist. And the psychopath. And the saint and the bull-fighter and the lover. The common denominator for all of them is their burning consciousness of the present, exactly that incandescent consciousness which the possibilities within death has opened for them. There is a depth of desperation to the condition which enables one to remain in life only by engaging death, but the reward is their knowledge that what is happening at each instant of the electric present is good or bad for them, good or bad for their cause, their love, their action, their need.

It is this knowledge which provides the curious community of feeling in the world of the hipster, a muted cool religious revival to be sure, but the element which is exciting, disturbing, nightmarish perhaps, is that incompatibles have come to bed, the inner life and the violent life, the orgy and the dream of love, the desire to mur-

der and the desire to create, a dialectical conception of existence with a lust for power, a dark, romantic, and yet undeniably dynamic view of existence for it sees every man and woman as moving individually through each moment of life forward into growth or backward into death.

3.

It may be fruitful to consider the hipster a philosophical psychopath, a man interested not only in the dangerous imperatives of his psychopathy but in codifying, at least for himself, the suppositions on which his inner universe is constructed. By this premise the hipster is a psychopath, and yet not a psychopath but the negation of the psychopath, for he possesses the narcissistic detachment of the philosopher, that absorption in the recessive nuances of one's own motive which is so alien to the unreasoning drive of the psychopath. In this country where new millions of psychopaths are developed each year, stamped with the mint of our contradictory popular culture (where sex is sin and yet sex is paradise), it is as if there has been room already for the development of the antithetical psychopath who extrapolates from his own condition, from the inner certainty that his rebellion is just, a radical vision of the universe which thus separates him from the general ignorance, reactionary prejudice, and self-doubt of the more conventional psychopath. Having converted his unconscious experience into much conscious knowledge, the hipster has shifted the focus of his desire from immediate gratification toward that wider passion for future power which is the mark of civilized man. Yet with an irreducible difference. For Hip is the sophistication of the wise primitive in a giant jungle, and so its appeal is still beyond the civilized man. If there are ten million Americans who are more or less psychopathic (and the figure is most modest), there are probably not more than one hundred thousand men and women who consciously see themselves as hipsters, but their importance is that they are an elite with the potential ruthlessness of an elite, and a language most adolescents can understand instinctively, for the hipster's intense view of existence matches their experience and their desire to rebel.

Before one can say more about the hipster, there is obviously much to be said about the psychic state of the psychopath—or, clinically, the psychopathic personality. Now, for reasons which may be more curious than the similarity of the words, even many

people with a psychoanalytical orientation often confuse the psychopath with the psychotic. Yet the terms are polar. The psychotic is legally insane, the psychopath is not; the psychotic is almost always incapable of discharging in physical acts the rage of his frustration, while the psychopath at his extreme is virtually as incapable of restraining his violence. The psychotic lives in so misty a world that what is happening at each moment of his life is not very real to him whereas the psychopath seldom knows any reality greater than the face, the voice, the being of the particular people among whom he may find himself at any moment. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck describe him as follows:

The psychopath . . . can be distinguished from the person sliding into or clambering out of a "true psychotic" state by the long tough persistence of his anti-social attitude and behaviour and the absence of hallucinations, delusions, manic flight of ideas, confusion, disorientation, and other dramatic signs of psychosis.

The late Robert Lindner, one of the few experts on the subject, in his book *Rebel Without a Cause—The Hypnoanalysis of a Criminal Psychopath* presented part of his definition in this way:

. . . the psychopath is a rebel without a cause, an agitator without a slogan, a revolutionary without a program: in other words, his rebelliousness is aimed to achieve goals satisfactory to himself alone; he is incapable of exertions for the sake of others. All his efforts, hidden under no matter what disguise, represent investments designed to satisfy his immediate wishes and desires. . . . The psychopath, like the child, cannot delay the pleasures of gratification; and this trait is one of his underlying, universal characteristics. He cannot wait upon erotic gratification which convention demands should be preceded by the chase before the kill: he must rape. He cannot wait upon the development of prestige in society: his egoistic ambitions lead him to leap into headlines by daring performances. Like a red thread the predominance of this mechanism for immediate satisfaction runs through the history of every psychopath. It explains not only his behaviour but also the violent nature of his acts.

Yet even Lindner who was the most imaginative and most sympathetic of the psychoanalysts who have studied the psychopathic personality was not ready to project himself into the essential sympathy—which is that the psychopath may indeed be the perverted and dangerous front-runner of a new kind of personality which could become the central expression of human nature before the twentieth century is over. For the psychopath is better adapted to dominate those mutually contradictory inhibitions upon violence and love which civilization has exacted of us, and if it be remembered that not every psychopath is an extreme case, and that the condition of psychopathy is present in a host of people including many politicians, professional soldiers, newspaper columnists, entertainers, artists, jazz musicians, call-girls, promiscuous homosexuals and half the executives of Hollywood, television, and advertising, it can be seen that there are aspects of psychopathy which already exert considerable cultural influence.

What characterizes almost every psychopath and part-psychopath is that they are trying to create a new nervous system for themselves. Generally we are obliged to act with a nervous system which has been formed from infancy, and which carries in the style of its circuits the very contradictions of our parents and our early milieu. Therefore, we are obliged, most of us, to meet the tempo of the present and the future with reflexes and rhythms which come from the past. It is not only the “dead weight of the institutions of the past” but indeed the inefficient and often antiquated nervous circuits of the past which strangle our potentiality for responding to new possibilities which might be exciting for our individual growth.

Through most of modern history, “sublimation” was possible: at the expense of expressing only a small portion of oneself, that small portion could be expressed intensely. But sublimation depends on a reasonable tempo to history. If the collective life of a generation has moved too quickly, the “past” by which particular men and women of that generation may function is not, let us say, thirty years old, but relatively a hundred or two hundred years old. And so the nervous system is overstressed beyond the possibility of such compromises as sublimation, especially since the stable middle-class values so prerequisite to sublimation have been virtually destroyed in our time, at least as nourishing values free of confusion or doubt. In such a crisis of accelerated historical tempo and deteriorated values, neurosis tends to be replaced by psychopathy, and

the success of psychoanalysis (which even ten years ago gave promise of becoming a direct major force) diminishes because of its inbuilt and characteristic incapacity to handle patients more complex, more experienced, or more adventurous than the analyst himself. In practice, psychoanalysis has by now become all too often no more than a psychic blood-letting. The patient is not so much changed as aged, and the infantile fantasies which he is encouraged to express are condemned to exhaust themselves against the analyst's nonresponsive reactions. The result for all too many patients is a diminution, a "tranquilizing" of their most interesting qualities and vices. The patient is indeed not so much altered as worn out—less bad, less good, less bright, less willful, less destructive, less creative. He is thus able to conform to that contradictory and unbearable society which first created his neurosis. He can conform to what he loathes because he no longer has the passion to feel loathing so intensely.

The psychopath is notoriously difficult to analyze because the fundamental decision of his nature is to try to live the infantile fantasy, and in this decision (given the dreary alternative of psychoanalysis) there may be a certain instinctive wisdom. For there is a dialectic to changing one's nature, the dialectic which underlies all psychoanalytic method: it is the knowledge that if one is to change one's habits, one must go back to the source of their creation, and so the psychopath exploring backward along the road of the homosexual, the orgiast, the drug-addict, the rapist, the robber and the murderer seeks to find those violent parallels to the violent and often hopeless contradictions he knew as an infant and as a child. For if he has the courage to meet the parallel situation at the moment when he is ready, then he has a chance to act as he has never acted before, and in satisfying the frustration—if he can succeed—he may then pass by symbolic substitute through the locks of incest. In thus giving expression to the buried infant in himself, he can lessen the tension of those infantile desires and so free himself to remake a bit of his nervous system. Like the neurotic he is looking for the opportunity to grow up a second time, but the psychopath knows instinctively that to express a forbidden impulse actively is far more beneficial to him than merely to confess the desire in the safety of a doctor's room. The psychopath is ordinally ambitious, too ambitious ever to trade his warped brilliant conception of his possible victories in life for the grim if peaceful attrition of the

analyst's couch. So his associational journey into the past is lived out in the theatre of the present, and he exists for those charged situations where his senses are so alive that he can be aware actively (as the analysand is aware passively) of what his habits are, and how he can change them. The strength of the psychopath is that he knows (where most of us can only guess) what is good for him and what is bad for him at exactly those instants when an old crippling habit has become so attacked by experience that the potentiality exists to change it, to replace a negative and empty fear with an outward action, even if—and here I obey the logic of the extreme psychopath—even if the fear is of himself, and the action is to murder. The psychopath murders—if he has the courage—out of the necessity to purge his violence, for if he cannot empty his hatred then he cannot love, his being is frozen with implacable self-hatred for his cowardice. (It can of course be suggested that it take little courage for two strong eighteen-year-old hoodlums, let us say, to beat in the brains of a candy-store keeper, and indeed the act—even by the logic of the psychopath—is not likely to prove very therapeutic, for the victim is not an immediate equal. Still, courage of a sort is necessary, for one murders not only a weak fifty-year-old man but an institution as well, one violates private property, one enters into a new relation with the police and introduces a dangerous element into one's life. The hoodlum is therefore daring the unknown, and so no matter how brutal the act, it is not altogether cowardly.)

At bottom, the drama of the psychopath is that he seeks love. Not love as the search for a mate, but love as the search for an orgasm more apocalyptic than the one which preceded it. Orgasm is his therapy—he knows at the seed of his being that good orgasm opens his possibilities and bad orgasm imprisons him. But in this search, the psychopath becomes an embodiment of the extreme contradictions of the society which formed his character, and the apocalyptic orgasm often remains as remote as the Holy Grail, for there are clusters and nests and ambushes of violence in his own necessities and in the imperatives and retaliations of the men and women among whom he lives his life, so that even as he drains his hatred in one act or another, so the conditions of his life create it anew in him until the drama of his movements bears a sardonic resemblance to the frog who climbed a few feet in the well only to drop back again.

Yet there is this to be said for the search after the good

orgasm: when one lives in a civilized world, and still can enjoy none of the cultural nectar of such a world because the paradoxes on which civilization is built demand that there remain a cultureless and alienated bottom of exploitable human material, then the logic of becoming a sexual outlaw (if one's psychological roots are bedded in the bottom) is that one has at least a running competitive chance to be physically healthy so long as one stays alive. It is therefore no accident that psychopathy is most prevalent with the Negro. Hated from outside and therefore hating himself, the Negro was forced into the position of exploring all those moral wildernesses of civilized life which the Square automatically condemns as delinquent or evil or immature or morbid or self-destructive or corrupt. (Actually the terms have equal weight. Depending on the telescope of the cultural clique from which the Square surveys the universe, "evil" or "immature" are equally strong terms of condemnation.) But the Negro, not being privileged to gratify his self-esteem with the heady satisfactions of categorical condemnation, chose to move instead in that other direction where all situations are equally valid, and in the worst of perversion, promiscuity, pimping, drug addiction, rape, razor-slash, bottle-break, what-have-you, the Negro discovered and elaborated a morality of the bottom, an ethical differentiation between the good and the bad in every human activity from the go-getter pimp (as opposed to the lazy one) to the relatively dependable pusher or prostitute. Add to this, the cunning of their language, the abstract ambiguous alternatives in which from the danger of their oppression they learned to speak ("Well, now, man, like I'm looking for a cat to turn me on . . ."), add even more the profound sensitivity of the Negro jazzman who was the cultural mentor of a people, and it is not too difficult to believe that the language of Hip which evolved was an artful language, tested and shaped by an intense experience and therefore different in kind from white slang, as different as the special obscenity of the soldier, which in its emphasis upon "ass" as the soul and "shit" as circumstance, was able to express the existential states of the enlisted man. What makes Hip a special language is that it cannot really be taught—if one shares none of the experiences of elation and exhaustion which it is equipped to describe, then it seems merely arch or vulgar or irritating. It is a pictorial language, but pictorial like non-objective art, imbued with the dialectic of small but intense change, a language for the microcosm, in this case, man, for it takes the im-

mediate experiences of any passing man and magnifies the dynamic of his movements, not specifically but abstractly so that he is seen more as a vector in a network of forces than as a static character in a crystallized field. (Which latter is the practical view of the snob.) For example, there is real difficulty in trying to find a Hip substitute for "stubborn." The best possibility I can come up with is: "That cat will never come off his groove, dad." But groove implies movement, narrow movement but motion nonetheless. There is really no way to describe someone who does not move at all. Even a creep does move—if at a pace exasperatingly more slow than the pace of the cool cats.

4.

Like children, hipsters are fighting for the sweet, and their language is a set of subtle indications of their success or failure in the competition for pleasure. Unstated but obvious is the social sense that there is not nearly enough sweet for everyone. And so the sweet goes only to the victor, the best, the most, the man who knows the most about how to find his energy and how not to lose it. The emphasis is on energy because the psychopath and the hipster are nothing without it since they do not have the protection of a position or a class to rely on when they have overextended themselves. So the language of Hip is a language of energy, how it is found, how it is lost.

But let us see. I have jotted down perhaps a dozen words, the Hip perhaps most in use and most likely to last with the minimum of variation. The words are man, go, put down, make, beat, cool, swing, with it, crazy, dig, flip, creep, hip, square. They serve a variety of purposes and the nuance of the voice uses the nuance of the situation to convey the subtle contextual difference. If the hipster moves through his life on a constant search with glimpses of Mecca in many a turn of his experience (Mecca being the apocalyptic orgasm) and if everyone in the civilized world is at least in some small degree a sexual cripple, the hipster lives with the knowledge of how he is sexually crippled and where he is sexually alive, and the faces of experience which life presents to him each day are engaged, dismissed or avoided as his need directs and his lifemanship makes possible. For life is a contest between people in which the victor generally recuperates quickly and the loser takes long to mend, a perpetual competition of colliding explorers in which one must

grow or else pay more for remaining the same (pay in sickness, or depression, or anguish for the lost opportunity), but pay or grow.

Therefore one finds words like go, and make it, and with it, and swing: "Go" with its sense that after hours or days or months or years of monotony, boredom, and depression one has finally had one's chance, one has amassed enough energy to meet an exciting opportunity with all one's present talents for the flip (up or down) and so one is ready to go, ready to gamble. Movement is always to be preferred to inaction. In motion a man has a chance, his body is warm, his instincts are quick, and when the crisis comes, whether of love or violence, he can make it, he can win, he can release a little more energy for himself since he hates himself a little less, he can make a little better nervous system, make it a little more possible to go again, to go faster next time and so make more and thus find more people with whom he can swing. For to swing is to communicate, is to convey the rhythms of one's own being to a lover, a friend, or an audience, and—equally necessary—be able to feel the rhythms of their response. To swing with the rhythms of another is to enrich oneself—the conception of the learning process as dug by Hip is that one cannot really learn until one contains within oneself the implicit rhythm of the subject or the person. As an example, I remember once hearing a Negro friend have an intellectual discussion at a party for half an hour with a white girl who was a few years out of college. The Negro literally could not read or write, but he had an extraordinary ear and a fine sense of mimicry. So as the girl spoke, he would detect the particular formal uncertainties in her argument, and in a pleasant (if slightly Southern) English accent, he would respond to one or another facet of her doubts. When she would finish what she felt was a particularly well-articulated idea, he would smile privately and say, "Other-direction . . . do you really believe in that?"

"Well . . . No," the girl would stammer, "now that you get down to it, there is something disgusting about it to me," and she would be off again for five more minutes.

Of course the Negro was not learning anything about the merits and demerits of the argument, but he was learning a great deal about a type of girl he had never met before, and that was what he wanted. Being unable to read or write, he could hardly be interested in ideas nearly as much as in lifemanship, and so he eschewed any attempt to obey the precision or lack of precision in

the girl's language, and instead sensed her character (and the values of her social type) by swinging with the nuances of her voice.

So to swing is to be able to learn, and by learning take a step toward making it, toward creating. What is to be created is not nearly so important as the hipster's belief that when he really makes it, he will be able to turn his hand to anything, even to self-discipline. What he must do before that is find his courage at the moment of violence, or equally make it in the act of love, find a little more between his woman and himself, or indeed between his mate and himself (since many hipsters are bisexual), but paramount, imperative, is the necessity to make it because in making it, one is making the new habit, unearthing the new talent which the old frustration denied.

Whereas if you goof (the ugliest word in Hip), if you lapse back into being a frightened stupid child, or if you flip, if you lose your control, reveal the buried weaker ~~part~~ part of your nature, then it is more difficult to swing the next time, your ear is less alive, your bad and energy-wasting habits are further confirmed, you are farther away from being with it. But to be with it is to have grace, is to be closer to the secrets of that inner unconscious life which will nourish you if you can hear it, for you are then nearer to that God which every hipster believes is located in the senses of his body, that trapped, mutilated and nonetheless megalomaniacal God who is It, who is energy, life, sex, force, the Yoga's *prana*, the Reichian's orgone, Lawrence's "blood," Hemingway's "good," the Shavian life-force; "It"; God; not the God of the churches but the unachievable whisper of mystery within the sex, the paradise of limitless energy and perception just beyond the next wave of the next orgasm.

To which a cool cat might reply, "Crazy, man!"

Because, after all, what I have offered above is an hypothesis, no more, and there is not the hipster alive who is not absorbed in his own tumultuous hypotheses. Mine is interesting, mine is way out (on the avenue of the mystery along the road to "It") but still I am just one cat in a world of cool cats, and everything interesting is crazy, or at least so the Squares who do not know how to swing would say.

(And yet crazy is also the self-protective irony of the hipster. Living with questions and not with answers, he is so different in his isolation and in the far reach of his imagination from almost every-

one with whom he deals in the outer world of the Square, and meets generally so much enmity, competition, and hatred in the world of Hip, that his isolation is always in danger of turning upon itself, and leaving him indeed just that, crazy.)

If, however, you agree with my hypothesis, if you as a cat are way out too, and we are in the same groove (the universe now being glimpsed as a series of ever-extending radii from the center), why then you say simply, "I dig," because neither knowledge nor imagination comes easily, it is buried in the pain of one's forgotten experience, and so one must work to find it, one must occasionally exhaust oneself by digging into the self in order to perceive the outside. And indeed it is essential to dig the most, for if you do not dig you lose your superiority over the Square, and so you are less likely to be cool (to be in control of a situation because you have swung where the Square has not, or because you have allowed to come to consciousness a pain, a guilt, a shame or a desire which the other has not had the courage to face). To be cool is to be equipped, and if you are equipped it is more difficult for the next cat who comes along to put you down. And of course one can hardly afford to be put down too often, or one is beat, one has lost one's confidence, one has lost one's will, one is impotent in the world of action and so closer to the demeaning flip of becoming a queer, or indeed closer to dying, and therefore it is even more difficult to recover enough energy to try to make it again, because once a cat is beat he has nothing to give, and no one is interested any longer in making it with him. This is the terror of the hipster—to be beat—because once the sweet of sex has deserted him, he still cannot give up the search. It is not granted to the hipster to grow old gracefully—he has been captured too early by the oldest dream of power, the gold fountain of Ponce de León, the fountain of youth where the gold is in the orgasm.

To be beat is therefore a flip, it is a situation beyond one's experience, impossible to anticipate—which indeed in the circular vocabulary of Hip is still another meaning for flip, but then I have given just a few of the connotations of these words. Like most primitive vocabularies each word is a prime symbol and serves a dozen or a hundred functions of communication in the instinctive dialectic through which the hipster perceives his experience, that dialectic of the instantaneous differentials of existence in which one is forever moving forward into more or retreating into less.

5.

It is impossible to conceive a new philosophy until one creates a new language, but a new popular language (while it must implicitly contain a new philosophy) does not necessarily present its philosophy overtly. It can be asked then what really is unique in the life-view of Hip which raises its argot above the passing verbal whimsies of the bohemian or the lumpenproletariat.

The answer would be in the psychopathic element of Hip which has almost no interest in viewing human nature, or better, in judging human nature, from a set of standards conceived a priori to the experience, standards inherited from the past. Since Hip sees every answer as posing immediately a new alternative, a new question, its emphasis is on complexity rather than simplicity (such complexity that its language without the illumination of the voice and the articulation of the face and body remains hopelessly incommunicative). Given its emphasis on complexity, Hip abdicates from any conventional moral responsibility because it would argue that the result of our actions are unforeseeable, and so we cannot know if we do good or bad, we cannot even know (in the Joycean sense of the good and the bad) whether we have given energy to another, and indeed if we could, there would still be no idea of what ultimately the other would do with it.

Therefore, men are not seen as good or bad (that they are good-and-bad is taken for granted) but rather each man is glimpsed as a collection of possibilities, some more possible than others (the view of character implicit in Hip) and some humans are considered more capable than others of reaching more possibilities within themselves in less time, provided, and this is the dynamic, provided the particular character can swing at the right time. And here arises the sense of context which differentiates Hip from a Square view of character. Hip sees the context as generally dominating the man, dominating him because his character is less significant than the context in which he must function. Since it is arbitrarily five times more demanding of one's energy to accomplish even an inconsequential action in an unfavorable context than a favorable one, man is then not only his character but his context, since the success or failure of an action in a given context reacts upon the character and therefore affects what the character will be in the next

context. What dominates both character and context is the energy available at the moment of intense context.

Character being thus seen as perpetually ambivalent and dynamic enters then into an absolute relativity where there are no truths other than the isolated truths of what each observer feels at each instant of his existence. To take a perhaps unjustified meta-physical extrapolation, it is as if the universe which has usually existed conceptually as a Fact ~~(even if the Fact were Berkeley's God)~~ but a Fact which it was the aim of all science and philosophy to reveal, becomes instead a changing reality whose laws are remade at each instant by everything living, but most particularly man, man raised to a neo-medieval summit where the truth is not what one has felt yesterday or what one expects to feel tomorrow but rather truth is no more nor less than what one feels at each instant in the perpetual climax of the present.

What is consequent therefore is the divorce of man from his values, the liberation of the self from the Super-Ego of society. The only Hip morality (but of course it is an ever-present morality) is to do what one feels whenever and wherever it is possible, and—this is how the war of the Hip and the Square begins—to be engaged in one primal battle: to open the limits of the possible for oneself, for oneself alone, because that is one's need. Yet in widening the arena of the possible, one widens it reciprocally for others as well, so that the nihilistic fulfillment of each man's desire contains its antithesis of human co-operation.

If the ethic reduces to Know Thyself and Be Thyself, what makes it radically different from Socratic moderation with its stern conservative respect for the experience of the past is that the Hip ethic is immoderation, childlike in its adoration of the present (and indeed to respect the past means that one must also respect such ugly consequences of the past as the collective murders of the State). It is this adoration of the present which contains the affirmation of Hip, because its ultimate logic surpasses even the unforgettable solution of the Marquis de Sade to sex, private property, and the family, that all men and women have absolute but temporary rights over the bodies of all other men and women—the nihilism of Hip proposes as its final tendency that every social restraint and category be removed, and the affirmation implicit in the proposal is that man would then prove to be more creative than murderous and so would not destroy himself. Which is exactly

what separates Hip from the authoritarian philosophies which now appeal to the conservative and liberal temper—what haunts the middle of the twentieth century is that faith in man has been lost, and the appeal of authority has been that it would restrain us from ourselves. Hip, which would return us to ourselves, at no matter what price in individual violence, is the affirmation of the barbarian, for it requires a primitive passion about human nature to believe that individual acts of violence are always to be preferred to the collective violence of the State; it takes literal faith in the creative possibilities of the human being to envisage acts of violence as the catharsis which prepares growth.

Whether the hipster's desire for absolute sexual freedom contains any genuinely radical conception of a different world is of course another matter, and it is possible, since the hipster lives with his hatred, that many of them are the material for an elite of storm troopers ready to follow the first truly magnetic leader whose view of mass murder is phrased in a language which reaches their emotions. But given the desperation of his condition as a psychic outlaw, the hipster is equally a candidate for the most reactionary and most radical of movements, and so it is just as possible that many hipsters will come—if the crisis deepens—to a radical comprehension of the horror of society, for even as the radical has had his incommunicable dissent confirmed in his experience by precisely the frustration, the denied opportunities, and the bitter years which his ideas have cost him, so the sexual adventurer deflected from his goal by the implacable animosity of a society constructed to deny the sexual radical as well, may yet come to an equally bitter comprehension of the slow relentless inhumanity of the conservative power which controls him from without and from within. And in being so controlled, denied, and starved into the attrition of conformity, indeed the hipster may come to see that his condition is no more than an exaggeration of the human condition, and if he would be free, then everyone must be free. Yes, this is possible too, for the heart of Hip is its emphasis upon courage at the moment of crisis, and it is pleasant to think that courage contains within itself (as the explanation of its existence) some glimpse of the necessity of life to become more than it has been.

It is obviously not very possible to speculate with sharp focus on the future of the hipster. Certain possibilities must be evident, however, and the most central is that the organic growth of Hip

depends on whether the Negro emerges as a dominating force in American life. Since the Negro knows more about the ugliness and danger of life than the white, it is probable that if the Negro can win his equality, he will possess a potential superiority, a superiority so feared that the fear itself has become the underground drama of domestic politics. Like all conservative political fear it is the fear of unforeseeable consequences, for the Negro's equality would tear a profound shift into the psychology, the sexuality, and the moral imagination of every white alive.

With this possible emergence of the Negro, Hip may erupt as a psychically armed rebellion whose sexual impetus may rebound against the antisexual foundation of every organized power in America, and bring into the air such animosities, antipathies, and new conflicts of interest that the mean empty hypocrisies of mass conformity will no longer work. A time of violence, new hysteria, confusion and rebellion will then be likely to replace the time of conformity. At that time, if the liberal should prove realistic in his belief that there is peaceful room for every tendency in American life, then Hip would end by being absorbed as a colorful figure in the tapestry. But if this is not the reality, and the economic, the social, the psychological, and finally the moral crises accompanying the rise of the Negro should prove insupportable, then a time is coming when every political guidepost will be gone, and millions of liberals will be faced with political dilemmas they have so far succeeded in evading, and with a view of human nature they do not wish to accept. To take the desegregation of the schools in the South as an example, it is quite likely that the reactionary sees the reality more closely than the liberal when he argues that the deeper issue is not desegregation but miscegenation. (As a radical I am of course facing in the opposite direction from the White Citizen's Councils—obviously I believe it is the absolute human right of the Negro to mate with the white, and matings there will undoubtedly be, for there will be Negro high school boys brave enough to chance their lives.) But for the average liberal whose mind has been dulled by the committee-ish cant of the professional liberal, miscegenation is not an issue because he has been told that the Negro does not desire it. So, when it comes, miscegenation will be a terror, comparable perhaps to the derangement of the American Communists when the icons to Stalin came tumbling down. The average American Communist held to the myth of Stalin for reasons which

had little to do with the political evidence and everything to do with their psychic necessities. In this sense it is equally a psychic necessity for the liberal to believe that the Negro and even the reactionary Southern white are eventually and fundamentally people like himself, capable of becoming good liberals too if only they can be reached by good liberal reason. What the liberal cannot bear to admit is the hatred beneath the skin of a society so unjust that the amount of collective violence buried in the people is perhaps incapable of being contained, and therefore if one wants a better world one does well to hold one's breath, for a worse world is bound to come first, and the dilemma may well be this: given such hatred, it must either vent itself nihilistically or become turned into the cold murderous liquidations of the totalitarian state.

6.

No matter what its horrors the twentieth century is a vastly exciting century for its tendency is to reduce all of life to its ultimate alternatives. One can well wonder if the last war of them all will be between the blacks and the whites, or between the women and the men, or between the beautiful and ugly, the pillagers and managers, or the rebels and the regulators. Which of course is carrying speculation beyond the point where speculation is still serious, and yet despair at the monotony and bleakness of the future have become so engrained in the radical temper that the radical is in danger of abdicating from all imagination. What a man feels is the impulse for his creative effort, and if an alien but nonetheless passionate instinct about the meaning of life has come so unexpectedly from a virtually illiterate people, come out of the most intense conditions of exploitation, cruelty, violence, frustration, and lust, and yet has succeeded as an instinct in keeping this tortured people alive, then it is perhaps possible that the Negro holds more of the tail of the expanding elephant of truth than the radical, and if this is so, the radical humanist could do worse than to brood upon the phenomenon. For if a revolutionary time should come again, there would be a crucial difference if someone had already delineated a neo-Marxian calculus aimed at comprehending every circuit and process of society from ukase to kiss as the communications of human energy—a calculus capable of translating the economic relations of man into his psychological relations and then back again, his productive relations thereby embracing his sexual

relations as well, until the crises of capitalism in the twentieth century would yet be understood as the unconscious adaptations of a society to solve its economic imbalance at the expense of a new mass psychological imbalance. It is almost beyond the imagination to conceive of a work in which the drama of human energy is engaged, and a theory of its social currents and dissipations, its imprisonments, expressions, and tragic wastes are fitted into some gigantic synthesis of human action where the body of Marxist thought, and particularly the epic grandeur of *Das Kapital* (that first of the major *psychologies* to approach the mystery of social cruelty so simply and practically as to say that we are a collective body of humans whose life-energy is wasted, displaced, and procedurally stolen as it passes from one of us to another)—where particularly the epic grandeur of *Das Kapital* would find its place in an even more God-like view of human justice and injustice, in some more excruciating vision of those intimate and institutional processes which lead to our creations and disasters, our growth, our attrition, and our rebellion.

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1956 ✓

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sphincter, tinged with snobbery, failure, hatred and spleen. The way to charge attention was to dare that hatred. The General calculated to stick his ideas up the ego of the Village, and in the middle of January, 1956, he wrote his first column as a declaration of war.

~~This is the way it went:~~

QUICKLY: A Column for Slow Readers

Column One

Many years ago I remember reading a piece in the newspapers by Ernest Hemingway and thinking: "What windy writing." That is the penalty for having a reputation as a writer. Any signed paragraph which appears in print is examined by the usual sadistic literary standards, rather than with the easy tolerance of a newspaper reader pleased to get an added fillip for his nickel.

But this is a fact of life which any professional writer soon learns to put up with, and I know that I will have to put up with it since I doubt very much if this column is going to be particularly well-written. That would take too much time, and it would be time spent in what is certainly a lost cause. Greenwich Village is one of the bitter provinces—it abounds in snobs and critics. That many of you are frustrated in your ambitions, and undernourished in your pleasures, only makes you more venomous. Quite rightly. If I found myself in your position, I would not be charitable either. Nevertheless, given your general animus to those more talented than yourselves, the only way I see myself becoming one of the cherished traditions of the Village is to be actively disliked each week.

At this point it can fairly be asked: "Is this your only reason for writing a column?" And the next best answer I suppose is: "Egotism. My search to discover in public how much of me is sheer egotism." I find a desire to inflict my casual opinions on a half-captive audience. If I did not, there would always be the danger of putting these casual opinions into a new novel, and we all know what a terrible thing that is to do.

I also feel tempted to say that novelists are the only group

of people who should write a column. Their interests are large, if shallow, their habits are sufficiently unreliable for them to find something new to say quite often, and in most other respects they are more columnistic than the columnists. Most of us novelists who are any good are invariably half-educated; inaccurate, albeit brilliant upon occasion; insufferably vain of course; and—the indispensable requirement for a good newspaperman—as eager to tell a lie as the truth. (Saying the truth makes us burn with the desire to convince our audience, whereas telling a lie affords ample leisure to study the result.)

We good novelists also have the most unnewspaperly virtue of never praising fatherland and flag unless we are sick, tired, generally defeated, and want to turn a quick dishonest buck. Nobody but novelists would be asked to write columns if it were not for the sad fact that newspaper editors are professionally and obligatorily patriotic, and so never care to meet us. Indeed, even *The Village Voice*, which is remarkably conservative for so young a paper, and deeply patriotic about all community affairs, etc., etc., would not want me either if they were not so financially eager for free writing, and a successful name to go along with it, that they are ready to put up with almost anything. And I, as a minority stockholder in the *Voice* corporation, must agree that this paper does need something added to its general languor and whimsy.

At any rate, dear reader, we begin a collaboration which may go on for three weeks, three months, or, the Lord forbid, for three-and-thirty years. I have only one prayer—that I weary of you before you tire of me. And therefore, so soon as I learn to write columnese in a quarter of an hour instead of the unprofitable fifty-two minutes this has taken, we will all know better if our trifling business is going to continue. If it does, there is one chance in a hundred—make it a hundred-thousand—that I will become an habitual assassin-and-lover columnist who will have something superficial or vicious or inaccurate to say about many of the things under the sun, and who knows but what some of the night.

It was blitzkrieg. The column opened the hatred of more than a few, and the General had his attention. Now one had only to divert the hatred from oneself to more deserving subjects.

The second column was, however, a disaster. The General

In New York
it's not
enough
to be polite,
one must
be
brutally polite,
to wit:
variations
observe
the theme
of foul
economy
Shithead
follows
up your
bunny
honey
in
balance
and pro-
priety
Jew
bastard
if said
in a
Village
bar
is as
gentle
as
spade
creep
Fuck off
can be

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with
three
stiff
fingers
to the
plexus
or the
neck
The
rule
is
keep
cool
This
is
New
York

✓

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~~1956~~

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Of a Small and Modest Malignancy

mented, and so demon-ridden — as if twenty devils could pull his chariot when ordered — that he was left with the confidence for years to come that he could write about the inner states of men like Hitler and Napoleon, Lenin and Castro and Cortes. It is a vanity to keep a young writer alive.

Of course, it also made him look on every action as immense with consequence — the early steps of a great leader! He did not forgive friends lightly for failing to see the transmogrificational significance of his thought, nor would he forget, he told himself, their lack of alacrity to follow him. He felt like a general without any army; his attention when he watched TV was not for his pleasure, therefore, but his martial art. He studied Ernie Kovacs like Moltke read Clausewitz, certain his hour was coming. The first TV show on which he would ever appear would be a call to the first battle, and he would fire a shot to ring around global village.

Start

His first appearance on a

Channel 4

His (television)

Night Beat

The show happened to be *Night Beat*, Mike Wallace the host. Mailer got ready like a Depression fighter going into the main bout at the Garden on Friday night. Since his anticipation of such experiences had been formed by films of the Thirties, and his wife would in fact have their first baby in two weeks; since he also saw his opponent as tough, the pressure might be immense, but, as he saw it, he had to win. On just such trinities as poverty, babies, and tough opponents had John Garfield's movies been built.

Two decades later, Norman would not bother to think about a TV show until he was on it. He had learned over the years that the inner condition for projecting a firm and agreeable presence for TV was to be bored. Ideally, it was best to feel no more desire than a prostitute toward the tenth client of the night. This abyss between the luminosity of the outer appearance and the void of the inner dark was a phenomenon unique to TV participants, and might be the very health of the malignancy; it was certainly what kept television such a formidable foe. How could one battle a process that accommodated the emptiest space in oneself?

Of course, on the afternoon before his first television appearance, Mailer was hardly in possession of such wisdom. Rather, he was as tight as a man going to the electric chair. Trying to relax on his bed,

Can
muster



adrenaline would take the best of him, and he would pace the room, and proceed to interrogate himself, asking the worst questions Mike Wallace might dare to ask, then search himself for the best of eight possible answers, a true fever! Young fighters dropped fights by squandering adrenaline before they reached the ring; they, too, were overcome with the monumental significance of whether they won or lost. Mailer, possessed of all the innocence of a protagonist who had never been on TV, did not understand he was entering no main event, but seeing the floor plans for a future mansion of Limbo; how was there a way to comprehend that he would not make history, but probably stifle it a little more?

It was a natural error to make. He could not, after all, get beyond the idea that he would be on the virgin air. If one said what one had to say with wit, conviction, and passion, if one said the unsayable, if people therefore heard something for the first time, passions ought to commence, buried sentiments could take life. But first he must be able to hold his own with Mike Wallace, and given Mailer's massive incapacity to stay cool, that was not automatic.

Wallace had become a success by way of a personality considerably at contrast to other TV hosts. His manner was not friendly but adversary. His straight black hair and craggy face gave off a presence as formidable as an Indian in a gray flannel suit. To this he added a humorless mind of which he was utterly unashamed, and used therefore as a weapon — no wit could slow his attack. His badly pitted skin suggested the unremitting stubbornness of a district attorney bitten hard enough in his youth to offer little mercy now. He was obviously not, like other interviewers, full of the very lard of companionability. Instead, Wallace gave the impression of wanting to interrogate further than the family manners of television permitted. Something of solemn, even heavy, purpose came off him, a distrust of human nature that was ready to focus on the probable insincerities of his guest. It was therefore a show to attract jokes about the masochism of people who would accept invitations from Mike Wallace, but Mailer, having studied the format for months, saw it as a rite of passage. If one wanted to make an impact on TV, *Night Beat* was the proper test.

By now, his own approach was as humorless as Wallace. He had so fired up the household, that his wife, in her ninth month, also took it as a test and put on a low-cut black velvet dress, thereby mustering her best appearance. Her hair was as black as Mike Wallace's and being a real Indian (Peruvian) she did her best to help her

husband make a decent entrance. Indeed, she looked splendid and sent out the beauty of her pregnancy like a promulgation of status. Her mate might have been happier to come into a real ring with a trainer to massage the back of his neck, and he certainly had the ravenous flare in his throat that only true desire for whiskey can bring, but he also knew the happiness of the fighter — at long last, love! even if love is the pow of a glove and the rocketing of the ring lights. He felt equal to expectation itself — maybe he had never been as aware before of all of America out there — a pregnancy in the night itself equal to his awareness of a million homes tuning into *Night Beat*. In later years, when everything was taped, he would not often feel the sensation that everyone was listening as the sounds came out of his throat.

Now, the program began, that is, they took seats that had been set out facing each other, chatted a little — it was a false and most unnatural kind of chatting, like fighters meeting at a weigh-in — and then with thirty seconds to air-time, to Wallace's small but somewhat superior annoyance, Mailer poured his water back into the carafe, took a small flask of gin out of his pocket, and decanted half of it into the empty glass.

He was sipping the gin as they went on the air. Since his mind had been overworked for hours, the liquor did not relax his tongue so much as disconcert his head and burn his stomach.

"*Life* magazine accuses your novel, *The Deer Park*," said Wallace in his opening and hortatory tones, "of dealing with immorality, alcoholism, perversion, and political terror in Hollywood. Why do you emphasize these themes?"

Mailer laid out the rights of a novelist to choose his subject, but his answer went on too long, and Wallace merely looked quizzical, self-centered, and superior in his lack of comprehension even as Norman said, "Only hypocrisy and insincerity are dirty. *Life* magazine is a dirty magazine."

So he felt uncomfortable through the early questions, going too long for one answer, too flippantly for another, only to be brusque on the third reply. He was like a tight-muscled fighter and could not seem to fake Wallace the least bit out. His voice began to grow dogged. On the other hand, Wallace did not seem comfortable either. Before one could expect it, the first commercial had come. One-third of the show was over, and it wasn't going as he had hoped.

He raised the ante. Mailer had an instinct for the wicked. If evil was to discover what was good, and proceed to destroy it, then how

many people could ever learn enough to be evil? Wickedness was more available. Wickedness would consist of raising the ante without knowing what the consequences might be. It was a way of asking for peril without a clue to who would be hurt. Wickedness was what he leaped into tonight. It was as if the only means for dealing with Mike Wallace's imperturbable certainty that the people who ran things knew more than the people who didn't was to keep raising the ante of his replies. Before long, he was saying, "America is a great and prosperous country, but it is not a brave or noble country. Our leaders are drowning in conformity and act like *women*."

(May it return a full sense of the Eisenhower period to recognize that our author was not near to suspecting a powerful movement would arise one day to banish men from public life for failing to refer to women as persons.)

Wallace, being equally ignorant of the future, looked awfully confident. "Who in high office," he asked in his deepest voice, "would you say is so feminine?"

Mailer came back with the first happiness he was ever to know on television. "President Eisenhower is a bit of a woman," he said into the ring of night around them, and was certain he could feel the instant when the heart of a million TV sets missed a beat.

Wallace never looked more like an Indian. His eyes grew as flat as the eyes of a movie Apache who has just taken a rifle bullet to the stomach.

"Come off it," he said. He, too, was listening to the silence in the living rooms.

"I mean just that," said Mailer.

They went on. The atmosphere was not dissimilar to the tension in a bar when a glass has been shattered and no apologies are made. They went through the half-hour to conclusion, and Mailer did a little better, and Wallace might have done a little less well, and the show came to its end. Mailer felt a great glow. He was immensely pleased with himself. In the elevator, going down to the street, his wife said, "Maybe we'll be dead tomorrow, but it was worth it." It is possible they never had a better moment together. They had been with each other for years, yet always fought in the animal rage of never comprehending one another. On this night, however, with the baby two weeks away, they were ready for one hour, at least, to die together. For once Mailer felt like a hero. In those days saying something bad about Dwight D. Eisenhower was a not great deal less

atrocious than deciding Jesus Christ has something wrong with Him.

Our new TV talent waited therefore on large and scandalized results from this Wallace show. Nothing seemed to happen. Occasionally he would run into an old friend who had happened to see it, and would chuckle over his remark. Weeks later, he learned that James Hagerty, the Press Secretary to President Eisenhower, asked for a transcript. That was all he ever heard. The phone did not ring with invitations from network executives to discuss a new show built around his controversial personality. Indeed, he was not invited on other shows for a while. ~~It was more than another year before~~ ^{5/6/61} he was asked by David Susskind to come on *Open End* with Dorothy Parker and Truman Capote.

Channel 5

In Limbo, it was becoming less difficult to understand why he always felt an instinctive distrust of the memoir. Part of one's share of anathema was to recollect the past in a style now analogous to the sentimental and streamlined details of the memoir. The final insult to one's life came by way of recognizing that one was here reduced to viewing the moral lessons of one's past through a film of slick. All the real, important, and (now that one was in Limbo) desperate meanings of one's acts slipped by, vague and smooth, almost without evaluation. The agreeable readability of the memoir (that property which made it perfect for the kind of magazines laid on airline passengers) was exactly what made it a torture now. Living among the glossy walls of Limbo, moral facts were hard enough to hold without the frictionless surface of a memoir.

Ergo, the author found himself shuddering — even if he did not know why — at the recollection, let us say at the reconstitution, of his experience on *Open End*, shivering indeed in that feverless ague where boredom is at last revealed as the ultimate protection against dread; yes, what better explanation for that family in the Utah desert staring at the video glass than precisely their awful if unstated decision, so gloomily made, that boredom was better than dread, that even an unpalatable mixture of boredom and dread was better than dread. Anything was better than that immense on-sliding

URUGUAY - I

The car windows were cloudy

71

Starty

Intermission for coffee and fundador
2:00 A.M.

Kittredge,

Brand new subject. Please save judgments until you've read all. What I have to tell will not, I pray, affect our friendship. You see, I am now embarked on what may yet prove an ongoing affair. While in Washington you were always trying to find some attractive young lady for me, the woman I'm now meeting *on the sly*—this slippery cliché certainly has the feel of it!—is, I fear, not suitable. In fact, she is married, has two children, and is the spouse, worse luck, of one of my colleagues.

All right, I know you'll ask how it began, and who she is, and I'll reply that she is Sally Porringer, the wife of Oatsie.

Let me give the facts. It began one evening about a week before Christmas after a party at Minot Mayhew's house. Our Chief of Station, having received word that E. Howard Hunt is finally coming to replace him toward the end of January, threw a farewell party for himself in the form of a Christmas gathering. He invited the Station folk and wives, plus a number of his State Department cronies, plus an even larger number of relatively—I thought—undistinguished Uruguayan businessmen and their wives, and I must say it proved nothing remarkable, what with all the other Christmas parties going on.

For that matter, Christmas down here is curiously discordant. That sense of a rose-chill to winter twilight, sweet as fine sorbet, is missed in the heat of summer. One is angry and compassionate in bursts. I mention this because Mayhew's party in his well-appointed house, filled with career mementos and hacienda-type furniture (armchairs with steer's horns), and paid for, no doubt, with his stock-market profits, did improve once he sat down to the piano. "Every man I know," my father told me once, "has an unexpected skill." Mayhew's is to sing and play. He led us through all the expected. We did "Deck the Halls," and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Noel, Noel," "Jingle Bells," "Silent Night," of course, and then somewhere in "O Come, All Ye Faithful," there was Sally Porringer next to me, her arm

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Harlot's Ghost

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around my waist, and swaying in rhythm as we and thirty other people sang along with Mayhew.

I'm no great vocalist, you know. There are all too many inhibiting influences ravaging my impulse to utter golden notes, but I have a little bass in me, and so I get along. Sally, however, elucidated something better from my voice. I don't know if it was due to the fact that I had never before swayed rhythmically while singing, but I heard my voice coming forth, thank you, and this freedom to sing and feel the beauty—not of the words, so much, but all the nuances and timbre of an ice-cold rose-sweet time of year—was going through me again. I felt as if it was really Christmas, even in Uruguay. I had the epiphany I always wait for as December descends into its climactic week, that feeling so hard to live without through most of the year—the conviction (I whisper it) that He may really be near.

Well, I was transported just enough to be fond suddenly of all my cohorts and their wives, and I thought of all the sweet solemn calls of country, duty, rich endeavor, and one's dearest friends. Most of all, I thought of you, because I can often feel that Christmas is near to me again by recollecting your beauty—there, I've said it—and then, even as I'm singing out, "O come, let us adore Him," I look down and see Sally Porringer's face and she smiles back with a warmth and energy that is part of my own sudden good voice, and I liked her for the first time.

After the carols, we sat on the sofa for a while, and I asked her a question about herself. She gave me a considerable amount of her life story in return. Her father was a rodeo rider, but drank too much and left her mother, who remarried a nice grain-and-feed man. Sally and Sherman knew each other in high school (Stillwater, Oklahoma), went on to Oklahoma State in the same class, but never saw much of each other the first three years. He was a grind, getting all kinds of academic honors, and she was on the cheerleaders' team. (I was right about that!) I took a second look at her then. She's pretty enough, if in no striking way, small turned-up nose, freckles, pale green eyes, sandy hair, a slightly harried housewife in her present cast, but I could see how it must have been ten or twelve years ago. She was probably healthy and vivacious then, and was having, as she now indicated, some kind of all-out affair with one of the football

players. I expect he ditched her, since in senior year Sherman and she found each other and were married after graduation.

I knew I was now expected to reply in kind, but I didn't feel like raiding my own meager cupboard. So I sat there, and smiled, knowing I had to come up with something. Will you believe it? I went on and on about discovering Skeat at Yale, and I expect she did her best to keep from falling asleep in disappointment. A minute later, just as we were about to move away from one another, Sherman came up. He was Duty Officer tonight at the Embassy. That meant he had to take his car to work and was leaving now. She wanted to stay on. I, being equipped for the evening with a Chevrolet two-door from the Embassy motor pool, offered to drop her off on my way back to the Cervantes. I hardly wanted to, I would just as soon have departed right behind Porringer—I did not like the idea of those paranoid eyes staring at me through the malign screen of his thick spectacles, but she looked so sad at having to leave that I stayed.



A little later, I danced with her. Minot Mayhew was now playing all kinds of what I call Charleston rags, although I know the term is not accurate for dances like the Shag and the Lindy and the Lambeth Walk. I didn't know how to do them, but she did, and we had fun. When he played a couple of slow foxtrots from the thirties—"Deep Purple" and "Stardust" are the ones I remember—she danced just a little too intimately, I thought. It was the sort of semiflirtatious stuff that's acceptable, I suppose, if the husband is still in the room. Which he wasn't. Then, Barry Kearns, our Commo Officer, cut in—to my relief. When I sat down, however, I was irked because she seemed to be enjoying herself just as much with Barry.

Sally was right there with me, however, on the turn of the party tide, and we left together. On the drive back to Montevideo from Carrasco, I searched for subjects to discuss, but we were silent. I was feeling the same kind of tension I used to have years ago at the Keep playing kissing games with the neighbors' girls; there was that awful silence as you marched out of the room with a girl. I remember that I always felt then as if I were passing through the woods during a thaw and every sound of melting water had the composure of a far-seeing purpose.

So soon as I parked in front of her house, she said, "Drive around the block."

I did. The Porringers were living in a small stucco house on one of the medium-income, medium-horizon, only-slightly-crumbling streets in an anonymous area back of the Legislative Palace. Even in summer, the streets are relatively deserted, and the block behind her house was distinguished by several empty lots. We parked, and she waited, and I did nothing. Then she reached around to lock the doors and close the windows. I still did nothing. I think my heart was beating loud enough for her to hear it. I did not really want to make love to her, and I did not want to cuckold Sherman Porringer, although there was, I admit, some dirty little rise somewhere down there. Then she said,

"May I ask you a personal question?"

"Yes," I said.

"Are you a queer?"

"No," I said.

"Then why won't you kiss me?"

"I don't know."

"Prove to me you're not a queer."

"Why do you think I am?"

"You talk so upper-class. Sherman says you're a prep-school kid."

I plunged. She went off like a firecracker. I confess to you, Kittredge, I didn't know that women could be so passionate.

This last sentence betrayed what I had known from the beginning—I was not going to go to conclusion. The carnal details were not to be put into a letter. So I sat back in my chair, looked out my hotel room window at the grim building across the street from me, and recalled how her lips had kissed mine as if our mouths were in combat. Her hands, free of any conceivable embarrassment, hooked onto the buttons of my fly. Her breasts, which she soon freed of her brassiere, were in my mouth whenever she had need to lift her head to breathe, and then, to my horror, as if a long string of underground ammunition dumps in the sexual field of my fantasies were all to be deto-

nated at once, she twisted, quick as a cat, bent down, and wrapped her mouth around the prow of my phallus (which seemed to me at that moment not only larger than I could ever remember, but worthy of the word phallus) and proceeded to take into her mouth the six, eight, nine, eleven jackhammer thrusts of the battering ram she had made of me. Then, in the midst of the extreme ejaculations of such ammo dumps blowing up, she added insult to injury and stuck her finger without a by-your-leave up my anus. I had obviously had one good Oklahoma cow-poke of a fuck, and we hadn't even had sexual intercourse yet.

That was remedied in surprisingly little time. I decided Lenny Bruce knew less than he imparted on the inner logic of the second time. Only one far-off part of me could possibly be working for the ego bit. The rest was hell-bent on enjoying all I could, as much as I could, as fast as I could, and yet, how I was repelled! It seemed manifestly unfair to raid the treasury of sex. In the middle of all my elation, exuberance, sexual wrath, and jubilee, in the midst of all my sense of something awfully strong in each of us smacked totally up against one another, there was the long, faint, elevated horror that Kittredge—for whom I had saved myself; Ingrid did not count!—was forever removed from my first taste of all-out frenzy and lust. I had always assumed this kind of heat could only arrive at the end of the deepest sort of love affair, and with momentum as gravely joyous as the mount toward elation in a majestic orchestra embarked on a mighty symphony. Sex with Sally was a football mêlée with bites and bruises and chocolate squashed in your crotch.

By my third ejaculation, I was weary of her. The car windows were clouded, our clothes were a wadded-up joke, and I hardly knew if I was a stud or a rape victim. Drawing away from her, I managed to induce us to get our clothes together, Sally half-unwillingly. Her kisses—how cruel is the after-shade of desire!—had begun to seem leechlike. I wanted to get home.

I could not leave her at her door, however, like a package delivered by someone else. "I'll call you soon," I said, and felt all the powers of extortion being worked on me.

"Oh, you better," she said. "That was groovy."

Groovy! I had been offered the key to my country. I was now

a charter member of that great, unknown middle land of America that I was prepared to defend. And felt a great relief as I drove off because so far as I knew, no pedestrian had passed our automobile on that lonely street. The risk of what we had undertaken was just becoming real to me.

Well, I had seen her since, of course. Once at her home while the children were out with a babysitter—a dreadful clammy occasion when we fornicated in fear that Sherman in full deployment of his paranoid powers would pop home, and we had certainly done better in the Cervantes despite carnal heats on a mattress that smelled of disinfectant. Finally, I dared all the gods of precaution and took her to the safe house above Pocitos Beach, where we coupled in a chair by the twelfth-story window looking down on the passing traffic and the clay-colored waves.

No, I decided, it would have been hopeless to write about any of this to Kittredge, and I put aside the pages I had written about Sally. Because I could not ignore the part of myself, however, that pleaded for some kind of confession, I conceived of a tale to close the gap.

Intermission for coffee and *fundador*
2:00 A.M.

Kittredge,

Brand new subject. What I have to tell will not, I hope, affect us grievously, since our relation is dearer to me than any loyalty or pleasure I could find on the banks of the Rio Plata. You must believe that. I hope you will not be shocked if I confess that after many weeks of the most intense suffering from sexual abstinence, I have at last felt bound to go to one of the better brothels here, and after a week or two of the inevitable winnowing out of choices, concerning which I will regale you someday, I have now settled on one Uruguayan girl in the Casa de Tres Árboles, and have what yet may prove to be an arrangement with her.

It makes sense to me. While you will always be the nearest embodiment I can know of the ineluctable quest, so do I also understand that you and Hugh will be together forever, as indeed you should be. There is no one I know closer to greatness than Hugh. Forgive such sententiousness, but I just want to say

that I love you and Hugh together as much as I adore you separately, which, mathematically, is like trying to equate finite numbers with infinite sums—I come to full stop: All I wish to say is we must be truthful with one another as best we can, and I just had to have a woman. I know there's no conventional reason to ask your forgiveness, but I do. And I feel innocent, I confess. I hope you won't think that the next observation is facetious or in any way impinges on your work, but I have found that Alpha and Omega are indispensable as tools of understanding for the sexual relationship. Sex with love, or sex versus love, can be handled so naturally by your terminology. I even presume to say that at present my Alpha and Omega are most asymmetrically involved. Very little, or maybe no Omega is present in the act—a good, fine part of me cannot bear the woman, the prostitute, I have chosen. My Alpha, however, if Alpha is, as I assume, full of clay and low mundane grabby impulses, well, obviously, my Alpha is not wholly unengaged.

I went on with the letter, spinning careful false tales of the mood of the brothel and finally signed off, not knowing whether I felt vicious or wise in using my original if now unsent letter about Sally as a guide to the false tale, but I knew myself well enough to feel a certain contentment at my guile even as I was falling asleep. It occurred to me with the last of my drowsing spirits that I might not be as unlike my mother as I had once supposed.

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yank him back by the neck, and manhandle him to the bedroom. In the space this took, Dottie Parker was out the door, and in her car. Before she could drive away, Norman came running out to find Bruce collapsed in the rear seat. The dog's limbs were vibrating. It was that quiver which will not cease until the nerve dies.

"I said it wouldn't work," said Dottie Parker face to face. She imparted this in a tone of whole reproach as if to tell him that the worst damage a friend can wreak is to convince you to be brave when you know you are right to be cautious, and then proceed to prove that indeed you were right. It throws you back even further upon yourself when that is no place to be.

As she drove off, he knew that he had wanted to bring Karl from the bedroom because he wished to show how well he could control the dog. Besides he had been curious on the outcome. He noticed that he did not feel very sorry. Only chagrined. But then the wicked are famous for offering small remorse.

PORTRAIT - TRUMAN CARTE

Channel 6

~~OPEN END~~

D

He was not to see Dottie Parker again until this evening they would meet on *Open End* eight years later, and when he arrived at the studio in Newark, and saw ^{Dottie Parker} her 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

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. . . . 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 gargoyles 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, 'Truman, you were *wunderbar*. Don't sell yourself short.' 'Honey,' I told this friend, 'I been short all my life,' " Truman guffawed with pleasure even more profound than the night at El Morocco. "It certainly is a mystery," he said with complacency.

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 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.

Of course, he was always miserable without an hypothesis. The hypothesis could later prove invalid, but it had to be interesting enough so that he could live with it for a while. ~~That the orgy would benefit humankind more than the family was one of his early hypotheses, Bolshevik as hell. That the war in Vietnam was a bad war because rich boys should not fight poor boys unless there was equality in the weapons was another, and that offered the best of conservative principles: the rich had better be terrific. Whether the particular hypothesis was good or bad, however, he leaned on it. There was something so rigid in his upbringing that for reference he had great need of a straight line — a straight line is, after all, the very first of the hypotheses (and, according to Einstein, wholly incorrect, since no line can run straight in space given the curly route of a light wave and the oval field of magnetic force).~~ Mailer sometimes wondered if he was one of the first to recognize that 186,000 miles a second was not the true speed of light, but only its calculated progress along a nonexistent straight line. If you measured the speed of light by the time it took to wind through the waves, then a beam might travel up to 1,000,000 miles a second in order to traverse 186 000

miles. That, doubtless, was one more reason why the sum of a million was magical to Americans.

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.

Channel 7

Years later, Norman would decide that television was one of those hostesses who were most impressed if you were somewhat unimpressed to find yourself in her home, and that was easy enough to handle. It was just that on television, your real hostess had to be the spirit of the electrons. While nobody was in command of enough physics to explore the idea that some men and women tend to attract electrons, while others most certainly repulse them, it seemed reasonable to suppose that electrons might conduct relations with more than a few forces, satanic and divine, and so could be working in unseen harness to focus or ruin your TV appearance. Translated, that should be able to state: The telegenic have good bioelectric relations with the tube, and these relations may yet be measured. Of course, Norman, biased to the depths of his unexpected defeats, was convinced that zombies were the first to benefit from such relations.

These were conclusions he came to with reluctance. He was plagued in those years by the divide between his absolute, if somewhat improbable, sense of intellectual mission, and his incapacity to work at anything like the necessary pace to accomplish his wonders. He thought, without admitting it to himself, that television might be a way to express ideas that would otherwise never reach an audi-

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private humor. That is why you never see public signs of it. He's about as funny as a hee-haw cowboy. Don't forget—Hugh, along with all else, could ride a mustang before his legs were long enough to reach the pedals on his kiddie bike. Just a Colorado cowboy.

I talked Hugh into inviting How Eee. Pointed out to my beau that Hunt was in on the Guatemala move. Hugh thinks that may yet prove to be the most catastrophic American victory of all. Smash an oxymoron, and you will encounter the Light! Yes, darling, *catastrophic victory*. Hugh feels it has pointed us in the wrong direction for decades to come. He wouldn't speak to Allen for weeks after the Agency, via Hunt and some of his pals, got Arbenz pushed out. So I had to talk Hugh into studying Mr. E. Howard Hunt, and wife.

Darling, I can't go on. I'm not being a bitch. I *will* finish tomorrow. Don't know why I got into the sherry. Yes, I do know. I'm revealing too much, and feel unfaithful to Hugh. But I do want secret letters from you and must pay the price. On that note, I excuse myself. Christopher is stirring.

K.

URUGUAY-II

A Caper in Counter-espionage

72 pages

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January 28th, 1957

Harry Dear,

I didn't mail yesterday's letter until I could reread it. It's not as bad as I feared. Indiscreet, but didn't we agree to be just that?

Now, to the occasion. E. Howard Hunt. It's clear after the first five minutes that Hugh and I have invited to dinner a very ambitious man. Afterward, we agreed that if there's anything in

the world Mr. Hunt wants in years to come, it is to be DCI. This desire is, I hope, more pathetic than frightening.

"No hard feelings, I hope," is the first bloody thing Hunt said as he came through the door.

"Dear boy," replied Hugh, though he can't be more than five years older, "no hard feelings about *what*?"

"The ruckus. I'm afraid I opened a birdbath for you on a certain Thursday."

"Howard," said Mrs. Hunt, "Hugh Montague may have thought of other matters since." She did it nicely. She's *tough*. Dark—I found out she's one-eighth Sioux—and determined. I wouldn't be surprised if she's the engine behind Howard's ambition.

Hugh could have left it there, but he's a pertinacious dog. Self-imposed civility is as agreeable to him as dysentery. "Why, Mrs. Hunt," he said, "Howard is right. I haven't stopped brooding. I assumed it was all part of a clockwork plot, and they wound Howard up."

Can you conceive of this conversation opening our evening? But Howard is *breezy*. "No sir," he replied, "I did it on my own. You are looking at an honest-to-God *espontáneo*. That's my vice."

"Have a drink," said Hugh, "we'll measure vices."

I was debating whether to booze a little—would the relaxation sweeten my milk more than the liquor would sour it? Afloat in such primary questions of motherhood, I hate the first twenty minutes of any of these evenings. But Hunt is a talker. By the time we sat down to dinner, I could see that this was his event-of-the-week. Harry, I have to tell you that in no way am I a snob except for the endless amusement of it. It is fun to observe a climber trying out new steps on the slippery slope. Nothing makes such people more nervous than to be observed, and of course, I'm not all that encouraging from my catbird seat. I offer an assortment of blank smiles.

Soon enough, he makes the mistake of bragging about his family background, which is, in the main, New York State. Although I grew up in Cambridge, my father happens to be good old stock from Oneonta, N.Y., and that, while nothing to make you hold on to your hat, is still leagues above Hamburg, the

particular suburb of Buffalo where the heraldic seat of the Hunts, bless all, was located. Now, Howard does have a few credentials. You may be certain he trots them out. His ancestor, Captain James Hunt, served in the Revolutionary War, and Hunt's Point in the Bronx is named after him. "That's so sweet," I say. Tomorrow I expect he will look up my pedigree and discover Maisie and the ancient relatives on the Mayflower.

Mr. Hunt goes on, and of course, the closer we listen, the more he swings on his own noose. It's a cruel business. He was kind of pleased with his family facts until they hit the light of our cold hearth. His father and mother, for instance, sang in the Cornell Glee Club.

"Oh," I say, "terrific. Your father must have loved Cornell."

"He did. One of the tragedies of his life is that I chose to go to Brown. He was the sort of man, however, never to express his disappointment."

"Good fellow," said Hugh.

"Yes. Dad, I warrant, is no fool. Said to me once, 'I'm on to your work, Howard. I didn't become a Thirty-second Degree Mason for too little, did I?'"

"How odd," said Hugh, "My father was also a Shriner."

"Let's drink to that happy coincidence," said Howard.

"Why not?" said Hugh, "why not?" But I winced. Hugh never talks about his father. It brings back the fatal night. Of course, Hugh can ride right over such rocks without suffering visible scratches on the hull. "Yes," he said, "my father was a secretive man"—a sip of his wine—"and my mother." Second sip.

This warmed Howard. He knew he had been tendered some small favor by the master. I believe Hunt is not without psychic gifts. His next remark was certainly aware of sudden mortality as an appropriate topic. He began to talk about a plane crash. Last summer, the Hunts, scheduled to return to Washington from Tokyo, lost their sleeping bunks on the overnight passage due to a booking error. Since, as Howard put it, "I am not one to subject my family to inferior accommodations when the government has already coughed up *the stimulus* for proper treatment, I chose to postpone our departure inasmuch as a later

flight did have bunks available. Lo, the discerning finger of Kismet!" concluded Howard in the mildest voice, as if to discount any outsize claim to magical selection. "Do you know, the first plane went down in the Pacific? All passengers lost."

I think there was a hint of special pride in the way he told the story, as if Providence peered through the smog of mankind long enough to spare E. Howard Hunt and family. After all, they do have large roles to play.

There it is. He isn't so much outrageously ambitious as filled with the idea that he's anointed. Be certain, therefore, in all your dealings with your new boss, not to lose sight of this belief he has in himself. If he weren't half attractive, the man would be intolerable. Too confident for too little.

Item: The Hunts occupied a house in Tokyo designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Not bad for a Chief of Covert Operations in North Asia. (Howard's highly titled job, so far as I could make out, consisted of propaganda, public relations, and leaving stink-bombs at Communist meetings.) Hunt, by the way, calls them Who-Me's.

"Who-Me's?" I ask.

"Yes," says Howard. "If they ask, 'Did you leave that odor?' you answer, 'Who? Me?' " He then laughs at his own explanation, with an involuntary whinny, a snaffling sort of sly, skinny laugh. (I think he considers it the appropriate response to genteel humor about the anus.) I naturally am more interested in being given some idea of what it was like to live in a Frank Lloyd Wright house, but he doesn't respond directly to such questioning. His pleasure comes from the name: *Frank Lloyd Wright*. Goes on to describe the moon gate, the courtyard, the garden with granite shrines, and the deep lily pond. "It was, of course, lovely," said Howard, "but upon due consideration, and the assurance by the Japanese gardener that the lilies would eventually grow back, we pulled them out and converted the pond to a swimming pool that could serve the children."

"Didn't you hesitate," I asked Dorothy, "over the lilies?"

"Well, I did," she said.

"I didn't," he said. "Not as soon as I knew it was feasible. Not for a moment. Children's needs precede aesthetic considerations."

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As you can see, he's a bit of a menace. When he speaks of his daughter Lisa, for instance, it is all too often by her full name. Obviously likes the euphony of Lisa Tiffany Hunt. "Her birth," he tells us, "is inscribed in the Civil Register of Mexico City, where she was born while I was establishing the first OPC station in that region for Frank Wisner. As a result, Lisa is on the Consular List of Americans born abroad, and belongs thereby to a special and insufficiently recognized natural club of birth."

Just as I've come to the conclusion that this is pretty heavy going—Consular List, my suffering little toe!—why, he crosses me up by adding in a faintly spiteful voice, "Of course, some Americans in foreign settings are just out for the oofah."

"Oofah?" I ask.

"Jack and stack. Stickum." When I am still blank, he translates, "The simoleons, the shekels." I remember that he's already spoken of money as "the stimulus." I expect he has an astonishing number of synonyms for good old filthy lucre. It seems he's not only anointed, but wistfully greedy, and all too keenly aware of the economic sacrifice we make in working for the Agency. He just can't figure out how he'll ever be oofy, and opulent.

All the same, I may be laughing at Howard Hunt a little too much. He can be as stuffy as turkey stuffing, but he's sly for all that. He's going to love having you on board. He even told Hugh that a friend of his at Brown had gone to St. Matthew's and was on the soccer team Hugh used to coach.

"I remember him," said Hugh. "Tried hard. Slow feet."

Living with a man in holy matrimony is analogous to taking a course in human mechanics. Hugh, I have discovered, has gears in his voice box. They tell me when he is ready to take over the conversation. "I hear you did a nice job of preparation in Guatemala," he now said.

"It killed me," answered Hunt, "to be taken out before the real op began, but the powers that be insisted my job had been accomplished and I was now needed in Japan."

"Well, the powers did lend you that Frank Lloyd Wright house for consolation," said Hugh.

"Hardly compensatory," said Hunt. "It's nettling to hear, far away in Tokyo, that your former assistant was actually invited

over to the White House and congratulated by President Eisenhower for his fine work. Most of that fine work was mine."

"I heard from my more elevated sources"—Hugh's reliably effective reference to Allen—"that the President was effusive. 'To take that country with just a few hundred men! All that sleight-of-hand!'"

"I'm glad you can understand how I feel," said Hunt.

"Well, before we quaff the cup of eternal friendship," said Hugh, "let us put it to the test. What would you say if I remark that your famous operation was, in my opinion, a gross error. American interests would have been better served if we had allowed Arbenz to build up a little Communist state in Guatemala." For all his desire to play politics, Hugh is not capable of it.

"What you're saying," said Hunt, "seems awfully liberal to me."

"Say behind my back that I wish to bugger little boys, but do not suggest that I am liberal. I loathe the faintest emanation of Communism. It is a cancer in full metastasis on the body of the Western world."

"Hear, hear," said Hunt. "My sentiments are being most elegantly expressed. Aren't they, Dorothy?"

"Of course," she said.

"But, sir, if it is a cancer, why not operate on it? Whenever and wherever you can."

"Because each cancer is a study in its own anomaly," said Hugh, "and world Communism is a *weak* cancer. You see, Howard, it got into metastasis before it asked itself whether it was ready. It doesn't have the inner wherewithal to fight those cancer wars on every front. Guatemala was, potentially, a desperately expensive proposition for the Soviets. They would have had to invest in that country, supply it, and probably end up feeding it. Their economic system is altogether unsuited for such a job. A huge inefficiency would have been sent to succor a dwarf inefficiency. Why, we could have cost the Russians a pretty penny. And if they had been so foolish as to invest real force, we could have pulled off your surgical incision then. That would have exposed them to serious mockery around the world."

"Wouldn't it also increase the danger of a nuclear war?" asked Dorothy.

"Nuclear scenarios must never be linked to small-scale foreign operations. Nuclear war will come, if it ever does, from another factor altogether."

"Would you name it?" Dorothy asked.

"Despair. World despair. Nuclear war is mutual suicide. A husband and wife make a pact to kill themselves only when they believe they do not have the right to continue to exist. They are spoiling too much. Whereas, in the real world, no two countries are as vain as the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. Neither of us can believe for a moment that we could spoil anything. But if I decide that I am wonderful, and it's the other fellow who is the mess, I guarantee you, Mrs. Hunt, I will not embrace him in a deadly grip and jump off the fatal bridge. I will try to get rid of the beast by other means."

"By starving the Russians out?" she asked.

"Exactly. Exhaust their wherewithal. Entice them into places that use up Soviet energies to little avail. Just think of a million Red Army soldiers in Mexico. What chance would they have against us in a land war?"

"I wouldn't want the numbers to get that high in our backyard," said Hunt.

"They never would," said Hugh. "The Russians are not that stupid. Would we try to put a million soldiers into Eastern Europe? We certainly didn't make the move in Hungary, did we? Yet we can afford a serious war far better than the Soviets. I repeat. We should have left Guatemala alone. They would have built up a third-rate Communist state that would soon have been looking to us for aid."

"I can't agree, sir," said Hunt. "I believe we must shoot varmints between the eyes before they grow up to raid our crops. I hate Communist rats wherever I find them."

Harry, he was seized, as he said this, with the most peculiar intensity. His voice was as husky as a boy getting ready to kiss a girl, and if he felt close to murder, and I would say he did, it was as a virtuous, if not wholly manageable, emotion.

I saw it then. Do you know, Harry, I fear our lovely country has become a religion. Joe McCarthy only dipped his finger into

the bowl of the new holy water. It's not the cross but the flag that is going to stir all those larger feelings people can't live without.

In any event, Hugh had heard enough by now to decide that Hunt could not be bent to any of his uses. So my husband diverted the conversation over to real estate values in Georgetown, about which Howard and Dorothy, as one might expect, knew a lot.

I keep thinking of you working with this odd, semi-inspired man as your future boss. I think Hunt is going to love you. Snobs on the slope always will. Before the evening was done, he let us know that Dorothy was not only one-eighth Oglala Sioux, but descended from the John Quincy Adams family on mother's side, and the Benjamin Harrison family on the father's end. (He made another point of saying, "*President Benjamin Harrison*"—I suppose this august name does not register for all.) "There," he might just as well have declaimed, "is our little tit to your fat tat, Miss Mayflower." Yes, Howard Hunt keeps his kickers for the end. Be sure to tell me all about him.

Yours,
Kittredge

10 | Hunt arrived in Montevideo in advance of Kittredge's letter, and I had formed my own impression by then.

Jan. 29, 1957

Dearest Kittredge,

Well, our new Chief of Station disembarked yesterday with his family: wife, two daughters, son, maid, and Cadillac from the SS *Rio Tunuyan*. Mayhew leaves in a week—which can't be too

no, he is not; yes, I miss you, no, I don't; I'm too busy to think.

Take this as an apology and trust me. I will write a long letter in the next ten days.

Your own H.H.

p.s. I just realized that Howard Hunt, but for his beloved E, is also H.H., and God, are we different. Hugh, Harvey, Hunt, and Herrick Hubbard. I've always thought H was the most peculiar letter in English, and cite for evidence that the Cockneys never came to agreement with it, and they're a practical people. H is the silent presence in "ghost" and the capital proprietor of Heaven and Hell. It is half-silent as in half, and changes error to horror.

P.P.S. As you see, I'm as mad as you are.

April, 1957

~~I dispatched the letter before second thoughts could com-~~
~~mence. Then~~ I went back to my hotel room and tried to sleep, but the sheets reeked of Sally, formaldehyde, and me. She always left behind a strong odor of herself, half carnal and half grugged out of existence by her deodorants, which didn't always take care of the job.

I hardly knew what to do about Sally. We were more intimate than our affection for each other. And my derelictions of duty were increasing. If Porringer was working triple-time under Hunt, I took time out from my own double-time to arrange a meeting with Chevi Fuertes which I knew would not take place. I had not notified him. Instead, I saw Sally. A week later, I did as much again. Professionally speaking, it was easy to conceal. Agents often missed meetings. Like horses, they bolted at the sight of a leaf blowing by. I had to file bogus reports, but they were routine, and bought two hours each time with Sally in my bedroom at the Cervantes. I, waiting for her, would have my clothes off, and my bathrobe on; she, knocking on the door with a tap followed by two taps, would be out of her shoes and off with her skirt even as we embraced in the first of her powerful kisses. "Glue sandwiches" I would have labeled them if not in the mood, but I was usually in the mood, and, naked in a streak,

we grappled toward the bed, stealing handfuls of each other's flesh en route before diving down into the song of the bed-springs, her mouth engorging my cock. There are a hundred words, I suppose, for a penis, but cock is the one that goes with fellatio, and her open marriage with lust, abandonment, and sheer all-out hunger for Hubbard's Yankee prong gave that fellow a mind of his own, a hound off his leash, a brute pillaging the temple of her mouth, except who could call it a temple?—she had confessed to me in one of our postcopulatory conversations that from high school on, she had had a natural appetite, or was it thirst, for this outpost of the forbidden, and, God, it was out of control by the time she came to me.

I, in my turn, was developing tastes and inclinations I did not know I had. Before long, she was presenting her navel and pubic hair toward me, and I, facing the contradictory choices of domination or equality, found my own head reaching to explore her sandy, almost weedlike bush. I am cruel enough to mention how wild and scraggly it looked because that came to mean little. It was the avid mouth behind the hair that leaped out to a part of me that did not know it existed until I was licking and tonguing away with my own abandon which I had never known could belong to my critical lips until they opened into the sheer need I knew to jump across the gap from one bare-ass universe to the next. The only way I ever felt close to Sally Porringer was when her mouth was on my cock and my face was plastered into the canyon between her legs. Who could know what things we had to tell each other at such times? It was not love we exchanged, I expect, but all the old bruises and pinched-off desires—how much there was of that! Lust, I was deciding, had to be all the vast excitement of releasing the tons of mediocrity in oneself. (Then, afterward, when alone in my bed, I would wonder if new mediocrity had been ingested just as much as the old had been purged.) I was discovering that I had the gusto of a high school athlete and the chill estimates of a man so noble in perception of each unhappy nuance as T. S. Eliot.

Say this for the act. When we rose dripping from the sweet and sour mire of feeding on each other, my copulation came pounding happily out of me. To fuck fast was to throw one's heart into the breach and pound enough blood to the head to

banish Thomas Stearns of the Eliot family. One gunned the motors of one's soul and the sugar of one's scrotum—what a joy to discover that Hubbards also secreted scrotum sugar—up, up, over the hill, and into the unchartable empyrean beyond. That vision seemed to disappear almost as soon as it afforded its glimpse. I would be happy for a while to know I was a man and that she wanted me and I gave her pleasure. Soon enough she would be stirring once more. She was not insatiable, but near enough. By the third time, I would be thinking again of Lenny Bruce, and the worst of all this passion was not its successive blunting, but the knowledge that when we were done, we would not know how to talk. We were about as essentially happy with each other in this situation as two strangers who attempt to make conversation on a train.

Whatever the shortcomings, two days later, I would want her again. ~~It was hardly an environment in which to write to Kittredge, but some jobs have to be done.~~

April 10, 1957

Dearest Kittredge,

Your delineation of Howard Hunt was of no uncertain help to me, even if I plead guilty to being the clod who did not acknowledge this earlier. But, Lord, angel, I have been busy. You have had a glimpse of the social side of EH2 (which is what we call Mr. E. Howard H. on occasions when he is not around) but we have been living with the professional end of the man, and he is a martinet for work. That is, the work he inspires us to perform. He takes a lot of time off to play golf, and hunt and fish. We, in turn, have to end up suspending judgment, because his outside recreation is invariably with important Uruguayans. Having taken over Minot Mayhew's role, he stands in as nominal First Secretary of the Embassy at all those diplomatic functions, which, if you remember, Mayhew used to pass on to Sonderstrom, Porringer, and myself. So, that's one change. Howard and Dorothy (who handles social credits and debits like a chief auditor, and manages the Embassy party life with skill comparable to any admiral steering the fleet) have already taken over an astonishingly large part of Montevideo society. We worked and

7 pages
Station jokes.) Hunt shook Porringer's hand solemnly. "That will be one A-OK coup," he said. In fact, Kittredge, it now is. Peones has been in the fold since February. Brownie points for Porringer.

After this lunch, Sonderstrom hastened his departure. He and Hunt were civil to one another, but they were not in tune. Now the Sonderstroms are gone and Porringer is, at present, Acting Deputy COS, and expects to take real title. His scrupulousness on detail and inside political savvy will back-stop Howard nicely. *Dear K. Kittredge,*

Incidentally, I spent an interesting evening at Porringer's home just a couple of weeks ago. His wife is a serious bridge player, and in the States was working on her National Tournament Rating. Marooned here, she has joined a bridge club in Montevideo, which forces her to learn basic Spanish—"Yo declaro tres corazones!" The Porringers brought in a member of Sally's local group for my date, a dolorous, much-wrinkled duenna of seventy or seventy-five who spoke passable English, and played real hot cards. I do an acceptable college rubber, and Porringer is slightly better, but that was the size of the evening. I pass, you notice, quickly over the meal. Sally is, alas, no cook, and we had pot roast that tasted like boiled beef in dishwater, sort of reminiscent of the old St. Matthew's grub. Later, during bridge, the kids would stir once in a while in their all-American bedroom, bunk-bed small and stuffed with half-broken toys, as I discovered when sitting it out as dummy and thereby being the one free to walk the youngest back to her bed after she woke up for the usual nocturnal and fluvial reasons. Why do I tell you all this? It's just that our American domesticity is so strange to me that I look upon it as Martian. (Confession: I envisaged Christopher's bedroom in a few years. Please: no broken toys.)

The banality of the Porringer evening was relieved by one astonishing insight into Sherman. His house looks as you would expect—gray drapes, and blonde-wood furniture, formica dining table and chairs, unpainted stack shelves jammed with books and papers—exactly the way a Midwestern graduate student's apartment figures to shape up. Even a rug made of straw squares sewn together. And frayed. They brought all their furniture with them from Washington because it's shipped at Company ex-

pense. (That gave me a sense of all our modest U.S. families deployed around the globe.) At any rate, in the midst of this predictable household is one glass case with eight hand-painted eggs within. They're remarkably well done. A vista of tree and pond wraps around the shell in one. Another is a gothic castle with moonlight shimmering through a purple forest; they all are separate and exceptional—painted by someone who can use those fine brushes with one or two hairs. Then I learn they are in the glass case because, Sally tells us, Sherman has carefully sucked out the egg by way of a tiny hole he drilled. Once that is accomplished, he paints the fragile surface. Enjoys the risk of it. You can lose all you've put in with one careless move. "Would you like to see these gorgeous things up close?" asks Sally.

Well, prepare yourself for the horror. Even as Sherman is passing the first of his eggs to me, said object falls between our fingers to shatter on the floor. I feel as if a baby bird has just croaked. Kittredge, there are clumsy accidents, and there are what I would call third-force accidents. This was in the latter category. The eggshell left his hand and I swear it took its own willful flip into space.

Well, I apologized till I felt as if I were chewing aspirin, and he kept shrugging it off. A bull rage was stirring so deep in him that it will just bury another piece of his much suppressed soul. I'm sure five, if not ten, hours of immaculate work were lost, and nothing to do about it. He said at the end of a long time for me, but short enough, I suppose, for him to get his sentiments in harness again—"Well, don't feel too bad. It's my least favorite egg. I always take it out first if strangers are going to handle the stuff." Given the circumstances, I must admit Porringer was being gracious. His blue-black shaven cheeks looked as funereal as the occasion.

It's late, and I can't possibly send a letter off which ends on a note like this. So will hold, and write more tomorrow, and mail you that.

Your indentured servant,

Harry

→ P52/16

I can't imagine why I told the awful egg story, except I do know. Even as I write this to you, the reason comes home. It was the sound of the egg as it struck their tile floor. Being just an empty shell, it made the softest, saddest little sound on breaking. I can't get that out of my head. Once on a High Thursday, Hugh told us of an ancient Egyptian saying that the difference between the truth and a lie weighs no more than a feather.

Enough! The exciting news is that we now have an Observation Post right next to the Russian Embassy, and this is as major-league as we have been able to get. Once again, credit is due to Porringer, since the OP comes to us by way of Peones, yet the action derives from Howard's efforts to wake us up. I have not described Peones, but you would hate him. He's heavy, very vain, half Spanish, half Italian, and built to endure. Medium height, with massive shoulders and legs. Large black mustache. Frankly, he's swarthy. Gives off an animal odor that he covers with scent. Peones knows all the brothels in Montevideo and scouts them for new talent the way an assistant college coach will go out to high school football games to look for recruitments. Well, Porringer, I've learned, is something of a brothelmaniac himself. Much more than I ever was, so quiet all contumely. I've settled down. I'm frankly working too hard. But Porringer and Peones became friends by running together from brothel to brothel. It's not the most discreet way to develop an agent, but in this case was a dependable means of stoking a relationship. And please don't say *poor Sally Porringer*. I'm sure Sherman has his reasons.

Here is the background: Peones not only hates Capablanca, but systematically had been deluding him about Sonderstrom and Porringer. Kept insisting they were bona fide State Department. Conceive of his embarrassment (and Oatsie's) when Howard popped out with the direct admission to Capablanca that the lunch was under the auspices of the Intelligence Agency from the Colossus of the North. Peones was mad as hell after that

Peones
~~prepared~~. Over a year ago ~~he had~~ obtained a lease on a villa situated next to the Russian Embassy on Bulevar España. These last twelve months, Peones chose to make no money on the rents—merely took in enough to pay his expenses from a family who, in return for the low rental, had agreed to move out on a week's notice. His instinct was certainly acute enough to know that we would give much to be able to put some of our own people into such a building, but he took no steps until he knew that we trusted him enough to bring his Libertad back to Montevideo. *make a serious arrangement with him for such a lookout.*

If Sonderstrom were still here, he would be dubious of this prize, and Hugh would approach it as a tainted sweetmeat. Even Gatsby and Kearns spoke up. What if the villa next to the Russian Embassy is already wired by the KGB, and Peones has suckered us in?

Hunt cuts through such arguments. "We'll only use the house as a lookout post on the Soviet garden until a few security people are flown down to check it out. Why, even if the Russians have bugged the villa, they are not going to hear anything of value."

No, we decide, not if we put the right people in. They must be people who know nothing of our business yet will be patient enough to sit for hours behind the window curtains, always ready to turn on our Bolex H-16 movie camera should someone enter or leave the Embassy. While it is getting late for outdoor parties, the weather here in April is warmer than Washington in October, so there figure to be a few gatherings in the garden underneath our side windows before cold weather sets in. Obviously, we have to find the proper tenants pronto. But, where do we get them? We don't want to rely on Peones for this.

find us
 Hunt decides to collar Gordy Morewood, and soon ~~we have~~ *enough he* a father and mother ~~installed~~ *and* in the villa with their thirty-year-old daughter. They're vintage Jewish refugees from the Nazis and came to Montevideo in 1935 or thereabouts. Their name is Bosqueverde, which is changed from the original German, I assume. Grunewald may have been the original. Never altered Hyman to Jaime, however. So it's Hyman Bosqueverde, and his wife is Rosa. Daughter is Greta. They call her Gretel. They are a timid, very retiring couple with a shy, plain daughter, but very

close to one another. If the daughter sneezes, the mother shivers. I know all this because Howard has made me their Support Officer.

You see, none of us dare speak to the Bosqueverdes in English (a pity since their English is not bad), but it would be a total giveaway if the KGB had miked the villa. The solution, therefore, was to use me. While my German is not great, I believe I can get away with laying a heavy Spanish accent over it. We hope the assumption will be—if, that is, the KGB is listening—that I'm some Spanish friend of the Bosqueverdes trying to improve his accent.

At any rate, my duties here are simple and small. In return for living in the villa rent-free, the Bosqueverdes are obliged to keep someone near the movie camera and tripod from six in the morning until dark. Since the daughter works as a librarian, I assume she puts in less time than the parents. I visit every third or fourth night to bring over new film and carry back exposed reels. We get the take developed in a safe lab, and I then put in my hours with a movie projector and screen studying the arrivals and departures from the front gate of the Soviet Embassy, ready to attach a new number to each new face. Then the film is pouched up to Cockroach Alley, where Soviet Russia Division has the capacity to recognize faces and attach dossiers to them. As we receive their findings, life becomes more interesting. One of the faces, for example, belonged to a high-level KGB man. He came to the Embassy a couple of times, left again on each occasion after a half-hour visit, and then flew back to Paris, which we were able to determine via AV/OUCH-2 in Passport Control. Of course, we don't know why he made his visit, but SR Division has one more straw for their giant nest.

The garden parties are another matter. Two have been photographed so far, and I run the reels with as much absorption as if I am sitting on the bank of a lake at evening and can't stop studying the light on the water. It's a curious image to use because the Bosqueverdes are not skillful photographers, and the result is close to bad home movies with a telephoto lens thrown in. The pans are abrupt enough to make you feel as if a wrestler is throwing you half across the ring. Still, I study the footage over and over for clues to Soviet Embassy personnel

relationships, and can't begin to tell you how absorbing that is. I feel as if I'm watching a film by Roberto Rossellini. I'm tempted to relate more, but would rather wait until the next garden party, which is scheduled for this Saturday. Personnel from the American Embassy have actually been invited, and while the Ambassador won't go, Hunt may fill in for him as First Secretary, and I could be brought along as Assistant to the First Secretary. How surrealistically splendid it will be if I am present at the party talking to Russians, knowing all the while that I will be able to study them later at leisure. Howard is weighing the pros and cons. He is afraid that if they are indeed tapping the villa they may recognize my voice. I'll give you his conclusion next week.

For now, let me describe our tenants. They live, as I say, rent-free, and Hyman ekes out his income by giving Hebrew lessons to a few young Jewish pupils who are getting ready for their Bar-Mitzvah. Apparently there is a substantial Jewish community in Montevideo. I am absolutely fascinated by these Bosqueverdes. They are the first Jewish family I have ever visited, and everything they do is of interest to me. Almost always when I go over at night, they are drinking tea in glasses, and often are eating some kind of light supper. Sometimes it's cold herring in sour cream with onions, and the smell, while not disagreeable, does permeate the room. They always offer me food and I always refuse it (since my instructions are to get into no long conversations with them and certainly no verbal transactions about reels and equipment. They know enough to hand over the product silently.)

Sometimes one of Hyman Bosqueverde's students will be studying with the old man in an alcove removed from the camera, and I listen to the mutual recital of Hebrew as if all the words are magical. The man and the boy both wear skullcaps, and that seems equally arcane to me. Think of it! They are getting ready for a Bar-Mitzvah in the midst of all this. As I go out, the old lady buttonholes me near the foyer and whispers directly into my ear in a strong German-Jewish accent, "Please, you should take the best care of Mr. Morewood. He works so hard for you."

"Ja," I say, "sí, ja," and I smile and leave with the exposed

reels rattling in my paper bag. (Which also has a loaf of bread sticking out of it.) And I am back on the street and sauntering along for three blocks to my pool car, taking a couple of leisurely stops en route to see if perchance I'm being followed. So far—*nichts!* Good enough. I have the feeling that the villa is not tapped. The Sovietskys simply don't feel the need to keep up to anything like their standards in Berlin.

On the drive to my hotel I keep thinking about the Jews. They are only one-eighth of me but I have this peculiar whole response to them.

Time for bed. Give my love to my godson, and to you and yours.

Harry

12 |

April 14, 1957

Dearest Kittredge,

The garden party is tomorrow and Hunt has decided that I'm the one to go with him. No doubt about it, he's bold, and I'm pleased. I know the terrain, I've done the chores, and now I'm entitled to the reward. Of course, I'll have to be three times as cautious in future when dropping in on the Bosqueverdes, or else turn the visits over to Kearns or Gatsby (who are, incidentally, jealous of Hunt's growing fondness for me—you were certainly right about that) but, on balance, I'm pleased. To sip cocktails behind the enemy's garden walls—how many can speak of such an experience?

As a result, work hung heavy today, and I left early, and now find an urge to write to you again. There are so many sides to

pp 562-615

16 The letter was written in her small Gothic script. By the time I was done, longing had thrown another noose around my wish to escape from love.

Start

Jan. 11, 1958

Dearest Kittredge,

53pp I will not try to tell you how near your letter brought you to me. ~~How deep, how damnable, and how unfair it must all have felt.~~ I see now why my letters, with their small details, have been agreeable to you. Let me try to divert you, then. Here at this Station on a busy day, when two or three things are coming to a boil (or coming apart), one feels in the midst of a Rube Goldberg machine. Right now, on Saturday afternoon, it is quiet—a rare occasion!—a quiet Saturday afternoon in the midst of our January summer. Everyone I know is at one or another of our clay beaches and coffee-colored sea. It's hot, and I sit in my shorts, still in the same cheap hotel room, believe it or not—I'm one of their three oldest residents by now. Kittredge, I pride myself at how little I need of material things. On the other hand, I virtually percolate with pleasure in enumerating Station activities. I feel as if that is my store, and I'm taking proud inventory.

Here is a good portion of the news. The Bosqueverdes have two awful Washington people from the Soviet Russia Division virtually bivouacked in their quarters. On Tuesday nights, in another part of town, AV/ALANCHE is fighting pitched battles against the left student youth group, MRO. AV/ALANCHE are the sign painters, do you recollect? And there's still Peones and Libertad, and Chevi Fuertes to bring you up on, plus the Russians, which is to say, our one Russian couple. I am now on good visiting terms with Masarov and his wife. Yes, the greatest single change is that I am, under the most stringent precautions you can imagine, permitted, even encouraged, to cultivate a relationship with Masarov. It has turned the pockets of my inner life inside out.

Before commencing, however, I must tell you, Kittredge, how much I adore you. I am absolutely confounded that anyone in our line of work can doubt for one moment the existence of

Alpha and Omega. Well, a good writing teacher I know at Yale said never to use qualifiers like absolutely unless one was hopelessly in love. Absolutely not.

To my good friend Boris Gennadyevitch Masarov and his gypsy wife, Zenia, then. (She told me once that she was one-nineteenth gypsy.)

"One-nineteenth?" I asked her.

"You are brutal as Russian with fascination for facts, figures, numbers," she responded.

"One-nineteenth?" I inquired again.

"Are good-looking young man. Why ask silly question?"

Having set down this exchange, I see that I have failed to present her quality. She is not shallow. She carries herself as if nothing has transpired in Russia of any moment since Dostoyevsky was saved from the firing squad by the czar's reprieve. I suppose I am saying that she elicits a chord in one's historical appreciation. I now know how an aristocratic woman of the provinces might appear to us in the middle of the nineteenth century. The best of Russian literature comes alive for me when I am around Zenia. So many of Turgenev's dissatisfied women come to mind, and Chekhov's incomparable glimpses of the Russian provinces. Zenia is all of them for me, and more. Yet, she is also a woman who has lived under the horrors of Stalin. Kittredge, you can feel the depredations of Soviet history through the sense one receives of her much-battered soul. While she looks over forty, the Russians show their age in ways we do not. Do you know, I believe they take a certain grim satisfaction in wearing their souls on the wrinkled surface of their face. We Americans would, of course, go squeak before we'd ever let anyone have the satisfaction of thinking he was looking into our spiritual depths, but that may be exactly what the Russians have to offer. "I have passed through cataclysmic days, and permitted state horrors to be visited on friends, but I have never lied to my soul." That is what her face says to me. (She has the most extraordinary deep dark eyes—operative definition of "Otchi Chorniya.") Yet she has to have been around frightful events. She is KGB, after all. Or at least her husband is. Then she tells me that she is thirty-three. Yes, history has cut its lines into Russian faces.

Well, here I am, rushing new people on to you without the courtesy of a little development, but then this friendship with the Masarovs is the most interesting relation I have at present with anyone in Uruguay, even if it has been put together like an arranged marriage with brokers on both sides.

It began because here in Montevideo we are sometimes a working part of the State Department. "Our cover folds us into the crust" has become one of Hunt's sayings. Of course, he doesn't exactly hate the idea of pretending to be First Secretary to the American Ambassador. As you may recall, that worthy, Jefferson Patterson, Eisenhower's appointee, is a genteel man with a hopeless stammer in English and it gets worse when he attempts Spanish. So, Patterson continues to avoid functions. His deputy, the Counselor, is all right, but his wife, a lush, has been known to take off her shoes at Embassy dances and embark on impromptu high kicks—"Grands jetés," she announces. Needless to say, they took her off the circuit. Which leaves the field open to the Hunts, and, on occasion, the Porringers, and myself.

Combine this with the State Department's estimate that Khrushchev's constant appeals lately for armament reductions, while clearly not to be trusted, must be met, nonetheless, with compensatory American moves. We-cannot-lose-another-contest-for-world-opinion is the present State Department stance. Word has even come to us from Western Hemisphere Division: Carefully monitored fraternizing with the Soviets is a viable option. Theoretically, we're always prepared to get friendly with any Soviet who throws us a side glance, but as a practical matter, whenever small conversations commence around the canapé tables, we comport ourselves as if we are offering Christmas politesse to lepers. You don't put a career on the line by fraternizing for too little.

Well, the directive has come in. And we have certainly heated up the GOGOL outpost (which is how we refer to the Bosqueverdes) now that the Russian garden parties are going again. The Sourballs thought enough of this opportunity to send down two of their operators. Nearly all of Soviet Russia Div's people are anti-Soviet Russians, or Poles, or Finns, intensely fluent in Russian. They do make an odd breed. Paranoid

and insular to an extraordinary degree, they give off about as much warmth as a barnacle. Yet they sport what could be Irish names if not for the odd spelling. Monikers like Heulihaen (pronounced Hoolihan) and Flarrety (pronounced Flaherty). Heulihaen and Flarrety have been installed on separate eight-hour stints at GOGOL outpost for the last month, and have been photographing the very hell out of the lawn parties in the Soviet Embassy garden.

Hunt calls them our Finnish Micks. Left to themselves, the Finnish Micks would pass over to us about as much information as you could get from a Mickey Finn, but Hunt knows how to play the web back at Cockroach Alley. Result: The Finnish Micks grudgingly provide us with bits of poop and scam.

The largest discovery (accomplished by way of filming the Russians and their guests in the garden, then studying these home movies around the clock) is that a bit of infidelity is going on behind Soviet Embassy walls. There seems a likely connection between the new Soviet KGB chief, the *Resident*, named Varkhov, Georgi Varkhov, who looks exactly as he should, built like a tank, shaved head like a bullet, and—are you wholly prepared?—our own soulful Zenia.

Now, I was apprised of this item after I became friendly, all proportions kept, with the Masarovs. I still think Zenia is soulful, although her taste for Varkhov, if true, puts me off. The Finnish Micks, however, seem pretty certain of their ground. The working logic for such conclusions, as I piece it out, comes to this: In social life, we are always surrounded by hints of infidelity at every party. We see smiles, whispers, glances—all that movie-business sign language. Yet our perceptions are transitory. Hints of behavior are everywhere, but we usually cannot confirm what we have seen. On film, however, if we expend the patience to reexamine each move of our actors, the indeterminate can crystallize into the concrete. By such methods are we provided with a 75-percent certainty that Zenia Masarov and Georgi Varkhov are having a liaison, and Boris Gennadyevitch Masarov is aware of the situation.

I hate to terminate at just this place but an urgent phone call involving my work has just come in. Since I have to go by the

Embassy, I will post this letter and do my best to carry it up to date tomorrow. Hopefully, I can send a full account then. Forgive such a brusque ending.

Love,
Herrick

17 | The urgent phone call did not involve my work but was from Sally. She had to be with me. She had just been to the doctor; she was pregnant.

Lately, I had been attempting to see her less often, but the results had been inconclusive. Now she was pregnant. My poor Sally was honest, or honest enough when pushed to the truth (since I did push her), to admit she had also had intercourse with Sherman in this period. She did not know whose child it was. Although she would swear it was mine.

I felt close to nausea. Soon, I recognized that she felt worse. She would not have an abortion, she told me. She would proceed to have the child—"And," she said, "let's hope he doesn't look too much like you." If it was a boy, she was certain it would be mine. Her logic seemed unassailable to her. "I want him to look a little like you," she said.

We sat on the edge of my bed, grasping each other in the way of beggars who hope to draw warmth out of the gnawing hole within themselves. For the first time, we neither took off our clothes nor made love with them on. Even as I pressed her to have an abortion, I knew she would refuse, and found a demon within my inmost worm. The thought that I would be having a child closeted in the home of Sherman Porringer did appeal to a very small part of me. I understood suddenly that evil did not have to be all-consuming, it need touch no more than one rare nerve. I did my best to tell myself that it might be

Sherman's child after all. Then I decided that it did not matter. Sherman, devoted habitué of every good (and low) brothel in Montevideo, deserved whatever he got. It also occurred to me that he could have syphilis (in which case, so could I), although, loyal hog to modern medicine, Porringer was always consuming each new antibiotic that came into the Embassy pharmacy. He was a walking myocinizine of a penisulfamilimide.

Sally departed to the tune of mutual agreements to discuss these matters further. I even thought of the child to come. That finally gave me one fine pang. Some part of me might soon be trapped beneath Porringer's roof. I consoled myself with the thought that Sally would be a passionate and loving mother, albeit a loud one with a register of shrieks for the spills and slops of childhood.

~~I had certainly lost my Saturday. That night I did go to the Embassy, laid my letter into the box for the State Department pouch, and went home to write again.~~

January 11, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

It's midnight just about. Work has come, work has gone—a crisis with Fuertes proved not critical. I'll fill you in before too long on our Uruguay ace, but prefer first to expatiate on my new KGB cronies.

Of course, I can still hear one instructor at the Farm saying, "Expatiate!" That dependable Agency exhortation! The-space-you-ate, Hubbard, bring-forth-the-space-you-ate—as if memory were a mighty maw. Hark to these wings of metaphor! The truth is that I feel giddy writing to you again. Can it be the altitude? In case I haven't told you, after Luxembourg, Uruguay is the flattest country in the world. At sea level, too. Do you know I've had four drinks with an avocado.

I apologize. I feel just a little too much vertigo to go on. I'll sleep and pick this up tomorrow.

Sunday morning

It's now January 12th, and I will not tear up last night's final *pensées*. I believe, despite the evidence above, that my wits show their own curious gait when I'm drunk.

To the Masarovs. Some time ago, Varkhov, the Resident at the Russian Embassy, invited us to a large party. After cable exchanges with the Groogs and the Sourballs, we accepted. Hunt led the State Department delegation, and Porringer and I took up our cover as First Assistant and Second Assistant to the First Secretary to the Ambassador—shades of Gilbert and Sullivan! Hunt, looking over our team, decided that I needed a date.

"How about Libertad La Lengua?" I said to that.

"How about Nancy Waterston," he replied.

I'm sure it's been so long since I mentioned our Administrative Officer that I must refresh your memory. I believe I described Nancy once as sweet, bright, and hardworking but undeniably plain and very much a spinster. She used to be devoted to Mayhew, and Hunt now gets ditto loyalty. In the beginning, I took her out a couple of times when Mrs. Sonderstrom or Mrs. Porringer or Mrs. Gatsby or Mrs. Kearns couldn't find an unattached single girl for me. Nancy has to be ten years older than myself, and I would guess that she has never been to bed with a man.

Well, if it had been the Swiss Embassy, or even the Embajada de Gran Bretaña, I would have accepted the chore, but I felt curiously diminished to enter the Soviet lair with Nancy on my arm.

Hunt would have none of these niceties. "Do you know the meaning of 'The Colonel requests'?" he asked.

"Howard, Nancy won't enjoy herself."

"She will."

stet { He laughed a lot at that in the sky-high skinny whinny you so detest. He has a long middle finger, and for the life of me, Kittredge (and I hope my candor will not put you off), I had an image of Howard inserting that finger into the poor chaste fold of Miss Waterston. It was the oddest flash to come into the conversation. I saw the finger probing back and forth—a series of wholly authoritative strokes. The mind takes us where it will, won't it?

"You look a little glassy-eyed," said Hunt.

"What is your motive?" I asked about as coldly as I dared.

"It's a ploy, Harry. The King Brothers won't know what to make of you and Nancy."

"They'll see right through it."

"Well, kid, they might not. Because I want you to introduce Nancy as your fiancée."

"Have you asked her?"

"She's amenable. It'll be fun for her."

"Howard," I said, "tell me the real motive. It will go down easier."

"The Sovs are always running a dupe-show on us. I've seen one of their joy-boys with three different Russian tomatoes at three different foreign embassy functions. Each time, the same fellow has the gall to introduce the *lady*"—he held both hands far apart and dipped quotation marks with bent fingers—"as his wife. The time has come to show them a little of our dipsy doodle."

Well, Kittredge, it ended up being quite an evening. We arrived at the Russian Embassy on a Saturday in late afternoon and the light was kind to the soft yellow tones of their stone manse. Like much of Montevideo architecture, it is a hodgepodge of Italian Renaissance, French Baroque, Transylvanian Gothic, Oak Park, Illinois, circa 1912, and plain old Russian samovar, a big sprawling villa with massive doors and turrets and ingrown balconies that look like ingrown toenails, dwarf windows and magnum windows, forbidding outer gates, black-spiked fence with painted gold tips on the spearheads. "Blue-beard's castle," I whispered to Nancy as we entered the outer gate and were steered by a wholly uncompromising young Russian marine to the garden. I had an unruly impulse to look up at the Bosqueverdes' window where the Bolex H-16 is posted, and give a clenched fist of a Communist salute to the Finnish Micks.

Well, I've never described an embassy party on the theory that you're familiar enough with them in Washington, so why be offered details of our lesser spread? Still, the Russians do it up. They had invited about every foreign gang in town—Norway, Greece, Japan, Portugal, Costa Rica, name it, even the Orden Soberana de Malta, the Reino de Bélgica, and the República Socialista de Checoslovaquia. By the time the international tide was in, there may have been one hundred and fifty people on that lawn drawn from as many as forty embassies and consulates. A Soviet offering of hospitality to the world: one ton of black

caviar, endless supplies of vodka, plus the usual array of appetizers, most of which struck the eye like a bead of acid-green pigment on a mound of cadmium orange. They also serve red wine and white wine from the Caucasus—some of the worst stuff ever corked—and all the foreign embassy types did their best to practice English on me. There is something so prodigiously fraudulent about the congealed friendliness of these embassy types. Such anxiety in the air. Everyone stirs with the restlessness of birds.

All this was exacerbated by the presence of Americans in the Russian garden. How I wish you could have been here. Your beauty would have polarized the greensward. As it was, I anticipated in advance just how it was going to show in the films. From above, each American and each Russian was the center of a cluster of foreign embassy types. Caught by a telephoto lens, pieces of information seem equal to particles of food. Tongues dart out to snatch each morsel.

Afternoon opened onto twilight, and another mood settled in. Everyone got a little wild (by which I mean no more than a shade over into the indiscreet). Hunt tells me that movie people call this time of day the magic hour since the natural light is soft and wonderful, but the scene has to be captured on film in thirty minutes. (If I ever have to face a firing squad, I hope it's in a garden at twilight—what a thought!) I kept picturing the frustrations of Heulihaen and Flarrety as they bore down on us with their lens and (it better be) ultra-high-speed film. Of course, the more we all acted up at the party, the less light there was to satisfy our Finns.

Pretty soon, those minor and major embassies who happen on this day to have no particular business to initiate begin to leave, and the lawn opens for dramatic action. Now you can pick up what is happening across the garden. Hunt is talking to Varkhov, who in turn is paying court to Dorothy. Before long, Zenia takes a stroll from the Foreign Office to the KGB, which is to say leaves two of Great Britain's officials to join her Resident, and she and Varkhov now laugh loudly at Hunt's jokes. In another corner of the garden, a joy-boy (from Irkutsk, no doubt) is flirting with Sally Porringer, who no longer seems afraid that Sherman will put her tit in a wringer, and I, giddy from caviar

after a year of eating meat twice a day, and not impervious to the vodka, move in on Boris Masarov, keeping Nancy at my side. "I want you to meet my fiancée," I say in the best good humor, as if the idea were mine all along.

Kittredge, I must tell you. Given my schooling, I am only now learning what wonderful and mysterious beings women are. I confess it. Nancy Waterston, whose face on a good day would give competition to a parson's daughter, narrow, pinched, and all her features pulled by duty, her small bust unable to protrude beyond the forward hunch of her shoulders, now looked as attractive as if sparklers had been set off on her wedding cake. When a plain woman looks dazzling for an instant, one's breath stands still; the universe is full of surprise. (Which is equal to saying, I suppose, that the universe is meaningful.)

Masarov reacted formally. "I congratulate you," he said. "I lift glass to toast vital spirit of future marriage."

"Mr. Masarov, that is a distinguished toast," said Nancy in her good Midwestern accent so cram-packed with honest step-by-step sentiment. But then she gave a little laugh as such honesty came face to face with her present role. "Maybe you will attend our wedding," she said.

"It will be when?" he asked, and I could not help but notice that he was looking down the length of the lawn to where Zenia and Varkhov were still talking to Hunt and Dorothy. The anguish on Masarov's face (which I cannot say I would have perceived had not the Zenia-Varkhov liaison been advertised to me as a 75-percent likelihood) now seemed analogous to the wound of a tired animal who pauses, blood dripping, before gathering itself to climb one more hill. He downed his drink in a shot and stopped a Uruguayan waiter who was carrying an ice-cold bottle of vodka on a tray.

"We don't know the date yet," said Nancy, "because I believe in long engagements." Was she drunk, I wondered, or merely intoxicated by newfound talents? "That's an old family institution," she told him. "My father and mother went together seven years before their wedding bells spoke up long enough to say, 'Enough of this. Please ring us. We're rusty.'"

"Yes," he said, "may I ask? What does your father do?"

"He's a circus acrobat," said Nancy, and giggled again. Her

eyes were dancing behind her eyeglasses. I realized, as if I were cleansing the inside of myself with the nicest pomade of compassion and sweet sorrow, that this must be the liveliest evening she had had in Uruguay. "No," she said, "our country was founded on the idea that you cannot tell a lie. My father is retired, but he used to be a corporate executive in insurance in Akron, Ohio."

Masarov looked relieved, as if a piece of intelligence had just checked out. "My country was not founded," he said in reply. "More likely, was shot out of a cannon."

Be certain, I underlined that last remark for referral to Hunt.

Masarov held up his glass. "Toast to future nuptials."

"I like being toasted," said Nancy.

"First, however, learn to drink our vodka. Americans are always telling me is hard to keep up with Russian banquets. Because they do not know secret."

"Oh, give me the secret," she said.

At just this juncture, Varkhov, who was making a tour of his remaining guests, joined us, and jumped in so quickly on Masarov's speech that I realized both men were equally well used to informing all and sundry how to imbibe Russian spirits. Varkhov's syntax in English, however, was what an instructor at the Farm once called *Russky Tarzan*. Articles, pronouns, and the verb *to be* withered away. Primeval grunts were substituted.

"Not sipping," he said. "Never sipping. Gulp vodka. Only"—Varkhov held up one Russian commissar of a flat, heavy palm—"offer toast. First! Deepest toast. Appraisal of relationship. From heart. Offered from heart, drink vodka in gulp." Which he did, and whistled for the waiter to come back. "Fill glasses. Not worry. Small glasses."

We filled glasses. "After vodka," he said, "eat caviar. Better, eat *zakushki*. Appetizer."

"Yes," said Nancy, as if she were well used to obeying orders.

"Then, darling lady never drunk."

"Ho, ho, ho," said I.

"Cynic," said Varkhov.

He held up his glass again. "Toast," he said. "To evening,