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Washington - 2

A Visit to Dr. Kissinger.

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The calendar being never so orderly as the requirements of literary form, Aquarius had his conversation with McGovern on the day after an interview with Henry Kissinger, but in memory the occasions were reversed, as if he had shifted from observing Democrats to covering Republicans on the precise hour he crossed over the parties and went to visit Dr. Kissinger in the White House.

Since it was an interview which had been scheduled weeks in advance and confirmed the day before, with all option given to meet at Sans Souci for lunch or the White House, he had naturally picked the White House. How often did such opportunities arise? Still, it took fifteen long minutes and then five more to pass through the special police at the gate. Interrogating him through a microphone in a plate-glass facade, they claimed at first to have no record of his appointment, and then informed him he had been due at nine in the morning, only to discover they were looking through the schedule of the resident White House physician, Dr. Tkach. Kissinger! now that was better! but before they could announce him, he would have to complete a questionnaire. There was something as reductive as a steam bath in this colloquy through the glass. Already he was perspiring at the minutes being lost for the interview.

Once admitted to the kiosk, however, he was freezing in the air conditioning and fuming at the questionnaire. When he handed it back, the Sergeant who conducted the inquiry through the window, scolded him. "I told you not to use abbreviations, didn't I."

"Why don't you have a form which gives you space to write out the full word," he snapped back, and was apparently accepted at last by the Sergeant as a man of sufficient self-importance to visit the White House, for he was invited to take a chair.

Still, he had to wait while they phoned for clearance. In the meantime, he listened to the Sergeant and his assistant, a bright-eyed and wiry Southerner, who said, "I just reduced crime in my neighborhood by forty percent."

The Sergeant jeered; the other policeman, a young Black with a ramrod posture, smiled uneasily.

"Hell, yeah. The other night I talked my wife out of hitting me on the side of the head with a skillet. That's forty percent right there. But when it comes to armed robbery I'm helpless. I come home at the end of the week with my pay check and she holds me up for all fifty-one cents."

"Why," said the Sergeant, "don't you study the life of George Washington and stop telling so many fucking lies?"

"There's an example. George Washington cut down the cherry tree and they gave him ten thousand dollars a year. Why, way back then he was making more money than I am right now."

"What are you complaining about?" asked the Sergeant. "He was the first President of the U.S. What was you ever the shit first of?"

But a young Secret Service man had now come up to the kiosk, and conducted him across the North Lawn. Inside the West Lobby a receptionist apologized politely for the delay. Ushered through a door into a hallway, he was met by Kissinger who gave the greatest of broad smiles, pumped his hand, and said in a deep and gutty German accent, "Today must be my day for masochism since I dare to be interviewed by you."

Almost immediately, they were in his office, large and full of lights. "We have a momentous decision to make instantly," said Kissinger. "It is: where shall we eat? I can offer you respectable food if you wish the interview here, not exciting but respectable, and we won't be interrupted. Or we can go to a restaurant just around the corner where the food will be very good and we will be interrupted a little although not very much."

Similar in height and build, it was probable they would not wish to miss a good lunch. So in much less time than it took him to enter, he left the White House (that most placid of mansions!) with Kissinger, hardly noticing the same Secret Service man who unobtrusively—it was the word!—had stopped the traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue while they crossed. If not for just such a rare American pomp, he could have had the impression that he knew Kissinger over the years. For as they walked along, chatting with no pain, it was much as if the learned doctor had been an editor of some good and distinguished quarterly, and they were promenading to lunch in order to talk over a piece.

In fact, that was the first topic—his piece. “We must, from the beginning,” said Kissinger, “establish ground rules. We may make them whatever you wish, but we have to keep them. I can speak frankly with you, or not so frankly. But if I am frank, then you have to allow me the right to see what you put into my mouth. It is not because of vanity, or because of anything you may say about me, you may say anything you wish about me, in fact”—with the slyest grin—“you will probably hurt my position more if you say good things than bad, but I have, when all is said, a position I must be responsible to. Now if you don’t wish to agree to such a procedure, we can do the interview at arm’s length, which of course I’m used to and you need show me nothing. Either method is agreeable, provided we establish the rules.”

They had by now reached Sans Souci, and Kissinger’s advance to his table was not without ceremony. Since he was hardly back twenty-four hours from Paris and some talks with the North Vietnamese, the headwaiter teased him over the pains of quitting Parisian cuisine. Passing by the table of Larry O’Brien there were jokes about Watergate.

“That was good luck, Henry, to get away just before it hit the fan,” said O’Brien.

“Ah, what a pity,” said Kissinger. “You could have had me for the villain of the sixth floor.”

And a friend intercepted him before he could take his seat. “Henry, what truth to the rumor that McGovern is picking you for Vice-President?”

Kissinger chuckled. “Twenty-two thousand people in the

State Department will be very happy." He was animated with the pleasure these greetings had given him. While not a handsome man, he was obviously more attractive to women now than when he had been young, for he enjoyed what he received, and he was a sensuous man with a small mouth and plump lips, a Hapsburg mouth; it was not hard to see his resemblance to many a portrait of many an Austrian archduke and prince. Since he gave also every sign of the vanity and vulnerability and ruddy substance of a middle-aged man with a tendency to corpulence—the temptation to eat too much had to be his private war!—his weaknesses would probably be as amenable to women as his powers, and that German voice, deep, fortified with an accent which promised emoluments, savories, even meat gravies of culture at the tip of one's tongue, what European wealth! produced an impression altogether more agreeable than his photographs. So one mystery was answered—Kissinger's reputation as a ladies' man. And a difficulty was commenced—Aquarius' work might have been simplified if he liked the Doctor less. A hint of some sinister mentality would have been a recognizable aid.

Yet even the demand for ground rules was reasonable. The meal ordered, Kissinger returned to the subject—he repeated: he would obviously expect the rules to be clarified before he could go further. Nor was there much impulse to resist him with argument. Secretly, he respected Kissinger for giving the interview—there was indeed not a great deal the Doctor could gain, and the perils were plentiful, including the central risk that Kissinger would have to trust him to keep his side of the bargain. Since his position not only as Assistant to the President on National Security Affairs but as court favorite must excite the ten thousand furies of bureaucracy—"this man who can't speak English that they keep hidden in the White House" being a not uncommon remark—the medium of this interview was not without its underlying message: Kissinger, in some part of himself at least, must be willing to function as a cultural ambassador across the space of mind between the constellations of the White House and the island galaxies of New York intellectual life. So Aquarius made his own speech. Like a virgin descending the steps of sexual congress, he said that he had never done this before, but since

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he was not unsympathetic to Kissinger's labors, and had no wish to jeopardize his position, which he would agree was delicate . . . so forth. They set up some ground rules.

"Now what should we talk about?" asked Kissinger.

Well, they might talk about the huge contradiction between the President's actions in Russia and China as opposed to Vietnam. "You know, if not for the bombing I might have to think about voting for Nixon. Certainly no Democrat would have been able to look for peace with Russia and China. The Republicans would never have let him. So Nixon's achievement is, on the one hand, immense, and on the other ghastly." Kissinger nodded, not without a hint of weariness to show his familiarity with the argument.

"If I reply to you by emphasizing the difference in our styles of negotiation in each country, it is not to pretend that these negotiations preempt moral questions, but rather that I'm not so certain we can engage such questions properly if they're altogether stripped of context. For instance, it would be impossible to discuss the kind of progress we made with China and Russia unless I were to give you the flavor of those negotiations for they were absolutely characteristic and altogether different. For instance, I was not unfamiliar with Russian matters, but my ignorance about China was immense on the first secret visit, and I had no idea of how they would receive me"—a hint of the loneliness of his solitary position now passes across the table at Sans Souci—"nor even what we necessarily would be able to talk about. In the beginning I made the mistake of assuming that they negotiate like the Russians, and they don't. Not at all. With the Russians you always know where you stand. If, for example, you are hammering out a joint statement, you can be certain that if you ask them to remove a comma in one place, depend on it they will ask you for a comma in return. Whereas the character of men like Chou must emerge to a great degree from experiences like the Long March, and so I discovered—and not immediately—that you always had to deal with them on the real substance of the question. I remember when the President visited China, and I was working with Chou on the joint statement we would issue describing our areas of agreement and difference, I asked if a certain point the Chinese had brought

up could be dropped because the wording would be difficult for us in America. In return I would give up a point to them. Chou said 'Explain to me why this point causes you difficulty, and if your explanation makes sense I will cede it to you. If it doesn't convince me however, then nothing can make me give it up. But I don't need or want your point. You can only give your points back to *your* President, you cannot give them to us.' So he shamed me," Kissinger finished.

"And the Vietnamese?"

"They could hardly be more different. The problem is to convince them we really want peace."

"Don't you think a million tons of bombs a year makes it hard for them to believe?"

"No. I know this has to sound unendurably callous to you, but the North Vietnamese are inconceivably tough people, and they've never known peace in their lives. So to them the war is part of the given. They are able to live with it almost as a condition of nature. But when it comes to negotiation, they refuse to trust us on the most absurd little points. Let them feel if they will that we are not to be relied on in the larger scheme of things—that is not my point of view, but an argument can obviously be advanced—it is just that they refuse to trust us on the pettiest points where it would not even be to our interest to cheat them. So they are not easy to comprehend. On the one hand they have a fortitude you cannot help but admire; on the other, they are near to little lawyers who are terrified of the larger processes of the law—and so cling to the most picayune items. That is one difficulty in dealing with the North Vietnamese. The other is their compulsion to the legalistic which bears no relation to reality, nor to the possibility of reality. In effect they expect us to win their war for them for they want us to write up into the peace agreement their literal investiture of the government of South Vietnam. And that obviously we can't do. There's nothing we want more than for the war to end, but they must take their chances too. They have to win their own war."

"When they began their offensive in April, why then didn't the President just let them drive ahead and solve the problem for you? Why, just at that point, did he choose to escalate the bombing?"

Kissinger did not reply. The difficulty in continuing the discussion was that they would now be obliged to talk about the character of Richard Nixon rather than the nature of the North Vietnamese; given Kissinger's position, that was hardly possible: so the character of the interview changed. If it was easy for Aquarius to have the idea that Nixon and Kissinger were more in accord on Russia and China than on Vietnam, there was no evidence for it. Kissinger took pains to express his respect. "The President is a very complex man," he said, "perhaps more complex than anyone I've known, and different from the public view of him. He has great political courage for instance."

"Yes. It was no ordinary gamble to go to China."

"And he made moves in Russia which would take too long to explain now, but believe me he showed extraordinary decisiveness."

"Still, don't you think it's a vice that he has a personality which is of no use to the country?"

"Nixon is wary of exhibiting anything personal in himself. You have to consider the possibility it's for very good cause considering the way he has been treated by the Media."

"Still his wariness creates contempt."

"And a spirit of debunking which I don't find very happy. It was like that in the Weimar Republic. Just the kind of wholesale debunking that may yet lead to totalitarianism." Kissinger shrugs. "I wonder if people recognize how much Nixon may be a bulwark against that totalitarianism."

"Can he be?"

"I'm not certain I know what you mean."

"As people grow up, don't they form their characters to some extent on the idea a President gives of his person to the public. Nixon may give too little."

"Is it your point of view then that in the presidency one needs to have a man it is worth being like?"

"Yes. Nixon offers nothing authentic of himself."

"You would argue that he is not primarily a moral leader. I do not wish to agree. But perhaps you go along with me that he has political genius," Kissinger said.

"Absolutely."

It was indeed Aquarius' opinion. Still, that was a thought he could return to. Their lunch broke up with the passing of their table by Art Buchwald who announced to Kissinger

that Dobrinin was coming to his house one night soon to play chess, and schedules permitting, he thought, granting Dobrinin's status as a chess player, that they should make a date to team up against the Ambassador. Kissinger agreed.

On the way back to the White House, they talked companionably of the hazards of working life, of jet-lag and fatigue. "How much sleep do you get?" asked Aquarius.

"I am happy if I can average five hours."

"Is it enough?"

"I always thought my mind would develop in a high position. But, fatigue becomes a factor. The mind is always working so hard that you learn little. Instead, you tend to work with what you learned in previous years."

They said good-bye in the white office in the White House with its blue sofas, its Oriental rugs, and its painting by Olitsky, a large canvas in blue-purple, a wash of dark transparencies with a collection of pigment near the center as if to speak of reverie and focus. "I've only come to like modern art in the last few years," Kissinger remarked.

Aquarius was to think again of focus. Because Kissinger opened to him a painful question on the value of the act of witness: lunch had been agreeable. Yet how could one pretend that Kissinger was a man whose nature could be assessed by such a meeting; in this sense, he was not knowable—one did not get messages from his presence of good or evil, rather of intelligence, and the warm courtesy of Establishment, yes, Kissinger was the essence of Establishment, his charm and his presence even depending perhaps on just such emoluments of position as the happiness he obtained in the best restaurants. If there was a final social need for Establishment, then Kissinger was a man born to be part of it and so automatically installed in the moral schizophrenia of Establishment, a part of the culture of moral concealment, and yet never was the problem so perfect, for the schizophrenia had become Aquarius' own. Kissinger was a man he liked, and in effect was ready to protect—he would even provide him with his own comments back to read. So Aquarius wondered if he had come into that world of the unendurably complex where one gave parts of one's allegiance to men who worked in the evil gears and bowels and blood left by the moral schizophrenia of Establishment, but still worked there, as one saw

it, for good more than ill. It was a question to beat upon every focus of the brain, and he prepared with something near to bewilderment to go down to Miami again and see if there were moral objects still to be delineated in the on-growing blur of his surest perceptions.

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Pat Nixon

St. George and the Godfather

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in this crowd remind him of other crowds he knows well, and does not like. Of course!—they are the faces of the world—all those mobs of facts who line up outside TV theaters and wait for hours that they may get in to see the show live, yes, the show will be more alive than their faces. The genius of Nixon! Has he selected this gaggle of mildly stunted minds from photograph film? Or had they been handed applications as they left the theaters after the live shows? Aquarius remembers the look of the television screen in his room at the Fontainebleau. It was up on a small pinked-white dais and looked like some kind of altar for a medico-religious event. Nixon may have drawn the deep significance from such a sight twenty years ago—how valuable must be the insights he could pass on to McLuhan, well! Aquarius was frothing again and so came near to missing the value of Pat Nixon's entrance.

So, he went back to the opportunity to watch Pat Nixon do her work twice that afternoon to see her, once at her planned spontaneous tumultuous entrance with Secret Service men who quietly, gently, steadily, politically, forced an aisle for her up the steps and for a few hundred feet along the lobby in an elevator up to a private room in the Fontainebleau Towers while the band played (a trip which must have consumed a half hour) and there after a bath presumably—how much desire for still another shower did such waves of human flesh arouse in a First Lady?—she had changed and came down again with her daughters to plunge into an orgy of hand-shaking and autographing as she proceeded along a six-foot-wide roped-off aisle to a banquet room of the Fontainebleau where a reception party was being given for Pat Nixon, her girls, and the Young Voters for the President.

What a rich opportunity then to study Pat Nixon, first with her entrance to the hotel in a pink dress, then her immersion later into the reception crowd with a royal-blue dress, long-sleeved, straight-skirted, a light soft material vulnerable to crowds, she was able to demonstrate that particular leathery hard-riding sense of grace she possessed which spoke of stamina first, for she could knee and elbow her own defense through a crowd and somehow never involve the dress, that was one of the straight-out tools of her trade and she knew how to employ it—that material

Start

After her arrival at the Fontainebleau, Aquarius watches Pat Nixon do her work, goes twice that afternoon to see her.

was not going to get snagged on some dolt's ragged elbow or *ripped* any more than a seaman would get his feet caught in a rope he was coiling in a storm.

So, for instance, had she managed her passage through the lobby for the reception, pointing her head at an angle up to the glare of the Media lights poised like flaming swords over her way, the ears inured to the sound of another brass combo (with one black trumpeter) trombone, banjo, other trumpet, and drums), still she moves a little to it, just a flash, as though to demonstrate that dancing is one of the hundred and sixty-eight light occupations she can muster.

Earlier Clark MacGregor has come down the steps with his wife, he stands close, he is proud of her like a college kid with one smash of a keen steady! Indeed there are older people all through the lobby waiting with love in their eyes for Pat—she has worked hard and she is better off for it—they are ready to revere her for caulking the hull of the ship so well (it is their ship, too—the presidency residing somewhere in the awesome fall between one's god and one's parents) and the crowd is orderly, not pushing, the YVPers all stashed in the reception room, but Pat is still going slowly down the aisle through the older folks in the lobby, tarrying to say hello, and before her comes Julia, committed, determined to do a good job in a green top and white-skirted dress, black belt, and Tricia in a white and pink dress with her husband Ed Cox who looks gracious, as if he takes considerate care of her which she might need for she is near to beautiful and tiny, wearing perhaps a size 5 dress with blond hair all pulled back and sprayed into an immaculate pale-gold mass, but her dark eyes, nymphlike and lost, suggest the vacant remote and yet flirtatious look of a princess who has been told about life outside the castle. Then comes Pat. There are liver spots to perceive on her hands, and her teeth must be capped, she has obviously pinched and pushed and tightened her presentation of herself all her life, but she had ridden the beast of such discipline, she looks better now than when she entered politics. No, she has emerged as a pro, such a pro indeed with such a pride in having mastered every side of her occupation that one did not ask oneself if she liked shaking hands. Possibly the question did not exist for her, since it was a matter of indifference

whether she liked it or not—she was not on earth to like things but to do them!

Still, for a politician, the love of shaking hands is equal to a writer's love of language. Ultimately that is the material with which a politician must work, yet not all politicians love shaking hands, nor with everyone, any more than Ernest Hemingway loved every word in the English language. Certain words like "gorgeous" brought out Poppa's snobbery—perhaps he was in this sense equivalent to a Republican politician who preferred to grasp the hand of the clean, the neat, the precise, and the well-laundered. (Hubert Humphrey, to the contrary, was a veritable Thomas Wolfe of a politician; just as no word was too mean or out-size splendid for the man who could write *Of Time and the River*, so Hubert would kiss Queens and scrofula victims with the same warmth.) Now, if Pat Nixon had been a writer, she would have gravitated to the commonest words that everyone used or the most functional words—she would have wanted to reach the largest audiences with ideas they could comprehend on first reading—that was how she shook hands. Like a *Reader's Digest* editor attacked a paragraph. She loved to work with the wad. Give her the plainest dullest face, no spark, no flair, just the urgency to get what it wants—her autograph, her handshake. She gave them out equally, like the bills and smiles of a bank teller. There are faces to greet, currency to handle, stay on top of the job!

In his own mayoralty campaign, Aquarius ended up by shaking hands wherever he could, had in fact to his surprise ended up liking that act more than anything else in politics, at least once he comprehended that the only way to do it was to offer as much of himself as was present with every greeting. The phenomenon was that energy came back, and the hand did not get tired. It was as if in shaking a thousand hands, six hundred may have returned a little more energy than they took, as if the generosity of a mass of people might be larger than their greed, a belief which was as it should be if one wanted to become a politician, for it gave, on balance, some confidence ~~a~~ the thought of working for others. p

But Pat Nixon had obviously come from folds of human endeavor which believed the reward for service was not to be found in the act but afterward. Naturally she gave energy

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and she took energy, impossible not to, and was somewhat wilted if with a glow when she was done, but it was the muscles of her arm which worked, and the muscles in her smile, her soul was the foreman of the act, and so did not reside in her muscles, but off to the side and vigilant as she worked the machine. She no longer saw faces, no, she was a heavy worker on an assembly line, and bodies came her way, there were touches and taps, a gloved rhythm to keep—she moved in some parallel perhaps to the burden of a slim tight-mouthed Negress with heavy family worries on a heavy assembly line for whom the pay was good and so she was in it until death or double overtime. So, too, would Pat Nixon have no inner guilt before trade unionists or Blacks—she had worked as hard as any of them—in her own way, she moved as well. Afterward, her fixed expression stayed in memory for she had the features of a woman athlete or the heroine of some insurmountable disease which she has succeeded in surmounting.

A man getting an autograph from her asks, "How do you stay so young?"

She smiles carefully. "With hard work," she says.

Nixon Comes to Miami

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NORMAN MAILER

There is an image! Swimming just out of reach we see the head of a liberal politician stuck onto some sort of pole-filled penile shaft (black presumably) and yam! go Agnew's teeth. What a karate chop! The head of the liberal has just been clipped off its Black backing.

Well, such an image is it seen in Nixon. At the foot of the plane he embraces his wife and kisses his daughters but with appropriate reserve—they are being watched after all. The embrace is suggestive of five million similar such greetings each evening as commuters get off at a suburban stop and go through the revelation, and the guard they throw up against revelation, of their carnal nitty-gritty. A good game for a face-watcher, and Nixon's is not different from many another man who pecks a kiss in public. But as he walks toward the Young Voters for the President and salutes and smiles and grins, preparing to stop before them and raise both his arms (for they are now no longer just cheering him as the principal, but are off on all the autoerotics of thrusting their own arms in the air four fingers up while screaming "Four more years, four more years"), so Nixon promenading toward them exhibits again that characteristic gait which is his alone and might have provided thought for analysis in even so profound a student of body movements as Wilhelm Reich, for Nixon has character-armor, hordes of it! Several schemes of armor are stacked all on top of one another, but none complete. It is as if he is wearing two breastplates and yet you can still get peeks of his midriff. He walks like a puppet more curious than most human beings, for all the strings are pulled by a hand within his own head, an inquiring hand which never pulls the same string in quite the same way as the previous time—it is always trying something out—and so the movements of his arms and legs while superficially conventional, even highly restrained, are all impregnated with attempts, still timid—after all these years!—to express attitudes and emotions with his body. But he handles his body like an adolescent suffering excruciations of self-consciousness with every move. After all these years! It is as if his incredible facility of brain which manages to capture every contradiction in every question put to him, and never fails to reply with the maximum of advantage for himself in a language which is resolutely without experiment, is, facile and incred-

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St. George and the Grouse

ible brain, off on a journey of inquiry into the stubborn refusal of the body to obey it. He must be obsessed with the powers he could employ if his body could also function intimately as an instrument of his will, as intimate perhaps as his intelligence (which has become so free of the *distortions* of serious moral motivation), but his body refuses. Like a recalcitrant hound, it refuses. So he is still trying out a half dozen separate gestures with each step, a turn of his neck to say one thing, a folding of his wrist to show another, a sprightly step up with one leg, a hint of a drag with the other, and all the movements are immediately restrained, pulled back to zero revelation as quickly as possible by a brain which is more afraid of what the body will reveal than of what it can discover by just once making an authentic move which gets authentic audience response. ~~Yet he remains divided on the utility of this project. Stubborn as an animal, the body does not give up and keeps making its disjunctive moves while the will almost as quickly snaps them back.~~

Yet when he begins to talk to the crowd, this muted rebellion of his activities comes to a halt. ~~His speaker's assistant who fixes you with his stare and thereby gives promise that no matter the provocation, he will not giggle, Nixon has made a compact with his body. When the brain stops experimenting with its limbs, and takes over cerebral function (like manipulating an audience), the body becomes obedient to the speaker's posture instead of on it.~~

No 9

Now, hands clasped behind him, Nixon begins. "I was under some illusion that the convention was downtown," he says.

It takes a while for the kids to get it. YVPers are not the sort of hogs who grab the high I.Q.'s. But when they realize he is not only complimenting them for the size of their numbers but on their importance, they come back with all the fervor of that arm in the air and the four fingers up in the double V. ~~Nixon has appropriated the old V for Victory sign, better he has cuckolded all the old sentimental meanings—Victory means liberalism united and the people in contact against tyranny. Et cetera. It is his own, and doubled. Up go the double horns of the kids. "Four more years."~~

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YVP

Pat Nixon arrives with her daughters at the gate of the Fontainebleau, up the driveway and into the crowd of Young Voters for the President. She disappears in a sea of white floppy hats with blue brims and straw hats with red-white-and-blue bands. A combo with red-and-white-striped jackets is playing middle-class wedding songs, pseudo Benny Goodman music (maybe the term for it is category), accordion, clarinet, flute, drums and electric guitar, and George Romney has been running before her arrival—he is excited—and Dole is now down to ground level. There is a flood of cheers when she comes up in her black Cadillac much like the on-off hysteria you hear when the team enters the field, and all the signs say.

Now, the signs painted by the YVPers all begin to wave, these Young Voters for the President who in the eyes of the liberal Press will yet look as ears of goldenrod to hayfever sufferers. Somebody has provided all YVPers with the paint, no dark secret, Republican money can be spent for Republican posters and paint, but the kids have done the work themselves and the signs say "We stand for Pat"; "We Love Julia"; "Trish You're a dish"; "Miami loves the 1st family"—there is just a hint of the slovenly in the uncertain use of capital letters. "Welcome back, Pat"; "Agnew for peace"; "Vote for a WINNER"; "Nixon gives a damn"—here is one—"Nixon is For Love." Now kids are chanting "Four more years," "Hey, hey, whateya say, Nixon, Nixon, all the way." They are not the most attractive faces he has seen. Hundreds of young faces and not one is a beauty, neither by natural good looks nor by the fine-tuning of features through vitality or wit—the children

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YVP
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in this crowd remind him of other crowds he knows well, and does not like. Of course!—they are the faces of the wad!—all those blobs of faces who line up outside TV theaters and wait for hours that they may get in to see the show live, yes, the show will be more alive than their faces. The genius of Nixon! Has he selected this gaggle of mildly stunted minds from photograph files? Or had they been handed applications as they left the theaters after the live shows? Aquarius remembers the look of the television set in his room at the Fontainebleau. It was up on a small pickled-white dais and looked like some kind of altar for a medico-religious event. Nixon may have drawn the deep significance from such a sight twenty years ago—how valuable must be the insights he could pass on to McLuhan, well, Aquarius was frothing again, and so came ~~to witness the value of Pat Nixon's entrance.~~

Ergo, he went back to the opportunity to watch Pat Nixon do her work, went twice that afternoon to see her, once at her planned spontaneous tumultuous entrance with Secret Service men who quietly, gently, steadily, *politically* forced an aisle for her up the steps and for a few hundred feet along the lobby to an elevator up to a private room in the Fontainebleau Towers while the band played (a trip which must have consumed a half hour) and there after a bath presumably—how much desire for still another shower did such waves of human flesh arouse in a First Lady?—she had changed and came down again with her daughters to plunge into an orgy of hand-shaking and autographing as she proceeded along a six-foot-wide roped-off aisle to a banquet room of the Fontainebleau where a reception party was being given for Pat Nixon, her girls, and the Young Voters for the President.

What a rich opportunity then to study Pat Nixon, first with her entrance to the hotel in a pink dress, then her immersion later into the reception crowd with a royal-blue dress, long-sleeved, straight-skirted, a light soft material vulnerable to crowds, she was able to demonstrate that particular leathery hard-riding sense of grace she possessed which spoke of stamina first, for she could knee and elbow her own defense through a crowd and somehow never involve the dress, that was one of the straight-out tools of her trade and she knew how to employ it—that material



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One thing can be said for the presidency—it gives every sign of curing incurable malaise. Nixon is genial! Now, he jokes with the crowd. "I think I'm going to be nominated tonight. I *think* so," he says charmingly. It is the first time he has ever spoken with italics in public. "And so is Vice-President Agnew," he adds. "He's going to be nominated too." They cheer. Ever since they arrived on Saturday, the YVPers have been cheering, on the street, at receptions in the gallery, in the lobby of each hotel they visit, and here at the airport they exhibit all the inner confidence of a Fail-Safe. When in doubt, cheer.

Once again Aquarius is depressed at the sight of their faces. It is not only that all those kids seem to exist at the same level of intelligence—which is probably not quite high enough to become Army officers—but they also seem to thrive on the same level of expression. They have the feverish look of children who are up playing beyond the hour of going to sleep; their eyes are determined, disoriented, happy and bewildered. So they shriek. With hysteria. The gleam in their eye speaks of no desire to go beyond the spirit they have already been given. Rather, they want more of what they've got. It is unhappy but true. They are young pigs for the President. ~~He thinks of all the half-nude selenitic pirates of Flamingo Park, over whom America (which is to say Republicans) are so worried. Perhaps America has been worrying about the wrong kids.~~

"I've been watching the convention on television," Nixon says through the microphone. "I want to thank you for the tribute you paid my wife." Now for the first time he puffs his chest up, which—given the mating dance he performs whenever addressing a crowd—has to signify that a remark of portent is on its way. "Based on what I've seen on television, and based on what I have seen here today,"—Four more years!—"those who predict the other side is going to win the young voters are simply wrong." Deep breath. Solemn stare. Now comes the low voice which backs the personality with the presidential bond of integrity: "We're going to win the young voters." Shrieks. Squeals. Cheers. Four more years! They are the respectable youth and they are going to triumph over fucked-up youth.

Back at the convention, the delegates are watching this arrival on the three huge screens above the podium—it is

being televised live both to the convention and to America. Only the galleries are empty this afternoon, but that is because the YVPers are not present to fill their seats—they are here!

Nixon takes them into his confidence. He knows they are interested in politics, or they would not be in Miami, he says. And maybe one of them someday will be President, "Maybe one of your faces that I now am looking at will be President. It is possible. One thing I want you to know. That is that we want to work with the trust and faith and idealism of young people. You want to participate in government and you're going to." Cheers. He smiles genially. "However, let me give you a bit of advice. To succeed in politics, the first thing you want to do, is to marry above yourself."

They do not begin to comprehend the seismographic profundity of this advice. They only yell, "We want Pat. We want Pat."

"Well, you can't have her," Nixon says. "I want to keep her."

Yes, he had wanted her and he had wanted to keep her. Back in Whittier, before they were married, he would drive her to Los Angeles when she had a date with another man. Then he would pick her up and drive her back to Whittier when the date was done. That is not an ordinary masochism. It is the near to bottomless bowl in which the fortitude of a future political genius is being compounded. It had made him the loser who did not lose.

But how many years and decades it must have taken before he recognized that in a face-off with another man, he would be the second most attractive. Once he had made the mistake of fighting Kennedy man to man, and wife to wife. Jack had beaten Dick, and Jackie had certainly taken Pat. ~~Nixon cried out with no ordinary bitterness over what America could not stand.~~ But now he had learned that the movies were wrong and the second most attractive man was the one to pick up the marbles, since losers (by the laws of existential economy) had to be more numerous than winners.

"Some public men," he had said in an interview, "are destined to be loved, and other public men are destined to be disliked, but the most important thing about a public

man is not whether he's loved or disliked, but whether he's respected. So I hope to restore respect to the presidency at all levels of my conduct.

"My strong point, if I have a strong point, is performance. I always do more than I say. I always produce more than I promise."

~~It was as true for Vietnam as for China. And now here~~
~~was this nice man talking to children. Aquarius stood in~~
~~that stricken zone. If anything better comes upon the~~
~~mind when one tries to comprehend the dilemmas of the~~
~~century. Here is this nice man who has the reputation of~~
 being considerate about small things to the people who
 work for him, this family man married so many years to
 the same wife, possessor of two daughters who are almost
 beautiful and very obedient. He is a genius. Who would
 know?

Yes, the loser stands talking to all of his gang of adolescent losers who are so proud to have chosen stupidity as a way of life, and they are going to win. ~~The Smog of the~~
~~and lies over the heart. Freud is obsolete. To explain Nixon,~~
 nothing less than a new theory of personality can suffice.



11C

Convention Center is a compound of buildings and parking areas which runs for several city blocks on every side and is surrounded by a wire fence. On Tuesday night, in one of the deserted side lobbies of the main convention hall, a company of Miami Beach police are dinging their riot clubs in rhythm on the composition floor of the lobby. It is a peculiar operation. They stand in ranks, swaying and chanting and about every fourth beat they bounce the end of their long riot clubs off the floor. Then as the tempo increases, they begin to bounce the club faster and faster, chanting all the way. Soon they are bouncing the club on every beat. It is the war dance of the Miami Beach police and one hardly knows if they do it to get ready for battle, or to cool off after the frustration of early evening. Street

1972-74

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9 Co. 1
G. Sullivan

I- Into The Credibility Gap

Watergate

- 28 pages

Watergate - the day, Clark MacGregor is giving a press conference at the DePaul just one hour after his arrival in Moscow. A few minutes before Clark MacGregor's dark brown dress suit is changed into a white shirt and tie. There is no suggestion that he is anything but a man of business, and where he is, he is a man of business.

MacGregor's presence is due to a number of reasons. First, it is a matter of good management and operational strategy which the management of successful corporations are also able to carry off. Of course MacGregor is no corporate executive but a former congressman from Minnesota appointed recently by Nixon to run the Committee for Re-election of the President after John Mitchell has resigned, and in fact he dresses with just a little bit more than that of the last Senator to work for an Eastern corporation. He is wearing a grey suit, baggy from travel, a white shirt and a black tie with little red diamonds, but these are unobtrusive things - what he lacks is the quality of high confidence.

Behind him, mounted on the wall, are charts. "Rate of Inflation Is Down," they say; "Real Earnings Are Up"; "Total Chinese Employment Is Up While Armed Forces Man Power Is Down" and they stand in front of the powder-blue curtains (TV-like in every great conference room) while underfoot is a blue-green carpet and gold-painted chairs for the Press. MacGregor and his house look down on MacGregor from the ornate ceiling of the Mediterranean Room as he is asked if there is any way the Republicans can lose the election.

Adm. Gen. The

Clark MacGregor

1972

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St Geo +
Goodfather

I - Into The Credibility Gap

Later that day, Clark MacGregor is ^{gave} giving a press conference at the ~~Doral~~ just one hour after his arrival in Miami. A big man with straight sandy hair and dark horn-rimmed glasses, a big friendly nose, his manner is there to suggest that if only there were no Blacks, no Latins, and no slaughter in Vietnam, then America could be a country where Republicans administer government for other Republicans, and they would be superb at it, ~~for collectively~~ (MacGregor's presence is there to suggest) ~~Republicans~~ ^{that} are better able to give off that necessary aura of confidence, good management and impersonal courtesy which the managers of successful corporations are also able to convey. Of course MacGregor is no corporation executive but a former congressman from Minnesota appointed recently by Nixon to run the Committee for Reelection of the President after John Mitchell has resigned, ~~and in fact~~ he dresses with just a little too much hint of the lost Square to work for an *Eastern* corporation, he is wearing a gray suit, baggy from travel, a pale-blue shirt and a black tie with little red diamonds, but these are unworthy items—what he fairly promotes is the geniality of high confidence. Behind him, ~~eminent of Pinet~~, are charts. "Rate of Inflation Is Down," they say; "Real Earnings Are Up"; "Total Civilian Employment Is Up While Armed Forces Man Power Is Down!" and they stand in front of the powder-blue curtain (TV-blue in every press-conference room) while underfoot is a blue-green carpet and gold-painted chairs for the Press. Mermaids and sea horses look down on MacGregor from the ornate ceiling of the Mediterranean Room as he is asked if there is any way the Republicans can lose the election.

Miami for the
Republican
Convention.

Clark MacGregor

"No," he says. A smile. "Although I think it will get closer. Let me say that we are gearing up for a close fight, and absolutely on the watch against overconfidence."

"But you think the polls are good?"

"In Minnesota, my home state, 96 percent of the Republicans are for Nixon, and that's an incredible figure if you know anything about party breakdowns."

"2 percent. We're ahead in the state 58 percent to 31. Exceptional statistics for Minnesota." In 1970 at Nixon's request, he has run for senator against Hubert Humphrey, an impossible campaign and lost by 2 to 1.

"How big is your budget for the election?"

"We're aiming—the figure is not yet fixed—but we look for a total budget between 35 and 38 million." (The Democrats have announced 25 million for their budget.

"What about Watergate?" comes the first voice. "Will that hurt you?"

He is unflappable. "I am absolutely satisfied that the so-called Watergate caper will have absolutely no effect on the election of Richard Nixon." His doughty air suggests that he could be hired equally well as a sales manager or a police commissioner.

"In relation to Watergate," says another reporter, "is it possible you've set up your tight security in this hotel because you expect the Democrats to bug it?" There is mocking laughter, for the Press is much irritated. A security tight enough to guard the President has been installed at the Doral, yet the President won't even stay here!

To get to see even a minor Republican official, it is necessary to obtain a special folder and look up his room which is listed in it, get the official's permission by telephone for an interview, then look to obtain a pass in the downstairs lobby in order to get on the elevator. A woman reporter cries out that the Republicans call themselves the Open-Door party. "Will you please open the door of the Doral a little?"

"Will you look," says MacGregor, "I just got off the plane. Let me look into the situation."

"Will you ease it?"

"Let me see." He thinks he is done with this, but another reporter asks, "Any truth, Mr. MacGregor, to the rumor

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~~that the security is so tight because the Republicans already have the 35 million in the hotel?" MacGregor laughs heartily. "I knew it was the dog days, but not the silly~~

Now the conference is moving to its point. If there is a single flaw in any Republican presentation of themselves, it is ~~(except for the six million killed, wounded, and homeless)~~ to be found in Watergate. What a mess. Five men have been caught trying to remove the bugging devices they have installed (by breaking and entering) in Democratic Headquarters in Washington, and the two leaders not only have had links to the CIA but to the Committee to Reelect the President, indeed have worked for a more important team with the modest name of "plumbers" who were set up to investigate White House leaks to the Media: the "plumbers" include members of the White House staff, and a former Assistant Attorney General, are even connected to a special counsel to Nixon. One of the plumbers, E. Howard Hunt, formerly a high official in the CIA and White House consultant, has now disappeared. Two weeks before the Watergate arrests, however, Hunt has flown to Miami to meet Bernard Barker, leader of the five men who were caught in the middle of the night at Watergate, and Barker has deposited four checks totalling \$89,000 to his account, the money reputed to have come from wealthy Texas Democrats via wealthy Texas Republicans, but none of these names will MacGregor agree to divulge (at the request of the contributors, he says) and then there is still another check for \$25,000 which has gone through Maurice Stans, former Secretary of Commerce, and Hugh Sloan, Jr., treasurer of the Nixon campaign (who has since resigned for personal reasons). Allegedly this check has been given to G. Gordon Liddy, a former White House staffer, who became the attorney on the Committee to Reelect the President's Finance Committee—Liddy—it is the same allegation—has converted the check to cash and given it to Barker. Liddy has been fired for refusing to respond to questions. "You know I can't answer that," is the reply ~~everyone hears him making to his sympathetic interrogator.~~ What a mess! Rumor in Miami, Washington, and New York suggests Martha Mitchell's last ultimatum to her husband John that he must dare to choose between the gov-

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ernment and herself is no curious coincidence. Certainly, not since the writing of *El Cid* has such a conflict between love and duty been presented to so high an official with such perfect timing. Is it true that John has been told he could not do better than to choose Martha? Some go so far as to suggest Martha has been encouraged to be Martha. Whatever! MacGregor has replaced Mitchell as the head of the Committee to Reelect the President and now can dodge the worst of the questions by saying that he has only been on his new job since July 1. So he has no first-hand knowledge of what has gone on before, "Although, I am convinced, let me say, that no one in the White House, or in high responsible position on the Committee to Reelect the President, has any prior knowledge of, or gave sanction to the operation generally known as the so-called Watergate caper. I will say," MacGregor stated solemnly, pushing his glasses up on his large nose, "that I have talked to the White House principals in this affair, and Mr. Stans, Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Colson have all assured me that they were not involved, and I am convinced that they are men of honor. I can only say that they have satisfied me."

"Will you agree that if any of them were lying, there was no way you could know?"

"No, I cannot agree. The word of men of honor is good enough for me. More than that, I cannot say. We have been warned by Judge Richey to employ all necessary discretion against impinging on the rights of the defendants by making disclosures which would then hurt the government's case."

"But since you were not there before July 1, you have only the word of these high officials to go on?"

MacGregor has a temper, and he is containing it now. The straight sandy hair suggests some fire at the root, for his face is getting red. "I have endeavored to be as forthright as I can, given my lack of knowledge before July 1 of the activities of the Committee to Reelect the President."

No one quite dares to suggest he is saying that he ~~knows~~ knows but he doesn't know. "In public life," MacGregor ~~says~~ says, "you have to learn when to trust the word of other people. But what he can't know is when an honorable man has an overpowering motive to lie. So too, for many a public official, less or somewhat more than this, the word of a public official

~~already created the highest suspicion for an official to~~



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~~the credibility gap.~~ MacGregor gulps and reddens and his temper singes his hair, his glasses slide down his nose and are pushed up once more, the sea horses and mermaids look down on him, the Press looks up from their golden chairs and he does not move. He doesn't know and he does know, but he is a man who has been picked to weather more than one storm, and it will be no trick at all, here today, to ride this out. The Judge, he repeats, wishes to restrain them from talking of the case. "... necessary discretion . . . you fellows are trying to get me to impinge . . . rights of the defendants. . . ."

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formidable witness for the government administration. Douglas Kestland, writing for the New York Times, described him as a combative rocky defender of the faith. And indeed Ehrlichman had something of the look on those room-packed occasions of an Irish or German middleweight with black eyebrows and a balding head, able to hit hard with either hand. Ehrlichman had a boxer's confidence. Kestland went on to say, "Not that the rained and muscular-looking former chief domestic affairs adviser to the President didn't smile now and then. But the smiles were those of a man who enjoys a good scrap - and he came out fighting. . . . Mr. Ehrlichman was a new kind of witness for the Committee, a tough, unapologetic Nixon stalwart who obviously felt that a good offense was the best defense."

After a string of defeated or obviously frightened witnesses like Jeb Magruder, Hugh Sloan, Herbert Porter, Robert Odle, Gordon Strachan and Richard Moore, Ehrlichman seemed to show by contrast a lack of ultimate

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From CHIC
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II - The CIA

During the five days and 30 cumulative hours John Ehrlichman testified in the Caucus Room of the Old Senate Office Building before the Senate Watergate Committee in late July, 1973, he was a formidable witness for the Nixon administration. Douglas Kneeland, writing for the *New York Times*, described him as "a combative cocky defender of the faith," and indeed Ehrlichman had something of the look on those room-packed occasions of an Irish or German middleweight with black eyebrows and a balding head, able to hit hard with either hand. Ehrlichman had a boxer's confidence. Kneeland went on to say, "Not that the tanned and muscular-looking former chief domestic affairs adviser to the President didn't smile now and then. But the smiles were those of a man who enjoys a good scrap—and he came out fighting... Mr. Ehrlichman was a new kind of witness for the Committee, a tough, unapologetic Nixon stalwart who obviously felt that a good offense was the best defense."

After a string of deferential or obviously frightened witnesses like Jeb Magruder, Hugh Sloan, Herbert Porter, Robert Odle, Gordon Strachan and Richard Moore, Ehrlichman seemed to show by contrast a lack of ultimate

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About ten
back pages

respect for the good motives of the Committee: implicit in his attitude was the suggestion that politics and morality were not noted for their propinquity, and a political confrontation might be nearer to a football game than a religious convocation. If you played for a team, you did your best to play very well, but there was something obscene, said his attitude, in starting to think there was more moral worth to Michigan than Ohio State. So he looked sardonically, keenly, contemptuously and on occasion subtly into the moral gravity of the Ervin committee as if all the while he were saying in effect, "Gentlemen, I wouldn't trust you with the collection plate."

Ehrlichman was one man who loved the sting of good English.

Sam Dash: *So there came a time when you were administering an investigative unit?*

Ehrlichman: *Yes. In a literal sense, that is true.*

Dash: *Literal sense?*

Ehrlichman: *Yessir.*

Dash: *Not in an actual sense?*

Ehrlichman: *Well, here I am dueling with a professor.*

There is a liberal eschatology whose first law is: Respect our latest hero or Hell awaits. Since liberal ideology is oriented toward a bloodless society, and imbibes its anti-machismo in daily doses, there is more need in the liberal firmament for heroes. They are less easy to find. Little in liberal ideology is conducive to hero-worship, yet the average liberal still wants to get a charge out of his liberal



politics. The media, therefore, have a tendency to keep the Liberal-Hero-of-the-Month Club well stocked. In the summer of 1972, it was Henry Kissinger. In the fall of 1973, it would be Archibald Cox. In July '73, the Liberal-Hero-of-the-Month was that old Southern conservative, Sam Ervin. His ideology took nothing from his qualifications—maybe it added to them. He had a fine theatrical presence, spoke like an old Shakespearean actor and was willing to serve as an instrument which might chop down Richard Nixon. Remarks, therefore, like Ehrlichman's reply to Sam Ervin, "The Chairman has the delightful trial room practice of interrupting something you don't want to hear," were as offensive as brimstone to liberal devotions. In that pious

Ehrlichman: ... it would have been fully for me ... to suggest that the defense be thrown into the final side of the Petrosan. ... As I said, we have a great disposal system at the White House. If you really want to get rid of a document, you put it in a brown bag and you seal it up and it's never found again. It goes into a furnace and that is the end of it.

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summer when hopes collected like in-held breath for the final impalement of Richard Nixon, a day of bad news for Nixon meant the millennium was nearer. So Ehrlichman's unrepentant defense made him stand out like a warlock.

Senator Ervin: ...your testimony is that John Dean told an untruth.

Ehrlichman: Yessir, twice. Once in the out-of-town tryout, once here.

Senator Ervin: ...you made some suggestions about disposing of the papers that were in [Hunt's] briefcase. My recollection is that you advised Mr. Dean to "deep six" these papers.

Ehrlichman: ...it would have been folly for me ... to suggest that the briefcase be thrown into the flood tide of the Potomac. ... As I said, we have a great disposal system at the White House. If you really want to get rid of a document, you put it in a burn bag and you seal it up and it's never found again. It goes into a furnace and that is the end of it.

~~Ehrlichman was playing Christopher Marlowe to Sam Ervin's Shakespeare~~
The gallery in the Caucus Room hated Ehrlichman. The Hero-of-the-Month may live only for a month but in those 30 days he is to be treated like Eleanor Roosevelt. One wasn't required to talk back to Sam Ervin.

Just as Conservatives prove good at weeding gardens and/or administering capital punishment, but can be powerfully insensitive to the anguish of minorities who have lost their culture and their roots, so the liberal has his Christly sentiments (not wholly false) for the pain of that multitude who live on the edge of decent existence. Liberals want to believe they keep the weak alive. It is just that the liberal spirit, with its emphasis on administrative compassion and its detestation of violence, gets a touch hysterical when it comes to killing its enemies. Richard Nixon is one of the great American villains, but that is *not* because he tried to cover up a scandal. Rather he is a villain by way of the 25 years he did his best to murder the English language with a margarine of pieties; he is a villain because he had a negative charisma. He sucked the hope and heart out of American wit and creativity to the very limit of his personal ability. He was the apotheosis of Uriah Heep. He would yet be the only American President whose political career would die in the unwinding of his own excrement—he would end politically by suffocating himself. He was awful—with a

⑥

force larger than himself. And yet he was the true test for liberal compassion. The liberals failed it miserably. Liberals were always saying: love the odious, the crippled and the weak. Love the cancer-ridden and the leprous. Build the hospitals and the schools. All bodies are salvageable, all organs interchangeable, all hearts redeemable; surgery and education are sacraments and grace.

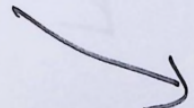
The liberals failed. If Richard Nixon had been standing alone on the street and a thousand non-violent liberals had been standing around him with flails, they would have beaten each other to death in their rush to get at him. They would have drowned in each other's slobber in the fury to beat him to a pulp. Richard Nixon had intensified the demonic lust-to-destroy in all those good compassionate Judeo-Christian liberal atheists. He had scorched reason a little further out of existence.

Civilization was in the Caucus Room on the days Ehrlichman testified. Civilization was non-violent. But to the people in the Caucus Room, and the majority of people watching through the hot mornings and hotter July afternoons on television, John Ehrlichman was baiting the Hero-of-the-Month, good Sam Ervin, as powerful to the media for those 30 days as a newly elected Pope, and suppressed violence ran like a virus through liberal veins. Ehrlichman was unendurable. He acted as if he were proud to be on the side he was on; his pride was what could not be suffered. For it

spoke of a world whose real complexity could savage a liberal brain. Liberals could certainly live with the hot idea they were fighting Mephisto's own Nixon, but they couldn't support the Kierkegaardian complexity that the good guys might be right next to the bad guys on the same team. Ehrlichman came forward like he was one of the Good Guys, born knowing it. Implicit in everything he did in that Caucus Room was an attitude: Gentlemen, detest Richard Nixon and sneer at me, but do not pretend these Watergate peccadilloes are serious matters when we all know politics is a business as dirty as the rest of life, and we are only players choosing and re-choosing sides in a game whose rules are never honored. Gentlemen, I come to you in the firm tradition of high shenanigans and illegal Presidential practice long and well practiced by John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

So Ehrlichman was his own man for five days and took a cannonading of cross-examination and never looked worried, and the liberals never forgave him because he had tried to deny them a clean-cut holy war by suggesting that the end of Richard Nixon did not end a single one of the world's ongoing fevers.

After pride comes attrition. After the adrenalin which is found in advocacy, comes the anemia of protracted legal defense, of convictions and appeals, and the costs of law firms



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charging for thousands of hours of work. It is not the legal process which breaks a man's confidence, but the cost of paying for it. Ehrlichman was found guilty in a Washington, D.C., court (before a black jury to whom he brought a black lawyer) on charges of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and lying under oath. In another trial, Ehrlichman was convicted of lying to a grand jury on the Ellsberg break-in. He was sentenced to prison for 20 months to five years, the terms to run concurrently. There was a view of him on a TV newscast just after one of these trials, and the power of his presence before the Watergate committee was gone. Now he looked like a skilled professional middleweight who had had some internal organs surgically removed. Punishment lived on his face. His cheeks looked soft, as if self-pity would convert them before long into jowls; his small (well-curved) ~~inexpensive~~ ~~mouth~~ was fighting petulance. It was obvious he thought he had been given a very bad decision. Some elasticity had gone out of his body, some joy in combat. His appearances before the Watergate committee took on, in retrospect, their own kind of luster. He had had such confidence then in the value of spirited advocacy itself, as if his secret faith had been that something in the scheme of things approved of men who found happiness in the midst of battle. That kind of belief now looked to be gone. Maybe there is no moral shock so profound as

the idea that the brave and cowardly are ground up equally on the grindstone. Looking at Ehrlichman now aroused compassion, a surprising emotion considering how little was held in common with his politics. In the '60s, after revolution on the campuses, marches on Washington and the war in Vietnam, Ehrlichman was not a man to sit down with, not comfortably. Politics had been teleological in the '60s—in the distance was a barricade; one would fight on one side of it, or the other. But in the '70s it was not political teleology which offered the obsession, but entropy. Were the forms disappearing and the energies descending? Was America hearing the gurgle of historical waters going down the drain? In bland times, a man's clearcut manner could seem more significant to the life of things than his politics. Witness the pleasure one could take in Ehrlichman before the Watergate committee. Something valuable had been lost in the shadow of self-pity which had now come over him.

It is possible that our sense of our own identity is no more than the self-esteem we put into our psychic account; a punched-out haunted look is the true equivalent of psychic bankruptcy. It is agonizing to give up a powerful personality. In many an organized psyche the perquisites of the ego are the nearest one can come to sensual bliss.

There was evidence, however, in the years after his trials and convictions that Ehrlichman must have given up one identity to take on another. Reported in the press was a separation from his wife. He was living in Santa Fe in a

four-room adobe house on a hill up a dirt road. "Inside, nubby fabrics and earthenware, a fire lit against morning chill, a window flat of kale and corn seedlings for the little vegetable bed out back" (*Village Voice*, S.J. Diamond, June 7, 1976.) Suspended from the federal and the California bars, he had decided he might as well disbar himself in Washington state to save "pain and embarrassment," and so he was living now on no income other than his advances as a novelist, a new novelist! Why, indeed, was he writing novels?

But then Ehrlichman, in the midst of appealing two convictions, may not have wished to confuse his legal situation by writing too directly of his own experiences. That might oblige him to deal with facts whose disclosure could affect the legal appeals. Besides, he had a thesis he could not prove: Ehrlichman's novel, *The Company*, was ready to suggest that the real account of the break-in and cover-up could best be told by the CIA.

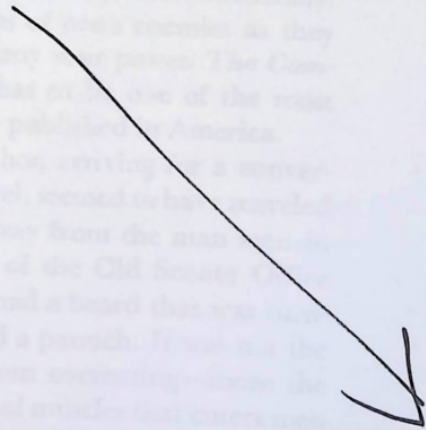
It is a tour-de-force of a novel for the word Watergate does not appear in its pages. A book about a CIA man named Martin who orders the death of a militant priest in an unsuccessful Bay-of-Pigs-type invasion of a Caribbean republic. We learn that Martin has been given these assassination orders by the President of the United States (who, it is suggested, is trying to satisfy some prearranged balance of power with the Russians). A secret CIA report is made on this murder, the Primula Report, and only one copy exists

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Years later, Martin has worked up the echelons of the CIA to the post of CIA director. He has labored under three Presidents, and is now in trouble again from the old affair. The new President of the United States, Richard Monckton, is hostile to the CIA, wishes to reduce the Agency's power and is on the track of the Primula Report. If Martin is obliged to surrender it, his own career will be destroyed, and the CIA grievously damaged. So Martin devises a situation where some Presidential agents working out of the White House are encouraged to undertake the burglary of a prominent gossip columnist's house. It is a set-up, however. Martin has these agents secretly photographed in the act, and shows the photographs to the President, thereby enabling Martin to make a deal for himself. The Primula Report is destroyed and the President gives up on his war with the CIA. The point of the novel is clear. Watergate, the White House "horrors" and the consecutive panics of the cover-up are offered their back-lighting. The CIA was holding the flashlight.





Given the explosion in Ehrlichman's own life—from the second most powerful administrator in Washington out to a disbarred lawyer living on a dirt road in the New Mexico hills—the restraint of the novel, its intricate clockwork of plot, and its lack of overt rage, speak a full volume of the passions Ehrlichman chose to contain within himself. We can only guess at his mastery over the chaos implicit in such a state. To have power and lose it through one's own errors can induce self-pity or self-examination, but to have power and lose it because one was set up is to be marooned in obsession, paranoia and impotent fury. The absence of passion and the lucidity of Ehrlichman's novel offers therefore a spiritual credential—it is a virtuoso if ironic act to write sympathetically, even intimately, about the problems of one's enemies as they are plotting to destroy your power. *The Company*, as a result, has to be one of the most curious novels ever published in America.

Certainly, its author, arriving for a conversation about his novel, seemed to have traveled one full identity away from the man seen in the Caucus Room of the Old Senate Office Building. Now, he had a beard that was turning gray and he had a paunch. It was not the fat which comes from overeating—more the slacking of abdominal muscles that enters men in their 50s when they have taken a great deal

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of punishment. Since he also had the easy and agreeable manner of a man who has been through an experience bad enough not to fear smaller experiences, he may have seemed representative again of what he had been originally—an American from the Far West. With his beard, his casual clothes and the character of the calm he presented—that sense of peace

we offer when we have relinquished something valuable in ourselves—he was not unlike a cross between a gray-bearded prospector and some hippie professor from a Western college, the radical on the faculty, champion of *Whole Earth Catalogue*, soft-voiced, gentle, equable, open to conferences with campus friends—yes, the first professor on the faculty to smoke pot openly with his students, and not much on sports anymore. Something of these qualities was now in his style. It took a wrench of the mood to insist that he had ever been one of the Prussian twins of the Nixon administration, no, it was more like talking to an old classmate across the years who had been, yeah, teaching in this rather agreeable cow college out at the edge of desert country, yes, and the minds were separate but not that far apart. The '70s were proving different from the '60s.

#

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MAILER I picked up *The Company* to read yesterday about four in the afternoon, and I finished it at 11 in the evening.

EHRlichman Which is cruel and unusual punishment.

MAILER It's fast for me because I read slowly,

but I heard we could do this interview today and there wouldn't be another opportunity for weeks, so I rushed. I offer this actually as a compliment because I don't get through too many books from beginning to end.

EHRlichman I don't either: 

MAILER But there was something about *The Company*. I think both its virtue and vice as a novel is that it reads as much like a brief as a novel. There is a clarity of argument in it from beginning to end—a point being made. You were arguing a hypothetical brief, how the CIA could have implicated a President of the United States in such a way as to have power over him, a special power to be able to make him do their bidding. If you will, it is the reverse of Watergate, where the situation



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broke loose and got unruly.

EHRlichman I started out to write a penny melodrama about the CIA rigging of presidential elections. An awful lot of my experience has been in campaigns, and I thought that it would be something that I could do realistically. As I got into the outlining of the story, it became what it is, quite another story, the one that you described.

MAILER Well, I was fascinated with your novel, fascinated with the brief. I've felt for a long time that Watergate began as a mystery and has ended as a larger mystery than it seemed to be in the beginning. In fact, I am all but convinced that to a great extent, if not entirely, Watergate was a CIA operation.

EHRlichman Have you seen Fred Thompson's book, called *At That Point in Time*?

MAILER No.

EHRlichman He was the minority counsel on the Watergate committee, you know, that Ervin committee. He devotes about the last third of his book to his efforts and Howard Baker's efforts to find out whether that assertion you just made is true or not. And he obviously leaves the reader with 100 questions unanswered, and paints a picture of the CIA totally in command, totally able to frustrate a Senator's inquiry, totally able to frustrate the Senate Committees' staff inquiry. I think he makes a case of probable cause.

~~MAILER I haven't read it, but I know Rolling Stone recently had an article. I was surprised didn't attract more attention *~~
EHRlichman D.D.

MAILER

~~EHRLICHMAN KNIGHT.~~

~~MAILER Chuck Calvert is quoted as saying that Bob Bennett, president of the Mullen Company, was Deep Throat. The Mullen Company is a public relations firm which is often described as a CIA front. In the White House, during Watergate, was it generally the assumption that the CIA had a lot to do with the break-in?~~

EHRLICHMAN No, I don't think so. Bear in mind, I left quite early in that whole episode, and when I left, after a month or two, I was pretty effectively cut off, so that I haven't been able to derive very much information at all from the White House after about spring '73.

MAILER Well, I know, but we can go back to June, '72 . . . [laugh] . . . when it all happened. After all, there were some *fairly* intelligent people [Mailer chuckles] in that place, there had to be a number of speculations, and it seems, on the face of whatever little evidence we can trust, that the first speculation was: of course it was a CIA operation, and the CIA will probably take care of it very neatly, because they are more embarrassed than we are. Wasn't that virtually the attitude?

EHRLICHMAN It was obviously something that occurred to Richard Nixon in June, '72, as some of us have since discovered.

MAILER Didn't General Walters say at one point, "We've looked into our files, and it is not one of our operations," and didn't Halde- man answer at that point, "We have reason to believe it *is* CIA"?

EHRLICHMAN Yeah, but I don't know how

much Haldeman believed that. His response may have been pure baloney.

MAILER Poker.

EHRlichman Exactly, exactly.

MAILER Anybody who knows anything about the CIA has to admit Haldeman had a legitimate and workable response. I said poker advisedly. Because at that point Walters couldn't know whether Haldeman was bluffing or not. Walters knew enough about his agency to know that of course the CIA could have done it, and very well might have, and Haldeman could be in possession of more information than he, Walters, given the cellular nature of the CIA that you point out in *The Company*.

EHRlichman I think you are probably right, that those "little did he know that I knew" kind of things were what was going on.

MAILER I would take it a step further, I think the situation had to be Kafka for people in the Nixon administration. It seems to me, just speculating about Haldeman, that Haldeman himself, while he didn't know precisely what had happened, could well believe he had a case—that is, he could bluff with the assurance that his hand might well be stronger than the other man's hand.

EHRlichman Well, I think the bluff worked to a point.

MAILER To a point?

EHRlichman I suspect that around that time the CIA got all its in-house stories straight, they went around and picked up or destroyed

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McCord's papers, and did all those housekeeping things Fred Thompson talks about. I think there *was* a certain amount of doubt in the minds of both Helms and Walters on June 23 as to just how much involvement the CIA had had, at least from the answers that we were being given. I think Helms and Walters went back to Langley and got a lot of people around the table, and asked, "Well, what really did happen here? Was Martinez on the payroll of the CIA at the time of the break-in? He was! . . . Well, *who else!* Let's tote it all up, let's see just how deep we are in this, and who gave what orders."

MAILER Do you think they then came out with a feeling it was not one of their own operations?

EHRlichman I don't know, I really don't know.

MAILER You see, I have always been a firm believer in the enclave theory of the CIA, to wit that no one who directs the CIA can ever be certain, and very often can't even be fairly certain whether the CIA is implicated in a caper.

EHRlichman That is why I think they had to go back and do some checking.

MAILER But can they really find out?

EHRlichman I doubt it.

MAILER There must be enclaves not amenable to that kind of checking out.

EHRlichman Particularly when something goes wrong.

MAILER Yeah. It seemed to me that if I had been the head of the CIA, facing Nixon's continuing desire to take over some of the

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functions and powers of the CIA, it would have been to my interest to infiltrate CREEP. There must have been people in CREEP who were CIA agents.

EHRlichman The Joint Chiefs had a guy stealing stuff left and right . . .

MAILER That was Yeoman Radford.

EHRlichman The guy would walk through Henry Kissinger's paper mill like a cafeteria. Take one of these, one of those, he helped himself as he went around and made xeroxes of whatever he wanted, then put it all back. If he could do it, certainly others could.

MAILER I guess the point I am leading toward is that if I were the head of the CIA, I would very much want to implicate CREEP in much the same way the FBI used to get the Black Panthers implicated. Indeed, the worst things the Black Panthers ever did were done by black FBI men posing as Panthers. In fact I sometimes think the history of the left through the '60s . . .

EHRlichman There was none, you are about to say?

MAILER Well, two-thirds of it may have been made by America's secret police. That is staggering. You know, in the '60s, I was very much a man of the left, and I used to walk around in a state of shock wondering how our people could be so idiotic. I can't tell you what some of the excessive infantile militancy of the left did to my morale as a leftist. That god-damned FBI! They really blunted my point. I am less of a leftist today and one of the reasons is because those bastards were working away full time committing their supposedly leftist

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atrocities. It made me despair then about the militancy of the left. It was so adolescent, and ridiculous and unbalanced, finally frightening. And the FBI was doing it. How much they did, we still don't know—it keeps being uncovered—but they contributed a lot to the freakiest parts of the history of the left in that period. Now, the CIA had to be aware of how effective the FBI had been. If I am a CIA patriot, working for the CIA and devoted to it, and I am terribly distrustful of the Nixon administration and am afraid they want to take over the agency's powers, precisely the situation you lay out in *The Company*, then, in effect, I'm wrestling with them for power, and naturally want to get a better grip.

EHRlichman The only problem that I see with that is CREEP was less important than it is given credit for, certainly as a way to get at Nixon. In an emergency, it was detachable. Obviously, the wisest thing the White House could have done in June of 1972 would have been to do what Ford did to Callaway. A whole bunch of people could have been put over the side in June, '72, without really touching Nixon.

MAILER Was it Nixon who held on to CREEP?

EHRlichman I would say it was. There were a lot of knee jerk reactions by a lot of people who tended to defend people at CREEP on the false premise that if Mitchell and Magruder and folks of that rank were criticized or penalized, it would, in some way or other, reflect directly on the President. In fact, it wouldn't have, it was detachable. (Ha)

MAILER Well it may have been detachable, but in June, '72, McGovern had a lot of

momentum.

EHRlichman Sure.

MAILER There had to be a panic that Watergate could give McGovern the election.

EHRlichman Well, yeah, I run into people all the time that say, why in the world did they go in there, we don't understand it, he won by 60-some percent. Nixon was a sure thing, why in the world was CREEP doing all this stuff? The fact is, you are right, at that time I don't think there was any sense of confidence in the White House that Nixon was surely going to be re-elected, but—and I am using great hindsight—it would have been possible to cut that problem out at CREEP without hurting the President as such. My argument is that ~~one~~ ^{somebody} in the CIA would have thought it better to have his fellow in the White House committing an atrocity than in CREEP. For instance, I think something overlooked today is the Schlesinger study. Jim Schlesinger did a study of the intelligence community in 1970 ^{or} 1971 when he was still in the Office of Management of the Budget, and the CIA had to know about the existence of that study. It called for a major overhaul of them, virtually a disestablishment of some of the existing intelligence apparatus. Of all the threats to the CIA that existed, I think that study was probably considered the foremost threat by the ^{Cove} management of CIA. Only that kind of bureaucratic concern to protect themselves suggests, to me at least, an infiltration of the White House itself rather than CREEP if the alternatives were being considered.

MAILER In secret police work one tries to get an agent wherever one can. One has not only the A plan but the B plan, the C plan. The A plan may be to infiltrate the White House, but maybe the CIA got further into CREEP because it was easier to infiltrate. Operatives don't wait for the master plan to unfold. They seize at tactical advantages, creating their particular mischief as they go. It may be that element of the CIA, having infiltrated CREEP, were relatively on their own. Helms may not have been sending the word down every day. Helms may not even have known about it.

EHRlichman If you put a termite in a block of wood, you expect him to do his job without a lot of supervision.

MAILER Perfect. I think the intent may have been, if there was intent as such, may have been to get some kind of grip on the Nixon administration one way or another. If CREEP could be implicated in wiretapping, the President would be not exactly implicated, but tarnished sufficiently to wish to keep the matter quiet—thus, a bargaining point could be gained. Then, for all we know, a double-cross might have occurred. Two opposed wings of the CIA, as personified by Hunt and McCord, could have been working at cross-purposes. Or the FBI could have decided to trip the CIA. Watergate could have been a setup where the police were tipped off by one of the agents. There is no telling what went on. All we know is that we have no explanation. Watergate is more of a mystery today.

EHRlichman I totally agree, I totally agree.

MAILER The element I find most mysterious to me now is what happened afterwards. If

~~we~~ keep using this metaphor of the wrestler's grip, if the CIA wanted to get a punishing grip on the Nixon administration to improve the balance for themselves, still the first interest of the intelligence establishment must have been to keep Nixon in, bad as he was for them, rather than have to deal with McGovern. So it was important to them that Nixon win the election. The establishment of the CIA may have been as worried about the consequences of Watergate as Nixon, especially if it was an operation that was supposed to get CREEP implicated in the power plays of the invisible government but not exposed in the public media. After the election, however, things began to change. Something in the power structure of the country began to shift. Some of the very people and corporations who had made Nixon in the first place and supported him and who drew their notion of stable government and society from Nixon began to turn on him.

EHRlichman The thing began to deteriorate after the Ervin hearing. That display was brilliant politics. It seems to me underrated at the present time. ~~(People like Rufus Edmiston and two or three others who stage-managed those Senate hearings have to be given a lot of credit. I am not sure that they knew what they were doing at the time, the implications of it, but it seems to me that episode was sort of the sea change, the major change in direction.)~~ A lot of people in the administration and establishment were either personally disaffected or they reacted to what seemed to be an overwhelming national reaction. Things began to flake away. Substantial respectable business and academic support which Nixon had enjoyed began to shut up and stay at home. I think those televised hearings were the major contributors to that.

MAILER I remember being impressed by you when you testified. I remember you had a kind of glee in your eye when the argument got good. All I knew about you in those days was that you were part of the—what was it called?—the Berlin Wall. I had never heard anything good about you. So I was startled to see a witness who felt pleasure up there, considering the fact that there was a lot of worry and heavy woe in the activity.

EHRlichman It was a competitive situation. I always tried a very hard law suit, I was always very competitive, and I think a lot of the reason for my demeanor being as it was in there was that it was an adversary courtroom situation, except that you had nine guys on the other side, instead of one, you know.

MAILER One other thing I have never understood is why the Nixon administration did not in general use a tougher defense. I remember the day Helms testified. Cross-examination of him, even by Republicans, was benign. The timidity with which the Senators approached Helms was impressive in reverse by what it suggested of his powers.

EHRlichman That is the problem with congressional oversight over the CIA. It is possible for the CIA to cultivate and coopt the Congress





to an extent that even J. Edgar Hoover didn't equal. I don't know what goes into that mix, but there were two oversight committees, Senate and House, and I appeared at both those committees in the course of investigation of the CIA relationship to the White House. The CIA had both of those committees totally psyched. There was not anybody on any of them who would seriously question anything that a representative of the CIA told them. That is the product of years of work on the part of the CIA. Early on, they had identified the congressional flank . . . as potentially very troublesome and no lengths were too great for the CIA in terms of cultivating particular members of Congress. So that attitude on Helms' part was totally natural because this is his vineyard. Those were his grapes sitting up there. ~~and he was~~

end

III- The Explanation

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(12 pages)

Replied Colson morosely:

"Who knows that that's the only \$100,000?"

— Jack Anderson, July 16, 1974

It is a fascinating detail. It is just that nothing comes of it. We still don't know if it is the only \$100,000 or no more than the tail of the mouse left in the trap. Since much that we examine will appear, then tend to disappear, it is nice to think there is something iridescent about a view seen for an instant in the fog.

Perhaps it is the effect of such glimpses to leave us with an after-image. On reflection, Nixon's reaction to the \$100,000 does not have to be political. Even a political man is entitled to a private emotion. Lighting the attack on Rebozo, Nixon could be expressing the outrage he felt at attacks against himself. Or, maybe the gift just gave him an uneasy feeling from the moment it was proposed. Of course, the hard chance of an inflamed in-house scandal could also have been sitting beneath the money. We simply do not know to which corner the mouse has gone.

START

The nature of the difficulty begins to disclose itself. We cannot ~~have~~ an explanation ~~because~~ we do not know which of our facts are bricks and which are papier-mâché painted to look like bricks. We can only watch the way the bricks are handled.

construct

It is painful, nonetheless, to relinquish one's hope for a narrative, to admit that study of the CIA may not lead to the exposure of facts so much as to the epistemology of facts. We will not get the goods so quickly as we will learn how to construct a model which will tell us why we cannot get the goods. Of course, that will never be enough — willy-nilly, the habit will persist to look for a new narrative (and damn the papier-mâché bricks).

In the meantime, however, a short course:

Epistemological Model I:

If half the pieces in a jigsaw puzzle are missing, the likelihood is that something can still be put together. Despite its gaps, the picture may be more or less visible. Even if most of the pieces are gone, a loose mosaic can be arranged of isolated elements. The possibility of the real picture being glimpsed under such circumstances is small but not altogether lost.¹⁸ It is just that one would like to know if the few pieces left belong to the same set.¹⁹

¹⁸ Larry Rivers has taught us as much.

¹⁹ Is this what Robert Rauschenberg is up to?

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Epistemological Model II:

Maybe it is the splinters of a mirror rather than the scattered pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that provide a superior ground for the metaphor. We are dealing not with reality, after all, but that image of reality which reaches the surface through the cracked looking glass of the media.

Epistemological Model III:

What is most crucial is that we do not forget that we are interpreting curious actions. Men who seem to be honest are offering cover. We are obliged to remind ourselves that a life lived under cover produces a chronic state of mind ~~in the outer~~ which is not unlike those peculiar moments when staring in the mirror too long we come to recognize that the face looking back at us must — inescapably — be our own. Yet it is not. Our vicissitudes (but not our souls) stand revealed in the mirror; or, given another day, and another mirror, there we are, feeling wretched, looking splendid.

Epistemological Model IV:

Doubtless the difficulty is analogous to writing a poem with nothing but names, numbers, facts, conjecture, gossip, trial balloons, leaks, and other assorted pieces of prose.

For example:

When we interviewed him in my office on December 10, 1973, he struck all of us as a highly intelligent, highly motivated person. . . . Finally I asked him, "Mr. Martinez, if in fact you were a CIA plant on the Watergate team and were reporting back to the Agency, would you tell us?" He broke into a broad smile, looked around the room, and laughed. He never answered the question; no answer was necessary.

— *At That Point in Time*

Let us go back to the facts, to the false facts, distorted facts, concealed facts, empty facts, secretly rich facts, and unverifiable speculations of our narrative.

In this connection, nothing we have read about Gordon Liddy explains his long silence in jail so well as the supposition that he is an agent of real caliber. Of his biography we know he was in the FBI in the early Sixties, an assistant district attorney in Dutchess County, ran for Congress on the Conservative party ticket, and got a

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job with the Treasury Department high up in a Customs Bureau drug campaign called Operation Intercept. It was not a position to leave him alien to certain intimacies of the CIA, the Mafia, and the flow of profits in the drug trade. Liddy came to the White House to work for Egil Krogh, who was trying to organize the Nixon administration's war on drugs with a projected team of CIA men, FBI men, narcs, and private detectives, an undertaking some would see darkly as a most ambitious cover for Nixon's real intent, which was to commence his own Intelligence on a competitive level with the CIA and the FBI — in other words, his unspoken follow-up to the ~~Huston Plan~~. It is worth mentioning that during this period, Liddy wrote a memo for Nixon in criticism of the FBI, which Nixon described to Krogh as "the most brilliant memorandum" to come his way "in a long time."²⁰ It is with this background that Liddy comes to CREEP. There is nothing in these details to suggest he could not be a career agent.

We read of how he burns his hand in a flame to impress a girl and threatens to kill Magruder if Jeb touches him on the shoulder again. John Dean describes to us how Liddy offers to commit suicide if that will protect the administration. Liddy offers a lecture on how to kill a man with a finely sharpened pencil. There is nothing in these details to suggest he could not be a career agent.

"The master who instructed me in the deadliest of the Oriental martial arts taught me that the outcome of a battle is decided in the minds of the opponents before the first blow is struck."

— G. Gordon Liddy²¹

We have the habit to look on the Watergate burglars as ignorant Cubans led by clowns. Being scorned as ridiculous is, of course, a cover in itself; the CIA can count on such a disguise being provided by the wire services. Simple declarative sentences make curious actions appear automatically absurd.

Under examination, the burglars look better. Gonzales had been a bodyguard for Batista, and fought in the Bay of Pigs. Martinez had been a CIA boat captain and made 354 illegal runs to Cuba. Barker was a member of Batista's secret police, and an FBI contact in Cuba, then an informer against Castro. By Hunt's own description, Barker

²⁰ These details are given in a forthcoming book impressively researched by Edward Jay Epstein, *An American Coup D'Etat* (Putnam's).

²¹ As quoted in *Nightmare*.

became his "principal assistant" during the Bay of Pigs, and Hunt was chief of political action.

The fourth Cuban happens to be Italian — Frank Sturgis, an ex-Marine born Frank Angelo Fiorini. He served with Castro in the Sierra Macstra — and would later claim he was already an agent for the Company. In any case, he was good enough to be working as Fidel's personal supervisor in the Havana casinos until the day gambling was eliminated. Then Sturgis decided to defect. To the Mafia and to the CIA. (Or is it simpler to say the Mafia wing of the CIA?) It is a not inconsiderable defection.

Before the Bay of Pigs, Sturgis would act as contact for Santo Trafficante, who with his son Santo Jr. "controlled much of Havana's tourist industry," and was alleged to have received "bulk shipments of heroin from Europe and forwarded them through Florida to New York."²² During this period, Sturgis joined a CIA unit called Operation Forty, which had been set up to kill Castro and a number of important Fidelistas. Involved in this training were Trafficante and E. Howard Hunt,²³ Frank Sturgis,²⁴ and Robert Maheu. Maheu and Sturgis must have been reasonably well met, since Sturgis is still pivotal enough eleven years later to be chatting with Jack Anderson in the lobby of Washington National Airport on the morning he arrives from Miami with Barker, Martinez, and Gonzales for the last break-in at Watergate, but then it would be difficult to name an investigative reporter in America more pivotal than Anderson.

"I don't know if I told you before," Sturgis wrote to his wife [while in jail], "but William F. Buckley used to work for CIA and I don't know if he still does. When he found out that Howard (Hunt) was going to work in the White House, he told Howard it was good that he could be so close to the President but Howard told him that he was there to take orders and not to influence anyone. That was a good answer!"

Buckley frankly admitted he was a "deep cover agent" for the CIA from July, 1951, to March, 1952, but said he had not worked for them since.

— Jack Anderson, September 18, 1973

²² Alfred W. McCoy, et al., *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*.

²³ "Strange Bedfellows."

²⁴ In *Undercover*, Hunt mentions in passing that he did not meet Sturgis until shortly before Watergate. Of course, he also does not mention that there was a plot to assassinate Castro. Nor does he bother to inform us that Hank Sturgis is the name of a character in Hunt's early novel, *Bimini Run*, which Frank Angelo Fiorini liked well enough to modify into an alias.

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It was apparent from the documents that in November 1971, a month after he took part in the Fielding break-in, Martinez mentioned his association with Hunt to his case officer who, in turn, took Martinez to the CIA's chief of station in Miami.

We immediately requested that the chief of station be brought from Florida for an interview. The chief, a heavyset man who appeared rather nervous, told us that in March 1972, Martinez had asked him if he "really knew all about the Agency activities in the Miami area." Martinez had dropped hints about Hunt's activities, the chief said, which had concerned him so much that he wrote a letter to CIA headquarters inquiring about Hunt's status. The answer, we were told, was that the chief should "cool it" and not concern himself with Hunt's affairs.

— *At That Point in Time*

One does better not to rely on that comfortable picture we have of E. Howard Hunt as an unhinged undercover man in a wild red wig impotently badgering Dita Beard on her hospital bed — the wig may have been chosen to make him startling to a fearful woman.

By the rank of the posts he occupied in his career, it is obvious that Hunt, for a long time at least, was well regarded in the Agency. For that matter, he has so many credentials we can wonder how close he came in his own mind to becoming director of the CIA. In his autobiography, *Undercover*, he remarks, "Obviously I was never going to be director of Central Intelligence, nor did I particularly want to be," but the year is 1966 and he says it after more than fifteen years of service and such prime positions as deputy chief of station in Mexico (which is where William F. Buckley, Jr. worked for him); chief of covert operations for southeastern Europe — Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey; chief of political action for the Guatemala operation which overthrew Arbenz; chief of covert operations for the north Asia command — China, Korea, Japan; chief of station in Uruguay; chief of political action for the Bay of Pigs; chief of Domestic Operations Division (the United States); and chief of covert action for Western Europe.

Before joining the CIA Hunt had been an English major at Brown, served in the navy, the OSS, had been a war correspondent for *Life*, published novels, worked in Hollywood, had a Guggenheim Fellowship for one of his novels, and was in Europe for the ECA under Averell Harriman. Later, within the CIA, he collaborated with Allen Dulles in the writing of *The Craft of Intelligence*. He also worked closely with Frank Wisner, Allen Dulles,

Dick Helms, Richard Bissell, Frank Barnes, Tom Karamessines - there are no larger names in the CIA. If his autobiography fails to mention Cord Meyer or James Angleton there is no reason we cannot speculate on his concealed relations with them, particularly from 1966 to 1970, when Hunt neglects to describe what he is doing for the Company, and the assumption, since he is stationed in America, is capers, domestic capers.

A Dutch manufacturer of electronic gadgetry was demonstrating some ultrasophisticated electronic "sneakies." The Dutch salesman announced that over twenty items of gadgetry had been hidden in the exhibition room and invited his CIA guests to find them. Then the Dutchman set about to uncover them, and he couldn't find them. Jim McCord had sneaked into the room before the demonstration, found them all, and removed them. "Jim is one fine operator," said Helms.

- Miles Copeland, *National Review*,
September 14, 1973

McCord was in the CIA for twenty years but he seems like nothing so much as an FBI man. A devout Methodist, abstemious, soft-voiced in his right-wing opinions, his personality speaks of law and order rather than espionage or counterespionage. With the CIA from the first years of its inception (those years when it was raiding the FBI, and Hoover did not like it, and may for all we know have been casting about for a career agent who could infiltrate the CIA for the rest of his working life), McCord worked for the Company from 1951 to 1970 and became chief of the Physical Security Division of the Office of Security.

As we know, his work had in part to do with finding concealed bugs and dealing with advanced eavesdropping equipment. He was good enough to receive a Distinguished Service Award from Helms, and Allen Dulles once referred to him as "my top man."²⁵ We do not know what he was top man in, but it is not mean praise.

His performance during the Watergate break-in is on the consequence fascinating for its incompetence. McCord, according to Hunt's account, bought only four walkie-talkies where six had been needed. He delayed charging the batteries. He neglected to disconnect a burglar-alarm system. In the course of the first break-in, he

²⁵ Lewis Chester, et al., *Watergate*

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removed his men from the Democratic National Committee offices before the job was done. Then for several days he was unable to process the two rolls of film the Cubans did manage to take because McCord's "man" was out of town. In addition, according to Liddy, McCord "bugged the wrong telephone line. He was supposed to tap O'Brien's."²⁶ So a second attempt was necessary. On the next try, two of McCord's walkie-talkies had uncharged batteries. McCord retaped the locks after the guard had removed the tapes. He then insisted to Liddy on going ahead with the operation. He also retaped the locks horizontally instead of vertically; the tape was therefore visible at a glance. Hunt would finally decide that McCord was a double agent for the Democrats. A double agent he may have been — for the CIA — and a triple agent for the FBI, but a Democrat? McCord?

Whoever he was, McCord broke the Watergate case by his letter in March, 1973, to Judge Sirica: "There was political pressure applied to the defendants to plead guilty and remain silent. Perjury occurred during the trial. . . ."

He also said, "The Watergate Operation was not a CIA operation. . . . I know for a fact that it was not." It is a retired CIA operative speaking, which is to say, a man who may or may not be retired. Authoritative disclaimers by CIA officials bear the same relation to fact that the square root of minus one bears to a real number. The net effect of McCord's remark, therefore, is to make us more suspicious of the CIA. The possibility that he is an FBI man thereby increases an iota.

~~The second break-in took place in order that the tap on Larry~~
~~the second break-in took place in order that the tap on Larry~~
 O'Brien's phone that McCord had not put in well enough to function after the first break-in should now be put in again. Hunt thought the project was odd. "O'Brien's in Miami," he said to Liddy. "Why in hell should we tap the phone in his Washington office? . . . What's the rationale? As a friend, colleague and fellow professional, I'm asking you to go back to Mitchell, Dean and Magruder and reargue the case."²⁷ Liddy replied, "Okay, I'll try again, but I hate to do it. They look to me to get things done, not argue against them."

²⁶ Undercover.

²⁷ Quoting from Hunt is hitting the bullet. Still, it is tempting to quote. From Undercover

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Since Liddy is the conspirator who has remained silent, we do not know his "principal," that is, we do not know who told him to break into Democratic headquarters the first time, nor --- it may be more interesting --- who insisted on a second time when Hunt thought the only logic was to call it off. It is not impossible that Magruder, Mitchell --- or could it be Dean? --- had an undisclosed relation to the CIA. Let us spin on ~~the fact that~~ the vertigo of that thought,

Mr. Haldeman said he had never understood why Alexander P. Butterfield, the aide who disclosed the existence of the White House tapes to the Senate Watergate committee, wanted to join the White House staff. . . .

"He was soon to become an Air Force General. I have never understood why he insisted, against my advice, on dropping his commission or why he suddenly wanted to be part of the Nixon team.

"In view of his subsequent role," Mr. Haldeman went on, "these actions seem even more curious today. Was Butterfield a CIA agent? Maybe. I just don't know."

— The New York Times, June 23, 1976

In the early Sixties he [Haig] ran a CIA-financed Bay of Pigs rehabilitation program, preceding Alexander Butterfield in the job.

— "Strange Bedfellows"

Colson complained to Bast that the President was always on the verge of coming down hard on the CIA. But, Colson grouched, Nixon was talked out of it by presidential staff chief, Al Haig, who feared it would "take down the whole intelligence community."

— Jack Anderson, July 15, 1974

Haig told us there was "no way" he was working for the CIA.

— Jack Anderson, July 15, 1974

Paul F. Hellmuth, the managing partner of St. Clair's Boston law firm, has been associated over the past decade with . . . Anderson Security Consultants, Inc . . . a CIA front. . . .

Mysterious checks, written for large amounts, would frequently arrive at the office of the firm's secretary-treasurer, Virginia lawyer L. Lee Bean, who would . . . disperse it upon instructions.

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~~The secret instructions often came, say our sources, from James St. Clair's quiet law partner. Some of the mystery money was dispatched to Miami banks and was used allegedly to support the CIA's anti-Castro activities. . . . [Hellmuth] insisted . . . that James St. Clair didn't know "the first thing about the security firm."~~

~~— Jack Anderson, July 22, 1974~~

[Leon] Jaworski had been . . . a director of a private foundation that laundered funds for the CIA.

— "Strange Bedfellows"

We also learned that Paul O'Brien, who had served as counsel to the Committee to Re-elect the President after the Watergate break-in, was a former CIA operative.

— *At That Point in Time*

Among the officers of OSS Detachment 101 was Clark MacGregor, later a Congressman, a White House staffer, and, after the Watergate break-in, the replacement for John Mitchell as head of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

— *Compulsive Spy*

~~Bob Woodward interviewed me on numerous occasions. I have told Woodward everything I know about the Watergate case, except the Mullen company's tie to the CIA. I never mentioned that to him."~~

~~— Robert Bennett: House subcommittee testimony²⁸~~

~~Because Robert Bennett's CIA ties were exposed by the Watergate scandal, he has closed down the Mullen Agency. He now works for the Hughes organization as a vice-president and CIA liaison.~~

~~"Strange Bedfellows"~~

~~During the last interview, Colson would name Bennett as Deep Throat. At one point, he would say in pain, "Every story that Woodward won the Pulitzer Prize for was fed to him by the CIA."~~

An observer of the Company, hearing of this, shook his head. "Deep Throat is a cover in itself. Where is the casual reader who will argue with so agreeable a story — one man's revelation pulling down the entire Nixon administration? If Deep Throat told all, it was only because the information had already been neatly collected

Colson

²⁸ As quoted in "Strange Bedfellows."

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for Deep Throat to tell." The observer shook his head. "Learn the law of reversal. The victims can be the agents in these affairs. There is as much need to remain suspicious of Colson as to feel sorry for him, since in attacking the CIA, Colson creates good cover for them. The reaction of the newspaper reader who dislikes old Chuck is to think, 'Even if it is true (and I must say I have had my suspicions of the CIA) I won't believe the story if it comes from Colson.' The Bast interview, you see, bothers me. Colson visits Bast, a private investigator, sits down by the pool next to the shrubbery and never wonders if he is being taped? Colson? Pit-bull Colson?"

"By the same guideline, the heroes can be the villains. Beware of the heroes of Watergate. I look at the *Washington Post* and think, 'Isn't it a brave paper? Isn't that a heroic editor who dares what no editor of no other major paper will dare? Isn't that right in the vein of major newspaper editors as we have come to know them?'"

On publication of this piece, the editor of the *Washington Post* emphatically denied that he had ever been, or was now, a member of the CIA.

"Never allow yourself," the observer says, "to think you have a fixed platform from which to measure these motions. We're out in the stars with Einstein, I assure you. For instance, you speak of McCord as being inefficient, when what you relate is no more than Hunt's description of how McCord acted in the break-in. Hunt's book could have been written by an enclave."

"Were they wishing to suggest that McCord was dealing with the Democrats?"

"Never look for the answer. Pursue the question into the next question. The answer is invariably smudged, but the questions are beautiful. There is the rapture of the depths descending into the questions."

I also suspected, but could never prove, that the Nixon crowd tapped my telephones. I was only slightly surprised, therefore, by a letter mailed to me on April 15, 1972. It was written by William Haddad, a New York entrepreneur who, until a dozen years ago, had been a prize-winning investigative reporter. Haddad told me he had learned from a private investigator of plans to tap the telephones of the Democratic National Committee. Haddad understood the plot had been hatched by a group of advertis-

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vention, was not even presented to John Mitchell until January 27, 1972, it seems that some undisclosed scheme was already being developed by Gordon Liddy and the November Group in the fall of 1971. Such a probability hardly diminishes the hypothesis that Liddy is an agent of stature. (In fact, the November Group will even be given a million dollars by CREEP before the famous April 7 deadline for campaign contributions. While the majority of this is ostensibly for the November Group's stated purpose, which is advertising, not espionage, the figure is nonetheless interesting. It is equal to the sum Liddy tried to get for Gemstone.)

At any rate, we are left with the following additions:

(1) The Democrats were well aware of the November Group and the possibility that their offices would soon be bugged.

(2) British and Canadian intelligence can now be added to the soup. Let us think of them as herbs.

(3) Maybe the Democrats were putting in the garlic. Haddad "sent his entire file to Jack Anderson in April 1972" and now "could not remember what was in it. In fact, Haddad said, he sent material to Anderson twice, but had kept no copies." Jack Anderson "had acknowledged receipt of the material from Haddad concerning plans for the break in, but he said he had since lost it."²⁹

Of course, the CIA had infiltrated the FBI, and the FBI had unknown men working for it in the CIA. We must assume both had agents in the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the IRS, the National Security Council, the 40 Committee, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Special Operations Division, Naval Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Council on Foreign Relations, HUGHES, plus a number of private intelligence companies whose work extended from military-industrial security to private detectives' offices. In turn, these companies, bureaus, groups, and agencies had to the best of their ability infiltrated the CIA and the FBI. Since the CIA, the FBI, and other major intelligence also had had their authority infiltrated by their own unknown enclaves, it is, in certain circumstances, meaningless to speak of the CIA as a way of differentiating it from the AIA, the DIA, the NSC, HUGHES, or the SOD — let us use the initials CIA therefore like a mathematical symbol which will, depending on the context in which it is employed, usually offer specific reference to a CIA located physically

²⁹ At That Point in Time.

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in Langley, Virginia, with near to 18,000 employees, understanding that under other circumstances CIA may be no more than a general locus signifying an unknown factor whose function is intelligence and whose field is the invisible government. Students of Einstein's work on tensor calculus may find it comfortable to deal with these varieties of unknowns. In the world of social theory, however, we are at the point where a special and general theory of relative identity in social relations would be of inestimable use since the only situation for which there can be no cover is *anguish*, and the operation of the twentieth century may be to alienate us from that emotion in preparation for the ultimate destruction of the human soul as opposed to the oncoming hegemony of the technological person.

Generally, his enemies and friends agreed that Nixon was a fool not to destroy the tapes. They may not have understood the depth of the pot in which he was boiling. There was reason to believe there were copies of the tapes. If Butterfield would reveal their existence, he could be an agent; if one agent was near those tapes, then more than one; what reason to assume duplicates of the damaging tapes were not being systematically prepared all the while he was being set up? Impeachment was certain if he burned the evidence and a copy appeared.

"You do not understand. This man stood at the threshold of his own idea of greatness. He was going to write the peace with Communism. He was going to be immortal. Now, as he loses respect, it is slipping away from him inch by inch." Kissinger smiles sadly over his salad. Across the city, the Ervin committee is holding a hearing in the hot summer afternoon. "People criticize Nixon for being irresolute about Watergate. Why does he not confess what is wrong and end it? they ask. They do not understand that he cannot make a move because he is not in possession of all the facts. He does not know what is going to happen next. He does not know what is going to break upon him next." Kissinger sighs. "Nobody will ever know how close that man was to getting the foreign situation he wanted."

Nixon is not only a Shakespearean protagonist in the hour of his downfall, but Macbeth believing that Birnam Wood will never come to Dunsinane. ~~Of course, he is as appealing in his travail as Ronald~~

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Reagan might be playing Lear, but ~~the echo nonetheless~~ of a vast anguish comes back — ~~who else has known such anguish and managed to live in the American world?~~ Birnam Wood will come back to Dunsinane as the tapes one by one get ~~to be~~ taken.

Epistemological Model V:

"Sometimes," said the wise observer, "I think of that story of Howard Hughes being so fearful of bacteria that he kept Jean Peters across the room from him, and then I think, what if the fear of bacteria is the cover, and the double dare not get too close to Jean Peters?"

Epistemological Model **V**

There is hardly an episode in Watergate which was not presented to us in a way that makes it seem more stupid than it ought to have been. Or, is it closer to say that what we hope to perceive is more brilliant than the level at which we have been encouraged to perceive it?

The tapes, for example. If a tape can be made, a copy can be made. Until we brood upon the matter, it is natural to assume the copy is equal to the original. We do not stop to think that the poor tapes we thought were the originals could in fact have been inferior copies. The remarkably bad quality of the tapes might have been produced by design. There are advantages to a tape ~~which~~ can hardly be heard: The affair is downgraded, and seems less sinister. *that* No cover is more comfortable to a clandestine operation than the appearance of ineffectuality. Let us remind ourselves of how inept the Secret Service seemed in its taping operation. Possessing all that White House power, all those funds, all that available electronic equipment — yet the product sounds like it was recorded in the glove compartment of a moving car. Admittedly, there were technical difficulties to the taping, but the product still seems inadequate. Nixon must have suffered another turn of the screw. Since he cannot know if the tapes he hears are the unique, original, and only tapes, or a debased copy prepared by his enemies, he cannot even be certain whether it is a trap to encourage him to take advantage of the garbled sound and rephrase the transcripts in his favor. He takes the plunge. But his emendations are discovered later by the House Judiciary Committee. A corrected transcript is presented to America.

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How can Nixon not wonder whether somebody substituted a subtly clearer version of the tapes to John Doar's staff?

All the while, Nixon has to confront another question. If he evades every snare, pit, impressment, and delusion, if he even manages to work his way through the Senate to the edge of being declared not guilty in the impeachment, how can he be certain that in the last minute after the very last of all these abominably unexpected breaches in his cover-up, the missing eighteen minutes will still not appear? Then he can envision how America will spank the horse, and he will twist forever in the wind.

End~~A Crime in Criminology~~

I received a telephone call from L. Patrick Gray, the Acting Director of the FBI — a man I had never met. Gray told me he was disturbed by reports suggesting the FBI was not conducting a thorough investigation. "That is simply not true," Gray told me. "I assure you this matter will be pursued wherever it leads, regardless of my position in the Administration. Let the chips fall where they may." I told Gray I appreciated his call, and he concluded our talk with an unexpected comment: "Mr. O'Brien, we Irish Catholics must stick together."

On July 7, following Gray's call, I was visited by two Secret Service agents. . . . They told me they had been instructed to report to me that the FBI's exhaustive examination of the National Committee offices had uncovered no telephone bugs or other electronic devices — that "the place was found to be clean." I accepted their report without question. I knew the FBI had torn the place apart — removing ceiling panels, dismantling radiators, and the like — and if they said there were no bugs, then I assumed there were no bugs. Later evidence, of course, revealed that bugs had been placed on my phone and that of Spencer Oliver, Executive Director of the Association of State Democratic Chairmen. To this day I cannot explain the discrepancy between those facts and the report I was given.

~~No Final Victories~~

When Hunt's team was caught, McCord had already removed a few panels from the ceiling of O'Brien's office. It is not so very well known that an excellent and advanced kind of eavesdropping can be

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Epitaph to Watergate
Nixon's Hemlock

①

May 20, 1974
The New Yorker

Quick thoughts: Nixon's crime is his inability to rise above admiration for the corporation. Throughout the transcripts, he is acting like the good, tough, even-minded, cool-tempered, and tastefully foulmouthed president of a huge corporation—an automobile man, let us say, who has just discovered that his good assistants have somehow, God knows how, allowed more than a trace of tin to get into the molybdenum. Now they have the choice of calling back one hundred thousand cars with faulty bearings or letting a few pile up at the traffic lights. The press and the politicians scream that he has no moral values. He has no more and no less sense of value than any big corporation president in the land. Who, after all, polluted America in the first place? Now we're having an Aztec ceremony to clean up the mess. We won't be happy until we cut Richard Nixon's heart out and hold it high on the summit of the Presidential pyramid while an ooh goes up from the crowd. But his crime, moral insensitivity, is the one with which he began, prospered, lost, despaired, and finally succeeded in the passion of Richard Nixon. Good old American moral inanition. Was Lyndon Johnson less disgusting in Vietnam, or Jack Kennedy less cynical in some of the conversations he had—doubtless had—about the little workings of the C.I.A.? Poor Nixon. He makes the peace with Russia and China by pitching the political equivalent of a shutout on his own right-wing Murderers' Row (which no Democrat ever

had the nerve to do). Then he slips on the dugout steps. One could pity him, if not for having been shamed by his presence as the Uriah Heep of the Indo-Chinese war—all those years when one had to listen to Nixon speak of the enemy as he ordered the carnage and bombardment. For that, Nixon will never be forgiven, but these are schizophrenic years—the separate parts of ourselves hardly communicate—and so one is even tempted to admire the final release of these unreleasable transcripts. What a boon to historians, what a blow to ambiguity. How much easier it might have been for Nixon to resign and cry foul for the rest of his life, thereby to muddy the last washes of Watergate. Instead, he takes the gamble, he rages “against the dying of the light.” Yet as he takes this last desperate step, he nonetheless repeats the theme of his life—he cannot take the step with all of himself in the same place. Expletive deleted. He lacks the simple New York smarts to keep the obscenities in. All his life he has been trying to tell us he is a man, a real man, and we keep replying he ain’t. A real man knows how to swear. Now he finally has the stuff to show it. Better, he flings himself on the final court of public opinion. Yet we still do not know if he even swears well. He could have had the bars of America laughing with his prejudices, saying, Hey, the guy is no good and he can prove it, but

he's one funny guy, he'll make you laugh. Instead, our Richard squirts deodorant at the smell in the room, and we all feel the pall. I'm beginning to think he is doomed. The stubbornest man in America, and doomed. With all his congealed and unadmitted boldness, with all his transcendent hypocrisy (the gas of his false pieties enters the very spirit of anti-matter), still he has always been, in the final crisis, the fool of small-town caution. So, in the grand boiling of the pots of American opinion, our National Yardbird goes into the broth without his feathers, and all salts withheld. We will be a great nation on the day we come to see that his ability to poach in his own juice is the American disease of us all. For the flavor of his moral invention, as he cooks himself, is saccharin, preservative, and gobs of super-burger. Bile in the stomach, canker on the tongue, and woe in the pit. What if his horror is the same as ours when we say at 3 A.M. *we are not so bad as they think we are*, and writhe in the thought that God may not agree? Let someone say, at any rate, that if ever a human was obliged to drink the cup of his own excretions, then the last or the next-to-last of the classic American Presidents has been that man. What a curiosity is our Democracy, what a mystery. No novelist unwinds a narrative so well.

end

ignore underlining

P+P
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1974

The Faith of Graffiti



1.

Journalism is chores. Journalism is bondage unless you can see yourself as a private eye inquiring into the mysteries of a new phenomenon. Then you may even become an Aesthetic Investigator ready to take up your role in the twentieth-century mystery play. Aesthetic Investigator! Make the name A-I for this is about graffiti.

A-I is talking to CAY 161. That is the famous Cay from 161st Street, there at the beginning with TAKI 183 and JUNIOR 161, as famous in the world of wall and subway graffiti as Giotto may have been when his name first circulated through the circuits of those workshops that led from Masaccio through Piero della Francesca to Botticelli, Michelangelo, Leonardo and Raphael. Whew! In such company Cay loses his name, although he will not necessarily see it that way. He has the power of his own belief. If the modern mind has moved from Giotto who could find beatitude in a beheading as well as the beginnings of perspective in the flight of angels across the bowl of a golden sky, if we have mounted the high road of the Renaissance into Raphael's celebration of the True, the Good and the Beautiful in each succulent three-dimensionality of the gluteus maximus on out to our own vales and washes in Rothko and Ellsworth Kelly, why so, too, have we also moved from the celebration to the name, traveled from men and women who wrested a degree of independence from Church and God down now to the twentieth-century certainty that life is an image.

A couple of stories:

The first is a Jewish joke. Perhaps it is *the* Jewish joke. Two grandmothers meet. One is pushing a baby carriage. "Oh," says the other, "what a beautiful grandchild you have." "That's nothing," says the first, reaching for her pocketbook. "Wait'll I show you her picture!"

The second seems apocryphal. Willem de Kooning gives a pastel to Robert Rauschenberg who takes it home and promptly erases it. Next he signs his name to the erasure. Then he sells it. Can it be that Rauschenberg is saying, "The artist has as much right to print money as the financier?" Yes, Rauschenberg is giving us small art right here and much instruction. Authority imprinted upon emptiness is money. And the ego is capital convertible to currency by the use of the name. Ah, the undiscovered links of production and distribution in the psychic economy of the ego! For six and a half centuries we have been moving from the discovery of humanity into the circulation of the name, advancing out of some primitive obeisance to dread so complete that painting once lay inert on the field of two dimensions (as if the medieval eye was not ready to wander). Then art dared to rise into that Renaissance liberation from anxiety. The painterly capacity entered the space-perspective of volume and depth. Now, with graffiti we are back in the prison of two dimensions once more. Or is it the one dimension of the name — the art-form screaming through space on a unilinear subway line?

Something of all this is in the mind of our Aesthetic Investigator as he sits in a bedroom on West 161st Street in Washington Heights and talks to CAY 161 and JUNIOR 161 and LI'L FLAME and LURK. They talk about the name. He has agreed to do a centerpiece for a book of photographs on graffiti by Jon Naar, has agreed to do it on the instant (in a Los Angeles hotel room) that he has seen it. The splendid pictures and his undiscovered thoughts on the subject leap together. There is something to find in these pictures, thinks A-I, some process he can all but name. The intellectual hedonism of an elusive theme is laid out before him. So, yes, he accepts. And discovers weeks later that his book has already been given a title. It is *Watching My Name Go By*. He explains to the pained but sympathetic ears of his collaborators that an author needs his own title.

Besides, there is a practical reason. Certain literary men cannot afford titles like *Watching My Name Go By*. Norman Mailer may be first in such a category. One should not be able to conceive of one's bad reviews before writing a word.

But then he also does not like *Watching My Name Go By* for its own forthright meaning. These young graffiti writers do not use their own name. They adopt one. It is like a logo. Moxie or Socono, Tang, Whirlpool, Duz. The kids bear a not quite definable relation to their product. It is not MY NAME but THE NAME. Watching The Name Go By. He still does not like it. Yet every graffiti writer refers to the word. Even in newspaper accounts, it is the term heard most often. "I have put my name," says Super Kool to David Shirey of the *Times*, "all over the place. There ain't nowhere I go I can't see it. I sometimes go on Sunday to Seventh Avenue 86th Street and just spend the whole day" — yes, he literally says it — "watching my name go by." But then they all use it. JAPAN I, being interviewed by Jon Naar and A-I in a subway, grins as a station cop passes and scrutinizes him. He is clean. There is no spray can on him today. Otherwise he would run, not grin. Japan says, with full evaluation of his work, "You have to put in the hours to add up the names. You have to get your name around." Since he is small and could hardly oppose too many who might choose to borrow his own immortal JAPAN I, he merely snorts in answer to the question of what he would do if someone else took up his name and used it. "I would still get the class," he remarks.

Whether it is one's own interviews or others, the word which prevails is always the name. MIKE 171 informs *New York Magazine*, "There are kids all over town with bags of paint waiting to *hit* their names." A bona-fide clue. An object is hit with your name, yes, and in the ghetto, a hit equals a kill. "You must kill a thing," said D. H. Lawrence once, "to know it satisfactorily." (But then who else could have said it?) You hit your name and maybe something in the whole scheme of the system gives a death rattle. For now your name is over their name, over the subway manufacturer, the Transit Authority, the city administration. Your presence is on their presence, your alias hangs over their scene. There is a pleasurable sense of depth to the elusiveness of the meaning.

So he sits with Cay and Junior and the others in the bedroom of Junior's parents and asks them about the name. It is a sweet meeting. He has been traveling for all of a wet and icy snowbound Sunday afternoon through the monumental drabs of South Bronx and Washington Heights, so much like the old gray apartment house ranks of Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn near where he grew up, a trip back across three generations. The Puerto Ricans in this apartment may not be so different from the poor ambitious families of relatives

his mother would speak of visiting on the Lower East Side when she came as a child up from the Jersey shore to visit. So little has changed. Still the-smell-of-cooking-in-the-walls, a single word, and the black-pocked green stucco of the halls, those dark pits in the plaster speaking of the very acne of apartment house poverty. In the apartment, entering by the kitchen, down through the small living room and past the dark bedrooms in a file off the hall, all the shades drawn, a glimpse has been had of the television working like a votive light in some poor slum church chapel (one damp fire in the rain-forest) while the father in shorts sleeps on the sofa, and the women congregate — the kitchen is near. The windows are stained glass, sheets of red and yellow plastic pasted to the glass — the view must be on an air shaft. No light in this gray and late winter day. It is all the darkness of that gloom which sits in the very center of slum existence, that amalgam of worry and dread, heavy as buckets of oil, the true wages of the working class, with all that attendant fever for the attractions of crime, the grinding entrapments of having lost to the law — lawyers' fees, bondsmen, probation officers, all of it.

Yet now there is also a sense of protection in the air. The mood is not without its reverence: CAY 161 has the face of a martyr. He looks as if he has been flung face first against a wall, as if indeed a mighty hand has picked him up and hurled him through the side of a stone house. He is big, seventeen, and almost six feet tall, once good-looking and may yet be good-looking again, but now it is as if he has been drawn by a comic strip artist, for his features express the stars, comets, exclamation points, and straight-out dislocation of eyes and nose and mouth that accompanies any hero in a comic strip when he runs into a collision. SOCK! ZAM! POW! CAY 161, driving a stolen van, fleeing the cops in an old-fashioned New York street chase, has gone off the road on a turn, "and right on 161st Street where he was born and raised, he hit a hydrant, turned over a few times, and wound up inside a furniture store. . . . When the police looked inside the car," — description by José Torres in the *N.Y. Post* — "Cay lay motionless in the driver's seat, and another youth, a passenger, sprawled unconscious outside, hurled from the car by the impact." The friend had a broken leg, and Cay had part of his brain taken out in a seven-hour operation. The doctor gave warning. He might survive. As a vegetable. For two months he did not make a move. Now, six months later, Cay is able to talk, he can move. His lips are controlled on one side of his face but slack on the other — he speaks as if he has had a stroke. He moves in the same fashion. Cer-

tain gestures are agile, others come up half-paralyzed and top-heavy, as if he will fall on his face at the first false step. So his friends are his witness. They surround him, offer the whole reverence of their whole alertness to every move he makes. There is all the elegance of good manners in the way they try to conceal that he is different from the others.

But Cay is happy now. He is in Junior's house, JUNIOR 161, his best friend. They used to go out writing together for years, both tall, a twin legend — when one stands on the other's shoulders, the name goes up higher on the wall than for anyone else. True bond of friendship: they will each write the other's name, a sacramental interchange. Junior has a lean body, that indolent ghetto languor which speaks of presence. "I move slow, man," says the body, "and that is why you watch me. Because when I move fast, you got to watch out." He is well dressed, ghetto style — a white turtleneck sweater, white pants, a white felt hat, white sneakers, nothing more. Later he will step out like this into the winter streets. You got to meet the eye of the beholder with class. Freezing is for plants.

A-I interviews them. Yes, they started three years ago and would hit four or five names a day. Junior liked to work at least an hour a day. So go the questions: Cay liked to use red marker, Junior blue. Hundreds of masterpieces to their credit. Yes, Junior's greatest masterpiece is in the tunnel where the track descends from 125th Street to 116th Street. There, high on the wall, is JUNIOR 161 in letters six feet high. "You want to get your name in a place where people don't know how you could do it, how you could get up to there. You got to make them think." It is the peril of the position which calls. Junior frowns on the later artists who have come after Cay and himself. The talk these days is of SLY and STAY HIGH, PHASE 2, BAMA, SNAKE, and STITCH. The article by Richard Goldstein in *New York* (March 26, 1973) has offered a nomenclature for the styles, Broadway, Brooklyn and Bronx, disquisitions on bubble and platform letters. Perhaps his source is BAMA, who has said to another reporter in his full articulate speaking style, "Bronx style is bubble letters, and Brooklyn style is script with lots of flourishes and arrows. It's a style all by itself. Broadway style, these long slim letters, was brought here from Philadelphia by a guy named Topcat. Queens style is very difficult, very hard to read."

Junior is contemptuous of this. The new forms have wiped out respect for the old utilitarian lettering. If Cay likes the work of STAY HIGH, Junior is impressed by none. "That's just fanciness,"

he says of the new. "How're you going to get your name around doing all that fancy stuff?"

Cay speaks into this with his deep, strangled, and wholly existential voice — he cannot be certain any sound he utters will come out as he thinks. "Everybody tries to catch up to us," he says.

"You have to put in the hours?"

A profound nod.

Of course, he is not doing it any longer. Nor is Junior. Even before the accident, both had lost interest. On the one hand, the police were getting tough, the beatings when you were caught were worse, the legal penalties higher, the supplies of paint getting to be monitored, and on the other hand something had happened to the process itself. Too many names had grown — a jungle of ego creepers.

A-I queries them about the prominence of the name. He hesitates how to pose the question — he fears confidence will be lost if he asks straight-out. "What is the meaning of the name?" but, indeed, he does not have to — Cay speaks up on what it means to watch the name go by. "The name," says Cay, in a full voice, Delphic in its unexpected resonance — as if the idol of a temple had just chosen to break into sound — "The name," says Cay, "is the *faith* of graffiti."

It is quite a remark. He wonders if Cay knows what he has said. "The name," repeats Cay, "is the *faith*." He is in no doubt of the depth of what he has said. His eyes fix on A-I, his look is severe. Abruptly, he declares that the proper title is "The Faith of Graffiti." So it is.

A Sunday afternoon has come to its end. A-I walks downstairs with Junior, Cay, Lurk and Li'l Flame, and is shown modest examples of their writing on the apartment house walls. Cay has also used another name. At times he has called himself THE PRAYER 161. They say goodbye in the hall. Cay shows A-I the latest 161st Street sequence of thumb-up finger-curved handshakes. The pistol-pointed forefinger and upraised thumb of one man touch the thumb and forefinger of the other in a quick little cat's cradle. Cay's fingers are surprisingly deft. Then he and Junior spar a bit, half-comic for he lurches, but with the incisive tenderness of the ghetto, as if his moves also say, "Size don't come in packages. A cripple keeps the menace." It is agreeable to watch. As he attempts to spar, Cay is actually moving better than he has all day.

The name is the faith of graffiti. Was it true that the only writing which did not gut one's health lay in those questions whose answers were not known from the start? A-I still had no more than a clue to

graffiti. Were the answers to be found in the long war of the will against the power of taboo? Who could know when one of the gods would turn in sleep as images were drawn? Was that a thought in the head of the first savage to put the silhouette of an animal on the wall of a cave? If so, the earliest painting had been not two dimensions but one — one, like graffiti — the hand pushing forward into the terror of future punishment. Only later would come an easier faith that the Lord might be on the side of the artist.

2.

No, size doesn't come in packages, and the graffiti writers had been all heights and all shapes, even all the ages from twelve to twenty-four. They had written masterpieces in letters six feet high on the side of walls and subway cars, and had scribbled furtive little toys, which is to say small names without style, sometimes just initials. There was panic in the act for you wrote with an eye over your shoulder for oncoming authority. The Transit Authority cops would beat you if they caught you, or drag you to court, or both. The judge, donning the robes of Solomon, would condemn the early prisoners to clean the cars and subway stations of the names. HITLER 2 (reputed to be so innocent of his predecessor that he only knew Hitler 1 had a very big rep!) was caught, and passed on the word of his humiliation. Cleaning the cars, he had been obliged to erase the work of others. All proportions kept, it may in simple pain of heart have been not altogether unequal to condemning Cézanne to wipe out the works of Van Gogh.

So there was real fear of being caught. Pain and humiliation were implacable dues, and not all graffiti artists showed equal grace under such pressure. Some wrote like cowards, timidly, furtively, jerkily. "Man," was the condemnation of the peers, "you got a messed-up handwriting." Others laid one cool flowering of paint upon another, and this was only after having passed through all the existential stations of the criminal act, even to first *inventing* the paint, which was of course the word for stealing the stuff from the stores. But then, an invention is the creation of something which did not exist before — like a working spray can in your hand. (Indeed, if Plato's Ideal exists, and the universe is first a set of forms, then what is any in-

There was always art in a criminal act — no crime could ever be as automatic as a production process — but graffiti writers were opposite to criminals since they were living through the stages of the crime in order to commit an artistic act — what a doubling of intensity when the artist not only steals the cans but tries for the colors he wants, not only the marker and the color, but steal them in double amounts so you don't run out in the middle of a masterpiece. What a knowledge of cops' habits is called for when any Black or Puerto Rican adolescent with a big paper bag is bound to be examined by a Transit cop if he goes into the wrong station. So after his paint has been invented a writer has to decide by which subway entrance it is to be transported, and once his trip is completed back to the station which is the capital of his turf, he still has to find the nook where he can warehouse his goods for a few hours. To attempt to take the paint out of the station is to get caught. To try to bring it back to the station is worse. Six or seven kids entering a subway in Harlem, Washington Heights, or the South Bronx are going to be searched by Transit cops for cans. So they stash it, mill around the station for a time painting nothing, they are, after all, often in the subways — to the degree they are not chased, it is a natural clubhouse, virtually a country club for the sociability of it all — and when the cops are out of sight, and a train is coming in, they whip out their stash of paint from its hiding place, conceal it on their bodies, and in all the wrappings of oversize ragamuffin fatigues, get on the cars to ride to the end of the line where in some deserted midnight yard they will find their natural canvas which is of course that metal wall of a subway car ready to reverberate into all the egos on all the metal of New York, what an echo that New York metal will give into the slapped-silly senses of every child-psyche who grew up in New York, yes, metal as a surface on which to paint is even better than stone.

But it is hardly so quick or automatic as that. If they are to leave the station at the end of the line, there is foreign turf to traverse which guarantees no safe passage, and always the problem of finding your way into the yards.

In the A-train yard at 207th Street, the unofficial entrance was around a fence that projected out over a cliff and dropped into the water of the Harlem River. You went out one side of that fence on a narrow ledge, out over the water, and back the other side of the fence into the yards "where the wagons," writes Richard Goldstein, "are sitting like silent whales."

We may pick our behemoth — whales and dinosaurs, elephants folded in sleep. At night, the walls of cars sit there possessed of soul — you are not just writing your name but trafficking with the iron spirit of the vehicle now resting. What a presence. What a consecutive set of iron sleeping beasts down all the corrals of the yard, and the graffiti writers stealthy as the near-to-silent sound of their movements working up and down the line of cars, some darting in to squiggle a little toy of a name on twenty cars — their nerve has no larger surge — others embarking on their first or their hundred-and-first masterpiece, daring the full enterprise of an hour of living with this tension after all the other hours of waiting (once they had come into the yard) for the telepathic disturbance of their entrance to settle, waiting for the guards patrolling the lines of track to grow somnolent and descend into the early morning pall of the watchman. Sometimes the graffiti writers would set out from their own turf at dark, yet not begin to paint until two in the morning, hiding for hours in the surest corners of the yard or in and under the trains. What a quintessential marriage of cool and style to write your name in giant separate living letters, large as animals, lithe as snakes, mysterious as Arabic and Chinese curls of alphabet, and to do it in the heart of a winter night when the hands are frozen and only the heart is hot with fear. No wonder the best of the graffiti writers, those mountains of heavy masterpiece production, STAY HIGH, PHASE 2, STAR III, get the respect, call it the glory, that they are known, famous and luminous as a rock star. It is their year. Nothing automatic about writing a masterpiece on a subway car. "I was scared," said Japan, "all the time I did it." And sitting in the station at 158th and St. Nicholas Avenue, watching the trains go by, talking between each wave of subway sound, he is tiny in size, his dark eyes as alert as any small and hungry animal who eats in a garden at night and does not know where the householder with his varmint gun may be waiting.

Now, as Japan speaks, his eyes never failing to miss the collection of names, hieroglyphs, symbols, stars, crowns, ribbons, masterpieces and toys on every passing car, there is a sadness in his mood. The city has mounted a massive campaign. There was a period in the middle when it looked as if graffiti would take over the world, when a movement that began as the expression of tropical peoples living in a monotonous iron-gray and dull brown brick environment, surrounded by asphalt, concrete, and clangor, had erupted to

save the sensuous flesh of their inheritance from a macadamization of the psyche, save the blank city wall of their unfed brain by painting the wall over with the giant trees and petty plants of a tropical rain-forest. Like such a jungle, every plant, large and small, spoke to one another, lived in the profusion *and* harmony of a forest. No one wrote over another name, no one was obscene — for that would have smashed the harmony. A communion took place over the city in this plant growth of names until every institutional wall, fixed or moving, every modern new school which looked like a brand-new factory, every old slum warehouse, every standing billboard, every huckstering poster, and the halls of every high-rise low-rent housing projects which looked like a prison (and all did) were covered by a foliage of graffiti that grew seven or eight feet tall, even twelve feet high in those choice places worth the effort for one to stand on another, ah, if it had gone on, this entire city of blank architectural high-rise horrors would have been covered with paint. Graffiti writers might have become mountaineers with pitons for the ascent of high-rise high-cost swinger-single apartments in the East Sixties and Seventies. The look of New York, and then the world, might have been transformed, and the interlapping of names and colors, those wavelets of ego forever reverberating upon one another, could have risen like a flood to cover the monstrosities of abstract empty techno-architectural twentieth-century walls where no design ever predominated over the most profitable (and ergo most monotonous) construction ratio implicit in a twenty-million-dollar bill.

The kids painted with less than this in view, no doubt. Sufficient in the graffiti-proliferating years of the early Seventies to paint the front door of every subway car they could find. The ecstasy of the roller coaster would dive down their chest if they were ever waiting in a station when a twelve-car train came stampeding in and their name, HONDO, WILDCAT, SABU or LOLLIPOP, was on the *front!* Yes, the graffiti had not only the feel and all the super-powered whoosh and impact of all the bubble letters in all the mad comic strips, but the *zoom*, the *aghr*, and the *ahhr* of screeching rails, the fast motion of subways roaring into stations, the comic strips come to life. So it was probably not a movement designed to cover the world so much as the excrescence of an excrescence. Slum populations chilled on one side by the bleakness of modern design, and brain-cooked on the other by comic strips and TV ads with zooming letters, even brain-cooked by politicians whose ego is a vir-

tue — I am here to help my nation — brained by the big beautiful numbers on the yard markers on football fields, by the whip of the capital letters in the names of the products, and gut-picked by the sound of rock and soul screaming up into the voodoo of the firmament with the shriek of the performer's insides coiling like neon letters in the blue satanic light, yes, all the excrescence of the highways and the fluorescent wonderlands of every Las Vegas sign frying through the Iowa and New Jersey night, all the stomach-tightening nitty-gritty of trying to learn how to spell was in the writing, every assault on the psyche as the trains came slamming in. Maybe it was no more than a movement which looked to take some of the excrescence left within and paint it out upon the world, no more than a species of collective therapy of grace exhibited under pressure in which they never dreamed of painting over the blank and empty modern world, but the authority of the city reacted as if the city itself might be in greater peril from graffiti than from drugs, and a war had gone on, more and more implacable on the side of the authority with every legal and psychological weedkiller on full employ until the graffiti of New York was defoliated, cicatrized, Vietnamized. Now, as A-I sat in the station with Jon Naar and Japan and they watched the trains go by, aesthetic blight was on the cars. Few masterpieces remained. The windows were gray and smeared. The cars looked dull red or tarnished aluminum — their recent coat of paint remover having also stripped all polish from the manufacturer's surface. New subway cars looked like old cars. Only the ghost-outline of former masterpieces still remained. The kids were broken. The movement seemed over. Even the paint could no longer be invented. Now the cans set out for display were empty, the misdemeanors were being upped to felony, the fines were severe, the mood was vindictive. Two hideous accidents had occurred. One boy had been killed beneath a subway car, and another had been close to fatally burned by an inflammable spray can catching a spark, yes, a horror was on the movement and transit patrols moved through the yards and plugged the entrances. The white monoliths of the high-rise were safe. And the subways were dingier than they had ever been. The impulse of the jungle to cover the walled tombs of technology had been broken. Was there a clue to graffiti in the opposite passion to look upon monotony and call it health? As A-I walked the streets with Jon Naar, they passed a sign: DON'T POLLUTE — KEEP THE CITY CLEAN. "That sign," the photographer murmured, "is a form of pollution itself."

3.

Since the metaphor of plant life had climbed all over his discussion of graffiti he went with profit to the Museum of Modern Art for it confirmed the botanical notion with which he began: that if subway graffiti had not come into existence, some artist might have found it necessary to invent, for it was in the chain of such evolution. Art had been rolling down the fall-line from Cézanne to Frank Stella, from Gauguin to Mathieu. On such a map, subway graffiti was an alluvial delta, the mud-caked mouth of a hundred painterly streams. If the obvious objection was that you might interview a thousand Black and Puerto Rican kids who rushed to write their name without having ever seen a modern painting, the answer, not quite as obvious, was that plants spoke to plants.

Famous plant-man Backster, attaching the electrodes of his polygraph to a philodendron one night, wonders in the wake of this passing impulse how to test the plant for some emotional reaction. Abruptly, a current courses through the philodendron at the horror of this thought. (When Backster cuts or burns the leaf, however, the polygraph registers little: now, the plant is numb. Its sensitivity seems to be its life, its suffering an abstention from life.) By the new logic of the experiment, plants must be a natural species of wireless. (What, indeed, did Picasso teach us if not that every form offers up its own scream when it is torn?) Radio is then no more than a prosthetic leg of communication, whereas plants speak to plants, and are aware of the death of animals on the other side of the hill. Some artists might even swear they have known this from the beginning, for they would see themselves as stimulants who inject perception into the blind vision of the century. (And like a junkie, does the century move into apathy from the superbrilliance of its injections?)

Still, when it comes to a matter of who might influence the writers of graffiti, one is not obliged to speak only of neon signs, comic strips and TV products, one has the other right to think the kids are enriched by all art which offers the eye a resemblance to graffiti. Which might enable us then to talk of Jackson Pollock and the abstract graffiti of his confluences and meanderings, of Stuart Davis' dramatization of print as a presence that grows in swollen proportion to its size, even include Hans Hofmann's *Memoria in Aeter-*

num where those red and yellow rectangles float like statements of a name over indistinct washes beneath, or Matisse's blue and green *Dance*. (Matisse's limbs wind onto one another like the ivy-creeper calligraphies of New York graffiti.) So might one refer to work which speaks of ghetto emotion in any place, of Siqueiros' *Echo of a Scream*, or Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. If the family histories of the most messed-up families have all the garbage-can chaos of de Kooning's *Woman*, no wonder the subway writers prided themselves on style and éclat — "you got a messed-up handwriting" being the final term of critical kill.

But on reflection, was A-I trying to slip in some old piety on the distribution of art down from the museums through media to the masses? — these subway children may never have seen *Memoria in Aeternum* at the head of the stairs at MOMA, but it filtered through to them by way of advertising artists. Fell crap! Rather say art begot art, and the migrations were no one's business. For if plants were telepathic, then humans lived in a psychic sea where all the forms of art also passed through the marketplace of the dreamer in his sleep, and every part of society spoke to every other part, if only with a curse.

So he had the happy thought during his visit to the Modern Art to decide that some paintings might be, by whatever measure, *on the air* — leave it to the engineers of some future techno-coven to try to determine the precise migrations of Miró's *Plate 8 from Series One, 1953*, "*The Family*" into the head of an espontaneo with a spray can looking over his shoulder for the black mother in a uniform who will beat his own black blue.

4.

Like a good reporter he goes to see the Mayor. It is ten days to Christmas and the last two weeks of the Lindsay administration on that Saturday morning he has his appointment to visit, nearly a week from the previous Sunday when he talked to Junior and Cay. Again the weather is iron-gray and cold. At Gracie Mansion, the wind is driving in from the East River, and the front porch looks across its modest private lawn to the Triboro Bridge in the north. (To the west apartment houses rise like the sheer face of Yosemite.)

It is not a large lawn in front of the Mayor's residence nor even a large house. Old white Gracie Mansion might be no exceptional residence on any wealthy road in Portland, Oregon or Portland, Maine — there is even a basketball hoop on a backboard not far from the front door, a political touch dating from recent years when the Knicks became the most consistently successful team in New York — yet with all its limited grandeur, Gracie Mansion is still one fine Federalist of a house (built in 1799) and if the spirit of an age could have been captured by a radio, then where better to measure this magic mean if not in the proportions of the Mansion's living room and dining room? They speak in their harmony of some perfect period of Arcadian balance between the early frontier being settled to the West and the new sense of democratic government forging itself in the state capitals of the East. How better to characterize the decorum, substance, grace, and calm center of such architecture if not to think that the spirit and style of the *prose* of the American Constitution is also in it (even to the hint of boredom in prose and buildings both), yet, why not precisely these high ceilings, paucity of curves, and all the implicit checks and balances of the right angle? Lindsay, it may be said, is at home in such surroundings. They seem built to his frame. Only a tall lean man could look well-proportioned in so *enlightened* a set of rooms. Nothing like a Gothic arch is present to suggest any mad irreconcilable opposites of God and man, no Corinthian columns to resonate with praetorian tyrannies (and orgies at the top), nor any small and slanted ceilings to speak of craft and husbandry, just government here in Federal style without the intervention of Satan or Jehovah (and next to nothing of Christ), just a fundament of Wasp genius, a building style to state that man could live without faith if things were calm enough. Perhaps the economy of balance is the true god of the Wasp.

His appointment is at eleven, but it is an unusual morning for the Lindsay family since they have been up until five the night before at a farewell party given the Mayor to honor the eight years of his administration. Lindsay has worked as hard as any man in New York for eight years, and can afford the luxury of being hungover before a reporter this Saturday morning. What a nice relaxation. Lindsay chuckles at the memory of each unexpected rejoinder of party dialogue and laughs at the expression on Tom Morgan's face, press secretary to the Mayor, a tall man with a dark brush mustache who capitulates in the sardonic gloom of his hungover eyes the

incandescence of all those good drinks at that good party. Watching them all, studying Lindsay's face with its patrician features so endowed with every purchase on the meaning of handsome that he could be not only a movie star but there at the front, right ahead of Burt Lancaster and Steve McQueen, on a par with Robert Redford, and hardly a millimeter of profile behind Paul Newman, it occurs indeed that no movie star could be more convincing than Lindsay if it came to playing some very important American politician in the quiet American years from 1800 to 1825. Even his eroded teeth — Lindsay's one failing feature — speak with authenticity of the bad teeth of those English ruling classes who became the American ruling classes in that Federalist era one hundred and seventy years ago. So sitting in such a dining room, and a little later adjourned to a living room with Lindsay and Morgan to bring up the subject of his interview, he is thinking that Gracie Mansion never had a Mayor nearly so perfectly suited to itself; if there were some divine renting agency in the halls of karma, then come soon or late the post of Mayor of New York would have had to be found for John Vliet Lindsay or the house would feel unfulfilled.

For Lindsay, however, the question may have been whether an ambitious man had ever come to power at a time less promising for himself. He had labored in his two terms, innovated and negotiated, explored, tinkered, tampered, and shifted the base of every municipal machine of government upon which he could work his cadres. He had built a constituency in the ghetto. Mailer-Breslin running for the mayoralty in '69 also ran into one argument over and over in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Harlem and the South Bronx. It was, "What do we want with you? Lindsay's our man." Lindsay had walked the streets in summer riots, and held some kind of line for decontrol, which is to say, local control, in the ghetto schools. That had taken political courage. Yet make him no saint! He had also worked with the most powerful real estate interests in the city. No question that in his eight years, the ugliest architecture in the history of New York had also gone up. The new flat tops of the skyline now left New York as undistinguished in much of its appearance as Cleveland or Dallas. It is possible Lindsay had bought ghetto relief at the price of aesthetic stultification. Call it desecration. The view of New York's offices and high-rise apartments proved sacrilegious to the mood of any living eye — Wasp balance had done it again.

Still, with all this effort, New Yorkers hated him. For every intolerable reason, first of which was his defense of the ghettos. "If I

wanted a nigger for Mayor, I'd have voted for a nigger," said every archetype of a cab driver to any tourist who would listen. And yet this Federalist movie star, this hard-working mayor for ghetto rights, had been the first and most implacable enemy of subway graffiti. So there was a feather falling through the mood when he told Lindsay and Morgan why he had come.

But A-I had his speech. If he thought the Mayor had done an honorable job, and was prepared to say so, he still could not comprehend how a man who worked so hard to enter the spirit of ghetto conditions had been nonetheless so implacable in his reaction to graffiti. "Insecure cowards," Lindsay had called the kids. "A dirty shame." Others in his administration offered civic blasts: "graffiti pigs," "thoughtless and irresponsible behavior." It was surprising. While the management of a city required you to keep it clean — where would a mayor hide if he could not get the garbage out? — there was a difference between political necessity and the fury of this reaction. How could he call the kids cowards? Why the venom? It seemed personal.

Lindsay grinned. He had heard enough preambles from reporters to know when an interview was manageable. "Well, yes," he said, "I did get hot under the collar, and I suppose if we had to go through it again, I would hope to lose my temper a little less, but you have no idea what a blow that graffiti was to us." He shook his head at the memory. "You see, we had gone to such work, such ends, to get those new subway cars in. It meant so much to people here in the city to get a ride for instance in one of the new air-conditioned cars. On a hot summer day their mood would pick up when they had the luck to catch one. And you know, that was work. It's hard to get anything done here. You stretch budgets, and try to reason people into activities they don't necessarily want to take up on their own. We were proud of those subway cars. It took a lot of talking to a lot of committees to get that accomplished."

Morgan nodded. "And then," Lindsay said, "the kids started to deface them."

A-I put his demurrer. "Deface," after all, was the core of the argument. Some people might think subway graffiti was art. He suggested in passing Claes Oldenburg's classic remark, "... You're standing there in the station, everything is gray and gloomy and all of a sudden one of those graffiti trains slides in and brightens the place like a big bouquet from Latin America."

Lindsay smiled as if recalling the screams, moans, epithets, and

agonized squawks of every bright college intellectual on his staff when Oldenburg's quote first came riding in. Grand division in the Establishment! Aesthetic schism! "Yes, we remember that quote," Lindsay's grin seemed to say. He had the most curious quality of personality. One did not know if he were secretly more or less decent than his personality. While the personality itself was decent enough, it was also patently not the man, nor, unhappily for him, characteristic at all of New York. He seemed now like a Westerner, full of probity, rawhide and something buried in the personality, a man you might not get to know at all even after a night of drinking together. He wasn't in the least like Richard Nixon except to share one quality. Lindsay was out of focus. He had always been out of focus. Part of his political trouble.

Well, Lindsay suggested, they had never really wondered whether it was anything but defacement. "People would come into new cars and suddenly they'd see them all marked up, covered inside and out, and it depressed people terribly. You know, we have to be a kind of nerve center to the city. Reports came in from everywhere. This graffiti was profoundly depressing — it truly hurt people's moods. The life would go out of everybody when they saw the cars defaced, they felt it was defacement, no question of that. And we kept hearing one request over and over, 'Can't you do something about it?' Then, too, we had our own pride in these matters. You know, you get to feel after you've put through a new municipal building that it's yours in some way. As Mayor I'd get as angry when a city building got marked up as if I owned it personally. Oh, it's easier to talk about it now, but I must say it was hard at times not to blow up."

"Actually," Morgan observed, "the Mayor would go around calming some of us down. 'Remember,' he would tell us, 'they're only kids.'"

Yes, in the framework of that time in the Summer of '71 and the Winter and Spring of '72 when Lindsay was looking to get the Democratic nomination for President, what an upset to his fortunes, what a vermin of catastrophe that these writings had sprouted like weeds all over the misery of Fun City, a new monkey of unmanageables to sit on Lindsay's overloaded political back. He must have sensed the presidency draining away from him as the months went by, the graffiti grew, and the millions of tourists who passed through

Of course, where was the tourist who could distinguish between men's-room and subway graffiti? Who was going to dare to look long enough to see that it was a name and not an obscene thought in the writing. Today, just before he had come to Gracie Mansion, he had stopped in the lavatory of a York Avenue bar for a minute, and there on the john wall was drawn a pure old-fashioned piece of smut graffiti. A balloon of dialogue issued out of a girl's mouth. No art in the lettering, no style. "Did you know," said her balloon, "that your clit is in your ass?" Some lost shred of fecal communion now nailed to the wall. Was there a public comfort station in America which did not have a dozen such insights, "Suck me," "Fuck you"? That was what people expected to see on the subways. They assumed the full mad explosive shithouse of America was now erupting in their faces. So they did not look but rode in the cars with their heads down, and brought the news out to the rest of America that Lindsay could not keep the city clean. No wonder he called it a dirty shame. And labeled the aplomb of the graffiti writers cowardice. That was his attempt to soothe the terror in the heart of every subway citizen who looked at the graffiti and put his head down so his eye would not meet any eye that might be connected to a hand which held a knife, yes, that was one side of the fear, and the other was fear of the insane graffiti writer in the self. For what filth would burst out of every civilized office worker in New York if ever *they* started to write on moving public walls, my god, the feces to spread and the blood to spray, yes, the good voting citizen of New York would know that the violent ward at Bellevue was opening its door to him on the day he would take a spray can to a subway. So, New York citizenry saw all the children as mad — and therefore saw madness, instability, and horror in the New York Transit. No wonder Lindsay had gone to war against graffiti. The city would tolerate junk, graft, insanities of traffic, mugging, every petty crime of the street, and every major pollution, but it could not accept a towering rain-forest of graffiti on all the forty-story walls. Yes, build a wall and balance a disease. For the blank wall of the new architecture was a deadening agent to balance the growing violence beneath. (Could it be said that the monotony of modern architecture increased all over the world in direct relation to the volcanic disturbances of each society it would contain?) Plastic above, dynamite below.

In the face of such questions the interview was effectively over. They chatted for a while, and got up to say goodbye. On the way out, A-I noticed there was a Rauschenberg on the wall.

Lindsay, in his courtesy, walked with him to the gate. Wearing a blue windbreaker he looked in the gray outdoor light like a veteran big league ballplayer, tall, weathered, knowledgeable. They took leave not uncordially, and he complimented the Mayor on eight good years, even meant it.

"I wish I had the talent to write," Lindsay said in parting. Was that a politician's gift? A-I pulled back the reply that he wished he could have been Mayor.

Outside the fence, a policeman was standing with a drawn gun. It was a simple measure of the times: be forever ready at the Gracie gate.

And indeed a ten-year-old boy on roller skates cried aloud, "That's him, that's him, that's the Mayor," and promptly took out a cap pistol and fired a number of bang-bangs at the back of John Lindsay going back into his house.

For a while, A-I walked, and had a little fantasy of how impossible it would have proved if the miracle worked and he had been elected in the campaign of 1969. What would he have done about graffiti? Would he have tried to explain its virtues to the people of New York — and laughed in all the pain of absolute political failure. The answer was simple — nobody like himself would ever be elected Mayor until the people agreed bad architecture was as poisonous as bad food. No, graffiti as a political phenomenon had small hope for life. His faith in the value of the question would have to explore in another place. Did the final difficulty lie in the meaning of graffiti as art? There the inquiry might become as incomprehensible as the motives of the most advanced artists. On then to the rim of the enigma, to the Sea of Vortices where the meanings whirl with no meaning.

5.

Years ago, so much as twenty years ago, A-I had conceived of a story he was finally not to write, for he lost his comprehension of it. A rich young artist in New York in the early Fifties, bursting to go beyond Abstract Expressionism, began to rent billboards on which he sketched huge, ill-defined (never say they were sloppy) works in paint chosen to run easily and flake quickly. The rains distorted the

lines, made gullies of the forms, automobile exhausts laid down a patina, and comets of flying birds crusted the disappearing surface with their impasto. By the time fifty such billboards had been finished — a prodigious year for the painter — the vogue was on. His show was an event. They transported the billboards by trailer-truck and broke the front wall of the gallery to get the art objects inside. It was the biggest one-man exhibition in New York that year. At its conclusion, two art critics were arguing whether such species of work still belonged to art.

"You're mad," cried one, "it is not art, it is never art."

"No," said the other, "I think it's valid."

So would the story end. Its title, *Validity*. But before he had written a word he made the mistake of telling it to a young Abstract Expressionist whose work he liked. "Of course it's valid," said the painter, eyes shining with the project. "I'd do it myself if I could afford the billboards."

The story was never written. He had assumed he was proposing a satire, but it was evident he had no insight into how painters were ready to think. Some process had entered art and he could not discern it out.

Let us go back to the pastel by de Kooning which Rauschenberg erased. The details, when further inquiry is made, are less impromptu. Rauschenberg first informed de Kooning of what he would do, and de Kooning agreed. The work, when sold, bore the inscription "A drawing from Willem de Kooning erased by Robert Rauschenberg." Both artists are now proposing something more than that the artist has the same right as the financier to print money, they may even be saying that the meat and marrow of art, the painterly core, the life of the pigment, and the world of technique with which hands lay on that pigment are convertible to something other. The ambiguity of meaning in the twentieth century, the hollow in the heart of faith, has become such an obsessional hole that art may have to be converted into intellectual transactions. It is as if we are looking for stuff, any stuff with which to stuff the hole, and will convert every value into packing for this purpose. For there is no doubt that in erasing the pastel and selling it, art has been diminished but our knowledge of society is certainly enriched. An aesthetic artifact has been converted into a sociological artifact. It is not the painting that intrigues us now but the lividities of art fashion which made the transaction possible in the first place. Something rabid is loose in the century. Maybe we are not convert-

ing art into some comprehension of social process, but rather are using art to choke the hole, as if society has become so hopeless, which is to say so twisted in knots of faithless ideological spaghetti, that the glee is in strangling the victims.

But take the example further. Let us imagine a show at the Guggenheim. It will be like many we have seen. Let us make it a plausible modern one-man show. Nothing will be exhibited but computer read-out sheets from a statistical operation. Hundreds of such sheets tacked to the wall. Somewhat irregularly. Attempts at neatness will be contradicted by a confusion in the style of placing them on the wall of the Guggenheim as it spirals up the ramp. Checkerboards alternate with ascending bands, then cul-de-sacs, paper stapled up every way.

We try to digest the aesthetic experience. Of what do the computer read-out sheets consist? What is the subject of their inquiry? we ask. And what is the motive of the artist? Is he telling us something about the order and disorder of the mind in relation to a technological world? Has he presented us with an ongoing composition of exceptional cunning? Is it possible he even has set the problem for the computer himself? Maybe the endless numbers on these computer sheets reflect some analogue to the tension of major themes in his brain. Do we then have here an arithmetical display whose relation to art is as complex as *Finnegans Wake* to literature?

Bullshit, responds the painter. The computer sheets were selected at random. Because the artist did not even wish to bear an unconscious responsibility for the selection, he chose an acquaintance with whom he shared no great psychic identity to pick up the computer sheets for him. Neither he nor the acquaintance ever inquired into the subject of the statistical problem, and he never took a look at what was brought back. Rather, he spoke to the janitor at the Guggenheim by telephone and told him to tack up the pages any way at all. The checkerboards and bands and cul-de-sacs of stapled paper were merely a reflection of the personnel: the janitor worked with two assistants. One was neat, the other drunk. And the painter never came to see the show. The show was the fact that people came, studied the walls, lived for an uncertain hour in the Guggenheim and went out again, their minds exercised by a question that not only had no answer, but may not even have been a question. The artist had done his best to have no intent. Not unless his intent was to demonstrate that most of the experience of viewing a painting is the context of the museum itself. We are next to one of John

Cage's compositions in silence. Art has been saying with more and more intensity: The nature of the painting has become less interesting than the relation of painting to society — we can even erase Rauschenberg's erasure. Get the artist out of it altogether, and it is still art. The world is turning inside out.

What step is left to take? Only one. A show that offers no object at all. The last reference to painting or sculpture is the wall on which something can be hung, or the floor on which a piece can sit. That must now disappear. The art-piece enters the artist: the work can only be experienced within his psyche.

From the *New York Times*, September 2, 1973, by Peter Plagens:

a marksman-friend shot Chris Burden in the upper left arm with a .22 long-jacket before an audience of 12 intimates. He (Burden) figured on a graze wound with a Band-Aid slapped on afterward, but it "felt like a truck hit my arm at 80 miles per hour"; he went to the hospital, nauseous, and filed the requisite police report ("accident").

Plagens goes on to describe other "pieces." Burden chooses situations for their possibility of danger, pain, humiliation, or boredom. There is:

"Movie on the Way Down," in which Burden, hanging by his heels, nude, six feet off a gym floor with a movie camera in his hands, is summarily chopped loose.

The movie is presumably taken on the way down (is it filmed in slow motion?) and he ends with a cut lip. There are other pieces where he rockets flaming matches "at his nude supine wife" or sets ablaze two 16-foot wooden crosses on Laguna Canyon Road at 2 A.M. — "the intended audience for that piece," says Burden, "was the one guy driving down the road who saw it first." Ah, Los Angeles! For "Endurance/real time," he 1) stays in a locker for five days, 2) does 1600 tours of a gallery on his bicycle and 3) remains in bed for three weeks and a day. He also pretends to be a dead man lying under a tarpaulin on the street and is arrested by the police for creating a traffic hazard. He gets a hung jury at his trial and the case is dismissed but "one of the nine votes for conviction, a stewardess, told Burden if she ever saw him under a tarp again, she'd run over him herself." He even does a study in the shift of identity. For "I Became a Secret Hippie," Burden cuts his hair short and dresses in

FBI clothes. "If you want to be a heavy artist nowadays," Plagens, reporting on Burden, concludes, "you have to do something unpleasant to your body, because everything *else* has been done. . . . [Burden] may be a product of art-world art history — backed into some untenable masochistic corner because all the other novelty territory has been claimed."

At the least, Burden is fulfilling the dictum of Jean Malaquais that once there are enough artists in the world, the work of art will become the artist himself. Burden is refining his personality. Through existential tests. Burden is not exploring his technique, but his vibrations. The situations he chooses are, as Plagens describes, "edgy." They have nothing remotely resembling a boundary until they are done. In "Movie on the Way Down," Burden can hardly know if he will cut his lip or break his neck, feel a live instant on the descent or some dull anxiety. When he shoots lighted matches at his nude wife the areas defined are empty before the action begins. Given every variable from Women's Liberation to the sadomasochistic tales of Wilhelm Stekel, Burden can know in advance only that a psycho-dramatic enterprise will be commenced. But where it may end, and what everybody might feel — will the matches burn her skin? — will the marriage be fortified or scorched? — no, there is no confidence which question is going to offer an answer. Perhaps he is not refining his personality so much as attempting to clear a space in his psyche free of dread. But isn't that the fundamental operation of the primitive at the dawn of civilization, the establishment of the ego? For what is the human ego but a clearing in the forest of the psyche free of dread? Money, held in one's hand, is free of time. Cash has no past; its future is assignable. It is powerful and empty. So, too, is the ego. It bears the same relation to the psyche as cash bears to the security or comfort of the body. The ego is virtually separate from the psyche even as money is still separate from every organic communicating logic of nature.

We are back to the cave man and his cave painting. His hand draws the outline of the animal in defiance of those gods who watch him. Burden is smashing his nose on the floor or displaying his wife in defiance of the last gods of conventional art. They are that audience remnant of a once-leviathan bourgeois culture. They still trickle out to see Happenings, the desire of the middle class to preserve its last religion: the world of the artist, palette, museum and gallery wall. Middle-class passion is to appreciate the work of art.

But art may be the little ball rolling off the table. Perhaps art now

signifies some unheard reverberation from the subterranean obsession of us all: Is civilization coming to an end? Is society burning? Is the day of the cave man returning? Has our search for ego which was once so routine — a useful (somewhat heartless) ego to be fashioned for a useful (if heartless) society — now gone past the measure of our experience so that we no longer try to construct a control center at the core of the mind, but plunge instead into absurdities which offer us that curious calm we find in the art of the absurd, even as the cave man, defying his gods, discovered he was not always dead on the next day.

But we are at the possible end of civilization, and tribal impulses start up across the world. The descending line of the isolated artist goes down from Michelangelo all the way to Shoot. But Chris Burden is finally more comfortable to us than the writers of graffiti. For Burden is the last insult from the hippie children of the middle class to the bourgeois art-patron who is their spiritual parent, but graffiti speaks of a new civilization where barbarism is stirring at the roots.

If at the beginning of Western painting, man was small and God was large; if, in the Renaissance, man was mysteriously large in his relation to God; now, in our times man has disappeared into God. He is mass-man without identity, and he is God. He is all the schizophrenia of the powerless and all-powerful in one psyche.

As we lose our senses in the static of the oncoming universal machine, so does our need to exercise the ego take on elephantiasistical proportions. Graffiti is the expression of a ghetto that is near to the plague, for civilization is now closed off from the ghetto. Too huge are the obstacles to any natural development of a civilized man. In the ghetto it is almost impossible to find some quiet identity. No, in the environment of the slum, the courage to display yourself is your only capital, and in the streets crime is the only productive process that converts such capital to the modern powers of the world, ego and money. Art is not peace but war, and form is the record of that war.

Yet there is a mystery still. From which combat came these curious letters of graffiti, with their Chinese and Arabic calligraphies? Out of what connection to the past did these lights and touches of flame become so much like the Hebrew alphabet where the form of the letter itself was worshipped as a manifest of the Lord? No, it is not enough to think of the childlike desire to see one's name ride by in letters large enough to scream your ego across the city, no, it is almost as if we must go back into some more primeval sense of exis-

tence. If our name is enormous to us, it is also not real — as if we have come from other places than the name, and lived in other lives.

Perhaps that is the unheard echo of graffiti, the vibration of that profound discomfort it arouses. Can the unheard music of its proclamation and/or its mess, the rapt intent seething of its foliage, be the herald of some oncoming apocalypse less and less far away, and so graffiti lingers on our subway door as a memento of all the lives ever lived, sounding now like the bugles of gathering armies across the unseen ridge.

The Fight

1974

The Fight

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THE DEAD ARE DYING OF THIRST

Archie Moore, whom No man had long revered, was dead at last. A sparring partner asked for an autograph.

What celebration. Being greeted this warmly on return to Africa, he felt delivered at last from the howls of the bummer. The final traces of the miserable fever that kept him for a week on his return to New York were now gone. He was happy to be back in Africa. What a surprise.

Since he was not being read in this milieu nearly so much as he was praised, and since the Black American community with its curious unities of opinion, so much like psychic waves was spreading a good word on him for no overt reason — no recent published work or extraordinary relation to Blacks half so close as books and articles he had done ten or fifteen years earlier — he came at last to realize the fair scope of the irony. Months ago, a story had gotten into the newspapers about a novel he was writing. His publishers were going to pay him a million dollars sight unseen for the book. If his candles had been burning low in the literary cathedral these last few years, the news story went its way to hastening their extinction. He knew that his much publicized novel (still nine-tenths to be written) would now have to be twice as good as before to overcome such financial news. Good literary men were not supposed to pick up sums. Small apples for him to protest in every banlieu and literary purlieu that his Boston publisher had not been laid low with a degenerative disease of the cortex but that the million was to be paid out as he wrote five to seven hundred thousand words, the equivalent of five novels. Since he was being rewarded only as he delivered the work, and had debts and a sizable advance already spent and five

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wives and seven children, plus a financial nut at present larger than his head, so the sum was not as large as it seemed, he explained — the million, you see, was nominal.

Well, the literary world was built on bad cess. For good cause. If no one would be in a hurry to forgive him unless his novel proved immense, then maybe that would force his work closer to such scope. He might have time, at least to parse it out.

Here in Africa, however, it was another tale. Since the word of his million hit the wire services, his name throughout the Black community had been *underlined*. No'min Million was a man who could make it by using his head. No rough stuff! He did not have to get hit in the head, nor hit on the side of *your* head. This man had to be the literary champ. To make a million without taking chances — show respect! To sign for a sum that Heavyweight champs had not been able to make until Muhammad Ali came along — why, the optimistic element of the Black community, looking now at every commercial horizon in America, began to gaze at writing. Hang around this man went the word. Something might rub off!

Once, he would have been miserable at being able to prosper from such values. But his love affair with the Black soul, a sentimental orgy at its worst, had been given a drubbing through the seasons of Black Power. He no longer knew whether he loved Blacks or secretly disliked them, which had to be the dirtiest secret in his American life. Part of the woe of the first trip to Africa, part of that irrationally intense detestation of Mobutu — even a photo of the President in his plump cheeks and horn-rimmed eye-

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glasses igniting invective adequate to a Harvard professor looking at an icon of Nixon — must be a cover for the rage he was feeling toward Blacks, any Blacks. Walking the streets of Kinshasa on that first trip while the black crowds moved about him with an indifference to his presence that succeeded in niggering him, he knew what it was to be looked upon as invisible. He was also approaching, if not careful, the terminal animosity of a Senior Citizen. How his hatred seethed in search of a justifiable excuse. When the sheer evidence of Africa finally overcame these newly bigoted senses (when a drive over miles of highway showed thousands of slim and probably hungry Zairois running like new slum inhabitants for overcrowded buses, and yet in some absolute statement of aesthetic, some imprimatur of the holy and final statement of the line of the human body, these Blacks could still show in silhouette, while standing in line for the bus, almost every one of those thousand slim dark Africans, an incorruptible loneliness, a stone mute dignity, some African dignity he had never seen on South Americans, Europeans, or Asiatics, some tragic magnetic sense of self as if each alone and all were carrying the continent like a halo of sorrow about their head) then it became impossible not to feel the unique life of Africa — even if Kinshasa was to the rain forest as Hoboken to Big Sur — yes, impossible not to sense what everyone had been trying to say about Africa for a hundred years, big Papa first on line: the place was so fucking sensitive! No horror failed to stir its echo a thousand miles away, no sneeze was ever free of the leaf that fell on the other side of the hill. Then he could no longer hate the Zairois or even be certain of his

condemnation of their own Black oppressors, then his animosity switched a continent over to Black Americans with their arrogance, jive, ethnic put-down costumes, caterwauling soul, their thump-your-testicle organ sound and black new vomituous egos like the slag of all of alienated sewage-compacted heap U.S.A.; then he knew that he had not only come to report on a fight but to look a little more into his own outsized feelings of love and — could it be? — sheer hate for the existence of Black on earth.

No, he was hardly surprised when his illness flared on return to the States, and he went through a week and then ten days of total detestation of himself, a fever without fantasies, an illness without terror, for he felt as if his soul had expired or, worse, slipped away. It was enough of a warning to lay a message on him. He got up from bed with the determination to learn a little about Africa before his return, a healthy impulse that brought him luck (but then, do we not gamble with the unrecognized thought that a return of our luck signifies a return of our health?). After inquiries, he went to the University Place Book Shop in New York, an operative definition of the word *warren*, up on the eighth or ninth floor of a wheezing old office building below Fourteenth Street — the smell of the catacombs in its stones — to find at exit from the elevator a stack and excelsior of books, cartons and dust where a big blond clerk with scraggly sideburns working alone assured the new customer that he could certainly afford these many books being laid on him, ~~since he had after all been given the~~ *sketch line* ~~million, hadn't he?~~ a worthless excursion to describe if not for the fact that the clerk picked the books, the titles all un-

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familiar. Would there be one paragraph of radium in all this geographical, political, historical sludge? His luck came in; not a paragraph but a book: *Bantu Philosophy* by Father Tempels, a Dutch priest who had worked as missionary in the Belgian Congo and extracted the philosophy from the language of the tribes he lived among.

Given a few of his own ideas, Norman's excitement was not small as he read *Bantu Philosophy*. For he discovered that the instinctive philosophy of African tribesmen happened to be close to his own. Bantu philosophy, he soon learned, saw humans as forces, not beings. Without putting it into words, he had always believed that. It gave a powerful shift to his thoughts. By such logic, men or women were more than the parts of themselves, which is to say more than the result of their heredity and experience. A man was not only what he contained, not only his desires, his memory, and his personality, but also the forces that came to inhabit him at any moment from all things living and dead. So a man was not only himself, but the karma of all the generations past that still lived in him, not only a human with his own psyche but a part of the resonance, sympathetic or unsympathetic, of every root and thing (and witch) about him. He would take his balance, his quivering place, in a field of all the forces of the living and the dead. So the meaning of one's life was never hard to find. One did one's best to live in the pull of these forces in such a way as to increase one's own force. Ideally, one would do it in harmony with the play of all forces, but the beginning of wisdom was to enrich oneself, enrich the *muntu* which was

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the amount of life in oneself, the size of the human being in oneself. Crazy. We are returned to the Calvinism of the chosen where the man with most possessions is chosen, the man of force and wealth. We are certainly in the ghetto where you do not invade another turf. We are allied to every pride of property and self-enrichment. Back to the primitive sinews of capitalism! Bantu philosophy, however, is not so primitive. It may offer a more sinister vision: maybe it is nobler. For if we are our own force, we are also a servant of the forces of the dead. So we have to be bold enough to live with all the magical forces at loose between the living and the dead. That is never free of dread. It takes bravery to live with beauty or wealth if we think of them as an existence connected to the messages, the curses, and the loyalties of the dead.

In the presence of a woman who is finely dressed, an African might do more than salute the increase of power that accrues to the woman with her elaborate gown. To his eye, she would also have taken on the force that lives in the gown itself, the *kuntu* of the gown. That has its own existence. It, too, is a force in the universe of forces. The gown is like the increment in power an actor feels when he enters his role, when he senses the separate existence of the role as it comes up to him, much as if it had been *out there* waiting for him in the dark. Then, it is as if he takes on some marrow of the forgotten caves. It is why certain actors must act or go mad — they can hardly live without the clarity of that moment when the role returns.

~~Here is a passage from *The Palm Wine Drunkard* by Amos Tutuola.~~

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We knew "Laugh" personally on that night, because as every one of them stopped laughing at us, "Laugh" did not stop for two hours. As "Laugh" was laughing at us on that night, my wife and myself forgot our pains and laughed with him, because he was laughing with curious voices that we never heard before in our life . . . so if somebody continue to laugh with "Laugh" himself, he or she would lie or faint at once for long laughing, because laugh was his profession.

~~When laughter presents such power, what are we to make of the African's attitude toward lust, the inevitable luntu of fuck —~~ yes, every word will have its relation to the primeval elements of the universe. "The word," says a Dogon sage named Ogotemméli, "is water and heat. The force that carries the word comes out of the mouth in a water vapor which is both water and word." Nommo is at once the name of the word and the spirit of water. So Nommo lives everywhere: in the vapor of the air and the pores of the earth. Since the word is equal to water, all things are effected by Nommo, the word. Even the ear becomes an organ of sex when Nommo enters: "The good word, as soon as it is received by the ear, goes directly to the sex organ where it rolls in the uterus. . . ."

What exhilaration! This small fine book, *Bantu Philosophy*, and then a larger work bursting with intellectual sweetmeats, *Muntu, the New African Culture* by Janheinz Jahn, is illumining his last hours in New York, his flight on the plane — a night and a day! — his second impressions of Kinshasa. It has brought him back to a recognition of his

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old love for Blacks — as if the deepest ideas that ever entered his mind were there because Black existed. It has also brought back all the old fear. The mysterious genius of these rude, disruptive, and — down to it! — altogether indigestible Blacks. What noise they still made to the remains of his literary mind, what hooting, screaming and shrieking, what promise of oblivion on the turn of a card.

How his prejudices were loose. So much resentment had developed for black style, black snobbery, black rhetoric, black pimps, superfly, and all that virtuoso handling of the ho. The pride Blacks took in their skill as pimps! A wrath at the mismanagement of his own sensual existence now sat on him, a sorrow at how the generosity of his mind seemed determined to contract as he grew older. He could not really bring himself to applaud the emergence of a powerful people into the center of American life — he was envious. They had the good fortune to be born Black. And felt a private fury at the professional complacency of Black self-pity, a whole rage at the rhythmic power of those hec-toring voices, a resentment at last of their values, of that eternal emphasis on centrality — “I am the real rooster on this block, the most terrible cock, the baddest fist. I’m a *down* dude. You motherfuckers better know it.”

Yet even as he indulged this envy, he felt a curious relief. For he had come to a useful recognition. When the American Black was torn out of Africa, he was ripped out of his philosophy as well. So his violence and his arrogance could be a fair subject for comprehension once more. One had only to think of the torture. Everything in African philosophy was of the root, but the philosophy had been uprooted.

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What a clipped and overstimulated transplant was the American Negro. His view of life came not only from his livid experience in America but from the fragments of his lost African beliefs. So he was alienated not from one culture but from two. What idea could an Afro-American retain, then, of his heritage if not that each man seeks the maximum of force for himself? Since he lived in a field of human forces that were forever changing, and changing dramatically, even as the people he knew were killed or arrested or fell out on junk, so he had to assert himself. How else could he find life? The loss of vital force was pure loss, equal to less ego, less status, less purchase on the availability of beauty. By comparison to the American Black, a white Judeo-Christian could live through a loss of vital force and feel moral, unselfish, even saintly and an African could feel himself in balance among traditional forces. An African could support the weight of his obligation to his father because his father was one step nearer in the chain to God — that unbroken chain of lives going back to the source of creation. But the American Black was sociologically famous for the loss of his father.

No wonder their voices called attention to themselves! They spoke of a vital (if tense) force. A poor and uneducated man was nothing without that force. To the degree it lived inside him, he was full of capital, ego capital, and that was what he possessed. That was the capitalism of the poor American Black trying to accumulate more of the only wealth he could find, respect on his turf, the respect of local flunkies for the power of his soul. What a raw, searching, hustling, competitive capitalism. What a lack of profit. The establishment offered massive restraint for such massive

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fevers of the ego. No surprise if tribal life in America began to live among stone walls and drugs. The drug gave magnification of the sentiment that a mighty force was still inside oneself, and the penitentiary restored the old idea that man was a force in a field of forces. If the social contract of the African restraint had been tradition, the American Black with a political ideal was obliged instead to live with revolutionary discipline. As he endured in his stone walls it became a discipline as pulverizing to the soul as the search for condition of a boxer.

Bantu Philosophy proved a gift, but it was one a writer might not need. Not to comprehend the fight. There was now enough new intellectual baggage to miss the train. Norman would bring some of it along, and hope he was not greedy. For Heavyweight boxing was almost all black, black as Bantu. So boxing had become another key to revelations of Black, one more key to black emotion, black psychology, black love. Heavyweight boxing might also lead to the room in the underground of the world where Black kings were installed: what was Black emotion, Black psychology, Black love? Of course, to try to learn from boxers was a quintessentially comic quest. Boxers were liars. Champions were great liars. They had to be. Once you knew what they thought, you could hit them. So their personalities became masterpieces of concealment. There would be limits to what he could learn of Ali and Foreman by the aid of any philosophy. Still, he was grateful for the clue. Humans were not beings but forces. He would try to look at them by that light.

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the book. The king gained his throne by killing a monster and the king will regain his throne by killing a bigger monster. This is the closing of the book." Of training he would propose, "You got to get the hard-on, and then you got to keep it. You want to be careful not to lose the hard-on, and cautious not to come." Of George Plimpton, who lent him money in the period when he was banished from Ali's camp, Bundini said he was loyal to George, because he took care of me when my ass was chapped."

START Newman and Bundini might have become friends — the writer respected the style with which Bundini could pass through trouble. At a time when collection men were getting ready to break his legs, Bundini would drop his last four hundred dollars on eight rolls of the dice and walk away with a sad wise smile. (Like many a hustler he was sweet. He could cry like a child — indeed he cried whenever Ali boxed with beauty, cried at the bounty of the Lord to provide such athletic bliss — and his eyes beamed with love at any remark that excited his own powers of metaphor. Then his big round face would show the simple happiness of Aunt Jemima, his big husky voice would croon in admiration at such wonders of wisdom. That was half of him; Bundini was just as proud of his other soul. If he was all emotion, he could show his ice; if he had class, he could be without class; he'd give his life for a friend and you might believe him, but "he would," said a critic, "take the dimes off a dead man's eyes and put nickels back." Small surprise if he had a build like nobody else. Over six feet with a big crystal ball for a head, he had small shoulders, a small protruding stomach that seemed to center its melon

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on his diaphragm, and spindles for legs — it was the body of a spaceman who grew up in a capsule. Yet he had fought in Navy competitions as an adolescent; even now nobody would take Bundini on for too little (except Ali, who slapped him at will as though dealing with an unregenerate child). Bundini was plain as a mouthful of gold teeth and handsome as black velvet; if he called his young wife "Mother," he had been about as fatherly in his day as any other player: a magazine story once spoke of his desire to be a "marketable pimp." But then he sold interviews of himself which told it all, and gave metaphors away for nothing; he could not spell a word and had a dozen movie scripts he was trying to sell, his own, he claimed. Recall us to "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." Bundini was the walking definition of the idea that each human is born with two souls — two distinct persons to inhabit each body. If Africans did not have the concept, one would have to invent it. What a clash of Nommo and n'golo. All that spirit, all that prick. The two never came together. After a while, Norman and he were no longer friends, ~~Their fight was~~ ^{and he} ~~serious enough~~ not to speak for years. But the fight game shakes old prejudices like castanets. Since he and Bundini kept being thrown together at fights, and since Bundini kept helping him in little ways whether he wished it or not, they finally began to talk a little, if more than a little on guard. For years they talked to each other just a little.

This fight, Bundini was shifting the terms. One afternoon, just as Norman was walking down the bank of the Zaire after a visit with Ali, he heard a voice shout to him from a neighboring villa.

"Hey, No'min, come here."

The tone was not pleasant, but he was curious who was calling. Somewhat too late, he realized he was approaching Bundini, who stood in the vestibule of the villa surrounded by a group of Black friends. He had been drinking. Straight out, he was drunk. It was easy to tell with Bundini. The whites of his eyes turned egg-yolk yellow and blooded with webs of red. His breath smelled of the vats.

"I learned," he declared to Norman, "the meaning of my name in African today. I've been blessed. What you been blessed with?"

"Meeting you."

"You talking like I'm still a nigger. Niggers is yesterday. I've been blessed with the root. I'm in harmony. What you been blessed with?" he asked once more. Bundini was warming up to play the dozens. "Show me your blessing," he said, "show me your blessing." The dozens, no mistake. Other Blacks were grinning with the possibilities.

"I'm blessed with listening to you beat your gums." Hardly a good reply. Points were already accumulating to Bundini.

"My black gums are dark with the misery and the wonder. The jewels of oppression are shining in my black gums, motherfucker."

~~"You speaking of your black bar mitzvah gums?"~~

No smiles from the audience. Bundini was treating him like a stranger. "I learned my black name today," he said, "I learned what Bundini means."

"What does it mean?" The answer was weak. You did not parley the dozens, ^{for that encouraged} you brought forth an onslaught.

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"Bundini means I'm back in the blood of my people. I'm the steeple. I'm the point of it all. My black heart is beautiful. Bundini! *Something like dark* is what they say Bundini means. *Something like dark*," said Bundini, going back over the translation with relish.

"*Not quite dark* is what it means." For the first time the Blacks around Bundini laughed a little.

"You're just envious," said Bundini, "because you don't have a name in African, motherfucker. You have none of the black juice. The berries in your belly are pale. Your blood is in jail, motherfucker. As you shit, you mumble, you're afraid of the jungle. You're afraid of the jungle, motherfucker!"

"I just wish my mother was here," Norman managed to say, "because if she was, she would give you a whupping!"

Maybe his voice caught something of Ali's tone, or maybe it had just gone on long enough, but everybody burst into laughter, and Bundini smote his hand as if he was now Honorary Black. On the round of good feeling this had to offer, Norman also felt some large part of unforgiveness to Bundini begin to lift. Only afterward did it occur to him that drunk in the middle of the afternoon, Bundini was still wise enough to choose the dozens as a way of reestablishing relations, certainly wise enough to thrust victory upon him.

So this night, passing ^{the} Bundini's table where he ^{Bundini} sat with his Jewish wife Shere, it was impossible to refuse his offer of a drink. Before too long, Norman accepted his invitation to dinner, ~~and wondered what Bundini had in mind for he kept going over to other tables to advance his business interests, which~~

→ Bundini asked about Ali's mood

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were numerous, various, in process, and secret. Shere made conversation with Norman about the ivory market, apartments in New York, her children, and these weeks of missing them, and finally they spoke of the absence of white women out at Nsele, which had been the reason for her desire to move to the Inter-Continental. "It got so I couldn't put on a swimsuit without creating a near riot." Truth, she had the figure to do that, but something strong and determined in her features would take no pleasure from such brouhaha. "At Nsele I just stayed in my room. Drew was out working with Ali, so what did he know, but I was going crazy. It's much better here."

Drew eventually came back. He was alternately surly and meek with his wife. He was preoccupied. ~~He asked about Ali's mood, and they talked about that for a while, since Norman had spent the afternoon with Ali at Nsele.~~ It had been a curious Sunday. Ali's voice had left him. ~~Whether it was the cold that appeared to be coming on the night they ran or simple laryngitis from talking too much,~~ Ali could offer no more than a hoarse whisper, a frightening prospect for the fight if his voice was the measure of his strength. But he certainly seemed happy enough. At twilight, he took a walk on the banks of the river, and was surrounded by hundreds of Zairois men, women, and children. He kissed babies and had his picture taken with numbers of black and jubilant housewives in African Sunday dress, and with shy adolescent girls, and little boys who glared at the camera with machismo equal to the significance of these historic events. All the while Ali kissed babies with deliberation, slowly, savoring their skin, as if

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he could divine which infants would grow up healthy. He was one politician who would love kissing babies.

Back inside the villa with friends and family for company, he kept speaking in a strained small tone. "Don't talk too much," Pat Patterson kept telling him. "Rest your voice."

Ali shrugged. "Oh, I got to talk," he said. "I'd die if I couldn't talk. But I'll be careful not to say too much."

He began watching TV cassettes of Foreman's fights. It was a curious half hour of early evening. Mrs. Clay was there, and she was a plump and very handsome woman with a light skin, a Southern lady, just about, indeed, she looked like a matronly version of Julie Eisenhower, or more properly, let us say we can see the way Julie Eisenhower may look when she is the age of Ali's mother. Now as Ali watched the Frazier-Foreman fight, his mother sat on the other side of the living room and watched with him. Once more, George appeared in his red trunks and proceeded to demolish Frazier, once more the sledgehammering punches went bouncing off Frazier's brain. Again came the sight of Frazier's face as he got up in the first round looking like a man on whom a wall has just fallen. He is back on his feet but the sky is shocking in its tilt.

As Frazier went down for the third time and Foreman, in his red trunks, stepped away, Mrs. Clay said, "That's going to be Ali in the red trunks."

Ali watched the films in an odd good mood as if there were something he saw that he would certainly use two nights from now. The fight with José Roman in Tokyo was shown next, a fight in which Roman threw a total of six

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Punches before Foreman threw one. None of Roman's punches reached Foreman. Foreman then threw twenty-four punches to Roman's three. More than half of Foreman's punches landed. He smashed through Roman's arms to reach his body. Roman, lying on the floor, had the glitter of a dying animal in his eye. Then a cassette of the Foreman-Norton fight. In all, Ali watched three fights with Foreman, a total of five rounds and twelve knockdowns. He looked pleased. Something he had seen. Something he could use. Who could know what it was? Each time Foreman knocked a man out, frustration showed on his face. Foreman looked like he still wanted to kill them.

Bundini, having listened to Norman's account, now nodded somberly, and said across the table, "Jesus has no fear."

"Do you mean Allah has no fear?"

"I call Allah Jesus. It all comes out of God. Whatever you call Him. My man is right there with Jesus, Allah, Jehovah. He's got it all."

Slowly, the motive for Bundini's invitation to dinner emerged. He wanted Norman to look at his scripts and advise him.

"But I thought you can't read or write."

"I can't. But I can talk. People took down my words. I want you to take down some of my words."

"Drew — why don't you learn to write? You can do it. It's time."

Bundini looked serious and very sad. "I'm afraid to," he said. "I learned what I learned not knowing how to read,