

MUNSHIN

I'm a realist. So are you, H.T. No other studio could make a nickel handling Tony, but your genius will do it. Think of the publicity. Tony Tanner the cocky kid who stole Atom Bomb Lulu Meyers right from under a big lover type like Teddy Pope. You've done it again, H.T.

TEPPIS

Don't give me compliments. My indigestion is upset.

MUNSHIN

The doctor told me you got to lower your nervous tension.

TEPPIS

You're my son-in-law and you're a pimp. If it weren't for my daughter, I'd fire you.

MUNSHIN

I've got a sweet kid for you, H.T. She'll button her lip tight as a virgin's bun.

TEPPIS

You're a foul-mouthed individual. You get the hell out, Collie. You think a man can break the laws of society? Those laws are for a purpose. Every time you send up a girl I don't even want to see her again. I refuse to sleep with her.

(Munshin makes a signal. Bobby enters)

MUNSHIN

Nobody works the way you do, H.T.

(He exits)

CHANGE FIFTEEN

TEPPIS

(To Bobby)

Come here, sweetie . . . don't you worry, sweetie . . .

(She kneels before him.

To the world at large)

There's a monster in the human heart.

BLACKOUT

→ P162

CHANGE FOURTEEN

SERGIUS

There's nothing like being up early. In the air at four in the morning, coffee on your tongue. Our wing man always used to wiggle his plane like a cooch dancer, and soon we were all laughing and wiggling our tails, cause he was a good crazy guy, you know. Sometimes on tactical missions we would lay fire bombs into Oriental villages. I didn't like that particularly, but I would be busy with technique, and I would dive my plane and release my payload into my part of the pattern. I hardly thought of it any other way. From the air a city in flames is not a bad sight. One morning I came back from such a mission and went into Officers' Mess for lunch. We were stationed at an airfield near Tokyo, and one of the Japanese KP's, a fifteen-year-old boy, had just burned his arm in a kettle of spilled soup. Like most Orientals he was durable, and so he served the dishes with one hand, his burned arm held behind him, while the sweat stood out on his nose, and he bobbed his head in

~~Deliberate~~ 1133

(On this speech, Eitel leaves the others, and takes a slow overburdened walk back to his favorite seat on the set, the director's chair)

MARION

Mire the body in offal. So the soul may relinquish its heart.

BEDA

The night is in the saddle of the hills. The hours pass.
Look—the night has drained the blood from one.

ZENLIA

On with the lights—I want to see the face of the sweet little beasts who make love to me.

MARION

Eitel has come home. The wounded always return to the place where they first knew the hunter held their heart in his eye.

SERGIUS

I was in the hospital and for the first time in my life I had to think. And that is a terrible demand to make of a native-born American like me.

(As Sergius is speaking these last words, Marion, Zenlia and Beda have been filing off. The light goes out on Sergius, and comes up. In the half dark, the few modifications necessary to bring the set back from the patio to Eitel's ranch house have been taken. We are back, yes, at the ranch again. So Elena steps directly from this last scene into the next, from the orgy—if you permit this—to the home.)

CHANGE TWELVE

ELENA

Love, Charley—I love you.

EITEL

Don't come near me.

ELENA

Charley, I love you.

EITEL

Love, Elena? Love is just a big noise.

ELENA

Yes, I love you. But I don't love you completely. You're too greedy. You don't really want me and yet you want every last bit of me. Well, let me tell you . . . maybe I want other rhythms in my body besides yours.

EITEL

I'll never touch you again.

ELENA

Oh, lover, touch me. .

(She reaches for him but he moves away)

Oh, Charley, don't you see, they had to have me, I was the center of attention. Oh, come here, love, come to me.

- (He does not move)

Listen, I don't love you. I never loved anybody. I'm too conceited. So don't feel guilty. You don't owe me nothing.

EITEL

You bitch, you worship stupidity as if it were your patron saint.

ELENA

Want to know how stupid I am? I tried to commit suicide the day Collie told me he was tearing it. Yes. "Collie," I kept saying, "you and me were just an old sewer."

EITEL

Shut your foul mouth.

ELENA

I'm just getting started, Charley boy. How do you like my crude manners, hey, sweetheart? Say listen. When Collie came to my room, I saw the executive in him, magnificent, daddy, he said, "Hello," and slapped me a few times, and asked, "Where's the pill bottle?" and when he saw it, he began to laugh, and he said, "You idiot, those aren't sleeping pills, those are just ~~bromide~~ No-Doz." and he began to jazz me right there and then.

(Eitel starts to leave)

No, you listen to every last bit of this . . . I never told you this, but Collie was pretty good, and I always used to act it was great with him, but of course I used to act with all of them until the night I met you . . .

(Eitel looks at her in disbelief)

. . . except that's a lie, you're right, Charley, because that night with Collie, the night before you, I let go, I mean I really let go—I thought I was in ether or something—what poison I was getting out of me, and the funny thing was that I couldn't have cared less about Collie, why we even had a talk afterward and he decided he would see me for a night every now and then, and he would pay me. Dig, Charley boy?

EITEL

Are you done?

ELENA

Can't you take it?

EITEL

I can take it.

ELENA

I mean consider my delicate ladylike elegant feelings. I mean, this great jazz with Collie, and the moment he's done, he's got to make it clear that tomorrow you are coming over, you Charley, my first john, my bathroom—Collie is setting me up in business—you sons of bitches—and you know what?—I was fantastically excited, I don't know if it was you or the situation or because I was finally nothing but a whore, but it was crazy with you, Charley, it was all the way out. And in the morning I realized you didn't think of me as a call girl. You didn't know. You were cornering me into a love affair, and don't think I didn't want it with you, except I knew I could eat up the whole world if only I wasn't afraid to live and be free.

(Eitel nods)

Yes, Charley, as of now I am free and it's frightening. Oh, Charley boy, it's terrifying as hell. Because women, Charley, weren't born to be free, they were born to have babies, I suppose, and I am getting weird and wild and really scared inside because it's too good, Charley, I mean like tonight I got too much from everybody—Wow! Oh, my God, Charley, I've gone too far—I keep telling myself, "You can't cheat life," and I feel like I can, I mean, Charley, let's cut the crap—you get on the telephone and get me a taxi because I'm going over to live with Marion—Yes, there is where I should be—with Marion—he asked me tonight, yes, you cheap cowardly son of a bitch, I'm taking off. Listen, Charley, I'm going up and up, I need a lot of men, that's the only way a bitch like me can learn anything, from men, you little idiots, you're so pleased with yourselves when you're done, well, kiss off and thanks, because now I have the key and it's going to unlock a few doors—it must be because I have a hole eating away in me—if that cold bitch Zenlia can get herself a king, I ought to rate an emperor, because I was born to be a queen, oh God, that's all that can save me—Do you have anything to answer now?

EITEL

(Eitel goes up to her. He smiles)

*ambiguously. We do not know if
he will embrace her or turn away.
And she moves toward him on the
hint. He smiles again.)*

Go peddle your papers, kid.

ELENA

*(With the cry of a wounded ani-
mal)*

Yes, yes. Good-bye, Charley.

(She exits)

CHANGE ELEVEN

(Eitel is alone)

EITEL

Where, in what cemetery of the heavens, do the tender
words of lovers rest when they love no more?

CHANGE TEN

*(Eitel is still alone. From behind
him, up on the platform where Tep-
pis has remained all night, comes
the old producer's voice. Eitel is
hearing him in a kind of hallucina-
tion whose quality is suggested by
the lights.)*

TEPPIS

I like you, you miserable crook, I want you back.

EITEL

You'll have to break something first.

TEPPIS

In you, I'll break it.

EITEL

I miss you, Herman.

TEPPIS

I could cry when I think you ain't here to play me the insults. Go to hell, Eitel. I believe in God. He's picked on me.

EITEL

Why you?

TEPPIS

Because He's like me, an old man who knows what it's all about, and could throw up it's such a mess. Excuse me. I believe He gives His vote to the man who wins.

EITEL

Amen.

(Teppis descends the stairs and sits down next to Eitel. The illusion of hallucination must not, however, be dispelled.)

TEPPIS

Eitel, why do I bother? It can't be the money.

EITEL

Herman, you can't be happy until you touch every last button on the machine.

TEPPIS

Say something nice to me. I've had a miserable night.

EITEL

I can't help it, you're not a very nice old man.

TEPPIS

(Begins to weep)

You. You were the only one I cared about. You never fit in. You had class.

EITEL

(Not without tenderness)

It's all changing, old pirate. Soon they'll make movies with electronic machines and you'll be gone.

TEPPIS

You like me a little.

EITEL

I don't like anybody anymore.

TEPPIS

Then you'll be back with me.

EITEL

I think that what I'll do is never make another picture. I'll take silence.

TEPPIS

You can't. You're a whore. You think a whore can stay alone in a room?

EITEL

We're all whores, sir.

TEPPIS

Leave the women out of it.

EITEL

Oh, the women. They *are* whores.

TEPPIS

Nobody talks about women that way in my presence.

(Slaps Eitel)

Listen, you bum, I've given to charity all my life.

EITEL

You'll die of cancer.

TEPPIS

Then society, God bless it, goes with me.

(Exit Teppis. Eitel is left alone in the wreckage of the patio.)

Dorothea speaks from the platform where we first saw her at the beginning of the act—it is still another part of the hallucination.)

DOROTHEA
(*Vaguely*)

You're too old, Charley, you're too sweet for all of this.

(Dorothea wanders off. Eitel is alone. Lights fade)

CHANGE NINE

(A single spot on Marion. The light flickers with a hint of lightning or some kind of distant explosion. Marion turns full circle, scanning the horizon.)

MARION

It seems they are testing another atom bomb tonight.

(Wild laugh from Elena. She is dialing the phone.)

EITEL

Hello? . . . Hello? . . . Who is it? . . . Elena? . . . Is it you? . . . Hello? . . . Hello!

(Elena hangs up)

ELENA

It seems like my old pal Charley is back in town.

MARION

There you are, with your hard wop heart, and yet you loved him.

ELENA

What would you know?

MARION

You really loved him. No wonder you never got around to telling Eitel about some of the men and boys you did to get a two-bit booking in a nightclub.

ELENA

Not as many as you think. Believe it or not, I had my pride.

MARION

Like your old pal, Charley.

ELENA

Lay off him.

MARION

You think he's all right?

ELENA

I don't want to talk about it.

MARION

See the newspapers today?

ELENA

I don't read the newspapers.

MARION

You're a dull broad.

ELENA

Your friend, Don Beda, doesn't think I'm so dull. Know what I mean?

MARION

(Takes a clipping from his pocket)

"It has taken me years of wasted and misplaced effort"—dig, Elena—"misplaced effort, to recognize the useful and patriotic function of the Committee, and I testify today without duress, proud to be able to contribute my share to the defense of this country against all infiltration and subversion." That's us, honey.

ELENA

He didn't write it. Somebody gave it to him to sign.

MARION

(Laughs)

They must have peeled Eitel inch by inch.

ELENA

Knock off, will you?

MARION

(Reading)

"I can only add that it is the duty of every citizen to aid the Committee in its work with whatever knowledge he may possess."

ELENA

(Interrupting)

It bores me.

MARION

You have no inner life.

ELENA

I don't. Don't I know I don't.

MARION

You certainly don't.

ELENA

Why don't you make me a call-girl?

MARION

You couldn't make it as a call-girl.

ELENA

I could be a very good call-girl.

MARION

When one gets to know you well, you're raw meat. You lack class.

ELENA

All right, make me a prostitute.

MARION

Let's get married.

ELENA

I'd never marry you.

MARION

Dearest—what if I'm the one who won't marry you?

ELENA

I want to be a prostitute.

MARION

I don't touch prostitutes . . . I could send you to a friend, though. He has a job where you could work half in a whorehouse.

ELENA

What does half in a whorehouse mean?

MARION

It means in a whorehouse . . . on the Mexican border.

ELENA

I won't do that.

MARION

Are you a snob, doctor? Think of all the poor creeps down there and how they're crawling for you.

ELENA

I'm getting out.

MARION

Get out.

ELENA

I'll go.

MARION

Can you find the door?

ELENA

I'd like to kill myself.

MARION

You haven't got the guts.

ELENA

Don't taunt me. I could do it.

MARION

(Takes out a small bottle)

I've been saving these for myself. They're like sleeping pills. Except that two is enough. Two capsules. But it's enough.

ELENA

You think I won't?

MARION

I think you'll look at them.

ELENA

How long have you had those pills?

MARION

I put them in my pocket today.

ELENA

But when did you begin to think of having them . . . for me?

MARION

Lying next to you in bed. The first time. When you were just beginning to go with Eitel.

(Tenderly)

I said to myself, "This child is the material out of which suicides are made."

ELENA

You knew.

MARION

My mind never stops. I'm always hearing the words of my will. My will said to me, "You can make her kill herself."

ELENA

Why?

MARION

You prevented the other thing.

ELENA

What?

MARION

The other thing. Eitel and me. I wanted Eitel. Then you came along. I wanted you. I wanted both of you.

ELENA

Were you insane?

MARION

Incest is always insane. But that's where the atomic power is buried, little boob. Incest, man, feedback, that's civilization. The mirror. Self-image, you ass, that's sanity, some image you can have of yourself. So bang me, mommy, dig.

(Stops. Considers. Stares at her.)

Besides, you bled the manhood from Eitel, you maggot.

ELENA

I didn't.

MARION

You bled my beloved Charley like a leech. Here . . . take the pills.

ELENA

How can you want this? I gave you more than I gave anyone.

MARION

(He says this angelically)

I know, sweetheart, but somehow I never did get to like your smell.

ELENA

(Swallows the pills)

There, it's done . . . I'm done.

MARION

You'll be asleep soon.

ELENA

You don't care.

MARION

I think you're great if you can hold out. I mean, like I don't know if I can watch.

ELENA

You horror. You're not killer enough to kill the hate in me.

MARION

Not killer enough. You squat. You eat the goodness from your seed.

ELENA

For a moment I knew what it was. With Charley I knew.

MARION

And with me.

ELENA

And with you. I will go mad.

MARION

Die.

ELENA

The night I met Charley I was ready to cut my wrists. Instead I went to bed with him. One last fling . . . I thought a miracle had come. I wanted to live again.

MARION

Die. Drown in ~~the Niagara of~~ your sentimental shit.

ELENA

Charley and I had so far to go to meet each other, and love is beautiful at the end of a long trip. Now I'll never feel love anymore. Oh, Charley, forgive me, oh Charley, forgive.

(Reaches for the phone, but the drug causes her difficulty in dialing. As she is about to dial the last number, Marion takes the phone.)

Maybe you are right to stop me. I have brought good to no one.

(It is the only self-admission which could save her. The avenging angel within Marion delivers its verdict: the execution will not take place.)

MARION

(Voice filled with hatred of himself for capitulating)

It seems I have a drop of mercy after all.

(Dials the last number)

ELENA

(Into the phone in a listless voice)

Charley . . . I took some pills. . . . Please call the hospital. . . . Send an ambulance over here . . . to Marion's.

(Hangs up)

I'm sorry, Marion. I'm so sorry, but I don't want to stop.

(She begins to weep.

It is at this moment that the BOMB goes off a hundred miles away—far across the desert.

The light through the window is intense, a white shuddering light. Elena screams, and Marion does not move.)

CHANGE EIGHT

MARION

(Over the high piercing note of the bomb's explosion, high and piercing as the wail of a jet engine)

The bomb, my friends, yes, let it come. Let this explosion

come, and then another, and all the others. Let it come and clear the rot and the stench and the stink, let it come for all of everywhere, just so it comes and the world stands clear in the white dead dawn.

(Silence—the echo of the bomb is gone)

Dorothea, my mother, she took money from men when I was young. I was a bastard, a passing gift from a passing prince. Yes, I was her bastard. I grew up while she was writing her gossip column, the cruellest gossip columnist in the country, an assassin. She used to print the American flag next to her face, so I knew what it was all about, I mean I knew early. She wanted me to be a priest—I was to be her sacrifice.

. . . Do I have to spell it out? I have this idea so deep in my head—

(Striking his forehead)

that the center of Hell must be in here, yes, I have this idea that I am a saint, and I feel what God feels, and He is in a desperation beyond mine because there is an extraordinary destiny He has to achieve and He does not know whether He will succeed or not because He is a part of us. He is failing because we are failing, because we are too cowardly, because we want to move slowly, and hold to what we have, when the world, the tangible substance of God, is ready to be blown beyond existence in those radiations of hate which none of us can contain any longer. There is a torment coming when the being of all of us will depend on whether there is a man brave enough, bold enough, to go further in his mind than anyone has ever gone and yet communicate his vision. And I am not that man. I am too weak. I have failed God again.

(Light fades. In the darkness there is the wail of an ambulance coming closer and closer.)

CHANGE SEVEN

ELENA

Charley, you better go. I know how you hate hospitals.

EITEL

I'll stay. I don't like to think of you being alone here.

ELENA

Oh, Charley, marry me, please marry me.

(He does not answer)

You feel cold as stone, don't you?

EITEL

No. It's just that you made me cry. You're the only woman who's ever made me cry more than once. So, yes, let's get married. Your wounds soothe my wounds. I think that's better than to be alone.

ELENA

Oh, Charley, say something more than that.

EITEL

Not yet.

(Lights fade)

(Lights up. A spot on Sergius holding an empty bottle in his hand. He looks haggard and his manner is subdued.)

SERGIUS

The worst is over. ~~We enter now on a plain of domesticity.~~ In Hell, like Life, the years pass into the years, *and I see* ~~and we count our time in lonely private rhythms which have little to~~

do with number or judgment or the
uncertain shifting memory of
friends.

(A conjuror's gesture)

For instance, the ghosts of my be-
loved Lulu and Charles Francis
Eitel . . .

CHANGE SIX

*(Lights on Eitel's living room as
Lulu runs in)*

LULU

Charley, don't scold. I'm in a state.

EITEL

Lulu, child, we really don't have too much time. Elena
could get here very soon.

LULU

Charley, would you mind if we let things go for tonight?

I would mind! EITEL

Yes, I've spent too much of this week figuring out how to
smuggle in a few hours with you.

LULU

Charley, there's a crisis on.

EITEL

A crisis?

LULU

Tony's in trouble. He beat up a waitress in a restaurant in
Cleveland.

EITEL

That is a mess.

LULU

It's terrible. . . . Why does the studio send him out on personal appearances? They ought to keep him in a cage. My press agent is in a panic. He says if I make the wrong move, this could finish my career.

EITEL

More probably, it'll finish Tony.

LULU

Tony's the hottest property in town. The studio has to save him. Don't you see they're going to spread the story that I drove Tony to it because I'm a bad wife.

EITEL

Supreme can't afford to sacrifice you.

LULU

The hell they can't. Tony is bigger than me.

EITEL

Don't scream, Lulu.

LULU

I'm sorry.

EITEL

Doesn't your press agent have any ideas?

LULU

Oh, Monroney is useless. He thinks I should make a statement that Tony's brutal, and I know exactly what the waitress went through, and so forth and so forth.

EITEL

People won't like it.

LULU

Of course they won't. But Monroney says that's the best I can do. His theory is: I have to attack before Supreme attacks me. I can't think straight. I'm so wound up, Charley. Please help me.

EITEL

It's a mistake to fight Supreme's publicity. They're too

strong for you.

LULU

(With exasperation)

I know they are.

EITEL

But they don't want to lose you unless they have to. If you make it possible, Supreme will be happy to save Tony and you.

LULU

Charley, be specific.

EITEL

I can work it out right now. . . . Call the airport and make a reservation to Cleveland.

(He gestures toward the bedroom. She dashes toward it, stops, turns.)

LULU

Ohio?

(Eitel waves her on. While Lulu is offstage, Eitel opens his typewriter case and begins to type. Mumbling to himself, he tries out the sound, reading some of the words aloud. As he finishes, Lulu, done with her call, comes back, and reads over his shoulder. They finish together.)

EITEL

Miss Meyers said today, "It's all my fault. Tony must not be blamed. I feel terrible about that poor wretch . . . poor waitress . . . emotional and psychological difficulties . . . even more than me."

LULU

(Hugs him)

Charley, you're a great man. When I'm in Cleveland, can I phone you here if I need advice?

EITEL

I guess so. I'll find some explanation for Elena.

LULU

She's jealous, isn't she?

EITEL

Sometimes.

LULU

Charles, are you happy with Elena?

EITEL

I'm not unhappy. Victor sometimes gives me great pleasure.

LULU

I never could have thought of you as a father.

EITEL

Neither could I. But I love that baby.

LULU

How do you know you love him?

EITEL

Because I want him to be better than me.

LULU

Oh, Charley, I love you an awful lot. Do you know you have real dignity now?

EITEL

It's nice of you to say that, Lulu. . . . You know, I wouldn't want this to get around, and I don't suppose I've told it to anyone in years, but my mother was a French maid before she married my father. Of course, she worked only in the best homes.

LULU

Oh, Charley, Charley, why didn't you ever know . . . that you were my big love? Come on, let's go over to my place before I take the plane. You look good enough to eat. Ugh, Cleveland!

(Blackout)

CHANGE FIVE

(In the dark we hear the voice of a television announcer)

ANNOUNCER

Reached at Los Angeles International Airport, Miss Lulu Meyers in an exclusive and confidential interview said today . . .

(Sound of flashbulbs, paparazzi, tumult. Spot on Lulu. She is wearing a white fur stole)

LULU

It's all my fault. Tony must not be blamed. I feel terrible about that poor waitress and I know Tony feels even worse. But the emotional and psychological difficulties that led Tony to commit such an act are all of my making. Down deep, Tony has a wonderful character, but I've failed to give him the love and unselfishness he needs, although in my own cockeyed childish way, I love him very much. Perhaps, out of this trouble, which is my responsibility more than Tony's, I will achieve the maturity and humility I've been looking for so long. I'm flying to Cleveland right away to be with Tony, and I hope that out of all this something good may come for Tony even more than me.

CHANGE FOUR

(Lights on Eitel's Desert D'Or patio. Elena paces, waiting. Eitel enters and she runs to him.)

ELENA

Where have you been?

EITEL

I got tired of waiting for you, and I went out to have a drink.

ELENA

You mean you've been with a girl.

EITEL

Elena, let's not get into that again. It was your idea to come out here, and I went through a good bit of trouble to get exactly our old love-nest reserved.

ELENA

It doesn't mean a thing to you.

EITEL

Baby, this is a vacation. Let's not fight on our first evening. I had to be up at six this morning. I was at the studio at eight. I was obliged to work with my cutter on that last miserable clinker I turned out. Let's start this evening over again. Imagine I just came through the door. And I say to you—how did you spend the morning?

ELENA

I played bridge with Lottie Munshin.

EITEL

Fine.

ELENA

I hate bridge.

EITEL

What's really the matter, Elena?

ELENA

I saw my analyst this morning.

EITEL

Well, now I understand.

ELENA

Yes, I know, it's very funny. But I had a fight with my analyst.

EITEL

Well, it's probably worth fifty dollars an hour to fight with somebody besides me.

ELENA

My analyst told me I was regressing, being childish, paranoid attitude toward you, sign of a weak ego. . . . I don't know what happened, Charley, but I started screaming at him, and I told him that nobody was asking him to take my money and . . . finally I told him he was not attractive enough to understand me.

EITEL

Well, if you said that, he'll be a patient himself soon.

ELENA

I don't want the kind of life he thinks I should have.

EITEL

What do you mean?

ELENA

Charley, we have the baby, and we'll probably have another baby, and I have good relations with the servants, and I do love the dancing classes, and I love you, I really think I still love you, but, Charley, is that enough? Is Vickie enough? I mean did we go through . . . what we went through . . . just so I could rise from being a poor wop to being a nice rich neurotic housewife?

EITEL

Sweetheart . . . you've grown more than anybody in the time I've known you.

ELENA

I can't talk to you unless you'll understand. When I was younger . . . I used to think . . . there was something beautiful in me. I can't say how. I used to feel such lovely things. In secrecy I used to think that if I could find my man, he would lift me out of ignorance and dirt, and I would travel anywhere with him, with any man who was brave enough to keep my love alive, brave enough to live

with my cruel and greedy blood. But it hasn't been that way. Everyone I know is getting dead and dull.

(Eitel, the husband, fills the pause in his wife's statement)

EITEL

I'm not the only one who killed the sex in you. There was another. You never stopped thinking of him.

ELENA

I haven't thought of him in years. We avoid the subject, my analyst and me. But this I haven't told you, I got a telegram from Marion this morning. He's coming out of prison and he thinks he will be by to see me. Do you know. Charley, that I felt a lift of hope for the first moment in I don't know how many months.

EITEL

The devil is the most beautiful creature God ever made.

ELENA

Didn't you hear? I hope that Marion comes to see me.

EITEL

Yes, I hear you. You tell me that Marion traveled into a part of you I have never known.

ELENA

It was the marijuana, my analyst said.

EITEL

Who cares what it was? I'm tired to the bone and my heart beats bad.

ELENA

Will you be silent about exhaustions you bring to me from other women?

EITEL

I am weary unto death—I confess it.

ELENA

You are boring.

EITEL

You are murderous in your stupidity. Oh, baby, once and again, whenever it happens, I still love to give it to you, that's the simple truth. It wasn't all wasted, Elena. I never knew what it was all about, until I learned from you.

ELENA

But I didn't learn from you.

EITEL

(Pause)

Yes, you are cruel.

ELENA

Your coldness is now in me. I think my breasts are losing their shape.

EITEL

It is because you were too selfish to feed the baby for more than a month.

ELENA

Good night, Charley. Hope you had a good screw this afternoon.

EITEL

I've had worse.

ELENA

Drop dead!

(She starts to walk off stage, then her fury brings her back)

Die!

(Eitel is left alone)

CHANGE THREE

(The lights alter and go down until there is only a modest illumination on Eitel. A suggestion of music springs up from somewhere but it is vague, like a wisp of fog, now a wisp and all too soon a vapor. "Sergius?" Eitel calls.)

EITEL

Sergius, what does one ever do with one's life? Are you one of those who know? For I do not. It is the mark of my life that the forgotten memory of your face is all that is left, a casual friend I hardly knew, and yet I like you. Yes, now I see your face.

(Eitel's hand comes to his breast as if he suffers a sudden unmistakable pain)

Aiiiiihhhh, the clot of unborn rage at all I have not done and all that I will never do . . . it tears now at my heart, and I am going to die . . . but where I go, ah, there's the fright—I do not know—it may be for worse.

(Slowly Eitel slips to the floor, the light disappears on him and as it does, Elena finds him in the darkness, gives a wail, cries out)

CHANGE TWO

ELENA

What have I done? He meant it when he said he was weary. May God have mercy on me.

(Then she kneels over his body; the sound of her sobbing)

SERGIUS

And she was left alone to live with this, for her man was gone, the poor man went of that disease which goes by so many names, that law of life so cruel and so just that we must grow or else pay more for remaining the same. And, as he died, his spirit passed on to me, for to pass on one's spirit is the one small gift we are allowed in Hell, and if there are enough to care for us, we can enter your world again—which is why perhaps we have spent this most curious evening watching the damned chase after love.

CHANGE ONE

ELENA

(Elena looks up. Her hands are still on Eitel's body.)

His coldness is now in me, but my death ended him. What fear I know of Hell for the other voice says I shall be stronger now. *End*

(Marion appears. He is older—a measure of the time he has spent in prison is on his face.)

MARION

Nobility and vice—they're the same thing—When you come to the end of one, you are ready to discover the other.

1161

Cross-criticism

Witchcraft

When I was
your age
twenty
seven
a dame
could
say
I'll put
a curse
on
you.

On
I would say
put a curse
on me
and wonder
why
my voice
would break. ✓

1967

Cross-criticism Theatre and Film

1967

The Playwright as Critic

1162

Ex Edwards

pf 72-81

87-88

merely on early foot, his thesis would seem to claim the professional reviewer has a double standard which is the reverse of the standard of the book reviewer: that the seriousness of your production — all rare exceptions admitted — is generally measured by the cost of your production. Be it understood the costly production is often a superb production with superb performances (usually by the dancers) but from the playwright's point of view, this is not so different from judging the literary merit of manuscripts by the excellence of the handwriting.

In the two weeks just past, the apprentice playwright saw a great deal of excellent handwriting. He saw *Hello, Dolly!*, and *Barefoot in the Park*, *Man of La Mancha*, *The Apple Tree*, *The Odd Couple*, *Don't Drink the Water*, *At the Drop of Another Hat*. He saw *Natural Look*, *The Homecoming*, and *Black Comedy*. He saw — he ran out of plays on Broadway. There was off-Broadway: *MacBird*, *Eh?*, *America Hurrah*, *Hogan's Goat*, *The Mad Snow*. He saw *The Deer Park* many times. He had evidence in plenty and some new thought to masticate in detail (for what is a critic without his teeth?). Finally, he even had a critical formula. It came from his own work. It explained the mystery of the schizophrenia in the drama reviewer's heart, for the answer was simple: there were two kinds of plays. That was the beginning of what it was all about.

Start

Would you like a metaphor to ease your way? Let the playwright tell a story he heard last night. It is perhaps apocryphal, but not grievously so, for if the story is unfair, you could change the names of the artists until you had a proper fit. This, at any rate, is how the tale was told. Some years ago, Willem de Kooning gave a drawing to Robert Rauschenberg, who then promptly erased the drawing and signed his own name to the smudged mess. Next, the erased drawing was sold. Children, we are discussing the final absurdity of certain terminal

the
page,
not

positions in modern art right here, no, ~~we~~ we are in on a primitive rite, the writing of money. Primitive man took a stand on a stone. He said, "I am the leader of this tribe, and I stand on this stone, and so this stone has the value of all your tents and all your wives and all your herds and flocks." And since no one was strong enough to kill the leader, the rock on which he stood was money. Before money can be used for barter, it is first declared — it is made into money by an act of declaration. "I, Robert Rauschenberg, hereby make of this piece of paper a piece of money." An erased drawing is restored in value by a signature. Emptiness plus authority equals money.

It seems we are now ready to talk of certain plays, the ones which might put the signature on the erased drawing. They are authority stamped upon emptiness, they are money. The authority of such plays is that they are known as a hit. That is their value. That is how they give value to an audience.

Look at the nightly event. A horde of the hard-working pours in from the suburbs for a night of food and play-going. If they are tired, it is not because they have toted that bale of cotton all day, no, they are tired because their nerves are stale, flat, bored, and unendurable from the stale, flat, unprofitable work they have done as a horde of the middle and professional class all day in offices which buy and sell commodities less interesting and less well-made than they used to be, and they have stifled in modern kitchens and driven children to school and gotten caught in suburban traffic and blinked their eyes against the glare of super shopping centers. They have rushed and they have waited every day of the week — they have lived lives devoted to controlling their environment — their umbilical relation to existence is now captured in the touch of a fingertip on the plastic button of some electrical machine. They are thus a class which is devoted utterly to control, and they have lost control of everything. If we are to dwell on the Broadway theatre

audience and its relation to a hit, we can only talk first of the heart of the theatre — this liberal complacent materialistic greedy pill-ridden anxiety-laden bored miserable and powerless jumble of suburban couples who jam every Broadway smash for the first few months. Later, they are joined, and still later replaced, by tourists, conventioners, small-towners about to drown in New York, and corporation label-men with the names of the hits to drop back into the office hopper at home. There are out-of-town philosophers buried among the culls of this audience, but out-of-towners in New York are usually using all their wit to dare the subway — they cannot arrive in their seat at their critical best, for they are in New York, Fun City, they want only to be reassured they will not be mugged in the next few hours. So their synapses blend in with all the fear-ridden reflexes of all the liberal couples from the suburbs, and what you get is the middle-class horror of America (and the hint of how Vietnam finally is possible), for our people are in their seats, sprawled out, nervous, vitiated, on the giggle, dying to be manipulated for external manipulation is authority, and they can need that. But only a hit will manipulate such an audience for they do not wish to contemplate ambiguity — ambiguity is the essence of their nausea and their fatigue. Listen carefully to such an audience laugh, and you can feel the undertow which attends the manipulation, you may even hear the silent machines which make the money. The Broadway audience being an over-manipulated apathetic flesh stirs only to the intense sound of such silent machines, for those who live in the suburbs are addicted to processes which make money as much ~~simply~~ as juvenile delinquents are hipped on marijuana. Addiction, like faith, is focus from a point of reference.

Are we too abstract? Let us take the best of examples ~~for the other side~~, and think of Zero Mostel, who is curator of a rich large talent. There are many who would say he is a great actor. Some might not agree altogether, but

no matter, possessed of moments of grandeur, and moments not so grand, Mostel is nonetheless a major theatrical artist, for he glides like a shark through that medium of mood we might call prime attention in the theatre, his movements slice into the center of a laugh, a roll of his eyes turns a spill of amusement through the aisle. He is a comic wind.

But the evil is this. He does not need to act any more. He can come out on stage, and the audience will laugh. If he scratches his crotch, the house breaks down. If he looks at another actor and merely turns away, the ticket-payers are instantly in delight. Let me whisper the next. If some unknown actor made up to look like Mostel came out for a minute and stood still and scratched his crotch and looked at another actor and looked away, the house might break into equal combers of hysteria provided they did not know it was not Mostel. That collective Broadway flesh wishes only to be manipulated. Mostel rat-tat-tatting his fly is pressing a button to make them laugh. It does not matter whether he is scratching these jewels in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, or in *Fiddler on the Roof*. The act of scratching is more important than the play, which is why he is not always a great actor. Audiences laugh because Mostel is the signature on that piece of paper, he is switching on the machines which make the money.

Zero is, of course, an artist of the first rank. When one gets down to the real stuff, however, down to that stretch of hits on Broadway where one ten-dollar bill is the same as the next, when you get all the way down to ~~Cactus Flower~~ and talentless technicians of high skill like ~~Barry Nelson~~, then you may be in the place where the Creation is denied.

There are those who will now suspect a thesis is coming. They may be confident. The thesis is soon to be made by discussing five plays which do not deserve to be

discussed separately, for they are not five plays but one play, since their internal mechanisms of manipulation are not individual but collective, and came not out of artists but computers. So specific criticism would have no real bone to bite. Besides, these plays are traitors to the stage: their secret allegiance is to television. When we discuss these plays, we will not be so foolish as to talk of their separate plots, for that would assume the original impulse had been creative rather than computed. Good. These five plays are nominally called *The Odd Couple*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *Cactus Flower*, *Don't Drink the Water*, and *Natural Look*. In fact, by existential measure, they had the duration of only two-and-one-half plays to this reviewer, since he walked out of each one at the end of the first act (which is how first he discovered their common denominator). On such a commencement one might normally have to say no more than that the basic provender of these evenings was watered oatmeal, but months and years ago, the critics had all been in like Flynn, and so the audience responded on each of our nights with a particular barking of laughter which called to mind a human tissue in a Petri dish swaying to calculated shock. A revolutionary with a sawed-off shotgun might in a rage have sprayed the critics hard enough to keep them off their seats because no humanoid tissue could have liked these plays if he had been told they were not to be liked. Subsequently, however, by a work of fierce concentration, compassion for critics was generated by the mind. Drama reviewers, all said, must have been desperately miserable in infancy, and wretched little feeders, to so enjoy watered oatmeal TV. Five pieces of Show Biz — say, nay! — five pieces of Telev Biz — put five bowls of oatmeal down the New York drama critics' collective tummy. Five hits went up. Call it five minus one. Because *Natural Look*, a work as tasteless, empty, skillful, well acted, and well directed as the other four is a shade of a hair less satisfactory in hiding the fact that it

possesses no fleshly meaning, and so it closes after opening night. Who knows where the styrene will crack? Plastic is a gas in solid form. It can only pretend to flesh.

Strike it like this: *Cactus Flower*, *Don't Drink the Water*, *The Odd Couple*, and *Barefoot in the Park* encourage underground spleen because they are the Theatre of Plastic, their content is TV, they are cooked of synthetics. Only danger is that the mode by which we perceive reality can indeed become our reality, a most elegant Marxian manner of saying that no medium is more of a message than TV — which may be why, despite the reek of the hot cigar butt, none of us can ignore McLuhan's total slogans. McLuhan has one great grip on the attention of this decade — we all know something in us slides off slowly and begins to die as we watch TV. So the medium is indubitably giving us a message. Feel the message. Salts wash out of your blood, hate and lust pass over to headache. Spook-show in the psyche, cramp in the groin. Love, tenderness, sympathy become vectors to anxious attention. Do not speak of what we see — what we see on TV can be anything — this is talk rather of lobotomizations which seep into the gray collective soul of the room after an evening of TV. Emotions are modulated (rather say: strangled, filtered, choked) while passing through the electronic valves of the transmitter and the set. Something leaves us each night we spend in attendance on the box. For the medium has one message — technological society will make certain you pass away on a bed into which national music is piped.

So these Cactus Flowers are not merely bad commercial plays called good by the bad taste of the critics, no, they are not even produced the way bad plays used to be, because back, way back then, in return for a definite waste of time, you could still get some raunchy funky little hint of theatre. But these Cactus Flowers offer preparation for nothing but the sick bed in the last ward. America has been watching television for twenty years

and the style of television has transfused itself not only into the taste, but the demand, even the expectancy, of the suburban middle class — that precise compound of neurons and suet so capable of being smelted into money. Therefore, Broadway comedies now rush not only to be like television comedies, but actors are trained away from theatre in the process, and sometimes look like television sets come to life.

Television, after all, was the child of the Age of Conformity which came to America after the Second World War. Television produced a genre: moderate characters in modest situations. It offered endlessly recognizable detail, *surface* detail: supermarkets, highways, suburban streets, pastel-colored classrooms. However, the characters in such television dramas presented nothing which was biologically real. They bore the same relation to human beings which vinyl does to leather. And the reason was that the characters of these TV series were synthesized from incompatibles — the new documentary and the old soap opera.

Soap opera had a sentimentality which was surrealistic, but its characters — while altogether psychotic — were still real. Since they lived on your radio, their voices came out of a background much like a cave: there was no confusion in one's mind with the here and now of daily surface. The soap opera was material for your dreams. Whereas television puts forth the very latest surface of reality — it goes on hunts for real backgrounds, it is documentarily obsessed. The documentary is, it may hope, its honest buck. Since it then thrusts its own highly sophisticated mutants (hey, Ginger! hi, Flipper) of the old soap-opera characters into highly documentary situations, the dramatic product excites that same vivid sense of displacement from reality you can receive from a painted plaster hamburger by Claes Oldenburg five feet in diameter. You don't know immediately whether the object is comic, nauseating, or significant of some new

reality, or even some new way of studying reality. Oldenburg's hamburger is, of course, a way to study a reality which is all before our fingers. But the housewife studying herself on a situation comedy in her electronic mirror does not know if the seemingly recognizable characters before her are in their bizarre situations because they have more wit than herself, or less; she pays for the human pleasure of recognizing some part of herself by a most indigestible psychic demand — she is plunged further into security and anxiety at the same point, and therefore further into obsession with herself. If the old radio soap opera encouraged schizophrenia by stimulating the housewife's buried secret plot (loyalty to the home vs. hots for the lover) television dulls her into nausea. Fundamental distinctions between the safe and the insecure, the reality and the dream, are marinated, dramatic oppositions are bypassed — powerful conflicts are first modulated, then mashed into one another. The side effect from such confusion is nausea.

Superb, you will say, now tell why television cannot offer stories and situations which are either frankly disturbing or honestly pacifying. Well, the medium is the message, yes, and a half-hour drama on television cannot be too pacifying or you will notice all too clearly the infernal sound of the set, feel its electronic harp, even — enter op art — see the very vibrations which erode your optic nerve. Yet one cannot go in the other direction: a story must not be too disturbing, for there is no actor's flesh and blood to warm you from a stage, nor, as in a movie, the bodies of the audience, no, you are all alone with your family and the emotional rigors of the tale, plus the psychic assault of the set. Television attacks the unconscious like a trip in a jet — you move from continent to continent or spectacle to spectacle without the accompaniment of a change in mood to prepare the flesh. (The unconscious thus becomes like that poor patient who is operated upon without warning.) So a work

of deep drama on television would inspire anxiety, for one's own depths might open to what? — to the baleful electronics of which far-off God? what cold star? No, you keep it neat. The scene is recognizable to ward off any shriek, and the situations are odd and out of focus — just sufficiently unsettling to keep your mind off the flickering of the set. Estimate the difficult problems facing our Broadway Computers when they, loyal to the firm premise that all sound commercial theatre must be based on television tales (because audiences are now based on the narrative synapses of the television series), are next obliged to translate or computerize the technique from one medium to another. You now have real actors forced to imitate actors as they appear to us on a television set. You must have backgrounds which are recognizable, but situations which do not exist, you must reconstruct in the audience that hum of security and insecurity which is a television set. Since you have real actors who can be generally depended upon to give the audience a moment of true warmth at the end (since that is finally what the actors are for), the psychic payoff on all Cactus Flowers is huge — it is like watching television with a home-cooked meal at the end. The only one who can suffer in these plays is the actor, for he is thrust into a cancerous relation with his art — too much appropriation too little deserved must flux his guilt, and skillful emotion skillfully applied to a situation which does not exist in the blood of his past experience must be as conducive to leukemia as kissing a plastic mask on the hip.

The medium is the message, and the message of television is electronic hum. The theatre will wash down from its old broken-down heights to the swamps of the theatre — if it continues, as it will, to cohabit with TV — is close to an excruciating death by long wallowing, for the smelting operations will enlarge, and the houses will continue to be filled with armies of humanoid in for the night from television. The theatre

of Manipulation will swell in every joint. It will thrive like edema. And the critics will be the doctors who call this swelling, health. For it is true. To talk of Broadway is to talk not of amusement but disease.

Yes, it seems that before we can forgive all drama critics for invariably amputating the wrong organ — but then they are blind and ill themselves. Have pity on them. They are men who fell in love early with illusion and so cannot leave now that the lady has become an electronic ghost. Drama critics cannot see themselves as necrophiliacs. They must believe that TV's Theatre of Manipulation, watered surrealism and pistol shot gags, is still the butler to art, not its avenging ghost.

And is that all to be said for the season? These five plays which are one play and lead to no discussion of the stage, only polemics and existential analyses of the evils of television? No, the apprentice put in two weeks going to shows, and he is not likely to let anyone away without a capsule of comment for each evening. Besides, one would not wish the rest of Broadway to escape. Listen to more about *Man of La Mancha* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, stay close and you will pick up criticism — we whisper it — of *Black Comedy*, exactly where it crosses *At the Drop of Another Hat*. But first, a word from my own play. A director and a producer exchange dialogue:

MUNSHIN: Extraordinary.

EITEL: You really like it?

MUNSHIN: It's an epic study about the hole in eternity our country is preparing for itself. It's a poem. This can make the greatest picture in the last ten years.

EITEL: Collie, why don't you say what you really think?

MUNSHIN (fingering his belly): No audience would understand it.

sometimes tedious, if always intelligent, insights into the maniacal surface of all programmed communications, and then exploded at the end with ten minutes that lived on the edge of the lip of the murder of all American life and the carnage of the psyche, and the death of the American vision.

Then, there was *MacBird*. *MacBird* had a truth for which the apprentice was not prepared. Beneath the parody was a wild sorrow, for suspicion flooded the heart that LBJ had more real life as *MacBird* than as Lyndon Johnson — one could conceive of him secretly watching *MacBird* with tears in his eyes. the role and the language gave him a stature life had denied.

This would be a fair quick summation of the plays one saw, and the lessons learned, and the coldest lesson came from the best plays — the future of the theatre seemed most rich where the material was most insane. A cold note. Therefore, *Hogan's Goat* was reserved for comment last, since it is out of category. A passionate and substantial work overwritten by a degree, it had another kind of sorrow, for it displayed the blood beneath the corruption and gave a feel of the muscle within the piety of the Irish in Brooklyn, New York, some generations back and that was no modest achievement.

Do you get the point? Good plays like *The Homecoming*, *MacBird*, *America Hurrah*, *The Mad Show*, *Hogan's Goat* (and you know the other) are plays which attempt to find a piece of that most mysterious and magical communion some call ceremony, some church, and some theatre. They are plays which attempt to reach a moment sufficiently magical to live in the deepest nerves and most buried caves of the memory of the people who have seen them, these plays speak of the fire at the edge of the wood and hair rising on the back of the neck when the wind becomes too intimate in its sound. The theatre lives (if it lives as anything more than a spinster aunt on allowance from movies, television, and the record busi-

#

from p 81

Start

Good plays

ness), the theatre lives on what it can do uniquely, on moods of depth and perfume and terror and exaltation and cascades of laughter which no other form can provide — it is a ceremony which takes place in a cave, and philosophers, priests, painters, tyrants, and athletes must collaborate, the bodies of some must harmonize with the minds of others. When it is really good, what it offers can be found in no other form of art, for then it is like religion for the irreligious and gives promise of something which may live forever. Its impermanence is the life of its power. But that is only true of those finest plays which never manipulate, and there are not so many.

This year on Broadway the number is down to two or one, this real species of theatre has about given way to all the hybrid giants in the palaces on Broadway, those Cactus Flowers whose sins against the loving heart of the Lord are performed at the rate of a thousand a minute, for a thousand humanoid hearts are laughing at jokes which were conceived in the same place they used to package thalidomide and will package the actors tomorrow when the actors perform the benefits for themselves in the camps of concentration. "Shit, señorita," says Broadway.

end

1994

1967

~~Notes~~
~~CAUTION~~
~~A note on Andy Warhol~~
~~it might be a note~~

1174

It is worth musing on Warhol's command of one particular gift—divination of social disease.

By the late middle of the twentieth century, human contempt for itself reached epic proportions. The notion had come that we might be a species ready to finish ourselves by way of nuclear apocalypse. It was possible. Even without the atom bomb, the Second World War had left as a legacy the shadow of the concentration camps, and that darkened all belief that humankind was evolving into a more humane future. Then the cold war proceeded to erode those institutions of marriage, family, and property that for two hundred years had kept society—or so society believed—relatively sane but for peculiar times of armed conflict. That happy view of humankind had washed out to sea by the late Fifties and in the Sixties, nothing made more sense to the average young man or woman than a prodigious absorption in oneself. That usually meant: Explore sex. The search for meaning translated into a search for pleasure. For if death was likely to present itself as nuclear termination arriving without warning, death was therefore absurd. Everyone destroyed more or less simultaneously, no grave, no ancestors, no roots, no memories of oneself.

The intensification of criminal life that drug traffic would provide still lay several decades away, but down the bleak vista of the cold war (which may yet be seen as a spiritual plague more pervasive, although less quickly fatal, than AIDS), Warhol must have been the first to gain keen insight into the pervasiveness of this plague. If its first symptom

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(buried under every hypocrisy of patriotism) was lack of respect for the human condition, Warhol perceived ~~that as~~ a corollary, there was going to be boundless if subterranean lack of respect for art. A painter could ^{now} get away with more ~~now~~ than ever before! So Warhol, a mediocre draftsman, a colorist without his own palette, moved into the void. The emptiness of others was the barren field he would seed for a cash crop. He was a magician.

1175

By now, Warhol is seen as a great artist even by people who do not profit directly from such an evaluation. Yet to think of him as an immortal American painter is to inspire the yawns. One need merely compare such sentiments with the pride of the Spanish and the French in Picasso or Matisse. No, Warhol's real claim to fame was not as an artist, but as the philosopher of voids and silences. Before anyone else, he comprehended the vacuum of Western culture in the second half of the twentieth century. "Authority," Warhol could easily have said, if he had been inclined to give his secret away—"authority imprinted upon emptiness is money!" And he was right. The history of the last half of the twentieth century can be seen as a study in authority, money, and emptiness. The spiritual diorama of our time is the triumph of high-rise corporate architecture in every major city of the world, the proliferation of plastic ~~into food and flesh~~, the presence of the homeless, AIDS, drug life, and ~~now, in the aftermath of the cold war, ethnic cleansing, that~~ ~~corrective purgative that looks to cure all the other ills, the~~ ~~first worldwide hint of a time to come when upturned~~ ~~heads will wait for a messiah with an authoritative voice.~~ "I

am the emptiness," Warhol could as well have said. "I am the emptiness that prepares you for the message to come." He is the maggot genius of American culture. (END)

~~Madonna, born in 1958, young enough to have been Warhol's daughter, was nonetheless reacting to the same void. But in drastically different fashion. She was, after all, like her generation, part of the horde of walking wounded. If nuclear fission would be the mortician to preside over her last rites, then, indeed, she would explore sex, and with an instinctive rebellion against all large hypocrisies. One did not have to be political to sense the vast fraud of the cold war—we had all been adjured to triumph over an Evil Empire that had turned out to be no more than a Sad Morass; at least for the last twenty years, a giant Third World quagmire buried in inefficiencies, bereft of desire for world domination. Our political leaders had converted language into cant, and our young—particularly those with good ears—reacted to the false note.~~

~~Yet if Madonna spoke to her generation, she was still condemned to explore herself. The explorations were chilling to some. In all the multimillion-dollar crops of her popularity, she was still without that hyperbolic popularity Marilyn Monroe gained in her own lifetime. Madonna was admired, but she was not loved. Not like Marilyn.~~

~~Our love for Marilyn is not complex. She was our movie star of the Fifties, but Marilyn spoke of a simpler time, the Thirties. It was to the Thirties that she belonged. She was three and a half years old at the end of 1929, and a young adolescent by the time 1940 arrived. Her smile goes back to such archetypes in our sentimental loyalties as the songs of the Thirties—"Let's have another cup of coffee, and let's have another piece of pie." She would be valiant~~

Dr. Hu
speaks
twenty-three
languages.

What loneliness.

Film

(1178)

Ex Enrich

103-107

112-114

the pigs put up everything good so soon as the highway is laid out for them. So the best stays hidden. It must be that way.

And out there in Hollywood, I learned what pigs do when they want to appropriate a mystery. They approach in great fear and try to exercise great control. Fear + Control = Corporate Power. Corporate Power applied to art produces a product which is on balance equal to Liberty stripped of his rights.

Now, readers, ~~you have been treated~~ ~~the~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~with~~ ~~my~~ ~~stick~~. I want rather to undertake and soon try to analyze the fact that the process of ~~film making has a natural tendency to liquidate the collective human entity of the film, and~~ ~~It is a living~~ ~~miracle, nothing less than a miracle, when a good big-budget movie is made, once you know, as few do, how absolutely deadening is the productive machinery of the cinematic full-length feature film.~~

Consider the movie script. A man or a team of men, who have the habit of regarding themselves as writers, begin by discussing a story. It is ninety-nine to one that the story originates not with them but with a book, magazine piece, play, former movie — we can skip these steps. Working on someone else's story is like raising another man's child. The moment a writer moves away from his basic connection to that unconscious which gives original words to the pencil in his fingers, art in its turn has given up a half-life. Witness, then, these Hollywood writers, singly or in team, who hobnob with producer, director, story editor, hordes of labially directed anxiety types who talk all the time. Large fear and large control — those are the protagonists who write the script. It bears the same relation to real writing, these endless discussions about form, plot, twist, and rooting interest, that a medical examination in the Army bears to the act of love.

Then comes the director and the producer, an ugly

jealous passionate fecal marriage ~~of bitch and stud~~. That overworked scenario is ignited into its first roar and flame when producer and director set out to bugger one another. Indeed that's how agreeable bad movies sometimes get made. It's art by act of war, however, and the actors get ground between them.

Then we have the actors who deal with existential situations like love, sex, disaster, and death, all those ultimates whose ends are by their nature indeterminable: you are in an existential situation when something important and/or unfamiliar is taking place and you do not know how it is going to turn out. Whereas professional acting consists of getting into situations where the actor knows precisely just how everything in the plot is going to turn out. The script is there, and from it he cannot escape very far. Acting and existentialism are therefore at the poles. If existentialism is ultimately concerned with the attractions of the unknown, acting is one of the surviving rituals of invocation, repetition, and ceremony — of propitiation to the gods. Talk of ultimates, maybe the actor lays ceremonial robes on his back in order to allay our fear of the wrath ¹²¹ which lives in the pits of metaphysics. Ceremony is designed, you can say, to mollify the gods, to safeguard us from existential situations precisely because ceremony is repetition. There is some quality primitive, powerful, and weight-free about the act of acting once you get into it, something so close to a real existential situation, yet not by real measure dangerous at all, that actors often know the delight of children, whose inner landscape you may remember is always existential, for the denouement of a situation is to a child unknown and dangerous until that moment when the outcome is perceived.

Actors have it well made then if they can enjoy the act of acting, for they may at once propitiate the gods of dread, feel the power of full men, and have the sensuous empyrean awareness of a child, not to mention his tact.

Great popular actors are not called idols for nothing. They are revered as God, lover, and child all at once.

Now, of course, the model presented is too attractive. There is always for the stage actor the tension, horror, and most existential moment of the opening night, and there is besides, once the actor is not on the stage, the unspeakable insecurity of his life, the uncertainty of work, bread, love of his fellow actors, the ~~existential~~ ~~(which is to say, dangerous)~~ privations of poverty, the manic uprooting yaws of success which can propel him into a profound alienation away from the most rudimentary clues to his identity. It is not so easy to walk through life uncertain if you are god, fool, hero, or clown, or eventually some new species of man. Rich or poor, the likelihood is great that the actor has the most existential private life of any artist — if nothing else, he is obliged to live closer than other artists to the mystery of personality itself, which is — if you consider it — related directly to the mystery of choosing one style of personality in preference to another, provided of course one possesses the power to exercise more than a single style well.

But we must follow this through. If I, living with a woman, choose a style for my personality which, crudely, we may say is not quite me, I am nonetheless in a real relationship, certainly I am if my adopted personality is sufficiently imaginative, cohesive, and convincing, that is to say, well enough acted, to make the lady think it is — forgive this — the real me. Because then the real emotions of my sweet mate with their real concomitants, her very gifts and blows, begin to rain on me, and I prosper or falter on the basis of my adopted personality. Yet if I had adopted a different style of personality for the same woman, the gifts and blows would have been different. Now think of the actor, ~~who commands a~~ ~~choice of adopted personalities.~~ The particular ~~style~~ ^{personality} he takes on for any role becomes as much an existential

choice as the pose of the lover — the actor is subtly rewarded and/or punished by the real reactions he arouses and disappoints in his audience, which audience becomes for practical purposes the next thing to his real mate. How disagreeable then, even brutal, is the situation of the actor when his role is not adequate to him, when he cannot act with some subtle variations of his personal style. But, indeed the actor, living uncomfortably in that psychic ground between the real and the unreal, consummate creature of modern anxiety, can find his reality only in a role worthy of his complex and alienated heart. What chance then has he in that abominable industry script we have already described or in that bucket of fecal passions swilled in by director and producer? Not to mention our patriotic apparatus of bullies, censors, and banks which hangs like insect repellent over the making of films.

No, the actor, if he is a good talented sensitive actor, is shoveled between the maw and the mangle. For if his personality now consists of a hundred personalities, they are nonetheless like a hundred fine tools. Even if he can find some relationship to the script, and be not contradicted fatally in his work by the other actors or the director, and be not betrayed by the producer, not cheated by the cameraman, nor the film editor, nor sickened too profoundly by his publicity, ~~be~~ the actor ~~must~~ run nonetheless into the most unendurable trap of them all ~~which is that~~ the magic of the relationship he and the other actors have breathed into one another despite the script is a magic which must soon falter before the tyrannical insistence of the script that all characters and events be funneled through the narrow orifice of committee solutions to aesthetic problems. So the exceptional tools of the exceptional actor, his ten hundred antennae, his blades and springs, fine nerves and subtle heart, go all shuddering through the anesthetized fields of a com-

mercial script: he must violate all he has learned about relationship and its thousand-footed sensitivity.

Taken even at its best in the occasional script which is first-rate, noble, fine, and good — you may look long for such a script — with a director and producer who are wise, sensible in the art of interruption, illumined with those proper fires which can light a fire in the actor, and with a budget not so enormous that every scene must groan with the pomposities and platitudes of money pressing its weight upon itself, in this ideal situation, even here, with the best of honest lines to speak, the actor must still warp his art and devour his liver and/or his soul to make his exquisite sense of relationship submit to the form. At its worst, the making of films for popular consumption is a liquidation center for talent — at its best it is still a rabidly unnatural act, and everyone connected to it is, soon or late, miserable.

~~Well, it is hardly our aim to give comprehensive listing of the efforts directors have made to break such tyranny; so it is not our intention to talk of Rossellini and De Sica, of Ingmar Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni, of Truffaut. Nor is it part of the agenda to try for a quick run through the underground film and artists so diverse as Warhol, Brakhage, Kenneth Anger, the late Ron Rice, a dozen others — their variety is extraordinary, their research into techniques, orgies, optical extravaganzas, animation, surrealism, exquisite photography and claustrophobically inept photography have slashed out a hundred indications of new trail. Nor pertinent to talk of documentaries: no discussion will be found here of the work of Ricky Leacock, Shirley Clarke, Helen Levitt, Emile de Antonio, the Maysles brothers.~~

No, the point rather to be made is that with every rare exception admitted, with all honor to the five or ten good commercial films a year and the fifty other such films which will seem better in twenty-five years than they do

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conceivable reason his actors are so good is that they do not have lines to remember.

THE PRINCE: You listen. How'd you get that cleft in your chin? Old lang syne, that's how you got that cleft in your chin.

BUZZ CAMEO: Ya know, I realize you guys resent me 'cause I'm the best-lookin' one here.

THE PRINCE: You're the best-lookin' guy in the what? In this filthy hole? I'd hate to be the best-lookin' guy in this filthy hole. Wha' do you got to say to yourself? I'm the best-lookin' guy in a filthy hole.

Freud saw the dream as a wish fulfillment. It is a grand theory, but it hints of the sweets and sour of middle-class life and bouts of nocturnal enuresis. For if you are in the middle class, you do not have to make out well on a given day, you can brood about a loss, indulge a fantasy on the conversion of failure to success — yes, if you are middle class, the dream is a wish fulfillment. Art comes to the middle class on that bypass called sublimation.

But to the saint and the psychopath, ^{to a} the criminal, ^a the hipster, ^{an} the activist, ^{an} the athlete, ^a the stud, ^a the gentleman ~~swindler, the supple stick,~~ the dream is ~~something else~~ ^{that} a theatrical revue which dramatizes the dangers of the day — a production in which ~~the world~~ the day is ~~dissected, exaggerated~~ put together again in dramatic or even surrealist intensity in order to test the power of the nervous system to pass through shocks, ambushes, tests, crises, and pleasures — future impacts of which the unconscious has received warning the day before. In the quick blink of a friend's eyes, in the psychic plumbing of an odd laugh was disclosed to the unconscious a hint of treachery. So that night the scene is replayed in its complex condensation with other scenes, and the

Is this not equal to saying

Navigator in the mind of the hipster delineates for himself a better map, figures a little more precisely how to chart a course through the possible rapids soon to be encountered in his life.

The metaphor is shifting. It now seems that everyone has not only a private theatre for dreams but is possessed of a helmsman, or ~~seer~~, or Navigator, who uses charts drawn from the experience of the past, maps drafted out of the emotions, education, and miseducation of childhood, the nuances, surprises, and predictable patterns of social life. These charts ~~admits our proposition~~ are altered every day of our life on the basis of what the day's experience has brought. ~~They are kept~~ up-to-date in order to transport us from the present into the unexpected contingencies of the future.

Our
= dreams
keep
them

What am I saying? ~~really?~~ Nothing more or less astounding than that every mortal (but for an occasional monster or vegetable) is elaborating somewhere in his mind the conception of a huge ~~and great~~ social novel. That unwritten unvoiced but nonetheless psychically ~~real or~~ detailed novel is precisely the map and/or chart from which the Navigator plots his course and selects his range of acts for tomorrow. (Indeed the dream may be the creative process which adds new refinements to the novel every night.) Yes, we not only possess that ~~great~~ novel in the map rooms of the self, but we are forever improving it, or at least altering it.

Let us ruminate upon this magnificent news. In the unconscious of each of us is then a detailed conception of a vast social novel greater than most of the vast social novels which have been written. In every last one of us just about lives a ~~great~~ ^{map} novelist. Better than that. The Navigator not only dips into his fantasy or his dream for inspiration and information to serve up to the ever-evolving unwritten pages of his book, but he employs the goods he finds. He goes out the next day and walks the stage of his life as an actor. For we are not only novelists

all, but we are actors all. Having a detailed conception of the world, accurate here, inaccurate there, we attempt not only to deal with the world on the basis of this conception or novel, but we push and press ourselves into styles of personality (like elegance or humility or graciousness or candor) which are not quite ourselves but will provide, or so believes our Navigator, a more effective mode for handling the events of our day. In short, we pretend to be what we are not. We are Actors. We are at least Actors a good deal of the time. Some of us are better than others, some more precise than others, or more passionate in our display of all-but-true emotion, but we are all vastly better actors than we suspect. At the least we are all more or less successful in seeming a little more or less sweet or powerful than we really are. Yet, and this is the horror of bad art, that social novel in the vaults of the unconscious, no matter how great, is nonetheless flawed in each of us by the misleading portraits of people and institutions we are fed via television and Hollywood. If the maps in this chart room of the unconscious are elaborate, they are also anchored on systematically induced misconceptions of society, and so are often as profoundly inaccurate as the maps with which Columbus set sail for Cathay. Of course a chart room with inaccurate maps is inviting its Navigator to courses of action which can plow a reef, and the actor who is serving as helmsman in the actions of the day may be psychotic in his lack of attachment to the reality of the wheel directly before him. Meretricious commercial art does not lead merely to bad taste, it pipes the nation toward psychosis. If you would look for an answer on why America — a conservative property-loving nation — is obsessed with destroying other nations' property, the answer can be found as quickly in bad movies as in bad politics. Which returns us to our quest: how does one get to the grail which blesses the making of a movie not entirely without honor?

and
by
bad
novels
and
the
distortions
of
journalism.

art

~~bad art~~

END

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Do not
ask
for
whom
the
television
tolls

"The Armies of the Night"

pages

22-37

154-165

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1967

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The Armies of the Night

HISTORY AS A NOVEL
THE NOVEL AS HISTORY

~~by [unclear]~~
~~[unclear]~~

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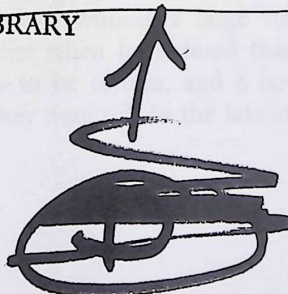
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THE NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY



Stout

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~~NORMAN MAILER~~

absolute egomania, a Beast ~~no recognition existed of the existence of anything beyond the range of his reach. And when he appeared it was often with great speed, he gave little warning.~~

the Bear

He gave no warning as the Historian checked in at the Hay-Adams, changed his clothes and prepared to give a few thoughtful remarks a little later that night at the Ambassador Theater on the essential insanity of our venture in Vietnam, such remarks designed presumably to encourage happy participation for Saturday's move to invest the Pentagon.

Space

~~4. THE LIBERAL PARTY~~

There was a party first, however, given by an attractive liberal couple. Mailer's heart, never buoyant at best, and in fact once with justice called "sodden" by a critic, now collected into a leaden little ball and sank, not to his feet but his stomach. He was aware for the first time this day of a healthy desire to have a drink for the party gave every promise of being dreadful. Mailer was a snob of the worst sort. New York had not spoiled him, because it had not chosen to, but New York had certainly wrecked his tolerance for any party but a very good one. Like most snobs he professed to believe in the aristocracy of achieved quality—"Just give me a hovel with a few young artists, bright-eyed and bold"—in fact, a party lacked flavor for him unless someone very rich or social was present. An evening without a wicked lady in the room was like an opera company without a large voice. Of course there were no wicked ladies when he entered this room. Some reasonably attractive wives to be certain, and a couple of young girls, too young for him, they were still in the late stages of

some sort of extraordinary progressive school, and were innocent, decent-spirited, merry, red-cheeked, idealistic, and utterly lobotomized away from the sense of sin. Mailer would not have known what to do with such young ladies—he had spent the first forty-four years of his life in an intimate dialogue, a veritable dialectic with the swoops, spooks, starts, the masks and snarls, the calm lucid abilities of sin, sin was his favorite fellow, his tonic, his jailer, his horse, his sword, say he was not inclined to flirt for an hour with one bright seventeen-year-old or another when they conceived of lust as no more than the gymnasium of love. Mailer had a diatribe against LSD, hippies, and the generation of love, but he was keeping it to himself. (The young girls, incidentally, had been brought by de Grazia. Not for nothing did de Grazia bear a resemblance to Sinatra.)

But we are back with the wives, and the room has not yet been described. It was the sort of room one can see at many a faculty party in places like Berkeley, the University of Chicago, Columbia—the ground of common being is that the faculty man is a liberal. Conservative professors tend to have a private income, so their homes show the flowering of their taste, the articulation of their hobbies, collections adhere to their cabinets and odd statements of whim stand up in the nooks; but liberal instructors, liberal assistant professors, and liberal associate professors are usually poor and programmatic, so secretly they despise the arts of home adornment. Their houses look one like the other, for the wives gave up herculean careers as doctors, analysts, sociologists, anthropologists, labor relations experts—great servants of the Social Program were lost when the women got married and relinquished all for hubber and kids. So the furnishings are functional, the prevailing hues of wall and carpet and cloth are institutional brown and library gray, the paintings and sculpture are stylized abstract, hopeless imitation I. Rice Pereira, Leonard Baskin, Ben Shahn, but bet your twenty-five dollars to win an assured ten dollars that the artist on the wall is a friend of the host, has the right political ideas, and will talk about literature so well, you might think you were being addressed by Maxim Gorky.

Such were the sour and near to unprintable views of the semi-distinguished and semi-notorious author as he entered the room. His deepest detestation was often reserved for the nicest of liberal academics, as if their lives were his own life but a step escaped. Like the scent of the void which comes off the pages of a Xerox copy, so was he always depressed in such homes by their hint of oversecurity. If the republic was now managing to convert the citizenry to a plastic mass, ready to be attached to any manipulative gung ho, the author was ready to cast much of the blame for such success into the undernourished lap, the overpsychologized loins, of the liberal academic intelligentsia. They were of course politically opposed to the present programs and movements of the republic in Asian foreign policy, but this political difference seemed no more than a quarrel among engineers. Liberal academics had no root of a real war with technology land itself, no, in all likelihood, they were the natural managers of that future air-conditioned vault where the last of human life would still exist. Their only quarrel with the Great Society was that they thought it temporarily deranged, since the Great Society seemed to be serving as instrument to the Goldwater wing of the Republican party, a course of action so very irrational to these liberal technologists that they were faced with bitter necessity to desert all their hard-earned positions of leverage on real power in the Democratic party, a considerable loss to suffer merely because of an irrational development in the design of the Great Society's supermachine. Well, the liberal technologists were not without character or principle. If their living rooms had little to keep them apart from the look of waiting rooms of doctors with a modern practice, it was exactly because the private loves of the ideologues were attached to no gold standard of the psyche. Those true powers of interior decoration—greed, guilt, compassion and trust—were hardly the cornerstones of their family furnishings. No, just as money was a concept, no more, to the liberal academic, and needed no ballast of gold to be considered real, for nothing is more real to the intellectual than a concept! so position or power in society was, to the liberal technologist, also a concept, desirable, but always to be relinquished for a better

concept. They were servants of that social machine of the future in which all irrational human conflict would be resolved, all conflict of interest negotiated, and nature's resonance condensed into frequencies which could comfortably phase nature in or out as you please. So they were servants of the moon. Their living rooms looked like offices precisely because they were ready to move to the moon and build Utope cities there—Utope being, one may well suppose, the only appropriate name for pilot models of Utopia in Non-Terrestrial Ecologically Sub-Dependent Non-Charged Staging Areas, that's to say dead planets where the food must be flown in, but the chances for good civil rights and all-out social engineering are one hundred percent zap!

As is invariably the case with sociological ruminations the individual guests at this party disproved the general thesis, at least in part. The hostess was small, for example, almost tiny, but vivid, bright-eyed, suggestive of a fiery temper and a childlike glee. It was to pain Mailer later to refuse her cooking (she had prepared a buffet to be eaten before the move to the theater) but he was drinking with some devotion by then, and mixing seemed fair neither to the food nor the bourbon. It was of course directly unfair to the hostess: Mailer priding himself on his good manners precisely because the legend of his bad manners was so prevalent, hated to cause pain to a hostess, but he had learned from years of speaking in public that an entertainer's first duty was to deliver himself to the stage with the maximum of energy, high focus, and wit—a good heavy dinner on half a pint of bourbon was likely to produce torpor, undue search for the functional phrase, and dry-mouthed maunderings after a little spit. So he apologized to the lady, dared the look of rejection in her eye which was almost balanced on a tear—she was indeed surprisingly adorable and childlike to be found in such a liberal academic coven—and tried to cover the general sense of loss by marshaling what he assumed his most radiant look, next assuring her that he would take a rain check on the meal.

"Promise?"

"Next time I'm in Washington," he lied like a psychopath. The arbiter of nicety in him had observed with horror over many a

similar occasion that he was absolutely without character for any social situation in which a pause could become the mood's abyss, and so he always filled the moment with the most extravagant amalgams of possibility. Particularly he did this at the home of liberal academics. They were brusque to the world of manners, they had built their hope of heaven on the binary system and the computer, 1 and 0, Yes and No—they had little to do therefore with the spectrum of grace in acceptance and refusal; if you did not do what they wished, you had simply denied them. Now Mailer was often brusque himself, famous for that, but the architecture of his personality bore resemblance to some provincial cathedral which warring orders of the church might have designed separately over several centuries, the particular cathedral falling into the hands of one architect, then his enemy. (Mailer had not been married four times for nothing.) If he was on many an occasion brusque, he was also to himself at least so supersensitive to nuances of manner he sometimes suspected when in no modest mood that Proust had lost a cell mate the day they were born in different bags. (Bag is of course used here to specify milieu and not the exceptional character of the mothers, Mme. Proust and Mrs. I. B. Mailer.) At any rate, boldness, attacks of shyness, rude assertion, and circumlocutions tortured as arthritic fingers working at lace, all took their turn with him, and these shuttlings of mood became most pronounced in their resemblance to the banging and shunting of freight cars when he was with liberal academics. Since he—you are in on the secret—disapproved of them far more than he could afford to reveal (their enmity could be venomous) he therefore exerted himself to push up a synthetic exaggerated sweetness of manner, and his conversations with liberal ideologues on the consequence consisted almost entirely of overcorrections of the previous error.

"I know a friend of yours," says the ideologue. A nervous voice from the novelist for answer. "Yes? Who?" Now the name is given: it is X.

Mailer: I don't know X.

The ideologue proceeds to specify a conversation which M held with X. M recalls. "Oh, yes!" he says; "of course! X!" Bubbles

of conversation about the merits of X, and his great ebullience. Actually X is close to flat seltzer.

There had been just this sort of dialogue with a stranger at the beginning of the party. So Mailer gave up quickly any thought of circulation. Rather, he huddled first with Dwight Macdonald, but Macdonald was the operative definition of the gregarious and could talk with equal facility and equal lack of personal observation to an Eskimo, a collector from the New York Department of Sanitation, or a UN diplomat—therefore was chatting happily with the world fifteen minutes after his entrance. Hence Mailer and Robert Lowell got into what was by all appearances a deep conversation at the dinner table sometime before food was laid out, Mailer thus doubly wounding the hostess with his later refusal.

We find, therefore, Lowell and Mailer ostensibly locked in converse. In fact, out of the thousand separate enclaves of their very separate personalities, they sensed quickly that they now shared one enclave to the hilt: their secret detestation of liberal academic parties to accompany worthy causes. Yes, their snobbery was on this mountainous face close to identical—each had a delight in exactly the other kind of party, a posh evil social affair, they even supported a similar vein of vanity (Lowell with considerably more justice) that if they were doomed to be revolutionaries, rebels, dissenters, anarchists, protesters, and general champions of one Left cause or another, they were also, in private, *grands conservateurs*, and if the truth be told, poor damn émigré princes. They were willing if necessary (probably) to die for the cause—one could hope the cause might finally at the end have an unexpected hint of wit, a touch of the Lord's last grace—but wit or no, grace or grace failing, it was bitter rue to have to root up one's occupations of the day, the week, and the weekend and trot down to Washington for idiot mass manifestations which could only drench one in the most ineradicable kind of mucked-up publicity and have for compensation nothing at this party which might be representative of some of the Devil's better creations. So Robert Lowell and Norman Mailer feigned deep conversation. They turned their heads to one another at the empty table, ignoring

the potentially acolytic drinkers at either elbow, they projected their elbows out in fact like flying buttresses or old Republicans, they exuded waves of Interruption Repellent from the posture of their backs, and concentrated on their conversation, for indeed they were the only two men of remotely similar status in the room. (Explanations about the position of Paul Goodman will follow later.)

Lowell, whose personal attractiveness was immense (since his features were at once virile and patrician and his characteristic manner turned up facets of the grim, the gallant, the tender and the solicitous as if he were the nicest Boston banker one had ever hoped to meet) was not concerned too much about the evening at the theater. "I'm just going to read some poems," he said. "I suppose you're going to speak, Norman."

"Well, I will."

"Yes, you're awfully good at that."

"Not really." Harumphs, modifications, protestations and denials of the virtue of the ability to speak.

"I'm no good at all at public speaking," said Lowell in the kindest voice. He had indisputably won the first round. Mailer the younger, presumptive, and self-elected prince was left to his great surprise—for he had been exercised this way many times before—with the unmistakable feeling that there was some faint strain of the second-rate in this ability to speak on your feet.

Then they moved on to talk of what concerned them more. It was the subject first introduced to Mailer by Mitch Goodman. Tomorrow, a group of draft resisters, led by William Sloane Coffin, Jr., Chaplain at Yale, were going to march from their meeting place at a church basement, to the Department of Justice, and there a considerable number of draft cards would be deposited in a bag by individual students representing themselves, or their groups at different colleges, at which point Coffin and a selected few would walk into the Department of Justice, turn the cards over to the Attorney General, and await his reply.

"I don't think there'll be much trouble at this, do you?" asked Lowell.

"No, I think it'll be dull, and there'll be a lot of speeches."

"Oh, no," said Lowell with genuine pain, "Coffin's not that kind of fool."

"It's hard to keep people from making speeches."

"Well, you know what they want us to do?" Lowell explained. He had been asked to accompany a draft resister up to the bag in which the draft cards were being dropped. "It seems," said Lowell, with a glint of the oldest Yankee light winging off like a mad laser from his eye, "that they want us to be *big buddy*."

It was agreed this was unsuitable. No, Lowell suggested, it would be better if they each just made a few remarks. "I mean," said Lowell, beginning to stammer a little, "we could just get up and say we respect their action and support it, just to establish, I suppose, that we're there and behind them and so forth."

Mailer nodded. He felt no ease for any of these suggestions. He did not even know if he truly supported the turning in of draft cards. It seemed to him at times that the students who disliked the war most should perhaps be the first to volunteer for the Army in order that their ideas have currency in the Army as well. Without them, the armed forces could more easily become Glamour State for the more mindless regions of the proletariat if indeed the proletariat was not halfway to Storm Troop Junction already. The military could make an elite corps best when the troops were homogenized. On the other hand, no soldier could go into combat with the secret idea that he would not fire a gun. If nothing else, it was unfair to friends in his outfit; besides it suggested the suicidal. No, the iron of the logic doubtless demanded that if you disapproved of the war too much to shoot Vietcong, then your draft card was for burning. But Mailer arrived at this conclusion somewhat used up as we have learned from the number of decisions he had to make at various moral crossroads en route and so felt no enthusiasm whatsoever for the preliminary demonstration at the Department of Justice tomorrow in which he would take part. To the contrary, he wondered if he would burn or surrender his own draft card if he were young enough to own one, and he did not really know the answer. How then could he advise others to take the action, or even associate his name? Still, he was going to be there.

He started to talk of these doubts with Lowell, but he could hear the sound of his own voice, and it offended him. It seemed weak, plaintive, as if his case were—no less incriminating word—phony, he did not quite know why. So he shut up.

A silence.

"You know, Norman," said Lowell in his fondest voice, "Elizabeth and I really think you're the finest journalist in America."

Mailer knew Lowell thought this—Lowell had even sent him a postcard once to state the enthusiasm. But the novelist had been shrewd enough to judge that Lowell sent many postcards to many people—it did not matter that Lowell was by overwhelming consensus judged to be the best, most talented, and most distinguished poet in America—it was still necessary to keep the defense lines in good working order. A good word on a card could keep many a dangerous recalcitrant in the ranks.

Therefore, this practice annoyed Mailer. The first card he'd ever received from Lowell was on a book of poems, *Deaths for the Ladies and other disasters* it had been called, and many people had thought the book a joke which whatever its endless demerits, it was not. Not to the novice poet at least. When Lowell had written that he liked the book, Mailer next waited for some word in print to canonize his thin tome; of course it never came. If Lowell were to begin to award living American poets in critical print, two hundred starving worthies could with fairness hold out their bowl before the escaped Novelist would deserve his turn. Still, Mailer was irked. He felt he had been part of a literary game. When the second card came a few years later telling him he was the best journalist in America, he did not answer. Elizabeth Hardwick, Lowell's wife, had just published a review of *An American Dream* in *Partisan Review* which had done its best to disembowel the novel. Lowell's card might have arrived with the best of motives, but its timing suggested to Mailer an exercise in neutralismanship—neutralize the maximum of possible future risks. Mailer was not critically equipped for the task, but there was always the distant danger that some bright and not unauthoritative voice, irked at Lowell's enduring hegemony, might come

along with a long lance and presume to tell America that posterity would judge Allen Ginsberg the greater poet.

This was all doubtless desperately unfair to Lowell who, on the basis of two kind cards, was now judged by Mailer to possess an undue unchristian talent for literary logrolling. But then Mailer was prickly. Let us hope it was not because he had been beaten a little too often by book reviewers, since the fruit of specific brutality is general suspicion.

Still Lowell now made the mistake of repeating his remark. "Yes, Norman, I really think you are the best journalist in America."

The pen may be mightier than the sword, yet at their best, each belong to extravagant men. "Well, Cal," said Mailer, using Lowell's nickname for the first time, "there are days when I think of myself as being the best writer in America."

The effect was equal to walloping a roundhouse right into the heart of an English boxer who has been hitherto right up on his toes. Consternation, not Britannia, now ruled the waves. Perhaps Lowell had a moment when he wondered who was guilty of declaring war on the minuet. "Oh, Norman, oh, certainly," he said, "I didn't mean to imply, heavens no, it's just I have such *respect* for good journalism."

"Well, I don't know that I do," said Mailer. "It's much harder to write"—the next said with great and false graciousness—"a good poem."

"Yes, of course."

Chuckles. Headmastersmanship.

Chuckles. Fellow headmastersmanship.

They were both now somewhat spoiled for each other. Mailer got up abruptly to get a drink. He was shrewd enough to know that Lowell, like many another aristocrat before him, respected abrupt departures. The pain of unexpected rejection is the last sweet vice left to an aristocrat (unless they should happen to be not aristocrats, but secret monarchs—then watch for your head!).

Next, Mailer ran into Paul Goodman at the bar—a short sentence which contains two errors and a misrepresentation. The assumption is that Goodman was drinking alcohol but he was

not; by report, Goodman never took a drink. The bar, so-called, was a table with a white tablecloth, set up near the archway between the dining room where Lowell and Mailer had been talking and the living room where most of the party was being enacted—to the tune of ten couples perhaps—so the bar did not qualify as a bar, just a poor table with a cloth to support Mailer's irritated eye. Finally he did not run into Goodman. Goodman and Mailer had no particular love for one another—they tended to slide about each other at a party. In fact, they hardly knew each other.

Their lack of cordiality had begun on the occasion of a piece written by Goodman for *Dissent* which had discussed Washington in the early days of the Kennedy Administration. Goodman had found much to displease him then, and kept referring to the "wargasms" of this Kennedy Administration which wargasms he attached with no excessive intellectual jugglery to the existential and Reichian notions of the orgasm which Mailer had promulgated in his piece *The White Negro*. (Goodman was a sexologue—that is, an ideologue about sex—Mailer was then also a sexologue; no war so rich without quarter as the war between two sexologues.) Goodman, at any rate, had scored off Mailer almost at will, something to the general effect that the false prophet of the orgasm was naturally attached to the false hero of Washington who went in for wargasms. Writing for a scholarly Socialist quarterly like *Dissent*, it was hard to miss. The magnetic field of *Dissent*—hostile to Kennedy at the time—bent every wild shot to the target. So Mailer wrote a letter in reply. It was short, sought to be urbane, and was delivered exactly to the jugular, for it began by asserting that he could not judge the merits of Goodman's intellectual points since the other had made a cardinal point of emphasizing Mailer's own incapacity to reason and Goodman was doubtless correct, but Mailer did nonetheless feel competent to comment on the literary experience of encountering Goodman's style and that was not unrelated to the journeys one undertook in the company of a laundry bag . . . Great ferment in scholarly Socialist quarters! A small delegation of the Editors assured Mailer they would print his letter if he insisted, but the hope was that he would not. Mailer had always thought it senseless to undertake

an attack unless you made certain it was printed, for otherwise you were left with a determined enemy who was an unmarked man, and therefore able to repay you at leisure and by the lift of an eyebrow. Mailer acceded however. He was fond of the Editors of *Dissent*, although his private mixture of Marxism, conservatism, nihilism, and large parts of existentialism could no longer produce any polemical gravies for the digestive apparatus of scholarly Socialist minds; nonetheless Mailer had never been asked to leave the Board, and would not have resigned on his own since that would have suggested a public attack on the ideas of people with whom he had no intellectual accord but of whom he was personally fond.

Nonetheless, from that day, Mailer and Goodman slid around one another at parties and waved languid hands in greeting. It was just as well. Each seemed to have the instinct a discussion would use up intellectual ordnance best reserved for articles. Besides, they had each doubtless read very little of the other.

Mailer, of course, was not without respect for Goodman. He thought Goodman had had an enormous influence in the colleges and much of it had been, from his own point of view, very much to the good. Paul Goodman had been the first to talk of the absurd and empty nature of work and education in America, and a generation of college students had formed around the core of his militancy. But, oh, the style! It set Mailer's teeth on edge to read it; he was inclined to think that the body of students who followed Goodman must have something de-animalized to put up with the style or at least such was Mailer's bigoted view. His fundamental animus to Goodman was still, unhappily, on sex. Goodman's ideas tended to declare in rough that heterosexuality, homosexuality, and onanism were equal valid forms of activity, best denuded of guilt. Mailer, with his neo-Victorianism, thought that if there was anything worse than homosexuality and masturbation, it was putting the two together. The super-hygiene of all this mental prophylaxis offended him profoundly. Super-hygiene impregnated the air with medicated Vaseline—there was nothing dirty in the damn stuff; and sex to Mailer's idea of it was better off dirty, damned, even slavish! than clean, and without guilt. For

guilt was the existential edge of sex. Without guilt, sex was meaningless. One advanced into sex against one's sense of guilt, and each time guilt was successfully defied, one had learned a little more about the contractual relation of one's own existence to the unheard thunders of the deep—each time guilt herded one back with its authority, some primitive awe—hence some creative clue to the rages of the deep—was left to brood about. Onanism and homosexuality were not, to Mailer, light vices—to him it sometimes seemed that much of life and most of society were designed precisely to drive men deep into onanism and homosexuality; one defied such a fate by sweeping up the psychic profit which derived from the existential assertion of yourself—which was a way of saying that nobody was born a man; you earned manhood provided you were good enough, bold enough.

This most conservative and warlike credo could hardly have meaning to a scientific humanist like Goodman for whom all obstacles to the good life derived precisely from guilt: guilt which was invariably so irrational—for it derived from the warped burden of the past. Goodman therefore said hello mildly to Mailer, who answered in as mild a voice, and that was all they had to say. Lowell, following, expressed his condolences to Goodman on the recent death of his son, and Mailer after depressing the hostess by his refusal to eat, went on to talk to Macdonald.

That was most brief. They were old friends, who had a somewhat comic relation, for Macdonald—at least as Mailer saw it—was forever disapproving of the younger author until the moment they came together at one or another party or meeting. Then Macdonald would discover he was glad to see Mailer. In fact, Macdonald could hardly help himself. Of all the younger American writers, Mailer was the one who had probably been influenced most by Macdonald, not so much from the contents of Macdonald's ideas which were always going in and out of phase with Mailer's, but rather by the style of Macdonald's attack. Macdonald was forever referring the act of writing to his sense of personal standards which demanded craft, care, devotion, lack of humbug, and simple *a fortiori* honesty of sentiment. All this was a little too simple for Mailer's temper. Nonetheless, Macdonald

had given him an essential clue which was: look to the feel of the phenomenon. If it feels bad, it is bad. Mailer could have learned this as easily from Hemingway, as many another novelist had, but he had begun as a young ideologue—his mind had been militant with positions fixed in concrete, and Macdonald's method had worked like Zen for him—at the least it had helped to get his guns loose. Macdonald had given the hint that the clue to discovery was not in the substance of one's idea, but in what was learned from the style of one's attack. (Which was one reason Mailer's style changed for every project.) So, the younger author was unquenchably fond of Macdonald, and it showed. Not a minute would go by before he would be poking Macdonald's massive belly with a finger.

But for now, they were ill at ease. Macdonald was in the process of reviewing Mailer's new novel *Why Are We In Vietnam?* for *The New Yorker*, and there was an empty space in the presence of the mood. Mailer was certain Macdonald did not like the new novel, and was going to do a negative review. He had seemed professionally unfriendly these past few weeks. The Novelist would have liked to assure the Critic that the review could not possibly affect their good feeling for one another, but he did not dare, for such a remark would break a rule, since it would encourage Macdonald to talk about what was in his review, or at worst trick him into an unwilling but revealing reply. Besides, Mailer did not trust himself to speak calmly about the matter. Although Macdonald would not admit it, he was in secret carrying on a passionate love affair with *The New Yorker*—Disraeli on his knees before Victoria. But the Novelist did not share Macdonald's infatuation at all—*The New Yorker* had not printed a line in review of *The Presidential Papers*, *An American Dream*, or *Cannibals and Christians*, and that, Mailer had long ago decided, was an indication of some of the worst things to be said about the magazine. He had once had a correspondence with Lillian Ross who asked him why he did not do a piece for *The New Yorker*. "Because they would not let me use the word 'shit,'" he had written back. Miss Ross suggested that all liberty was his if only he understood where liberty resided. True liberty,

Mailer had responded, consisted of his right to say shit in *The New Yorker*. So there was old rage behind the arms-length bantering about Dwight's review of Norman's book, and Mailer finally left the conversation. Macdonald was beginning to like him again, and that was dangerous. Macdonald was so full of the very beans of that old-time Wasp integrity, that he would certainly bend over much too far backward if for a moment while reviewing the book he might have the thought he was sufficiently fond of Norman to conceivably be giving him too-gentle treatment. "No," thought the Novelist, "let him keep thinking he disapproves of me until the review is written."

Among his acquaintances at the party, this now left de Grazia. As has been indicated, they were old friends of the most superficial sort, which is to say that they hardly knew each other, and yet always felt like old friends when they met. Perhaps it was no more than the ability of each man to inspire an odd sense of intimacy. At any rate they never wasted time in needless conversation, since they were each too clever about the other to be penned in position by an evasion.

"How would you like to be the first speaker of the evening?" de Grazia asked.

"There'll be nothing interesting to follow me."

De Grazia's eyes showed pleasure. "Then I thought of starting with Macdonald."

"Dwight is conceivably the world's worst speaker." It was true. Macdonald's authority left him at the entrance to the aura of the podium. In that light he gesticulated awkwardly, squinted at his text, laughed at his own jokes, looked like a giant stork, whinnied, shrilled, and was often inaudible. When he spoke extempore, he was sometimes better, often worse.

"Well," said de Grazia, "I can't start with Lowell."

"No, no, no, you must save him."

"That leaves Goodman."

They nodded wisely. "Yes, let's get rid of Goodman first," said Mailer. But then the thought of that captive audience tuned to their first awareness of the evening by the pious drone of Good-

man's voice injured every showman's instinct for the opening. "Who is going to be M.C.?" Mailer asked.

"Unless you want to, I thought I might be."

"I've never been an M.C.," said Mailer, "but maybe I should be. I could warm the audience up before Goodman drops them." De Grazia looked uneasily at Mailer's bourbon. "For Christ's sakes, Ed," said Mailer.

"Well, all right," said de Grazia.

Mailer was already composing his introductory remarks, percolating along on thoughts of the subtle annoyance his role as Master of Ceremonies would cause the other speakers.

5: TOWARD A THEATER OF IDEAS

The guests were beginning to leave the party for the Ambassador, which was two blocks away. Mailer did not know this yet, but the audience there had been waiting almost an hour. They were being entertained by an electronic folk rock guitar group, so presumably the young were more or less happy, and the middle-aged dim. Mailer was feeling the high sense of clarity which accompanies the light show of the aurora borealis when it is projected upon the inner universe of the chest, the lungs, and the heart. He was happy. On leaving, he had appropriated a coffee mug and filled it with bourbon. The fresh air illumined the bourbon, gave it a cerebrative edge; words entered his brain with the agreeable authority of fresh minted coins. Like all good professionals, he was stimulated by the chance to try a new if related line of work. Just as professional football players love sex because it is so close to football, so he was fond of speaking in public be-

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Mailer

2: THE MARSHAL AND THE NAZI

They put him in the rear seat of a Volkswagen camper and he welcomed the opportunity to relax. Soon they would drive him, he guessed, to some nearby place where he would be arraigned, fined, and released. He kept searching the distance for sight of Lowell and Macdonald whom he assumed would be following any minute. The thought that they might not have been picked up was depressing, for he could only guess at the depths of Lowell's dejection if he had botched his arrest and now, with each twenty seconds, he became more gloomily certain that Lowell and Macdonald had been turned back, had failed to get arrested, and blamed himself now for the rush with which he had set out—he should have warned them the arrest might not be automatic, that one might have to steal it—he felt somehow incompetent at not having properly prepared them.

Now a new man entered the Volkswagen. Mailer took him at first for a Marshal or an official, since he was wearing a dark suit and a white motorcycle helmet, and had a clean-cut stubborn face with short features. But he was carrying something which looked like a rolled-up movie screen over five feet long, and he smiled in the friendliest fashion, sat down next to Mailer, and took off his helmet. Mailer thought he was about to be interrogated and he looked forward to that with this friendly man, no less! (of course the prisoner often looks forward to his interrogation) but then another man carrying a clipboard came up to them, and leaning through the wide double door of the camper, asked questions of them both. When Mailer gave his name, the man with the clipboard acted as if he had never heard of him, or

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at least pretended never to have heard of him, the second possibility seeming possible since word traveled quickly from reporters.

"How do you spell it?"

"M.A.I.L.E.R."

"Why were you arrested, Mr. Miller?"

"For transgressing a police line as a protest against the war in Vietnam."

The Clipboard then asked a question of the man sitting next to him. "And why were you arrested?"

"As an act of solidarity with oppressed forces fighting for liberty against this country in Southeast Asia."

The Clipboard nodded drily, as if to say, "Yeah, we're all crazy here." Then he asked, pointing to the object which looked like a rolled-up movie screen, "You want that with you?"

"Yessir," said the man next to Mailer. "I'd like to take it along."

The Clipboard gave a short nod, and walked off. Mailer would never see him again. If the History has therefore spent a pointless exchange with him, it is to emphasize that the first few minutes of an arrest such as this are without particular precedent, and so Mailer, like a visitor from Mars, or an adolescent entering polite society, had no idea of what might be important next and what might not. This condition of innocence was not, however, particularly disagreeable since it forced him to watch everything with the attention, let us say, of a man like William Buckley spending his first hour in a Harlem bar—no, come! things are far safer for Mailer at the Pentagon.

He chatted with his fellow prisoner, Teague, Walter Teague was the name, who had been in the vanguard of the charge Mailer had seen from the parking lot. But before any confused impressions were to be sorted, they were interrupted by the insertion of the next prisoner put into the Volkswagen, a young man with straight blond hair and a Nazi armband on his sleeve. He was installed in the rear, with a table between, but Mailer was not happy, for his eyes and the Nazi's bounced off each other like two heads colliding—the novelist discovered he was now in a hurry for them to get this stage of the booking completed. He was also privately indignant at the U. S. Army (like a private

citizen, let us say, who writes a letter to his small-town newspaper) at the incredible stupidity of putting a Nazi in the same Volkswagen camper with Pentagon demonstrators—there were two or three other cars available, at least!—next came the suspicion that this was not an accident, but a provocation in the making. If the Nazi started trouble, and there was a fight, the newspaper accounts would doubtless state that Norman Mailer had gotten into an altercation five minutes after his arrest. (Of course, they would not say with whom.) This is all doubtless most paranoid of Mailer, but then he had had nearly twenty years of misreporting about himself, and the seed of paranoia is the arrival of the conviction that the truth about oneself is never told. (Mailer might have done better to pity the American populace—receiving misinformation in systematic form tends to create mass schizophrenia: poor America—Eddie and Debbie are True Love.)

Now they were moved out of the camper and over to an Army truck. There was Teague, and the novelist, and another arrestee—a tall Hungarian who quickly told Mailer how much he liked his books and in much the same breath that he was a Freedom Fighter—there was also a new U. S. Marshal, and the Nazi. The prisoners climbed one by one over the high tailgate, Mailer finding it a touch awkward for he did not wish to dirty his dark blue pinstripe suit, and then they stood in the rear of the truck, a still familiar 2½ ton 6-by of a sort which the novelist hadn't been in for twenty-one years, not since his Army discharge.

Standing in the truck, a few feet apart from each other, all prisoners regarding one another, the Nazi fixed on Mailer. Their eyes locked like magnets coming into line, and for perhaps twenty seconds they stared at each other. Mailer looked into a pair of yellow eyes so compressed with hate that back of his own eyes he could feel the echo of such hatred ringing. The Nazi was taller than Mailer, well-knit, and with neatly formed features and a shock of blond hair, would have been handsome but for the ferocity of his yellow eyes which were sunk deep in their sockets. Those eyes made him look like an eagle.

Yet Mailer had first advantage in this eye-staring contest. Be-

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cause he had been prepared for it. He had been getting into such confrontations for years, and rarely lost them, even though he sometimes thought they were costing him eyesight. Still, some developed instinct had made him ready an instant before the Nazi. Every bit of intensity he possessed—with the tremors of the March and the Marshal's arm still pent in him—glared forth into the other's eyes: he was nonetheless aghast at what he saw. The American Nazis were all fanatics, yes, poor mad tormented fanatics, their psyches twisted like burning leaves in the fire of their hatreds, yes, indeed! but this man's conviction stood in his eyes as if his soul had been focused to a single point of light. Mailer could feel violence behind violence rocking through his head. If the two of them were ever alone in an alley, one of them might kill the other in a fight—it was not unlike holding an electric wire in the hand. And the worst of it was that he was not even feeling violent himself—whatever violence he possessed had gone to his eyes—by that route had he projected himself on the Nazi.

After the first five seconds of the shock had passed, he realized he might be able to win—the Nazi must have taken too many easy contests, and had been too complacent in the first moment, yes it was like wrestlers throwing themselves on each other: one knuckle of one finger a little better able to be worked on a grip could make the difference—now he could feel the hint of force ebbing in the other's eyes, and could wonder at his own necessity to win. He did not hate the Nazi nearly so much as he was curious about him, yet the thought of losing had been intolerable as if he had been *obliged* not to lose, as if the duty of his life at this particular moment must have been to look into that Nazi's eye, and say with his own, "You claim you have a philosophical system which comprehends all—you know nothing! My eyes encompass yours. My philosophy contains yours. You have met the wrong man!" And the Nazi looked away, and was hysterical with fury on the instant.

"You Jew bastard," he shouted. "Dirty Jew with kinky hair."

They didn't speak that way. It was too corny. Yet he could only answer, "You filthy Kraut."

"Dirty Jew."

"Kraut pig."

A part of his mind could actually be amused at this choice—he didn't even hate Germans any more. Indeed Germans fascinated him now. Why they liked his books more than Americans did. Yet here he could think of nothing better to return than "Kraut pig."

"I'm not a Kraut," said the Nazi, "I'm a Norwegian." And then as if the pride of his birth had tricked him into communication with an infidel, thus into sacrilege, the Nazi added quickly, "Jew bastard red," then cocked his fists. "Come here, you coward," he said to Mailer, "I'll kill you."

"Throw the first punch, baby," said Mailer, "you'll get it all."

They were both absolutely right. They had a perfect sense of the other. Mailer was certainly not brave enough to advance on the Nazi—it would be like springing an avalanche on himself. But he also knew that if the Nazi jumped him, one blond youth was very likely to get massacred. In retrospect, it would appear not uncomic—two philosophical monomaniacs with the same flaw—they could not help it, they were counterpunchers.

"Jew coward! Red bastard!"

"Go fuck yourself, Nazi baby."

But now a tall U. S. Marshal who had the body and insane look of a very good rangy defensive end in professional football—that same hard high-muscled build, same coiled spring of wrath, same livid conviction that everything opposing the team must be wrecked, sod, turf, grass, uniforms, helmets, bodies, yes even bite the football if it will help—now leaped into the truck and jumped between them. "Shut up," he said, "or I'll wreck both of you." He had a long craggy face somewhere in the physiognomical land between Steve McQueen and Robert Mitchum, but he would never have made Hollywood, for his skin was pocked with the big boiling craters of a red lunar acne, and his eyes in Cinema-scope would have blazed an audience off their seat for such gray-green flame could only have issued from a blowtorch. Under his white Marshal's helmet, he was one impressive piece of gathered wrath.

Speaking to the Marshal at this point would have been dan-

gerous. The Marshal's emotions had obviously been marinating for a week in the very special bile waters American Patriotism reserves for its need. His feelings were now caustic as a whip—too gentle the simile!—he was in agonies of frustration because the honor of his profession kept him from battering every prisoner's head to a Communist pulp. Mailer looked him over covertly to see what he could try if the Marshal went to work on him. All reports: negative. He would not stand a chance with this Marshal—there seemed no place to hit him where he'd be vulnerable; stone larynx, leather testicles, ice cubes for eyes. And he had his Marshal's club in his hand as well. Brother! Bring back the Nazi!

Whether the Marshal had been once in the Marine Corps, or in Vietnam, or if half his family were now in Vietnam, or if he just hated the sheer Jew York presumption of that slovenly, drug-ridden weak contaminating America-hating army of termites outside this fortress' walls, he was certainly any upstanding demonstrator's nightmare. Because he was full of American rectitude and was fearless, and savage, savage as the exhaust left in the wake of a motorcycle club, gasoline and cheap perfume were one end of his spectrum, yeah, this Marshal loved action, but he was also in that no man's land between the old frontier and the new ranch home—as they, yes *they*—the enemies of the Marshal—tried to pass bills to limit the purchase of hunting rifles, so did *they* try to kill America, inch by inch, all the forces of evil, disorder, mess and chaos in the world, and *cowardice!* and city ways, and slick shit, and despoliation of national resources, all the subtle invisible creeping paralyses of Communism which were changing America from a land where blood was red to a land where water was foul—yes in this Marshal's mind—no lesser explanation could suffice for the Knight of God light in the flame of his eye—the evil was without, America was threatened by a foreign disease, and the Marshal was threatened to the core of his sanity by any one of the first fifty of Mailer's ideas which would insist that the evil was within, that the best in America was being destroyed by what in itself seemed next best, yes American heroism corrupted by American know-how—no wonder murder stood out in his face as he looked at the novelist—for the Marshal to lose his

sanity was no passing psychiatric affair: think rather of a rifleman on a tower in Texas and a score of his dead on the street.

But now the Nazi began to play out the deepest of ceremonies. The truck standing still, another Marshal at the other end of the van (the one indeed who had arrested Mailer) and Teague and the Hungarian to different sides, everyone had their eyes on the Norwegian. He now glared again at Mailer, but then whipped away his eyes before a second contest could begin, and said, "All right, Jew, come over here if you want a fight."

The Marshal took the Nazi and threw him against the side-wall of the truck. As he bounced off, the Marshal gave him a rap below the collarbone with the butt of his club. "I told you to shut up. Now, just shut up." His rage was intense. The Nazi looked back at him sullenly, leaned on the butt of the club almost defiantly as if the Marshal didn't know what foolish danger he was in to treat the Nazi so, the Nazi had a proud curved hint of a smile, as if he were recording the features of this Marshal forever in the history of his mind, the Nazi's eyes seemed to say to the Marshal, "You are really on my side although you do not admit it—you would like to beat me now because in the future you know you will yet kiss my boots!" And the Marshal traveling a high edge of temper began to slam the Nazi against the wall of the truck with moderate force, but rhythmically, as if he would pacify them both by this act, bang, and bang, step by step, the imaginary dialogue of the Marshal to the Nazi now sounding in Mailer's ear somewhat like this, "Listen, Nazi, you're nothing but a rat fart who makes my job harder, and gives the scum around me room to breathe, cause they look at you and feel righteous. You just keep me diverted from the real danger."

And the Nazi looked back with a full sullen pouting defiance as if from deep in himself he was all unconsciously saying to the Marshal, "You know I am beautiful, and you are frightened of me. I have a cause, and I am ready to die for it, and you are just ready to die for a uniform. Join me where the real war is. Already the strongest and wildest men in America wear our symbol on their motorcycle helmets."

And the Marshal, glaring back at the Nazi, butt of his club

transfixing him against the wall of the van, gave a contemptuous look, as if to drop him with the final unspoken word. "Next to strong wild men, you're nothing but a bitch."

Then the truck began to move, and the Marshal calmer now, stood silently between Mailer and the Nazi; and the Nazi also quiet now, stood in place looking neither at the Marshal nor Mailer. Some small storm of hysteria seemed to have worked itself out of the van.

3: GRANDMA WITH ORANGE HAIR

There was not much to see through the canvas arch of the vehicle. A view of a service road they passed along a little bumping, a bit of swaying—in two minutes they arrived at the next stop. It was the southwest wall of the Pentagon, so much was obvious, for the sun shone brightly here.

Probably they were at the rear of a large mess hall or cafeteria, since a loading platform extended for a considerable distance to either side of where the truck had come in. There were MPs and Marshals on the platform, maybe twenty or thirty, as many again in the back-up area where they had come in. At a long desk at the base of the loading platform, the prisoners were being booked. Each had a Marshal beside him. It was quiet and orderly. The Nazi was standing next to Mailer, but now neither looked at the other. It was indeed all over. The Nazi looked quietly spent, almost gentle—as if the outbursts had been his duty, but duty done, he was just a man again—no need to fight.

They took Mailer's name, having trouble with the spelling again. He was now certain it was not trivial harassment but sim-

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The Prison Bus at the Pentagon

The Armies of the Night

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cop and criminal knew each other better than mates, or at least knew some special *piece* of each other better than mates, yes an arrest was carnal. Not sexual, carnal—of the meat, strangers took purchase of each other's meat. Then came the reciprocal tendency to be pleasant. Beneath all those structures advertised as majestic in law and order there was this small carnal secret which the partners of a bust could share. It was tasty to chat afterward, all sly pleasures present that the secret was concealed. Mailer thought of a paragraph he had written once about police—it had probably acted upon him as much as anything else to first imagine his movie. Now his mind remembered the approximate sense of the paragraph, which actually (indulging Mailer's desire to be quoted) went exactly like this:

... they contain explosive contradictions within themselves. Supposed to be law-enforcers, they tend to conceive of themselves as the law. They are more responsible than the average man, they are more infantile. They are attached umbilically to the concept of honesty, they are profoundly corrupt. They possess more physical courage than the average man, they are unconscionable bullies; they serve the truth, they are psychopathic liars . . . their work is authoritarian, they are cynical; and finally if something in their heart is deeply idealistic, they are also bloated with greed. There is no human creation so contradictory, so finally enigmatic, as the character of the average cop . . .

Yes, and without an arrest, he would never have known that this very nice Marshal from West Virginia with his good American face and pleasant manners and agreeable accent, had also a full quiver of sadism and a clammy sweat of possession as he put the arm on you. But indeed, what knowledge had the Marshal of him?

Inside the bus, at the rear of the aisle, was a locked cage and three or four protesters were enclosed there; jailed within their jailing. They greeted him with jeers, cat-calls, hellos, requests for cigarettes, water—after the first impact, it was not ill-spirited.

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"Hey, look," said one of the kids behind the bars, "they got older people in with us too."

"What time does this bus leave for Plainfield?" Mailer asked. The laughter came back. It was going to be all right. He could hear them whispering.

"You Norman Mailer?" asked one.

"Yes."

"Hey, great. Listen, man, we got to talk."

"I hope we don't have too much time." More laughter. He was beginning to feel good for the first time since his arrest. "What did you gentlemen do to be given such honor?" asked Mailer with a wave at their cage.

"We're the ones who were resisting arrest."

"Did you resist it much?"

"Are you kidding?" said one dark-haired gloomy thin young pirate with a large Armenian mustache and a bloodied handkerchief on his head, "if we put our hands in front of our face to keep from being beaten to death, they said we were resisting." Hoots and jeers at the fell accuracy of this.

"Well, did you all just sit there and take it?"

"I got in a couple of good shots at my Marshal," said one of the kids. It was hard to tell if he was lying. Something about their incarceration in the cage made it difficult to separate them, or perhaps it was that they seemed part of a team, of a musical group—the Monsters, or the Freaks, or the Caged Kissers—they had not known each other an hour ago, but the cage did the work of making them an ensemble.

The rest of the bus was slowly filling. Mailer had first taken a seat next to a young minister wearing his collar, and they chatted not unhappily for a few minutes, and then both crossed the aisle to sit on the side of the bus which looked out on the loading platform and the table where they had been booked. From these seats, Mailer had a view of the Marshals and MPs outside, of new arrests arriving in trucks, and of the prisoners coming into the bus, one by one, every couple of minutes. After a while, he realized the bus would not move until it was filled, and this, short of massive new arrests, would take at least an hour.

It was not disagreeable waiting. Each new prisoner was obliged to make an entrance like an actor coming on stage for his first appearance: since prisoners in transit are an enforced audience, new entrance automatically becomes theater. Some new men sauntered on the bus, some bowed to the faces in the aisle, some grinned, some scowled and sat down immediately; one or two principled pacifists practicing total noncooperation were dragged off the 2½-ton trucks, bumped along the ground, tugged over to the bus, and thrown in by the Marshals. Bleeding a little, looking dazed, the three or four young men who arrived by this route were applauded with something not unlike the enthusiasm a good turn gets in a music hall. Handsome young boys got on the bus, and slovenly oafs, hippies, and walking wounded. One boy had a pant leg soaked in blood. A fat sad fellow with a huge black beard now boarded; a trim and skinny kid who looked like he played minor league shortstop took a seat, a Japanese boy, androgynous in appearance, told a few prisoners around him that none of the Marshals had been able to decide if he was a boy or a girl, so they had not known—for he would not tell them—whether a Marshal or a Matron should search him. This was quickly taken up with pleasure and repeated down the bus.

Outside, a truck would arrive every five or ten minutes and some boys and girls would dismount and go to the base of the loading platform to be booked, the boys to enter the bus, the girls to go off to another bus. Still, Maiter kept hoping they would appear in the next haul.

After a while he began to study the Marshals.

Their faces were considerably worse than he had expected. He had had the fortune to be arrested by a man who was indisputably one of the pleasant Marshals on duty at the Pentagon, he had next met what might be the toughest Marshal in the place—the two had given him a false statement. The gang of Marshals now stood outside the bus were enough to firm up any fading loyalty to his own cause: they had the kind of faces which belong to the bad guys in a Western. Some were some were too thin, but nearly all seemed to have those subtle anomalies of the body which come often to men from small towns who are

More Marshals 1214

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It was not disagreeable waiting. Each new prisoner was obliged to make an entrance like an actor coming on stage for his first appearance: since prisoners in transit are an enforced audience, new entrance automatically becomes theater. Some new men sauntered on the bus, some bowed to the faces in the aisle, some grinned, some scowled and sat down immediately; one or two principled pacifists practicing total noncooperation were dragged off the 2½-ton trucks, bumped along the ground, tugged over to the bus, and thrown in by the Marshals. Bleeding a little, looking dazed, the three or four young men who arrived by this route were applauded with something not unlike the enthusiasm a good turn gets in a music hall. Then some young boys got on the bus, and slovenly oafs, hippies, and walking wounded. One boy had a pant leg soaked in blood. A fat sad fellow with a huge black beard now boarded; a trim and skinny kid who looked like he played minor league shortstop took a seat, a Japanese boy, androgynous in appearance, told a few prisoners around him that none of the Marshals had been able to decide if he was a boy or a girl, so they had not known—for he would not tell them—whether a Marshal or a Matron should search him. This was quickly taken up with pleasure and repeated down the bus.

Outside, a truck would arrive every five or ten minutes and some boys and girls would dismount and go to the base of the loading platform to be booked, the boys to enter the bus, the girls to go off to another bus. ~~Still no sign of Lowell or Macdonald. Mailer kept hoping they would appear in the next haul of prisoners. After a while he began to study the Marshals.~~ Mailer

~~Their faces were considerably worse than he had expected. He had had the fortune to be arrested by a man who was incontestably one of the pleasanter Marshals on duty at the Pentagon, he had next met what must be the toughest Marshal in the place—the two had given him a false spectrum. The gang of Marshals now studied outside the bus were enough to firm up any fading loyalty to his own cause: they had the kind of faces which belong to the bad guys in a Western. Some were fat, some were too thin, but nearly all seemed to have those subtle anomalies of the body which come often to men from small towns who have~~

~~Don't know~~
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inherited strong features, but end up, by their own measure, in failure. Some would have powerful chests, but abrupt paunches, the skinny ones would have a knob in the shoulder, or a hitch in their gait, their foreheads would have odd cleaving wrinkles, so that one man might look as if an ax had struck him between the eyes, another paid tithe to ten parallel deep lines rising in ridges above his eye brows. The faces of all too many had a low cunning mixed with a stroke of rectitude: if the mouth was slack, the nose was straight and severe; should the lips be tight, the nostrils showed an outsize greed. Many of them looked to be ex-First Sergeants, for they liked to stand with the heels of their hands on the top of their hips, or they had that way of walking, belly forward, which a man will promote when he is in comfortable circumstances with himself and packing a revolver in a belt holster. The toes turn out; the belly struts. They were older men than he might have expected, some in their late thirties, more in their forties, a few looked to be over fifty, but then that may have been why they were here to receive prisoners rather than out on the line—in any case they emitted a collective spirit which, to his mind, spoke of little which was good, for their eyes were blank and dull, that familiar small-town cast of eye which speaks of apathy rising to fanaticism only to subside in apathy again. (Mailer had wondered more than once at that curious demand of small-town life which leaves something good and bright in the eyes of some, is so deadening for others—it was his impression that people in small towns had eyes which were generally livelier or emptier than the more concentrated look of city vision.) These Marshals had the dead eye and sour cigar, that sly shuffle of propriety and rut which so often comes out in a small-town sheriff as patriotism and the sweet stink of a crooked dollar. ~~Small-town sheriffs sidled over to a crooked dollar like a High~~ ~~Episcopalian hooked on a closet queen.~~ If one could find the irredeemable madness of America (for we are a nation where weeds will breed in the gilding tank) it was in those late afternoon race track faces coming into the neon lights of the parimutuel windows, or those early morning hollows in the eye of the soul in places like Vegas where the fevers of America go livid in the hum

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The Armies of the Night

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~~the night and Grandmother~~, the church-goer, orange hair
burning bright now crooned over the One-Arm Bandit, pocket-
book open, driving those half-dollars home, home to the slot.

"Madame, we are burning children in Vietnam."

"Boy, you just go get yourself lost. Grandma's about ready for a
kiss from the jackpot."

The burned child is brought into the gaming hall on her hospi-
tal bed.

"Madame, regard our act in Vietnam."

"I hit! I hit! Hot deedy, I hit. Why, you poor burned child—you
just brought me luck. Here, honey, here's a lucky half-dollar in
reward. And listen sugar, tell the nurse to change your sheets.
Those sheets sure do stink. I hope you ain't got gangrene. Hee
hee, hee hee. I get a supreme pleasure mixing with gooks in
Vegas."

One did not have to look for who would work in the concentra-
tion camps and the liquidation centers—the garrison would be
filled with applicants from the pages of a hundred American
novels, from *Day of the Locust* and *Naked Lunch* and *The Magic
Christian*, one could enlist half the Marshals outside this bus,
simple, honest, hard-working government law-enforcement agents,
yeah! There was something at loose now in American life, the
poet's beast slinking to the marketplace. The country had always
been wild. It had always been harsh and hard, it had always had
a fever—when life in one American town grew insupportable, one
could travel, the fever to travel was in the American blood, so
said all, but now the fever had left the blood, it was in the
cells, the cells traveled, and the cells were as insane as Grandma
with orange hair. The small towns were disappearing in the by-
passes and the supermarkets and the shopping centers, the small
town in America was losing its sense of the knuckle, the herb,
and the root, the walking sticks were no longer cut from trees,
nor were they cured, the schools did not have crazy old teachers
now but teaching aids, and in the libraries, *National Geographic*
gave way to *TV Guide*. Enough of the old walled town had once
remained in the American small town for gnomes and dwarfs and
knaves and churls (yes, and owls and elves and crickets) to live

~~Not a...
Grandmother...
large...
and...
and...
and...~~

in the constellated cities of the spiders below the eaves in the old leaning barn which—for all one knew—had been a secret ear to the fevers of the small town, message center for the inhuman dreams which passed through the town at night in sleep and came to tell their insane tale of the old barbarian lust to slaughter villages and drink their blood, yes who knew which ghosts, and which crickets, with which spider would commune—which prayers and whose witch's curses would travel those subterranean trails of the natural kingdom about the town, who knows which fevers were forged in such communion and returned on the blood to the seed, it was an era when the message came by the wind and not by the wire (for the town gossip began to go mad when the telephone tuned its buds to the tip of her tongue) the American small town grew out of itself, and grew out of itself again and again, harmony between communication and the wind, between lives and ghosts, insanity, the solemn reaches of nature where insanity could learn melancholy (and madness some measure of modesty) had all been lost now, lost to the American small town. It had grown out of itself again and again, its cells traveled, worked for government, found security through wars in foreign lands, and the nightmares which passed on the winds in the old small towns now traveled on the nozzle tip of the flame thrower, no dreams now of barbarian lusts, slaughtered villages, battles of blood, no, nor any need for them—technology had driven insanity out of the wind and out of the attic, and out of all the lost primitive places: one had to find it now wherever fever, force, and machines could come together, in Vegas, at the race track, in pro football, race riots for the Negro, suburban orgies—none of it was enough—one had to find it in Vietnam; that was where the small town had gone to get its kicks.

~~That was on the faces of the Marshals. It was a great deal to read on the limited evidence before him, but he had known these faces before—they were not so different from the cramped, mean, stern, brave, florid, bestial, brutish, narrow, calculating, incurious, hardy, wily, leathery, simple, good, stingy, small-town faces he had once been familiar with in his outfit overseas, all those Texans from all those small towns, it was if he could tell—as at a college~~

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reunion—the difference these more than twenty years had made. If it were legitimate to read the change in American character by the change in the faces of one's classmates, then he could look at these Marshals like men he had known in the Army, but now revisited, and something had gone out of them, something had come in. If there was a common unattractive element to the Southern small-town face, it was in that painful pinch between their stinginess and their greed. No excess of love seemed ever to come off a poor white Southerner, no fats, no riches, no sweets, just the avidity for such wealth. But there had been sadness attached to this in the old days, a sorrow; in the pinch of their cheeks was the kind of abnegation and loneliness which spoke of what was tender and what was lost forever. So they had dignity. Now the hollows in their faces spoke of men who were rabid and toothless, the tenderness had turned corrosive, the abnegation had been replaced by hate, dull hate, cloud banks of hate, the hatred of failures who had not lost their greed. So he was reminded of a probability he had encountered before: that, nuclear bombs all at hand, the true war party of America was in all the small towns, even as the peace parties had to collect in the cities and the suburbs. Nuclear warfare was dividing the nation. The day of power for the small-town mind was approaching—who else would be left when atomic war was done would reason the small-town mind, and in measure to the depth of their personal failure, would love Vietnam, for Vietnam was the secret hope of a bigger war, and that bigger war might yet clear the air of races, faces, in fact—technologies—all that alienation they could not try to comprehend.

It was not a happy meditation. Among the soldiers he had known, there was the chance to talk. He did not see many faces here who would ever talk. Cheers. They were dragging a girl out of one of the trucks now. Pale-skinned, with light brown hair, no lipstick, dungarees, she had that unhappy color which came from too many trips to marijuana garden. Nonetheless, she waved to her boyfriend while being dragged along the ground. ~~He was eventually dragged into their bus~~ *end*

~~Mailer began to chat with the young clergyman. His name was~~

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Black Powder

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words, and the hollow absurd imprecatory thunder of the loudspeakers with their reductive echo — you must FIGHT . . . *fight* . . . fight . . . fite . . . ite . . . , in the soul-killing repetition of political jargon which reminded people that the day was well past one o'clock and they still had not started) the Blacks in the roped-in area about the speaker's stand were the only sign of active conspiracy, they were up to some collective expression of disdain, something to symbolize their detestation of the White Left — yes, the observer was to brood on it much of the next day when he learned without great surprise that almost all of the Negroes had left to make their own demonstration in another part of Washington, their announcement to the press underlying their reluctance to use their bodies in a White War. That was comprehensible enough. If the Negroes were at the Pentagon and did not preempt the front rank, they would lose face as fighters; if they were too numerous on the line, they would be beaten half to death. That was the ostensible reason they did not go, but the observer wondered if he saw a better.

There is an old tendency among writers of the Left when apologists for one indigestible new convulsion or another — they go in for a species of calculated reduction which attempts to introduce comfortable proportions into historic phenomena which are barbaric, heroic, monstrous, epic, and/or apocalyptic. (*New Republic* and *Nation* writers please stand!) So we may remember there was never much of a famine in the Ukraine, just various local dislocations of distribution; never real Moscow trials, rather the sort of predictable changing of the guard which accompanies virile epochs of history. The American labor unions were never really in danger of leaving the Left, just being led down the garden path by unscrupulous but limited leadership. Et cetera. So forth.

Now, Black Power. We are bound to hear before we are done that Black Power is merely a long-due cor-

rective for premature and administratively betrayed efforts at integration — an indispensable period of self-development which will result in future integrations at a real level.

Like all such Left perspectives, it is wishful, pretty, programmatic, manipulable by jargon, and utterly stripped of that existential content which is indispensable to comprehending the first thing about Black Power.

The first thing to say, pretty or no, is that the Negro (that is the active volatile cadres of every militant Negro movement, SNCC, Black Muslims, etc., plus those millions of latently rebellious black masses behind them — which is what we will refer to when we speak of the Negro), yes, this Negro does not want equality any longer, he wants superiority, and wants it because he feels he is in fact superior. And there is some justice on his side for believing it. Sufficiently fortunate to be alienated from the benefits of American civilization, the Negro seems to have been better able to keep his health. It would take a liberal with a psychotic sense of moderation to claim that whites and Negroes have equally healthy bodies; the Negroes know they have become on the average physically superior, and this *against all the logic of America's medical civilization* — the Negroes get less good food ostensibly, no vitamins, a paucity of antibiotics, less medical care, less fresh air, less light and sanitation in living quarters. Let us quit the list — it is parallel to another list one could make of educational opportunities vs. actual culture (which is to say — real awareness of one's milieu). The Negro's relatively low rate of literacy seems to be in inverse relation to his philosophical capacity to have a comprehensive vision of his life, a large remark whose only support is existential — let us brood, brothers, on the superior cool of the Negro in public places. For the cool comes from a comprehen-

sive vision, a relaxation before the dangers of life, a readiness to meet death, philosophy, or amusement at any turn.

Commend us, while we are on lists, to the ability of the Negro to police himself, as opposed to the ability of the White to police others. At the civil rights march on Washington in 1963 with over a hundred thousand Negroes in town, no episodes of violence were reported — in the riots in the years ~~which~~ ^{that} followed, fascinating patterns of cooperation among the rioters emerge. One may look, as government commissions do, for patterns of a plot; or one may do better to entertain the real possibility that the Negroes have psychic powers of mass impromptu collaboration which are mysterious, and by that measure, superior to the White.

What the Negro may have decided at this point, as Black Power emerges, is that he has gotten the worst and the least of civilization, and yet has been able to engage life more intensely. It is as if the cells of his body now know more than the white man — so his future potentiality is greater. Whether this is true, half-true, or a species of madness is beyond anyone's capacity to know in this year, but the psychological reality is that breaking through his feelings of vast inferiority, a feeling of vast superiority is beginning to arise in the black man, and the antennae of this superiority lead not to developing the Negro to a point where he can live effectively as an equal in white society, but rather toward developing a viable modern culture of his own, a new kind of civilization. This is the real and natural intent of Black Power; not to get better schools, but to find a way to educate their own out of textbooks not yet written; not to get fair treatment from the police, but grapple instead with the incommensurable problem of policing one's own society — what will Black justice be? Ergo, not to get a fair share of hospitals, but an opportunity to explore Black medicine, herbs in place of antibiotics, witchcraft for

cancer cures, surgical grace with the knife in preference to heart transfers. In parallel: not to get into unions, but to discover — it is far off in the distance — Black notions of labor, cooperation, and the viability of hip in production methods; not housing projects, but a new way to build houses; not shuttle planes, but gliders; not computers — rather psychic inductions.

Black Power moves then, obviously, against the technological society. Since the Negro has never been able to absorb a technological culture with success, even reacting against it with instinctive pain and distrust, he is now in this oncoming epoch of automation going to be removed from the technological society anyway. His only salvation, short of becoming a city brigand or a government beggar, is to build his own society out of his own culture, own means, own horror, own genius. Or own heroic, tragic, or evil possibilities. For there is no need to assume that the black man will prove morally superior to the white man. Schooled in treachery, steeped in centuries of white bile, there are avalanches and cataracts of violence, destruction, inchoate rage, and promiscuous waste to be encountered — there is well a question whether he can build his own society at all, so perverse are the conduits of his crossed emotions by now. But the irony is that the White would do well to hope the Black can build a world, for those well-ordered epochs of capitalism which flushed the white wastes down into the Black heart are gone — the pipes of civilization are backing up. The irony is that we may even yet need a Black vision of existence if civilization is to survive the death chamber it has built for itself. So let us at least recognize the real ground of Black Power — it is ambitious, beautiful, awesome, terrifying, and has to do with nothing so much as the most important questions of us all — what is man? why are we here? will we survive?

BOITES

✓

I love Bobby, Bobby's divine
The Windsors came to
see him
and the Duke
kept calling for
Bye Bye Blackbird
over and over again.
It was a glorious night.
I borrowed mascara
from the Duchess
before we were done
we were crying
so hard
even the Duke.

How were we to know
that in five years
give ten
the West
Old World
would shiver from blight
and I would turn
to a Prince
of the Congo
saying: embrace me
darkest delight
for in your firmament
are stars.

Oh blackbird
do not banish us
banish not
the lovers
of Bobby

when he sang
Blackbird
bye-bye
for can it be
we heard
the chord
of the cannibal
sharpening his knife
on a blooded stone
and wept for you
as well as us.

Young winners
make weak old losers
said Bobby
removing his mask
to show
he was now
King
of our
Congo.

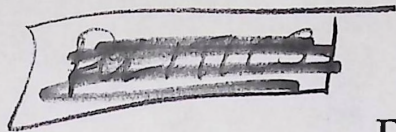
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1968



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pp 287-304



Black Power

~~Read - Carl Price, un-~~
~~annotated~~

Looking for the Meat and Potatoes — Thoughts on Black Power

"You don't even know who you are," Reginald had said. "You don't even know, the white devil has hidden it from you, that you are of a race of people of ancient civilizations, and riches in gold and kings. You don't even know your true family name, you wouldn't recognize your true language if you heard it. You have been cut off by the devil white man from all true knowledge of your own kind. You have been a victim of the evil of the devil white man ever since he murdered and raped and stole you from your native land in the seeds of your forefathers. . . ."

— *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

In not too many years, we will travel to the moon, and on the trip, the language will be familiar. We have not had