

MAILER

Not that I know of. Of course one always has something in mind.

INTERVIEWER

Well, you know it occurred to me that a magnetic field is like a depression. Everything is pointed in one way. I suppose a magnetic field is the most intense expression of a mood that you could find.

MAILER

Yes, perhaps it is.

INTERVIEWER

So, perhaps, what you meant to say was that while electricity is created by moving a wire across a magnetic field, in the deeper metaphorical sense it is also created by the purposeful interruption of a mood. Would you care to comment on that?

MAILER

No, I am weary. It is all yours.

INTERVIEWER

I'm beginning to enjoy the Science of Metaphor. I feel ready to explore electricity.

MAILER

Just remember it is a spirit, not a soul. In fact it may even be the spirit of interruption.

INTERVIEWER

I'm pleased to have read your essay on the absurd.

MAILER

Thank you. Cannibals are Christians. And forms which look alike are alike. In some mysterious way. Or at least they are alike until the souls which create them become the spirit of treachery. So says Picasso, I suspect. And in that spirit let me wish you a hearty good night!

PHOSPHORESCENCE AND NOURRITURES

Caviar is marvelous we agreed
but if one eats too much of it
(and I do love the taste of the soul
in each little dead little egg)
one does have to entertain the thought
that perhaps knowing too much of the sea,
perhaps,

oh dear God no,
perhaps next life
I will be a fish.

fizz
fire
flash
foo
flesh
went the bubbly.

Como no, señor
said the sommelier
I know some fine
accommodations
in the sea.

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Cubism 45
1875-76
18-19
86-87
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The Blue Period

Portrait of Picasso
as a Young Man

Until the end of the 19th century, the art world in Paris was dominated by the academic style. But in the late 19th century, a new movement called Impressionism emerged. It was a reaction against the academic style, and it was characterized by a focus on light and color. In the early 20th century, a new movement called Cubism emerged. It was a reaction against Impressionism, and it was characterized by a focus on geometric shapes and a limited color palette. The Blue Period was a phase of Cubism, and it was characterized by a focus on blue and a somber mood. It was a reaction against the academic style, and it was characterized by a focus on light and color. In the late 19th century, a new movement called Impressionism emerged. It was a reaction against the academic style, and it was characterized by a focus on light and color. In the early 20th century, a new movement called Cubism emerged. It was a reaction against Impressionism, and it was characterized by a focus on geometric shapes and a limited color palette. The Blue Period was a phase of Cubism, and it was characterized by a focus on blue and a somber mood. It was a reaction against the academic style, and it was characterized by a focus on light and color.

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The Blue Period

Picasso went back to Spain in January of 1902 and would not return to Paris until the end of the year, and then it was only for a few months before he came back to Barcelona and would work there until the spring of 1904. Short of money, depressed, at odds with his parents, steeped in dread, he was immersed in the Blue Period. If he had been criticized for painting in twenty borrowed styles, now, months after the death of Casagemas, he was exploring a concept that was simple enough: Nothing but a blue palette!—the deep depression of dark blue. Small wonder that painters had staked out so little of that ground and it was available as a territory that belonged altogether to him.

Who can measure the power of artistic investiture? Owning the one powerful style of the Blue Period for a few years may have given him the artistic strength to migrate into a multitude of other styles over the next seven decades. Be it said that each style he took up was sufficiently arresting to stand as a complete oeuvre for another painter, even a major painter. Of course, Picasso had to pay the spiritual impost for the first style: In the early years of the Blue Period he was seriously depressed and may have been closer to suicide than he would ever be again.

Entering the Blue Period, his depression poured out of him like unstanched blood. If he suffered in his own gloom, the irony is that these morose works can also qualify as sentimental art since they are just tender enough to become prodigiously popular in decades to come.

~~One would not wish to suggest that Picasso was not also inveighing against the iniquity of the world, but the Blue Period also speaks from the depth of his sexual~~

This mood prevailed from 1902 to early 1904, and in that time Sabartés, self-nominated Sancho Panza, becomes his intimate more than ever; no surprise, then, if Sabartés is proprietary about the Blue Period. Picasso, in the midst of this depression, obviously has greater need now of the all-but-faceted friend. Indeed, by 1902, after Sabartés followed Picasso back from Paris, he was pleased to see that his friend's work continued in the same vein:

What I could see was sufficient. His pictures continued to bear the blue characteristics which bound my ideas to his, reminding me of the period spent in Paris almost by his side. Had I found him following another road now, I would have thought he was doing so deliberately in order to detach himself from what had only recently united us.²

Apart from these personal elements, a portion of Picasso's gloom can certainly be attributed to the world around him. Social conditions in Barcelona were deteriorating. Anarchists and conservatives were both on the march; the slums of Barcelona were renowned throughout Europe for their abysmal living conditions; strikes and general strikes had increased; workers had been shot in the street.

Picasso joined no socialist or anarchist groups, but the slums through which he often wandered offered a squalor to intensify the melancholy he brought to his canvases. We must never lose sight of his prophetic sensitivity to the real intimations offered by events. The injustice of social life in Europe at the turn of the century was probably as palpable to him as leprosy or earthquake—a sizable remark—but then, who has ever given us more intense portraits of concentration camp victims before half of them were even born? *The Blind Beggar* and *The Old Jew*, both painted in 1903, can serve as emblems for 1944 in Auschwitz.



The Blind Man, Barcelona, 1903.
Watercolor on cream wove paper mounted
on canvas, 21 x 14 in.

His personal life during this period is not nearly so hopeless as the tone of his work, and is replete, as always, with contradictions. Art, even at the most demanding level, can, on occasion, free an artist of an obsession. Obviously, his own mood was not always as stygian as his canvases down in the depths of the Blue. During the same season, he can offer us a pen-and-watercolor that is high-style in its smudges, and fine and hellish in its humor: there is menstrual blood in the bidet, and the whore is contemplating it with the same low-key woe that a musician might bestow upon a guitar that has just snapped a string. But let us not speak prematurely of all the guitars to come. He is still in the foothills of his lifelong preoccupation with the Lord's hiding places and secrets, and his only tool is his instinct that objects which look alike must have unspoken similarities in their nature. It is worth underlining over and over: Form is as much of a presence to him as sound is to others. We are deducing a great deal from one casual drawing, but that is fair. The monumentality of Picasso's art is that it will become more and more difficult to come upon any of his scribbles that does not tell us a great deal indeed.

All the same, he is depressed, deeply depressed, through 1902 and 1903. → P86

Since depression often serves as the insulation that surrounds an ambition which has become too livid, he may also have been wounded by reading another critical piece by Félicien Fagus about young Spanish painters, including Picasso:

They do not yet have their great man, their conqueror . . . who will give shape to a limitless universe . . . Which of them—the time is ripe—will become their Greco? → P86

Picasso



Female Figure, Barcelona, 1903. Pen and watercolor on paper. 8 x 5 in.

The Blue Period

1986-87

He was indeed industrious these days. For over a year, one painting after another would be added to the Blue Period, even if they were almost impossible to sell. In later decades, the opposite phenomenon occurred, and the prices were higher

than for any other examples of twentieth-century art. These distillations of suffering and want either exorcise the guilt of mammon or else make it the more enjoyable.¹⁴

One ought to add that part of the power of these paintings is due to the artist's depression, his prodigious woe. If he has deep intimations of how much more he

can see than other artists, then his life must become a mission, even a crusade. Yet, there is so large a part of him that is materially passionate, ordinary, and small—which is to say, middle-class—with a greedy desire for recognition, precisely what the paintings of the Blue Period are not bringing him at all.

There is a rich irony. Perhaps such works did not sell in those years because the people who viewed them were not yet wealthy enough. The Blue Period speaks to the profound contradictions of those very rich



The Blind Man's Meal, Barcelona, 1903. Oil on canvas, 37 x 37 in.

who are invariably weary in spirit and never free altogether of depression. How can they not be miserable? Great wealth induces greed and treachery in everyone within the court of the tycoon: honest relations are consumed by dishonest appetites; the man of great wealth often lives in gloom amid sensations of profound isolation. The guilt accompanying great wealth presses upon the rich man's psyche powerfully enough to suggest the overburdened backs of Picasso's blue-tinted victims and orphans: yes, the prodigiously wealthy collector can feel kinship with the poor, and so-

lace as well for his guilt inasmuch as the power of the Blue Period lies in its suggestion that poverty is not a reflection of temporal passing conditions but is as universal as life. That makes wealth a little more palatable! Indeed, by such a logic, wealth and poverty are each other's counterparts—universals! Ergo, the Blue Period would come into commercial fashion about the time collectors of sufficient wealth encountered the works. Nor did it hurt that Picasso was, by then, well established and his later paintings were much more difficult to comprehend. There is an added marrow of satisfaction in purchasing the early work of a great and near-unfathomable genius. Of course, the irremediable bitterness in Picasso's soul, the power of the inner sanction he felt later in life to wound and humiliate others, had to come in part out of the paradox that the paintings that brought him the greatest sums were precisely the works which had cost him the most miserable days of his life. -p164

What fabulous works he painted, however, in this period. *La Celestina* can serve as one example.

It may be significant that *La Vie*, the most obscure of these paintings and the richest in private themes, also celebrates the return of his dead friend as a model. Picasso was still living at home, but, to avoid discord between don José and himself, was using the studio he had once shared in Barcelona with Casagamas, its walls still bearing the sumptuous handmaidens he had painted some three years before.

Once again, he was on



La Celestina, Barcelona, March 1904. Oil on canvas.

32 x 24 in.

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pp 164-167

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CRITICISM- The BLUE PERIOD

The poet soon becomes the guide who will conduct Picasso from the Blue Period into the Rose. Other friends and other factors are present, of course. The successful courtship of Fernande is one; a little later, when Leo and Gertrude Stein enter his life, Picasso will begin to sell his paintings more regularly. That is hardly going to inhibit his palette. There was also his increasing interest in the Médrano Circus at the foot of Montmartre. Picasso's choice of color required more, however, than the alteration of his personal circumstances. An outsize impetus was also needed. After all, there were other forces still locking him into the Blue Period, and they were fully enplaced to wait in larger fears.

start → It is hopeless to attempt to comprehend Picasso without assuming that he would never let anyone come near to the immensity of dread he contained within himself. One of his most honorable achievements over the ninety-odd years of his life is that he dominated his inner terror sufficiently to use it as a stimulus to work; how he worked! Work was his nostrum for dread. So we do well to view the Blue Period as his palisade built against dread. If we ask, Dread of what?—there can be no answer. Dread is characterized by alienation. We cannot point to the origin or the object of our fear. We know only that we are afraid, we wake up afraid, and this fear lives with us like a delicate nausea of the soul. At its most intense, everything takes on too much meaning—insanity begins to lurk outside that circle of sanity one has cleared for oneself—a circle of sanity often established through an act of will seeking to fortify the last boundaries separating a disturbed person from explosive forces in his psyche.

If this sounds close to insanity itself, we are obliged to recognize that sanity is often maintained by a mental balance which depends upon insane equations. In those years, Picasso must have seen the color blue as a force, an abstract power capable of holding off malignant interventions. His limited palette could protect him against invasions which he could hardly name yet that he nonetheless believed were ready to destroy him. We can do worse than to comprehend him in this last of the Blue Period, from 1904 to 1905, as a perfectly sane hardworking young artist with but one insanity, a highly useful and functioning insanity—his belief that he could not shift his palette from dark blue to bright green, let us say, or to brilliant red without being rent apart.

This is shamanism. But then, where is the highly talented painter without some primitive belief that magic is a presence in all artwork? It is not difficult to see painting as an occult act: It transforms a piece of paper, a sheet of cloth, or a cave wall into a life-like presence. If I am an actor and shape my mouth to look like the

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man or the emotion I am seeking to emulate, then I come closer to that man and that emotion. Conversely, if I feel myself taking on the emotional states of someone else, then my mouth is bound to form into similar lines. Put in simplest fashion, the actor is one person mimicking another. A painter, however, mimics an object, which is to say that he leaves a record of the object, he transfers it to another existence, he initiates a line that becomes a particular form. Soon enough, the painter is aware that one form can often represent more than one kind of object. The figure 7 can always be seen as a nose upside-down.

Let us go back once more into Picasso's depression as he entered the Blue Period. We can assume that he was close to fears he knew as a child. Everywhere he looked—at a stain on a wall, or a crack in a window—was evidence of an artist more divine than himself, a creator who could show a gargoyle's face in the crumbling of a slab of plaster. Were the lines of a penis at rest revealed in the drooping of a flag? We can hardly conceive of how powerfully ~~did~~ objects impinge on him. Objects spoke of other objects with similar form but highly different function (the number 7, to repeat, equals a nose upside-down). He must have believed that if he allowed himself to follow his visual stimulations, he might lose his mind. So he protected himself with a severe palette, and painted an assemblage of humans imprisoned by poverty, hunger, tragic memories, and dread. No old man was ever as old as the young Spaniard who painted these exorcisms in his Blue Period. If there are cynics who believe that Picasso's work at this time is merely a reflection of the fact that Prussian blue was probably the cheapest pigment available when Picasso was poor, why, they can give this book away right now.

In depression, goes our claim, was his mental safety; in gloom was a force sullen as smoke to keep dank madness outside the circle of his creative fires. Profound gloom was the last and best defense against psychosis, and Picasso, bringing life to paper and canvas with a turn of his wrist, had to feel uncomfortably close to that all-inclusive force which introduced an earthquake to Málaga and took away his young sister in Corunna. Psychosis is the sense that one is in touch with the gods even when one does not deserve to be, or *wish to be*. It is then that monochromatic palettes can be set up as filters to hold cosmic forces at bay. Have we entered the subtext of Picasso's actions through that year, 1904 to 1905, when he was courting Fernande and painting all night, every night, like a watchman on a parapet? André Salmon describes him as "dressed altogether in blue, the blue of workingman's clothes, Picasso painted in blue by the light of a candle."³

Now, Apollinaire enters his life, and the poet is ready to conquer the road to

madness by taking excursions upon it. Since there was a side of Picasso that believed one could only find personal significance in the bizarre (as if conventional scenes, still-lives and landscapes were all part of some gigantic social prison ruled by precisely those powers not particularly congenial to him), it is not surprising that the painter was ready to be influenced profoundly by a friend who had come to manhood out of a childhood and adolescence even more uprooted, grand, debased, cockeyed, and bi-valued than Picasso's. Yet, this variety of unique, even baroque, imbalance had led Apollinaire to build structures of eccentric habit that Picasso had to admire; the poet was not only a prodigious diversion but an advanced piece of human sculpture. To keep up with Guillaume Apollinaire, one had to view him from so many angles that he was already a spiritual model for the Cubism to come.

Together, however, they could share a vision of damnation, apocalypse, and the downfall of the bourgeoisie. In a personal period of prodigious inner anxieties, a collateral imbalance in society can seem reassuring. (You are not as fucked up as the people who are fucking you up!) The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth had produced a generation of bohemians, symbolists, and as-yet-untitled crypto-dadaists and surrealists ("pataphysicians," as Alfred Jarry would call them) who were prepared—it was the only solution they could see—to blow up the world, spiritually, socially and, if the dynamite was available, why not physically as well? Richardson shows his powers of synopsis here:

Reassured by the whiff of brimstone and brilliance they detected in each other, Picasso and Apollinaire became the best of friends . . .

Until he died, fourteen years after they met, Apollinaire would be a constant solace, a constant goad to Picasso. He opened up his imagination to a vast new range of intellectual stimuli: to new concepts of black humor, to the pagan past and the wilder shores of sex. Apollinaire, who was already obsessed with the works of the Marquis de Sade—"the freest spirit that ever existed," he wrote—had no difficulty converting Picasso to the cult of the Divine Marquis [nor to de Sade's] definition of art as "the perpetual immoral subversion of the existing order."⁴

De Sade believed in absolute freedom. As a corollary, he was opposed to property. Inasmuch as property commences with one's body—speak of sexual harassment!—Sade argued that all men and women should have full if temporary rights over the bodies of all other men and women. The question of rape immediately raised by this is quickly carried over to: What does one do about murderers? Sade's answer was: Beware of the dead man's friends. If, as a consequence, everyone is obliged to live in groups who will serve, if need be, as avengers, the ultimate resolu-

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tion of such an implicit pyramid is monarchy: When it comes to retaliation, who can be more powerful than the king?

How could it not prove convivial then to Apollinaire (and Picasso) to come across a philosophy that could ingest anarchism and monarchism into the same system? Magical worlds germinate from the collapse of logic.

If one is to speak, however, of magic, it is worth attempting a small exposition. Let us assume that magic can adhere, for example, to a painting—particularly if it is a fine work, and one owns it—because the artwork can now be contemplated a thousand times rather than on a few occasions in a museum. Each time the owner comes to appreciate more in the composition than he glimpsed before, the painting takes on an added endowment. It becomes a center of meaning, it stimulates new thought, it induces energy in the viewer—that is to say it has assumed magical powers. (Magic offers priceless energy.) If the same can be said of a memory, of athletic victory, of a ritual ceremony, or of political leaders who take on charisma, if it can be said as well of lovers, of children, and of friends, we have a species of equation: Whatever provides us with continually enhanced connotation is magically endowed.

This is, of course, not true of all paintings we own, or of politicians who bore us, friends and lovers who depress us, rituals that weary us, or of relations in which we lose interest. Repetition can also kill the soul, and so a ceremony, a person, or an object is able to enrich us only when its nature, its *artful* nature, rewards further study or calls for more relationship—that is to say, its nature transcends familiarity. And that, indeed, may be why good poetry is more magical than good prose—the message is more elusive, more compressed, and more responsive to sensuous study.

Picasso was in need of new magic to dare to leave the Blue Period; Apollinaire provided it. Here is a last look at the transition:

END
... taking his place somewhere between the blind beggars and the prostitutes, sharing with them the same café tables, another character makes his appearance. He is a youth disguised for a performance in which, to judge from his fragile looks, he is merely another victim, one of a troupe of players who impersonate the behavior of a society from which they are outcasts . . . ⁵

Of course, Germaine Cargallo is also in this portrait, and therefore Casagemas is present by connection. It is necessary to recognize that part of his difficulty in finding an exit from the Blue Period is that Picasso had to take Casagemas through the same door.

Fernande

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... he was waiting for me, feverishly. And his kisses left me feeling sweet. I found myself in his bed and undressed without having noticed just how it happened. I was sweetly happy, gently happy, and his tender caresses didn't disillusion me. The act of love has not brought me any joy, but I had gone through it at least without displeasure, simply in order that he be happy. And I was happy in his happiness. We stayed in bed all day long and I slept there that night, close to him, and tranquil. Provided that Laurent doesn't bother me too much, I'm going to spend the night at Roland's house whenever I feel like it. He's asked me to come live with him, but I won't do that. Life together, becoming accustomed to one another, spoils everything. It is necessary that a great love come alive in me.

Still another year passes. It is 1904, and finally she meets Picasso. They have their brief affair, she loses interest, and months go by, then the winter. We are almost in the present, which is to say, we are back in the spring of 1905 in that period when Fernande, living with Canals and his wife Benedetta, was trying to decide which of two Spanish painters, Sunyer or Picasso, she would now choose as a serious lover. Sunyer, the more attractive one, who supports himself on the presents of ladies older than himself, wins out.

I've become Sunyer's mistress. A consenting and even amorous mistress, physically speaking. But only physically. That which hadn't yet happened to me, did happen. Why with him rather than with someone else? It's strange. Sunyer hardly pleases me outside of "that." I don't like to spend the night in his place, so I leave. Love, apparently, has nothing to do with sensuality.

Sunyer is a young man, nicely dressed, with a pleasing body, and he's not stupid, but he doesn't touch my heart. I fell into his arms almost by accident, and he revealed to me sides of life of which I was ignorant! It's splendid, it's exciting! But if my senses have spoken, my heart stays closed. I find, on leaving his arms, that I have nothing but a desire to get back to my own bed, to sleep far from him. However, on waking up, I know that come evening I will go to see him again, and nothing can prevent me from doing so.

Poor Pablo. If I could only love him. Yesterday, Laurent arrived like a wild man and brought me over to his place. I was taken to bed, I had to open for him. He wasn't brutal, but he did take me as if I were his prey. Stocky little Laurent, with heavy, muscular hands, developed by the force of sculpting—he's very strong. But he doesn't excite me at all. I didn't, to my surprise, resist his ardor, and I didn't remain inert, as I used to, but despite all that he disgusted me. I feared his brutality when I refused him a second time. This evening I will go to Sunyer's place...

Sunyer invites me to live with him, but I hesitate. His studio is sad. He has no money, and I don't love Sunyer. I do, however, continue to enjoy his caresses, and ceaselessly. But what makes it happen? Such lovemaking doesn't give me anything on which to live. If I didn't work, I wouldn't eat, and he's out all day long. Yesterday he came back with a package. It was linen for himself. Silk linen, shirts, underwear, socks. Is it true that he has, as I've heard, an old mistress who gives him all that he needs except for money? Ha! I don't give a damn!

I run across Pablo, who doesn't leave me. Happy to see me, his eyes filled with tears, and in his amusing accent, he said, "Come to my house. I love you. I'll do everything for you. You don't *know* what I would do for you!" But I still said no to him. He looked at me greedily, with his large eyes, so brilliant, so restless, so sad. Oh, he loves me, but I don't love him. Can it be that he loves me too much? It isn't only because he is very poor that I don't accept the idea of living with him. Something in me refuses to accept . . . However, his love does warm me up. Perhaps I will get together with him, if he is patient, and if he still wants me, in some future time.¹³

It is Kees van Dongen, who had no small reputation in the Bateau Lavoir. The painting of Fernande done by him in this period may have been a species of trade-off for *La Belle Hollandaise*.

~~After his return from the Netherlands,~~ Picasso's studio is equal to any metaphor of a furnace in summer. Because of the heat, he works virtually in the nude with, according to Fernande, no more than "a scarf tied around the waist." She remarks that he is obviously proud of his good if short and stocky build ("the beauty of his limbs was no secret") and is more than ready to receive his visitors and friends half-naked.³

In this primal condition, on an exceptionally hot day in September of 1905, their affair, often dormant, but with occasional interludes, now passes into a more serious phase.

One should not deprive the reader of Fernande's account of it:

Coming back from Corman's studio at noon, I ran into Picasso. He was with Guillaume Apollinaire, whom he introduced to me, a large and jovial man, rather simpatico. I promised Picasso that I would come to see him when I came back from ~~work~~ at five o'clock. Upon entering his place as promised, I was suffocated by a new mixture of odors: gasoline, eau de cologne, eau de javel, all done in order to make the studio neat for me and proper. Picasso and Apollinaire had spent the entire day cleaning it, brushing it with the aid of a broom soaked in gasoline. Then the eau de javel, then the cologne. The joy of Picasso! I was almost happy, and felt tender to see him so moved. Since Laurent is away, I promise to see Picasso this evening. He said to me that during this time he's been smoking opium in the home of some friends, but for tonight he will buy a pipe and prepare it for us to smoke. I listened to him, absolutely dumbfounded. This is something new and, in consequence, interests me.

Picasso had bought the necessary ingredients, that is to say, the little mysterious oil lamp, the long bamboo stem with its ivory tip, the pipe with its small octagonal clay bowl in which one smells the sensitive, acid, and penetrating odor of opium, which gave off glints of a beautiful golden amber brown.

Propping ourselves up on the dry mat that covered the floor, as if we were on a bed of feathers, the smoking materials held in the hand, preparing the pipe while



Van Dongen, *Portrait of Fernande Olivier*, 1905. Oil on canvas, 39 x 32 in.

modelling

kneading the teardrop-sized piece of pâté on the end of a needle, applying it to the oil lamp held above the colorless flame of the lamp, taking the end of the ivory pipe between the lips, and breathing slowly into one's open lungs, slowly we took in this odorous smoke, bit by bit, breathing it in carefully to keep from choking . . .

Despite the sickness of stomach and the heavy headache that kept me in bed the next day, I can only think of beginning to find once more that spiritual acuity, that intelligent, refined comprehension, that quickening of mental sensations experienced under the effect of the drug. Everything then seemed beautiful, clear, and good. I owe it to the opium, perhaps, for allowing me to understand the real sense of the word *love*. I discovered that I understood Pablo at last . . . He was the one that I'd always been waiting for.

Love grew in me, sudden, burgeoning. A curious intimacy made it seem as if he was now a part of myself. So much did my imagination wish it to be so that this sentiment did not leave me; that, without doubt, was the cause of my sudden resolution to join my life to his.

I stayed for three days with Pablo. I love to smoke opium. I love Pablo. He is tender; he is nice and amorous. He pleases me. How could I have been blind for so long? Not to understand that right here was happiness waiting for me? I no longer



The Lovers Making Love (also called Erotic Studies), 1905. Oil on canvas.



The Place Ravignan, in Montmartre, postcard, 1903

think, as I used to, of getting up in the night to visit Sunyer because his caresses gave me so much pleasure.

Now I am happy in Pablo's arms, much more happy than with Sunyer. I love Pablo. I am going to love him so much. Pablo insists that I come to live with him. What am I to do? ~~I am going to try to get a week for myself~~

~~Benedetta advises me not to wait [and] the sun renews all of this old, shabby Place Ravignan, now gay and full of life. This little plaza, scorched with sunlight, its benches so heated in the summer warmth that the paint is melting off, the cobblestones shine, the leaves are dried off their branches, but the old Bateau-Lavoir stands on guard and defends its bohemians from the approach of undesirable people: "Bourgeois, prosperous people, don't approach!" Here is hope, love, and thought which comes alive . . . All you guarded people, reasonable people, logical people, leave those who live here~~

One very hot Sunday I brought over all my things to Picasso's studio. Now, many years later, I've found again a passage that's a bit lyrical in my diary. Here it is:

"Pablo, it's very hot today. It's a Sunday. I've never liked Sunday. It's a heavy day. It's a starchy day, it has an odor. I hadn't even left my studio. The tired heat

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did not encourage any movement. I was meditating, somnolent, stretched out on a couch, a book that I was not reading in my hands. Toward five o'clock, suddenly, I took the decision to leave everything in my short and joyless past in order to go join you . . . I called you. You were working, but you left your canvas and brushes and you came running. I borrowed from you the little wooden black suitcase that you had brought from Barcelona. I threw into it, pell-mell, all the finery and clothing that I possess. You stood there, in front of me, not believing. I poked you a little. Then, in a leap, you were outside, pulling the trunk, carrying the trunk as easily as I would carry any one of my small packages."⁴

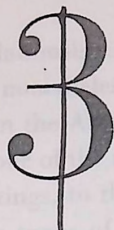
How intensely do Pablo and Fernande personify at this point all those delicate, lovely, and exploratory romances that flourished like sensuous flowers on slender stems, those marijuana romances of the Fifties and Sixties in America where lovers found ultimates in a one-night stand, and on occasion stayed together. There was always an element of the *other* in such romances—they were a gift from the beyond—and so the lovers who came together on marijuana could never trust their love altogether: The marijuana was the third creature in the act and might disappear someday.

Of all such romances, Pablo and Fernande's seems one of the first. We can wonder if they would ever have begun to live together without the opium. Once the bridge was crossed, however, once she knew she could have extraordinary experiences in bed with him, then many a need and many a mutual social advantage would keep them together for years.

1995-1907
Portrait of
Picasso as
a Young Man

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Gertrude

Picasso's relationship with Gertrude Stein was at its most intense and interesting during the first few years.

He had an instinctive and immediate reaction to her. Gertrude stimulated him in ways no other person ever had. While neither of them could recall just when she began to sit for him, both agree that he asked her to model soon after their first meeting, and their acquaintance developed with an easel and canvas between them.

At the Bateau Lavoir she would sit through many an afternoon—she claims ninety such occasions, a large claim, but there may have been scores of such meetings through the fall of 1905 and the spring of 1906. She would take the trip across the Seine from the rue de Fleurus on the Left Bank to the top of Montmartre on the Right, and he would add to the portrait and wipe it away, and explore new passages and paint them over, looking for what he certainly could not name, and Fernande, nearly always present, would read from one or another French classic.

Fernande spoke a very elegant french, some lapses of course into montmartrois that I found difficult to follow, but she had been educated to be a schoolmistress, her voice was lovely . . .¹

In such manner would the hours pass, and it is hardly possible not to speculate on their inner state. Richardson suggests that "a powerful charge

. . . was generated between them: a deep psychic feeling that went way beyond friendship and yet was not in the least amorous, often not even amicable . . .²

We are speaking of one of those rare but powerful relationships where people who have not much intimate affection for one another are nonetheless welded for a period in a Draconian relationship—not unlike serving in the Army, which is to say one of the most grueling experiences of one's life and one of the most valuable. Of course, this may exaggerate the difficulties. Those sittings, to the degree they were meditations, could also drift into more agreeable turns of thought, and Gertrude ~~by way of Alice~~ ^{in the name of Picasso} is quick to emphasize all that was pleasurable and profound in their meetings; but then, she is writing from the vantage point of 1933, twenty-seven years later, and Picasso is now comparable to Einstein in his fame.

During these long poses and these long walks Gertrude Stein meditated and made sentences. She was then in the middle of her negro story Melanctha Herbert, the second story of *Three Lives* and the poignant incidents that she wove into the life of Melanctha were often those she noticed walking down the hill from the rue Ravignan . . .

Practically every afternoon Gertrude Stein went to Montmartre and then later wandered down the hill usually walking across Paris to the rue de Fleurus . . . And Saturday evenings the Picassos walked home with her and dined and then there was Saturday evening.³ → P 204

The Saturday night salon had begun. It grew quickly. Picasso was soon able to invite his friends to accompany him, and to their ranks were added any number of visiting Americans and several of the Steins' acquaintances. One of them, a spinster from Baltimore named Etta Cone, later remarked, "I found the Picassos appalling but romantic." (She is presumably speaking of Pablo and Fernande rather than the paintings, although Pierre Cabanne believes she is referring to the paintings.)⁴

Gertrude, by way of Alice, has another description of Picasso's appearance in her salon:

. . . small, quick-moving but not restless, his eyes having a strange faculty of opening wide and drinking in what he wished to see. He had the isolation and movement of the head of a bull-fighter at the head of their procession.⁵

Others, Fernande and Salmon among them, will use the same image to describe him: A year or two later, entering a room followed by men as large in size as Braque, Derain, and Vlaminck, Picasso is the *torero* at the head of his *cuadrilla*; and when he is an old man, he will look like nothing so much as a venerable

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By way of Picasso, Apollinaire became a frequent guest at the rue de Fleurus, but he did not necessarily take the Steins too seriously. About them, he would make this small reference in 1907:

Vallotton . . . is exhibiting six paintings, among which is a portrait of *Mlle Stein*, that American lady who with her brother and a group of her relatives constitutes the most unexpected patronage of the arts in our time.

*Leurs pieds nus sont chaussés de sandales delphiques,
Ils lèvent vers le ciel des fronts scientifiques*

No more than Delphic sandals on their bare feet
Yet such scientific brows glimpse heaven's suite⁸

Afterward, back in the Bateau Lavoir, the week would commence with more sittings. At this point, Picasso's sentiments are nice to estimate. It is never routine to feel like a snob and a bohemian at the same time, but then, back in Barcelona during the Blue Period, Picasso and his friend de Soto had wanted to look well turned out but had only one pair of gloves between them:

They used to share it, keeping one bare hand in a pocket and gesturing ostentatiously with the gloved one. I remember Picasso telling me how elegant he felt, dressed in a green suit which he passionately admired, and his single glove.⁹

It is worth remembering that this is the same de Soto who is drawn in the winter of 1902-03 with a whore on his lap—a glove for one hand, a raunchy finger for the other. That can serve as an image for Picasso's social life now that Gertrude Stein has provided the glove.

A year or so later, Matisse would take his daughter Marguerite on a visit to the Bateau Lavoir:

More than fifty years later she still remembered . . . Fernande's extraordinary beauty, [and] her way of producing sugar for their coffee—she went to a cupboard, scooped up a handful, and emptied it onto a clear space on the filthy table.¹⁰

The outcome of all those ninety sittings is, of course, engraved in art history by now. Gertrude, in her blithe fashion, gives the account via Alice:

Spring was coming and the sittings were coming to an end. All of a sudden

look, he said irritably. And so the picture was left like that.

Nobody remembers being particularly disappointed or particularly annoyed at this ending to the long series of posings . . . Gertrude Stein and her brother were going to Italy as was at that time their habit. Pablo and Fernande were going to Spain, she for the first time, and she had to buy a dress and a hat and perfumes and a cooking stove. All french women in those days when they went from one country to another took along a french oil stove to cook on.¹¹

By way of Gertrude, it is all part of the flow. Picasso paints out a head, and Fernande buys a hat, a dress, some perfume, an oil stove. Nothing in language or in life is more important, suggests Gertrude, than a conjunction. One thing does lead to another and then another. Structure is structureless, a river ~~how Leo must have hated her over-flowing mind with never one composition to assert itself.~~

Hopefully, we are close enough to Picasso to assume that if life is a river, he was encountering a rapids. It was not like him to use a model over and over in the same pose. His virtuosity as a painter, his facility, his speed were all elements of his pride. He could work faster and better than any other young painter around. Now he is marooned for months trying to capture a short and very stocky woman.

We have to make the assumption that he is at a major crossroads in his life. He has been in the Rose Period for a long year and a half, time enough to recognize that it is a sinecure, not a breakthrough. He keeps hearing praise of the Fauves and of Matisse from people he respects—particularly, he is obliged to listen to Leo Stein pointing to Matisse as probably the most important young painter around. Matisse is certainly at the forefront of the avant-garde. The Rose Period is lovely, but it is safe. No one has to tell Picasso. Gauguin and Cézanne are his influences precisely because they have brought something radically new to painting. He is a young, competitive artist with the best-looking mistress in town, but he does not wish to be known for extraordinarily talented depictions of lovely and slightly eerie twilights with *salimbanques*—not at all; he would rather push on into a visual world never explored, not even necessarily glimpsed. What we can count on is that in the person of Gertrude Stein he saw the embodiment of a set of exceptions to life that he, by his own perception, was also approaching. With his instinct he must have sensed that she was an appropriate Sphinx for him. She offered clues to his artistic future.

We have to assume that he is not only God-driven in his ambitions (which is

to say that he wishes to reach some recognition of how God does it) but that he feels an uncomfortable intimacy with the Deity. God is more dangerous than a full-grown bull in the ring when you are only a naked man; God creates earthquakes and once again—night after night—lets your youngest sister die; God allows your beloved friend Casagemas to kill himself over a woman; God drives Max Jacob mad from time to time, usually when Max, far out on drugs, comes closest to Him.

God, however, is also a colleague. When Picasso draws, the line that delineates a limb seems to spring up out of some graceful collaboration between his hand and the power that conceived the design of that limb—God may be as amorphous as a cloud, but God is also as clear as a well-defined form. God is a dangerous foe because some of His secrets seem to be there to capture. That may indeed be the question: Can one enter the logic by which the forms of a human being are put together? Can one search out God's intentions, experiments, rejections, new explorations?

The key is to be found in form. Form is the language that God has decided to share with a few painters, the very best painters. They are apostles serving the mystery of form. They know more about it than other men and women; they know that a tree can have virtually the same form as a torso. To a verbal mind, tree and torso are separate words and so are wholly separate objects, each with an integrity that is not to be breached. But to Picasso in Paris in 1906, possessed of a power to draw that has to be terrifying even to him, to this young artist with a mistress whose body he explores form by form, to Picasso at the age of twenty-five embarked on opium twice a week into exceptional odysseys of his mind, it is no small matter that a tree can share the same form as a torso, and a man and a woman are not separate entities but meet and coalesce and cross over in gender. Even if we take his explorations with Fernande as no more than sex revealed by opium, his mind had to be influenced by notions about his own gender. He does the shopping and the housekeeping, and she is larger than he is. As O'Brien describes it,

the beautiful slattern Fernande, lying in bed at the Bateau Lavoir, sleepily watching Picasso sweep the lane that led from the divan "along a narrow valley among the empty sardine-tins and the respectable depth of oyster-shells" to his easel.¹²

Fernande may have been his best-found pleasure, but she was also his equal

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and more; he lived in a state of bohemian tyranny where the sordid cohabited with the ideal, and he must often have felt—if in no other place than his dreams—that she was more of a man than he was.

Now, with Gertrude, he could feel himself in the presence of another possibility for love, which is to say he could lock himself into the person of another woman.

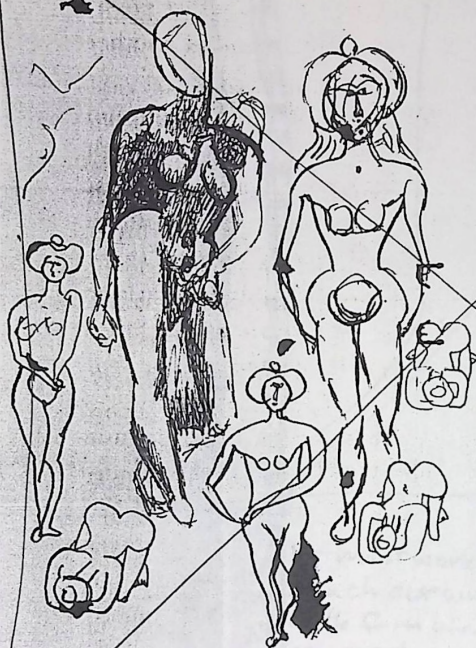
Not all love affairs are carnal; some can rest on the weight of the meditation each person inspires in the other. Pablo and Gertrude must have gone through their plenitude of sittings engaged in unspoken psychic transactions; they must have sensed on meeting that each had at last encountered another person with an ambition as large as one's own. Perhaps they struggled silently through those meetings over who could steal the most from the other, a witch and a warlock contesting a lust for power which the other could augment or diminish. Since neither was much removed from the mean-spirited and the diabolical, the real question is whether the sum of their game was for good or for ill.

That calculation is beyond our means, but it is safe to assume that Gertrude Stein was the most monumental crossover in gender that he had ever encountered. He ~~had to be~~ ^{would have been} knowing about this. With Fernande, he had entered the essential ambiguity of deep sex, where one's masculinity or femininity is forever turning into its opposite, so that a phallus, once emplaced within a vagina, can become more aware of the vagina than its own phallitude—that is to say, one is, at the moment, a vagina as much as a phallus, or for a woman vice versa, a phallus just so much as a vagina: At such moments, no matter one's physical appearance, one has, in the depths of sex, crossed over into androgyny.

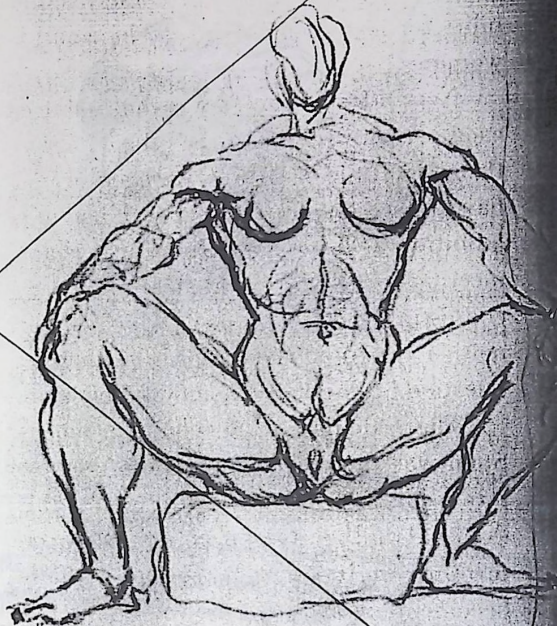
Picasso was obsessed with the subject. For good cause—it spoke to his preoccupation with form. The range of Gertrude Stein's crossover from woman to man could simply not be charted by ordinary means; if she was more like a man than a woman, so she was still by birth a woman, and so a focus for his own preoccupation with androgyny. That confirmed his private sense of himself in acts with Fernande (as well, doubtless, with many another woman). If in the act he felt himself to be part man here, part woman there, whole man here, whole woman there, then sex might be seen as a pool where forms swam over into other forms.

For Picasso, the virtue of androgyny was that it traversed contexts; a nude of a woman to which one added a phallus produced a man; a woman kneeling face-down on the floor could show a back and buttocks that looked like a phallus and
a pair of testicles.

a pair of testicles. We need only peek at a couple of drawings taken from one of his sketchbooks early in 1907.



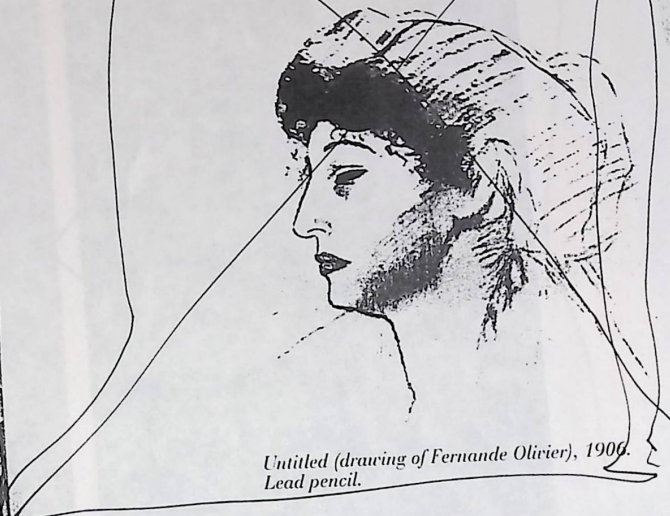
Untitled (Nude Studies), 1907. Pen on paper, 12 x 10 in.



Seated Nude, Legs Spread, 1907. Lead pencil on sketchbook paper, 10 x 8 in.

After the summer of 1906, he came back from Spain to the Bateau Lavoir and finally painted Gertrude's face in a manner to satisfy him. It had taken months, followed by a summer of being away from the portrait. Trying to obtain a canvas of Stein that would satisfy him, he must have had his fill of alternatives. If it took until 1907 for him to draw a woman with a phallus, he spent much time in 1906 attempting the opposite: He was looking to reduce the differences between Fernande and Gertrude. So he made Fernande heavier, gave Gertrude less bulk, and equated their faces, their expressions.

He also made Fernande look older in order to bring Gertrude's. We see Fernande as he thinks she might look, that is, she grows to resemble Gertrude.



Untitled (drawing of Fernande Olivier), 1906. Lead pencil.

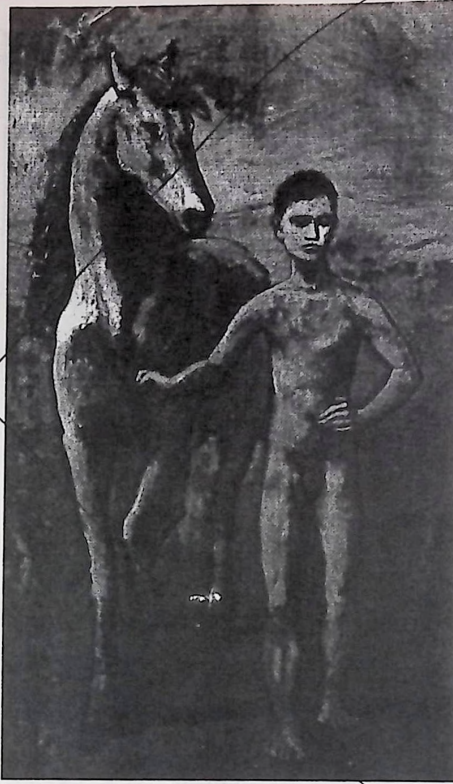
Until 1906.

Mainly, he wrestles with the enigma of Miss Stein. He must work on the premise that if he can solve the riddle she represents, much else will open. She is exceptionally authoritative. God has come down to visit in the form of a woman who acts like a man. It must add to his conviction that she is a creature out of the depths, there to provide him with clues. Failing completely to capture any authoritative sense of her, by the spring of 1906, he not only paints out her face but comes up with the formidable body of a earth goddess. Still engaged in his contemplation of Stein, he paints one of the last of his Blue Period pictures. If it does not contain the hue of rose, it is one of the best, all the same, one of his most famous, and forces the suggestion that he is the boy leading a horse more powerful than himself. Would Gertrude have liked or disliked the notion? She did, in any event, purchase the painting. The horse was so graceful,

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Nude Woman Standing, 1906. Pastel.



Boy Leading a Horse, 1906. Oil on canvas, 86 x 52 in.

quite the image of herself if she chose to come back as a quadruped.

The actual portrait of Stein (~~see page 215~~) was, of course, to become famous. The face is an astounding mask; the eyes are unseeing or, rather, in-seeing, and hint at the force buried within her. She is enough of a presence to make it an unforgettable portrait.

She also stands at the crossroads. She is asking in effect where Picasso can go next. Three years down the road, there will no longer be a road. He will live in a network of forms that have become crossovers between a still-life, a human, and a forest, between a forest and a city; in short, Cubism. But first, the Sphinx is fashioned in a formal portrait without more than a hint of the painter's underlying ambition to be ready to examine nothing less than the laws of existence. If a small part of him, still Catholic, had to be terrified of the sacrilege implicit in such pur-

suits, his work would throw up shields to keep him in check as often as he would sally forth to attack conventional vision. It is hopeless to understand Picasso without comprehending that he was not only a painter but a primitive hunter and a medicine man. If *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, now less than a year away, can in large part be comprehended as an exorcism, a literal scarecrow—there to repel spirits and demons—Gertrude's portrait precedes it. In relation to what was to come, her painting sits like a great stone god on the path.

~~That he does a portrait of himself in the same period on a canvas~~

~~was almost as large can be no coincidence. There he is, her younger sibling, her fellow mask. He looks haunted. He is hiding both of them.~~

One evening at the rue de Fleurus, Picasso would remark, "Everybody thinks she is not at all like her portrait but never mind, in the end she will manage to look just like it,"¹³ and that is true. By the time she died, no one said any longer that Gertrude's portrait did not look like her, but then, we have all heard that long-married people grow over decades to resemble one another more and more, and so could Gertrude have been married to the image Picasso had finally been able to offer of her.



Self-Portrait with Palette, 1906. Oil on canvas, 36 x 29 in.

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pictures, and those who wanted to, came to see them. Not too many, but we knew we could depend on them. Artists came, too, and people who didn't like this sort of thing but wanted to keep informed, to know about this Cubism the papers were making fun of.

"Try to picture the period, entirely different from today. There were very few galleries, infrequent exhibits, no advertising. The Salons were all the general public saw."

"Was it not an unusual gesture of contempt for critics and public for Braque and Picasso not to enter them?"

"Yes, but mainly it was contempt for the sarcasm and insults. You can't imagine how Cubism was hated in some circles. And even worse, there were people who went to the Indépendants or the Salon d'Automne just to laugh. Or to start trouble . . ."

Kahnweiler . . . does not mention that, sale of paintings aside, his painters, Picasso most of all, owed everything to him. Mistrustful at first, Picasso became quickly and totally sure of his young and ingenious dealer, an unusually faithful friend, a daring art lover, and a wily businessman. He once said to someone, "What would have become of us if Kahnweiler had not had good business sense?" And that was true.¹

Kahnweiler would also become the most authoritative interpreter of Cubism, and many of his analyses, derived from private conversations with Braque and Picasso, have by now taken on the imprimatur of received wisdom. Picasso, however, rarely talked about his work, and then usually in ways to mislead, for he was invariably gnomic and paradoxical. "There is no Cubism" was the sort of remark he might make. Braque, in his turn, did not necessarily understand all that Picasso was up to and also did not like to discuss his own work, but Kahnweiler was a man with a clear and logical mind, and an unadmitted passion to express himself. The series of wholly confident exegeses he handed down on Cubism ought to be received, therefore, as no more than what Kahnweiler would have declared about his own paintings if God had made him an artist and a Cubist. While he certainly reacted with large emotion to Picasso's and Braque's offerings, he spoke and wrote about them in such a way as to seal in the mystery of just why they affected him and a few others so intensely.

Kahnweiler offers the first and best of a good many curatorial interpretations of Cubism. Today, since many of the expositors are functionaries in the art world—teachers, critics, or dedicated museum staff—the formality and aridity of their crit-

icism hardly fosters any understanding in the general public. It does, however, serve the aims of the art hierarchy. The canons on Cubism restrain the professional interpreter from ever becoming too unconventional, and conceivably *wrong*—just about a fatal hazard to one's career. Besides, the conceptual jargon employed can take years for strangers to acquire, let alone comprehend—the cult of high art is thereby reinforced. With Cubism, such insulating effects have, over the years, sealed in the subject. There may be no movement in art about which so much has been written and so little is comprehended by the average museum-goer, who is left with not much more than an understanding that Cubism is a great, disturbing, and revolutionary phenomenon in art; of course, he or she is thereby deprived of that reassurance an amateur museum-goer needs most—that is, being guided toward an aesthetic appreciation that can actually be *appreciated*. Most viewers of the classic works of Cubism feel little more than a dull anxiety as they stare at what is up before them on the wall.

The official language surrounding Cubism guarantees this lack of response. For example (and the excerpt here is no worse than a hundred others), we can peruse Raymond Cogniat's statement that Picasso and Braque

needed to arrive at a total conception of the picture which henceforth is an object in itself, independent of the realistic imitation of a motif, an object having its own architecture, space, and perspective, and which is not a series of planes obtained by the methods of traditional perspective, an object which causes the work to form a homogeneous whole, closed up on itself.²

The prose tells us more about the need of art critics to generate a private language than it suggests any honest desire to explain the peculiar effect of Cubism on the viewer. We may be confused when we look at a Picasso or a Braque of these years, but all the same we know that something very odd is going on. That *something odd* cannot be explained by any of the vocabularies that the critics have given us. They do not help us to comprehend that a Cubist canvas is a creature as much as it is an object. Instead, most writing about this art is restricted to a discussion of the artist's technical innovations in the treatment of perspective, surface, and planes; the near-impenetrability of the critical jargon is startling to anyone schooled in a literary tradition. It is as if one were to discuss *Remembrance of Things Past* while keeping discussion fixed on no more than Proust's use of syntax.

We may as well go back to Kahnweiler, the prime malefactor behind such hermeneutics. The excerpt now offered has been heavily edited, yet it still requires

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a real investment of our concentration; but then, the nature of our complaint is that the interpretations of Cubism have become more difficult to get into than Cubism itself.

Years of research had proved that closed form did not permit an expression sufficient for the two artists' aims. Closed form accepts objects as contained by their own surfaces, viz., the skin; it then endeavours to represent this closed body, and, since no object is visible without light, to paint this "skin" as the contact point between the body and light where both merge into colour. This chiaroscuro can provide only an illusion of the form of objects. In the actual three-dimensional world the object is there to be touched even after light is eliminated. Memory images of tactile perceptions can also be verified on visible bodies. The different accommodations of the retina of the eye enable us, as it were, to "touch" three-dimensional objects from a distance . . . Picasso's new method made it possible to represent the form of objects and their position in space instead of attempting to imitate them through illusionistic means . . . the painter no longer has to limit himself to depicting the object as it would appear from one given viewpoint, but whenever necessary for fuller comprehension, can show it from several sides and from above and below . . .

At this point, Braque's introduction of undistorted real objects into the painting takes on its full significance. When "real details" are thus introduced, the result is stimulus which carries with it memory images. Combining the "real" stimulus and the scheme of forms, these images construct the finished objects in the mind. Thus, the desired physical representation comes into being in the spectator's mind . . .

In the words of Locke, these painters distinguish between primary and secondary qualities. They endeavour to represent the primary, or most important qualities, as exactly as possible. In painting, these are: the object's form, and its position in space. They merely suggest the secondary characteristics such as colour and tactile quality, leaving their incorporation into the object to the mind of the spectator.

This new language has given painting an unprecedented freedom. It is no longer bound to the more or less verisimilar optic image which describes the object from a single viewpoint. It can, in order to give a thorough representation of the object's primary characteristics, depict them as stereometric drawing on the plane, or through several representations of the same objects, can provide an analytic study of that object which the spectator then fuses once again in his mind . . .³

In Kahnweiler's conversations with Crémieux he gives away his underlying prejudices—call it his secret desire:

We must not forget something that is absolutely fundamental, in my opinion, to the comprehension of Cubism and of what, for me, is truly modern art: the fact that *painting is a form of writing* [my italics]. Painting is a form of writing that creates signs. A woman in a painting is not a woman; she is a group of signs that I read as "woman." When one writes on a sheet of paper "f-e-m-m-e," someone who knows French and who knows how to read will read not only the word "*femme*," but he will see, so to speak, a woman. The same is true of painting; there is no difference. Fundamentally, painting has never been a mirror of the external world, nor has it ever been similar to photography; it has been a creation of signs, which were always read correctly by contemporaries, after a certain apprenticeship, of course. Well, the Cubists created signs that were unquestionably new, and this is what made it difficult to read their paintings for such a long time.⁴

As a writer, it is agreeable to assume that painting is an annex to literature, a "plastic" form of communication, a creation of signs. Yet, what signs! Cubism was an attempt to write more than one thing at once. If we are to speak of its likeness to verbal description, let us recognize that the kind of writing to which it bears comparison is to be found in *Finnegans Wake*. Kahnweiler, therefore, keeps us away from the point. Cubism is not exciting because it is able to give a highly trained eye some shiver of pleasure at the artist's manipulation of objects and planes, his ability to provide us with a feeling of three-dimensionality in the dark; no, Cubism is not a form of lovemaking with the lights out: Cubism is compelling because it is eerie, resonant, and full of the uneasy recognition that time itself is being called into question. For as we stare at the objects (call them the depths and creatures and vistas of each complex in the canvas), we have stepped right out of our sense of the present into that other, more mysterious tense of time which is best described as time-other-than-the-present. That puts us into a landscape of the psyche where past and future dwell, all of that inner world of night, dreams, memories, and primitive forebodings. We become aware again that the past and the future have a more profound relation to each other than to the present. The present is palpable, but all we can feel about the past and the future is that they are elusive and curiously related to each other in our dreams. So Cubism took painting out of the present tense, that ubiquitous present tense which was the established time-frame of Western art until the arrival of Cubism, that present tense which was frozen forever into a two-dimensional canvas that gave the illusion of three dimensions. The present tense was the here-and-now of the painted canvas, fixed forever. In the centuries before photography, that was not a mean achievement. A moment in life had

been captured eternally (or for as long as the pigment would last), and that was a bulwark against the dissolutions of mortality and memory, of future and past. But photography forced painting out of the present tense.

There is a famous story told by Fernande of the *bande à Picasso*:

At a time when we were eager to experience new and different sensations . . . we had gathered at Princet's . . . taking hashish. Princet, Max, Apollinaire and Picasso expanded in ways which revealed a great deal about them. Princet simply wept about his wife, who had just left him; Apollinaire shouted with delight and fantasized that he was in a brothel; Max Jacob, an old hand at these experiences, sat in a corner beatifically happy, while Picasso, in a state of nervous ecstasy, hallucinated that he had invented photography and might as well kill himself as he had nothing left to learn. He appeared to have had a revelation that one day he would be prevented from developing. He would come to the end and find a wall which would impede all progress. No longer would he be able to learn, or discover, or understand, or penetrate little by little into the secrets of an art which he wanted to make new and fresh.⁵

At the time, Picasso was in his Rose Period, and his paintings were already in rebellion against the clarity of the present tense. Part of the indefinable appeal of the Rose Period was the way it could invoke a brooding past and an uneasy future. That night on hashish at Princet's, the problem must have become apparent. One had to find a way to paint works that would embody past, present, and future all in one; such ambition must have seemed as insubstantial as the hashish dream in which he found himself.

To be explicit about the power of Cubism is to recognize how much it is concerned with death and dissolution. We can remind ourselves one more time that Picasso, at an early age, perceived the sign for the number seven as a nose upside-down. One is tempted to argue that Cubism grew out of the inside of the nose for, indeed, its interior is often a cavernous, clotted, intricate web, full of bogs, stalactites, stalagmites, filament-like hairs; in many Cubist canvases, the vision develops into a dream-like view of the inside of a torso or, equally, the maze of a city. But then, can we recognize that our interior anatomy is a species of vertical city, a hurly-burly of spatial relationships in a closed box!

We can certainly entertain the idea that much of the Cubism of 1910, 1911, and 1912, consciously or unconsciously, is an exploration of death. Some of the paintings, if we dare to entertain the vision, have the appearance of corpses, their flesh in strips and tatters, organs open. As Apollinaire would write in 1912,

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"Picasso studies an object as a surgeon dissects a cadaver."⁶ (See colorplate 28, following page 304.)

If this thesis is horrific, it may still not be altogether unwarranted. Cubist paintings are sinister: they do inspire us with uneasiness (and Picasso accomplishes this effect much more often than Braque—indeed, it is one of the ways to tell the painters apart). Picasso's canvases usually look as if he is absolutely confident of what he is seeing, is truly gazing into a great and often ominous depth, whereas Braque, generally, seems merely to be searching, still searching. Of course in later years, Picasso would say to an interviewer, "I do not search: I find!"⁷

What can be agreed upon is that Picasso was looking to paint stasis and motion, growth and decomposition, the perceptions of infancy and the dissolutions of death, and do them all at once and in each painting. So he was as much engaged in capturing the whole as was Einstein devoted to his quest for a General Theory to explain in one formula all of motion, space, time, gravity, and energy.

Picasso, as we have surmised, may not have been free of dyslexia. Higher mathematics, in any case, was beyond him. How was he to deal with mathematical symbols when every bend in a line was, to him, an evocation of form?

Nonetheless, talk of the fourth dimension was not uncommon at the Bateau Lavoisier during the years from 1905 to 1910. Maurice Princet, who gave the famous hashish party, was an actuary by profession but also a schooled mathematician. He would speak to the *bande à Picasso* of the theories concerning relativity. Apollinaire, with his prodigious appetite for romantic new connections that might conceivably be cosmic, not only spoke of the fourth dimension as if it were a wonderful new poet but he would write about it. Manolo, in 1930, would tell Josep Pla, "I witnessed the birth of Cubism. If my memory does not fail me, Picasso used to talk a lot then about the fourth dimension, and he carried around the mathematics book of Henri Poincaré."⁸ Max Weber, who had a few conversations with Picasso in 1908, would say in an article:

In plastic work I believe there is a fourth dimension which may be described as *a consciousness of a great and overwhelming sense of space-magnitude in all directions at one time . . .* [italics mine] It exists outside and in the presence of objects, it is the space that envelops a tree, a tower, a mountain, or any solid; or the intervals between objects or volumes . . . It arouses imagination and stirs emotion. It is the immensity of all things.⁹

⁶ "Picasso: The Artist as a Surgeon," *Life*, 1955, 100. (The phrase is more misleading than Max Weber's of understanding the

fourth dimension, but he must certainly have enjoyed discussions of it in company with Picasso, Braque, Jacob, Princet, and André Salmon. In his book *Les Peintres Cubistes*, published in 1913, he circumnavigates the matter:

Until now, the three dimensions of Euclid's geometry were sufficient to the restiveness felt by great artists yearning for the infinite . . . Today scholars no longer limit themselves to the three dimensions of Euclid. The painters have been led quite naturally, one might say by intuition, to preoccupy themselves with new possibilities of spatial measurement which, in the language of the modern studios, are designated by the term *fourth dimension*.

As it presents itself to the mind, from the plastic point of view, the fourth dimension appears to be engendered by the three known dimensions: it represents the immensity of space eternalizing itself in all directions at any given moment. It is space itself, the dimension of the infinite: the fourth dimension endows objects with plasticity . . .

Finally, I must point out that the *fourth dimension* . . . has come to stand for the aspirations and premonitions of the many young artists who contemplate Egyptian, negro and oceanic sculptures, meditate on various scientific works, and live in anticipation of a sublime art.¹⁰

"Sublime art." That was exactly what Apollinaire, as self-appointed impresario of world culture, was looking to present: *fourth dimension* might be the phrase to start the wheel and keep it rolling. Certainly, it could do no harm. The fourth dimension would accompany their efforts—an invisible orchestra of the scientific cultures could offer its reverberation to their isolated artistic voices. So reasoned Apollinaire. On their own, Cubists like Gleize and Metzinger were soon full of theories concerning the fourth dimension and wrote polemics about its relation to their work. Picasso was quick to repudiate them. He detested theory. Cubism was his unvarnished embrace of the universe, and if the result he obtained made one unable to distinguish a landscape from a slum tenement, and if both could invoke a young girl on an autopsy table in Horta de Ebro, well, each painting was there, precisely, to exist as a universe full of teeming multitudes from different eras.

The War of the Oxymoron's

July 4 - August 1996

Oxymoron—n. [Greek *oxymoros*, fr. *oxys* of *oxymoros*,
oxy- sharp, keen + *moros* dull, foolish]; a figure of
speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas are
combined (e.g., thunderous silence, sweet sorrow,
purple yellow).

The Oxymorons

or

The presidential
conventions of 1996
and the campaign
that followed.



~~Notes~~ 1000 by George ①

The War of the Oxymoron's

July + August '96

~~D-16~~

~~George~~

Oxymoron--n. [Greek *oxymoron*, fr. neut of *oxymoros*, *oxy-* sharp, keen + *moros* dull, foolish]; a figure of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas are combined (e.g., thunderous silence, sweet sorrow, purple yellow)

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THE MAGICIAN They were the same age--which might be about all they had in common. Still, Norman did remember their one meeting. It had only lasted a couple of minutes, but sometime in the early 90's, after a Folger Library gala, (as one of the perks) he was ushered with a couple of authors into Dole's Senate office, a predictable domain. It could boast of a gracious chamber,

D

estimated 22 book pages

large windows, a commodious balcony. On the instant of their meeting, he had, however, been surprised. Expecting an encounter with a stern and somewhat wooden figure—the senator certainly looked no less on television—he was taken aback. When they said hello, Dole's eyes danced with private humor, as if he were ready to say: "You don't know the first thing about me, Mailer." It worked.

Novelists live for the moment when their imaginations come alive, since such a moment can feel as good as a match being struck in the dark. Afterward, he never discounted Dole. There had been too much light in the eye.

So, he was not startled when surprises popped up in the last week before the San Diego convention. Indeed, he blessed the gods for having made him a writer of fiction. It might be that only a novelist could hope to understand this particular Republican candidate.

His confidence was that he was ready to make a few guesses concerning that inscrutable inner life Dole would hardly bring to an interview. Did one desire to comprehend the senator's motives? That seemed an effort worthy in itself. Be brave enough to divine him. What else, after all, was the domain of the novelist? So, he would write about Dole as if he understood him well.

Of course, no prose goes awry faster than a pedestrian attempt to enter a public figure's mind. Sooner or later, one national columnist or another will try, but so clumsily that one winces for him as he struggles in the trap. A prayer: Let not too many wince for Norman!

Into the trap, then. We will ease onto the steel teeth of the difficulty by keeping our own voice for a time, while ruminating ~~first~~ on Dole's problems in the ~~New Hampshire primary~~. For one thing, all the money in his war chest had been spent on winning the primaries, and no federal lucre would be available until he was officially nom-

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inated at the convention. By early June of '96, his situation lacked all spark. Bugged in the labors of the Senate, his campaign was inert. To everyone's surprise—for it was the consensus of the press that the pride of his life, until this hour, had been to serve as Senate majority leader—Dole now resigned. ~~He~~ ^W wanted to be free, he explained, to give all his time to running for president.

The campaign, however, took on little life. Wooden in interviews was Dole. His campaign speeches offered no ideas. The press, given its unfailing attraction to error (since just about everything has to be judged overnight), came to the conclusion that Dole was a synonym for dodderer. Of course, the press was made up of the young or the middle-aged. Some of them could see that for the old, a change in your habits can make you more nervous than the thought of death itself. So the press assumed that all the old are slow to change. But that did not apply to Dole. It is fair to assume ~~that~~ ^a part of his pride was that no one could get too near to his thoughts. A powerful advantage. Secrecy was his sword. Bob Dole knew (among the things he knew) that if he could startle people by the speed with which he was able to alter public recognition of himself, it would be considerably more difficult for them to see him as hopelessly senior.

A question remained: Where was the surprise to be found? Resignation from the Senate had hardly done the job. ~~If the clay pack of entrenched public and media opinion of Dole shifted in its bed, it soon settled back again. Whether by fiduciary constraint or lack of decision, he would not present another surprise until the week before the convention.~~

Then he came out with a big one: He would cut everybody's income tax by 15 percent. No one believed it. ~~Dole, a staunch bal-
ance the budget man, was now asking for a big tax cut?~~ The press

shrugged. Campaign hype. Dole's bomb left only a small hole in the clay-pack. Later that week, he exploded a larger bomb: He would take Jack Kemp on as his running mate.

~~It was a staggering shift in expectations for the Republicans, and it blew out more than a few candles for the Democrats—blew them out just as Clinton was getting ready to cut cake on his fiftieth birthday.~~

~~Now, the mood of the convention reversed. An empty pocket, turned inside out, proved a light show of speculation. Right there in San Diego, one could see the Republican party come awake. It was as dramatic as the moment in *Frankenstein* when the monster, dangled by the apocalyptic bolt, stirs his limbs. And once done, it looked easy—the wistful demand for political magic had been satisfied.~~

~~Before we enjoy Dole's solution (however, ^{problems}), we ought to dwell a little longer on his political problems. They were many. It is time. Let us enter. Dole's head. Had a habit. Thought about himself as Dole.~~

As Dole could have told Gingrich: Beware of victory; it can be wicked. In '94 the country didn't like Clinton; now, it was the Republicans. Dole could have warned Newt. Should have but didn't. A mistake. The '94 fellows had been too dumb to know that victory might expose the heart of the party. The heart of the party was not a heart but a liver. Should have kept that hidden. Dole knew: A liver can get filled with bile.

The Gingrich bunch had been much too quick to tell everybody that poverty was immorality. Dole could have told them ~~better~~. Don't speak out. Keep your shell game going. Don't get judgmental. Just remember, the pea you are hiding may look small but it's as large as moneyed interests. Of course,

the '94 freshmen were after a revolution. Didn't get it. Instead, they jacked the lid off the cesspool. Smell sends the wrong message: greed. How dumb could fellow Republicans be? Don't spend all that time talking about black, single, teenage mothers. Overkill.

Now he had to get fellow Republicans to understand. Show that Republicans are honorable, charitable, wise, all-inclusive and full of the best ingredient of them all—that great American heart. What indulgences there had been on Gingrich's watch! Certain fellows spent all their time enjoying the sound of their own voice. Dole would have to pay if he were elected. There would be front-page stories about homeless children trying to keep warm in winter—sleeping in empty garbage cans. Or of old ladies dead—nothing to eat. Gingrich's boys would have done better to keep grouching about welfare. Let it go on. And on. A lot more useful to the party than trying to reform it.

Cold War was gone, and godless materialism with it. You had to keep a button you could push. Continuing a bad welfare system would have served. But Gingrich's freshmen were in a feeding frenzy. They forgot the trick: Keep looking human. ~~Some of those freshmen could have profited from a trip to the woodshed.~~

Now, as they all got ready for San Diego, Haley Barbour, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, was doing his best. Haley wasn't exactly Dole's kind of man—too deep in Mississippi mud-pie charm, huge chin, huge neck, and little features on top. Still, Haley was good at what he could do.

Good at

Haley assured Dole: He had a lot of make-you-cry cards. And Buchanan was not going to get any time. None at all. They would eschew the kind of voice that was looking to break through everything given. ~~So~~ This was going to be the best, most continuous buildup of a candidate since Nixon's convention in Miami in 1972.

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Only problem was that back then, Nixon had been running high in the polls. Dole was 20 points down. They might have to contend with a little depression. The more they could get those delegates to yell the first couple of nights, the more depressed they were likely to be on the fourth and final night, should the early enthusiasm have nothing to build on. Had to find something to build on, ~~on the last day and the last speech~~ Dole's speech might seem like a wake. The candidate had to ~~even~~ things up. Apathy in politics was equal to leprosy. Underline that.

Well, of course, Haley Barbour promised they were going to hit family values as family values had never been hit before. That much enthusiasm, Barbour assured him, could certainly be attained. When you are dealing with good people's feelings, you dial GOD, FAMILY, ARMED FORCES, FLAG.

But Dole knew that would not be enough to get him elected. Half of America was bound to decide that family values didn't justify making a man president. Dole knew. Concerning that, it would be hard to look good on family values. He had only one daughter. Like Clinton, no big family. And his first marriage was not going to be any kind of model once the media got onto it. Look what Gingrich's first marriage did to him. Clinton people would go after his first matrimony. Only fair. Payback. It wasn't as if it hadn't happened.

When things turned bad in his first marriage, Dole made his choice: moved downstairs, left the rest of the house to his first wife and daughter. Not unlike Russell, Kansas. Back when he was a boy. Mother and Dad had been so poor during the Depression years they had to rent out their home. Lived in their basement. Solved that problem then, so he tried it with his first wife. Lived in the base-

ment. Had dinner with her two times one year, no more. Then came upstairs one day. Told her. They did have a child, but he still wanted a divorce. The media could make it a lot worse. They would! Dark, Dole, dark! Especially since he and Liddy had come up with no children. People who were not his friends were saying that he and Liddy were a marriage of two people with separate ZIP codes. If he anchored his campaign on family values he could sound like a stranger trying to sell you something over the phone. Moreover, Dole was not a family values name. Dole. Didn't sound like prosperity. More like ~~grim~~ grim tomorrow. So Dole could see it. Had to bet the farm. His time had come. Bet the farm.

Only question: On what do you bet? ~~Too many problems. One after another.~~ Pro-life—enough to sink any Republican. Americans believed in their careers. Half the babies in the world were afterthought. Or accident. Pro-life could split the party. Permanent split. In '72—George McGovern's year—women had taken over the Democratic party. Women picked the Democratic candidates now. Carter, Mondale, Dukakis—come and gone. Now the Christian Coalition was taking over the Republicans. Pay attention, however, to one difference: Women's liberation was gung-ho for Ego. Female Ego with a capital E. But such people have ~~new egos. Their ego is~~ always on an elevator. Up and down. Sometimes you can deal with them; you could be on the same floor for a little while.

But this Christian Coalition was for God. Capital G. Offers no second thoughts. God people have maniacal certainty. Always talking to Him. Worse, God talks to them: Save those unborn babes! No way to deal with them.

But Dole was for second thoughts. You had to have a hand to conceal. Had to seem inflexible when secretly flexible. And conversely: Offer impression that you could be flexible when flexibility is not

feasible. Make platform gestures toward pro-choice, but do not pass Go. Don't deny pro-lifers. Not by jot or tittle. Could damage him to the bone. (8)

Dole saw it clearly. Pro-life people were sincere. Also, full of hate. So pro-life had to prevail. Otherwise, get ready. They will burn down the house. Give them what they want, then get them back in their seats.

They would probably be pooped out by then. Paranoid people. They didn't breathe well. They would be ready for a rest. Then he could take a step in a new direction. Bypass Ralph Reed on everything but pro-life. That was one key to one problem. Ralph Reed was always saying, "We of the Christian Coalition are not numerous enough to take over the Republican party, but then the Republican party is not strong enough to win without us."

Quite a fellow, Dole would say. Looked very young on television. Up close, Reed looked even younger. Small boy with a narrow face, innocent, angelic. Would look good in a movie. Could play a baby-faced killer. There he is, a baby-faced killer, protecting the lives of unborn babes. Only in America! Well, some people used to say Bob Dole looked like Humphrey Bogart. Years ago. If ~~it~~ true, an asset.

Of course, all that Christian energy was not necessarily on target. Dole could tell them. Real faith of the nation was in America itself, not in any Christian Coalition. Country was the religion. Find an average American—more love for flag than for church. Probably why the Christian Coalition was looking to bring flag and church together. Could save the church. Get it to the point where you wouldn't look at the Stars and Stripes without seeing the cross.

All the same, Christian Coalition was on a course. Could call it dubious. Most people give lip service to religion. Lip service evapo-

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rates with privacy of the voting booth. Church-going can bore young people. Through childhood and adolescence. Dead Sundays.

All right—what else? They kept saying, “Character. Bring up the issue of character.” Win on character? Didn’t think you could. Didn’t like politicians who looked to impress with character. Grated on him. Besides, certain things—damned if he would discuss them. Nitty-gritty of nursing. Being nursed. Pretty degrading.

Wounds of war come down to being helpless. Couldn’t take care of himself for close to three years. Why talk about that? Shipped home in a body cast, lost one kidney, lost more than 70 pounds, lost control of this and that, whatever. Didn’t look into a mirror those years. Hell of a cadaver looked back. Thirty-nine months to put hospitals behind him. His right arm would never move well. Never again. Had to keep a black pen clutched in his right fist so you wouldn’t try to shake hands. Everybody knew that. Except they didn’t. Always trying to shake hands.

Somebody told him of a writer named Ernest Hemingway who said, “Don’t talk about it.” He wouldn’t. Keep what virtue you can retain. Don’t put it on the air. Certainly nothing good. A man lies wounded. In real pain. Gets to know the air. All the air around him. Knows that forever. Air is as alive as you and me. So, keep what you have learned. Don’t put it on the air. Keep that secret chamber. If no one knows your next move, your surprises can pick up some smack. But what surprises? Problems do not guarantee a solution. Still, hated the idea of Clinton beating him. Sweet Billy Clinton didn’t have enough ethics to worry that he was betraying his ethics. Trouble was, Billy had one positive quality: His heart was in the right place. And it was big. Big as a field of cowflop. Hang around him, you take

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off your shoes, you put on boots. Billy could cry for others as quickly as another man zips up his pants. Of course, Billy's butt was owned by all those fat cats. Probably why his other part got inflamed so often. Heart and the other part were all that was left to him. Corporate suits owned Clinton's nuts. Dole was sure he could do better. Had lived with the big boys for a long time, and they didn't own his testicles. Just ~~had~~ a mortgage on them. held

Unkind thoughts about Billy weren't going to get him anywhere, however. Not with people these days. They want you softhearted. Back to first principles. It's basic. Use an oxymoron. Put opposites together. Art of politics. Use every oxymoron you can get away with. Marry incompatibles. Get twice as many votes. Speak of family and freedom as if they were one. The virtues of the family are many, particularly at Christmastime. What isn't said: Family happiness is obtained by losing a considerable amount of your freedom. Of course, there never was a dictator who failed to talk up the virtues of the family. But then fascists were emperors—emperors of the oxymoron.

Trying to copy Clinton might be an infectious disease, but he had caught Billy's bug. The kind of light you get from fever, he had it now. Wanted to win. Could do it if he played a good game. Had to keep telling himself: Think it through.

After all, Republicans had one real achievement: They had made it impossible for that old Democratic party to survive. Survive, that is, as their old Democratic party. Reagan had run the debt up. Then Bush. Now it had gotten to where every Democrat who got in had to work to reduce debt. Had to dismantle their Great Society. Couldn't afford it anymore. Law of reversal. Now, a strong Republican could get away with running up a new deficit. Could claim it was the Democrats' fault. After all, wasn't it always Democrats who went to

Couldn't
= be other-

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war? Then it took Republicans to make peace. ~~wise~~. No Democrat can end a war. How could he? Republicans would beat him to death for lack of patriotism. For cowardice. By contrast, no Republican president could go to war without half of America getting full of distrust. Democrats, anyway. Look at Bush's trouble getting into war with Iraq. ^{So, there's} There's an edge. Only a Republican ^{can} ~~could~~ run up a new deficit. ~~Opens a way to cut taxes.~~ Could be his surprise. Get elected on tax cuts. Extra money is as valuable to the American people as elixir of libido. Great stuff, elixir of libido.

Of course, they would say he was helping to bring about breakdowns in family values. Extra money could certainly lead to more infidelity. Well, you get elected and that gives you a bully pulpit. Try to undo the damage done getting elected. First things first.

Daring idea. But feasible. Larger your oxymoron, more chance it has. Cut taxes. Insist you can balance your budget. Brings the two halves of the Republican party together. Certainly has to stimulate curiosity. People will ask, Does Dole succeed or fail on this promise? People want to know what happens next.

Or — Of course, you don't want to get into details. Can't speak of cuts in Social Security, Medicare, ~~or Medicaid~~. Equal to being dead in the water. Only other real solution: End corporate welfare. Something to consider. It would take Dole to do it. Just like Nixon was the one to make peace with China. But you can't mention corporate welfare. Just say: I have the will. I have the will to do it. Trust me. When the debates come, look Clinton in the eye. The fat boy might melt. Nothing lost for trying. Will try it.

Well, tried it, announced it. ~~It~~ didn't work. No credibility. Not even for Dole. War wounds ~~are~~ worth less these days. Credibility has to be reinforced. Buttressed. Consider it. Jack Kemp for a running mate.

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Will guarantee credibility on your tax cut. Kemp's been talking about it for years. So, Dole-Kemp could wake this convention up. Tantalize Mae West strolling down your center aisle stark naked.

Dole-Kemp will do it. The trick is to keep telling yourself: An election campaign is not cut in stone. Not like legislation. For the Senate, you have to respect legislation. How can a nation survive all the bad bills that get passed if there aren't a few good ones? Keel of government. Underline that. As a legislator, you have to be responsible. Some of the time.

As a presidential candidate, it's opposite. Be ready to get away with what you can. Look at Reagan. Easier to catch a fly with your ~~two fingers~~ than to corner Reagan on a weak point. Emulate Ronnie. Don't look back. Most voters are not living in Kansas. So stop treating them as if they ~~can~~ read character. ~~Or remember what you said.~~ Failing memory is the fastest-growing disease of the twentieth century. People do not wish to have to recall what was said five days ago.

Thumb and forefinger
are smart enough to

All the same, don't go off half-cocked. Calculate media cost. They'll bring up those jokes. What were they? How long ago was that? He had said, "If Jack Kemp were smart, he would corner the market on hair spray instead of undergoing all that personal expense." Something like that. Kemp had an answer. Not a bad one. Talked about poor Bob Dole. Said how sad it was that this fire burned down Dole's house. However, Dole's library was saved. Both of his books were intact. That was nice, because Dole hadn't yet finished his coloring book.

Well, he couldn't laugh all the way home, not over that one. Kemp had upped the ante. Ergo, do unto others as they do unto

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you. Our good news, Dole had said, is that Jack Kemp and some of his supply-siders were in a bus crash. The bad news is that three of the seats were empty.

You could say he had gone too far. Had to watch that streak. Dark, Dole, dark. The media would swarm over those jokes. Still, it would keep everybody paying attention to Dole-Kemp. Do those two guys get along? Do they not? Will produce narrative interest. And Kemp will be loyal. For the next couple of months, anyway. Had to. Would want to be elected vice president. And no need to worry about a change of life in office. It's all in an old Italian saying. Heard it in Italy: Revenge is a dish that people of taste eat cold. He could live with the joke about the coloring book.

Would Kemp accept his offer? Would Neil Armstrong refuse to take a first step for mankind? Dole knew political figures when they were making policy on the inside. Knew them when they were pushed outside. He had installed some fellows in good places. Had maneuvered a few gentlemen out. Been inside and outside himself. At one point, Nixon turned chilly. That hurt. Practically speaking, you could call it one big crisis of identity. Left you feeling small.

Now Kemp had been out for a while. Called it living in his "wilderness years." But he was going to call Kemp back to the fray. That would do it. How could Kemp not love him? All the same, he couldn't approve of Kemp altogether. Talked too much. Very little Kemp wouldn't put on the air. Nonetheless! Dole-Kemp. A MacWhopper of an oxymoron.

He was hearing it all over the place. An enthusiastic crowd was waiting for them. Good for warming the bones. In front of the courthouse in Russell, he introduced Kemp to a large group—all home folks. Called him an "American original." Of course, you could say that Dole was an American original. For that matter, so was Sweet Billy Clinton. Whatever. And Jack Kemp, when he got up to talk to

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the folks in Russell, mentioned that at lunch he had asked Bob Dole how long he wanted him to speak, and Dole had answered, "Kemp, you can speak as long as you want, but we're ~~only~~ going to be here for five more minutes...."

~~THE TROUPE~~ Have we been in the mind of Robert J. Dole too long? We must prepare for a shock. We are going to move over to Jesse Jackson giving a speech on August 27 at the Democratic convention. Jesse Jackson may be our greatest orator, but his voice is sometimes muffled by all his withheld sounds—rage of frustration, clamped-down sobs of exasperation, the dark vibration of this year's patience compressed upon last year's patience. Sometimes you can hardly hear him. Truth, there are many whites who would not wish to hear him, a majority doubtless. Still, he said it on Tuesday night, August 27, 1996, in Chicago, like no one else happened to be saying it these days, and let us put up his words as a benchmark by which we can measure both conventions by their resolute inability to look into the eye of the issues, the few real issues:

"One tenth of all American children will go to bed in poverty tonight. Half of all America's African-American children grow up amidst broken sidewalks, broken hearts, broken cities and broken dreams. The Number One growth industry in urban America: jail. Half of all public housing built to last ten years. Jails. The top 1 percent wealthiest Americans own as much as the bottom 95 percent.... We must seek a new moral center."

~~<It is probably a fair remark that there is no such thing as a circus that has nothing to offer. A corollary is that no political convention~~

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When he added, "Our strength lies in true ideas, burning unquenchably in our hearts," they hardly cheered. Rabbi Lapin had not been here long enough to know that conservative Americans do not trust ideas, particularly Jewish ideas—so charged with emotion! Lower taxes, balanced budgets, free market, best army in the world, heroes, immoral Democrats—they were there to hear that.

They didn't seem to get it when Lapin said, "What we think of God is less important than what God thinks of us."

more easily
be found,
however,

THE REVEREND BILLY ~~ghostly~~ JEFFERSON CLINTON

The tone of the Democratic convention in Chicago can be found in the following speech: We Democrats believe that the family, fueled by values, must be restored to the central place in American life if we are to keep the dream alive. Yet, families cannot thrive and pass on these beliefs if parents cannot bring home a decent, living wage for a hard day's work. . . . In this richest nation on earth, we still have not solved the problems of poverty. . . . which tear away at the roots of strong families. . . . We have to make sure that reduced government spending does not single out just the poor and the middle class. Corporate welfare and welfare for the wealthy must be the first in line for elimination. . . . It is the entitlement state that must be reformed and not just the welfare state. And we must do it in a way that does not paint all of government as the enemy.

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War of the Oxymorons

"We are a big enough party—and big enough people—to disagree on individual issues and still work together for our common goal: restoring the American Dream. I am a Democrat because I believe in that dream, and I believe we are the ones to keep it alive."

A liberty has been taken. Two words were changed. "Republicans" and "Republican" were altered to "Democrats" and "Democrat." The speaker was not in Chicago but in San Diego on Monday, August 12, and he was Colin Powell.

Given his remarks on corporate welfare, he is, in fact, to the left of the Democratic party. Powell was, of course, to the left of the Republican party as well—there was no other luminary in the GOP who spoke out against corporate welfare at the convention. A year earlier, that had not been so. John Kasich, head of the House Budget Committee, had been looking to wipe out the deficit by the year 2002. He also had to find no less than \$200 billion dollars to pay for the tax breaks promised in the Contract With America. For a time, he thought corporate welfare might even be the place to do it. Kasich said in an interview, "I think it is an absolute outrage that some of this crap is still in this budget, and it just infuriates me every day when I think about it."

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It is not the sentiments of men that make history, but their actions. ~~Kasich soon struck a congressional reef named Chairman William Archer of the House Ways and Means Committee. Serving a rich Texas district, Archer knew better. "Corporate" and "welfare" were two words not to be put together. Corporations might get tax breaks, but they did not seek~~ ~~perk.~~ Kasich came down from the mountain of \$200 billion to \$25 billion. Didn't get anywhere with that either. By the time he stood at the podium in San Diego, he did not mention corporate welfare. Rather, he spoke of "reattaching our souls to one another," and "sending a clear message to God that He is being invited back into American life."

God, who is reputed to mark the fall of every sparrow, might not need an invitation. ~~Truth, it is unwise. He may send back regrets.~~

~~Of course,~~ ~~Whether it is need or an aid to investment, or both,~~ the numbers involving corporate welfare are, to put matters in the politest form, full of discomfort. Stephen Moore of the Cato Institute has said, if we were able to get rid of all the corporate welfare spending programs, "we could cut our budget deficit in half..."

We can also take a quote from a signally good article on corporate welfare in the *Boston Globe* on July 9, 1996: "'Clinton initially wanted to make a strong statement on corporate welfare, but backed away,' an administration source said. He eschewed the words 'corporate welfare' in public, the source said, adding: 'He uses the

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(13)

phrase in private and cabinet meetings, but the phrase is too combative for him."

Shall we call it corpfare from now on? Corpfare the rich child; welfare the hungry child. We need not be surprised that the Democratic convention was ~~not much more than~~ *close to* an overlay of the Republican convention.

~~It was~~ **S**ad. The American political body had evolved into a highly controlled and powerfully manipulated democracy overseen by a new species of aristocracy formed at the junction of four royal families—the ten-thousand-dollar suits of the mega-corporations, the titans of the media, the high ogres of Congress, and the upper lords of the White House. The inner disputes of a court with four such elements are not easy to follow, but their accords are clear: ~~the Republican and the Democratic conventions can be seen as one~~

Both parties were linked on balancing the budget, increasing the sentences on drug dealers, upgrading the best armed forces in the world and downsizing government (as if the two had no relation to each other!). Both parties would change welfare as we know it. No one asked whether anyone writing the specifications for those changes had any intimate knowledge about what life might be like on welfare.

We do not have
to catalogue
the Democratic
Convention
activities
either

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There were, it is true, a few points of dispute: The Democrats, for example, were tougher on cigarette smoking among adolescents than were the Republicans, and the Democrats were certainly pro-choice. Family values would prevail in both parties except for those special cases where family values might interfere with mega-size profits. There, in the realm of film, music, and health management organizations, family values could take a walk.

Given these similarities, ~~why catalog the activities?~~ Details are interesting when a dramatic turn in one event produces an unforeseen shift in another. None of that occurred after Dole-Kemp, ~~and no political issues produced conflict once pro-life became a Republican plank.~~ No riots, demonstrations or protests offered enough impact to be closely followed by the media. Both conventions had been prepared so thoroughly for TV than an ~~overriding~~ irony intervened. Except for the last night ~~when the candidates would speak,~~ the major networks refused to show more than an hour of convention time. ~~It had taken four decades of television for the conventions to convert themselves into TV specials.~~ The largest question for the media became: Who will win a larger share of the TV public during the prime-time hours on the first night of each convention?

The Republicans brought the deaf, the wounded, the victim of rape to testify to the honor and compassion of Bob Dole; on their initial network hour, the Democrats did not discuss politics

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at all. What a stroke! The genius of Dick Morris was once more confirmed. Focus groups had given him an ideal speaker for the first night, a nonpolitical person with immense TV impact, none other than Superman, Christopher Reeve, who had broken his neck taking his horse over a jump. In his 20/20 appearance with Barbara Walters last year, he had generated an enormous response. The Democrats, having no one available for their first night with status comparable to Powell, chose Reeve, and he gave one of the best speeches of both conventions. Because everyone knew that he could not move his limbs, the stern small shifts of his lips as he intoned his hard-earned sentiments of compassion occasioned real oratorical intensity. He stirred large emotional depths in the audience, and much of that was in relation to how handsome he was, and how immobile. He was not unlike a mythic idol, human, but made of stone. As he spoke of the need for research, one could see that it was the plainest women who were weeping most. His voice, transmitted through a larynx mike, was stirring precisely because it was small and necessarily measured: "We don't need to raise taxes; we just need to raise our expectations."

Colin

On the day of the election in the Sheldon Hall Room, Barbara Bush, at the podium, turned to Hillary Clinton on the dais and said, "We're going to take back the White House because of you." She saluted her. She added, "To my favorite first lady of all time." Barbara Bush was the only one wearing red on the speaker's platform, a primary red that

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(21)
"We found nothing is impossible. That should be our motto. It's not a Democratic motto nor a Republican motto. It's an American motto. It's something we will have to do together. America is stronger when all of us take care of all of us."

At the end of Reeve's ovation, Clinton came in on the big TV screen. He was speaking from Columbus, Ohio, and looked as large as a big-time football coach at a Friday night rally. His mojo was working. Thanks to Christopher Reeve, the returns for the Democrats' first night had done almost as well as the Republicans' first night had with ~~Colin~~ Powell and Nancy Reagan.

It is a true change of scene to go from Christopher Reeve to Barbara Boxer, for the senator from California was tiny and peppy, and she wore very high heels. She talked a great deal about children. She was so devoted to their welfare that one wondered why she seemed 1 percent phony. Later, one learned that she and Dianne Feinstein, the other senator from California, voted on the side of corpfare. It was, however, no evil deed. The bill to take a whack at corporate welfare had been voted down 74 to 25. So, Boxer and Feinstein were just two of 74 senators defending the nest where the big birds hatched their eggs.

On Monday afternoon in the Sheraton Ball Room, Barbara Boxer, at the podium, turned to Hillary Clinton on the dais and said, "We're going to take back the Hill because of you." She saluted her. She added, "To my favorite first lady of all time." Barbara Boxer was the only one wearing red on the speaker's platform, a primary red that

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(22)

gave a bounce to her black hair and red lipstick. If you're tiny, flaunt it. It was also likely that she dieted with major passion. She was older than the new generation but nonetheless had the look of the New Woman. She was the instrument of her own will. She would make herself into what she chose to be. It was possible that she did not understand that one virtue we cannot acquire by an act of will is to improve our minds in such a manner that we can improve the minds of others. Acts of will, on the contrary, tend to produce abilities that oppress others. Piety, for example.

But we have strayed, we have moralized! (We are moralizing among the moralizers.) And we have hardly declared where we are, nor why. Hillary was having a session at Chicago's grandest new hotel, where she was staying and where Bill would join her. More than 1,500 people were present, 85 percent of whom were well-dressed women. When she came forward to speak, Senator Carol Moseley-Braun even waved her right arm in the air like a prize fighter. But then their subject was the empowerment of women.

Hillary's speech soon followed. It was so easy for her. She had only to touch ~~this or that~~ ² button and the women would cheer and rise to their feet. "Doesn't it feel good to have a President who stood up against the National Rifle Association?" she asked. Cheers. ~~Hillary~~ ² was offering ~~S~~ sound bites,

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and a ~~large~~
~~round of~~
~~applause.~~

one after the other. But then there were a great many TV people there. A sizable stand had been erected for them. Now, no matter how the TV would cut her remarks, there would always be a selling point, "A clear, even stark choice." "~~We women must reach out in the next ten weeks.~~" "I have listened to our women senators and I say to myself, 'Go, girl, go!'"

the
=

then all

her.

To the huge roar that came up on this last, she added, "We are applauding women who ran for office to help affect the lives of men, women and children." ~~She was asking them indirectly for political contributions to the Women's Leadership Forum and EMILY'S List, an organization that supports women running for office, and the ladies present were hers. They would have been happy to give her more than money.~~ If she had asked them to march with her all the way to the convention center, they might have sprouted a bouquet of blisters in their high heels, but they would have followed. If she had asked them to bare their breasts, they would have shucked their blouses and their bras. They might be corporate ladies, but they were loyal troops. Command me—I am yours!

How the Republicans were enraged by St. Hillary's army, so militant, so sure of themselves. Republicans had often been left with dry, hard-edged specimens of women or obese cuties with

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beehive hairdos, but then the GOP had been giving it all to the men for a century—giving it to their tycoons, to their military heroes, their white athletes, their independent-minded riflemen who believed in freedom (while relinquishing more of it every day to the spiritual depredations of the corporation). What depredations? Why, ~~among others~~, plastic, high-rises, fluorescent lighting and sealed windows in expensive hotels.

That was Monday afternoon. On Tuesday night when Hillary spoke at the convention, she was wearing a knit dress somewhere in hue between baby blue and royal blue. A perfect color for television, it reached out for your eye but did not burn it. Her hair was coiffed for the kind of dinner party only doyennes give in New York. Immaculate, yet subtle was her hair, and well colored. In two decades, Hillary had moved half the distance from bottle-lens Rodham—the angry formidable dark-haired no-nonsense Yale Law School grind and soon young wife of young Governor Clinton—all the way over to a modest copy of ~~blond~~ Sharon Stone. Hillary had become ~~an~~ actress. She was not yet a very good one, but she was certainly better than the average ingenue.

a blonde

At the convention on Tuesday night, the delegates were expecting a powerful speech to burn out the power of the impression Liddy Dole had left. But Hillary was not competitive, not at least

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~~War of the Oxymorons~~

on this night. She had a quiet, caring, interested-in-your-doings family chat prepared, and she was not going to stray. She did her best to fulfill the role. But she was not all that compassionate. Ice blondes can hide a variety of faults—they cannot convince you of their loving care, however, when they are not feeling it.

"I want to talk about what matters most in our lives and in our nation—children and families. I wish we could be sitting around a kitchen table, just us, talking about our hopes and fears, and our children's futures. For Bill and me, family has been the center of our lives....

"Of course, parents, first and foremost, are responsible for their children.... Just think about what many parents are responsible for on any given day: packing lunches, dropping the kids off at school, going to work, checking to make sure the kids get home from school safely, shopping for groceries, making dinner, doing the laundry, helping with homework, paying the bills, and I didn't even mention taking the dog to the vet."

One could see why so many Americans disliked her. She was decompressing the presidency. She was pretending to be near to the people, but the nature of her position made that impossible. We laugh at the English royals when they pay their visits to factory workers, but at least they

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remain royal. Hillary was pretending that she was one of us, and it was hardly true. One wanted political leaders who were full of passion for the people but were also noble and a touch aloof: FDR and Eleanor set the standard. That was easier to trust than someone who pretended to know which laundry detergent to use, or even worse, was not pretending. She did know. What a waste of the upper faculties.

During the half hour she spoke, there were more than 70 references to children, to mother and father, to family. It no longer had anything to do with politics. There she was, absolutely in place, ice-blond, a saint to her gender even as she proceeded to talk about PTA solutions to profound problems. None of the real questions came into her purview, nothing about the sleazy quality of so many American products advertised to the hilt, nothing trenchant about the waste of the ghettos, the paucity of good wages among working people, the fever of global capitalism to send the profits to the top rather than sharing some of the wealth with those who worked to make the stuff.

To her credit, Hillary had succeeded in weathering the 400 blows aimed at her over the last four years. A weaker woman would have been in a sanitarium by now. She became stronger. We all know: If it does not kill you, it will make you stronger. Yet she had not become a nicer woman. Her ice-blond presence now offered the unhappy suggestion that acts of transcendence do not always lead us to the light. Saint Hillary and her Knights

2247

Templar were a force to emblazon one another, but they might not be exactly what the country needed. They were too eager to show that they could be the equal of any man in the corporation or the government. Probably they could. And so what? Women are as ugly as men when personal power is their life cause, their only real life cause.

If black people are often seen by some fearful whites as the wildest people in America, it is not as easily recognized that they can also be the most disciplined men and women. If that helps to explain why a million black people can march on Washington without one act of violence, it can also account for the genial affect with which they came to Chicago and stayed there through the week, never breaking their own good mood, even if aspects of the Clinton overdrive—all that moderate Republicanism—had to be heartbreaking to the majority of them. Many of the welfare women and children, who would soon be having cruel and heartless dealings with the local authorities in their states, might be friends of the delegates, or their neighbors or even poor members of their own families. The word was out, however, among the brothers and sisters—we are here to celebrate how good our relations are with white Democrats. And they were. One had to go back to the '50s to

2448

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liberal

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recall a time when whites and blacks had been so ready to have a good time together. Whatever Clinton's faults, political omissions and betrayals, there was this to his credit—relations between blacks and whites, in the Democratic party at least, were on the mend. Blacks knew the figures. At the Dole convention, about 3 percent of the delegates were black. In Chicago, the figure was about 19 percent. Now, however, blacks also knew that they were the Democrats' best chance for recapturing the House and the Senate. It could be done if they came out to vote in force.

So, Clinton had gambled that blacks would accept his signing of the welfare bill, ~~and he won~~. Many Democrats were unhappy that he signed, but they were certainly not mutinous. Where was there to go? They hoped, and some believed, that Clinton would fix the worst parts of the new welfare machine (not even yet designed) if he were re-elected with a Democratic Congress. No voice, but for Jesse Jackson, rose in real wrath to declare: If welfare is to be cleansed at the bottom, why not have it fumigated at the top? *CorpSare!*

Silence prevailed. Since the fire was out of the Democratic party, geniality took its place. Many of the black delegates liked Clinton. He was warm, he was good-hearted, he had tears in his eyes before the pain of others—he had been there to commiserate with black congregations after their churches were burned. If he was a sinner, he was also a churchgoer. (As you should be after you have sinned.) Of course, he was also sufficiently active

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as a sinner to salivate at the sight of a hotel room in a strange town, or for that matter, in his own town. He was okay. He was alive, he was American, he had his good side, he had his bad side. (20)

So the mood was genial. It was not a time to brood on the low state of the party. The Democratic party, after all, had been in an unhealthy condition for years. In 1968 it had been torn in half by Vietnam. The slash of the wound still ran across the face of the party. And of late, its soul had been bruised. Inanition bruises the soul.

The years from 1992 to 1994 were a terrible time for the Democrats. A wholly quixotic effort to get gays into the military was followed by a year-long sludge-filled effort to arrive at a medical health plan. It failed altogether. Did one have to go back to the Civil War to find battles where so much had been committed and so little gained?

The scandals commenced. Vincent Foster committed suicide and many in Washington hinted that it might be murder. (They did not understand that Americans in high places do not often know how to commit violent murder, nor do they trust the job to experts for fear of entangling themselves in blackmail.) There was Travel-gate and White-water-gate. There was Webster Hubbell, who had been the number three man in the Department of

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Justice. For years, he and Vincent Foster and Hillary Clinton had all worked together, and closely, on corporate matters at the Rose Law Firm in Little Rock. Now it turned out that Hubbell had spent nearly half a million dollars in fees that did not belong to him. Off he went to jail. (3)

More and more word came out of Arkansas on the number of ways in which Clinton had not ~~only been a forward-looking New Democrat, but an old-boy Southern governor as well and had~~ not been called Slick Willie for too little.

After two years in the White House, it was clear that Clinton's past was a puddle and he was sitting in it. In consequence, the Democratic party had been without a general. There was no one to lead them back to ground where they could fight the Republican party.

So the Democrats were weak before the righteousness of the Republicans, whose blitzkrieg in 1994 was underwritten by a fundamental public anger: There were too many indulgent poor people being supported on the taxes of the hardworking. Of course, the hardworking were often not too bright, especially the white men who had been brought up to succeed and believed, therefore, that to be hardworking was virtuous. It was, but it was not ~~altogether~~ as virtuous as they thought. The top was taking more from the middle than the bottom was taking. The failure to recognize this (or the resolute cowardice not to recognize it) was also a failure of virtue. They did not see that since the Cold War was over, American capitalism now had to choose.

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What would be its future direction? Was it possible that Marx's jeremiad would yet haunt us? Would the advent of global capitalism scourge all values and all institutions that stood in the way of profit? Or could American capitalism maintain itself as a liberal society where a middle class and a working class could receive an equitable share of the profits and a safety net be kept for the poor?

It was the safety net that was directly in peril. If it had been widened and strengthened by Lyndon Johnson, the policy had not come solely out of the magnanimity of his heart. It had also been a spin-off of the Cold War. The Great Society had been a weapon of propaganda against the Soviets. We might be capitalists, but we took care of our poor as well as they did. Even better. Come the end of the Cold War, however, that safety net was revealed. It was a magnet for taxes. Shrink it down. The Democrats were supposed to be the army to confront such an attack on the poor, but the party was lost in inanition. It had a leader who sat in a puddle.

History is irony. The Republican victory in 1994 became Clinton's good luck. If the Congress had remained Democratic, his own party would have turned on him. Candidates would have raced to run against him in the Democratic primaries of 1996. But the freshman Republicans of 1994 came to his aid. Greed was their god, privilege their chariot. American public opinion shifted in its condemnations from Clinton to Gingrich.

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On Thursday night, President William Jefferson Clinton came to the podium to present his acceptance speech. Rarely had he looked better or spoken with more vigor. He had the presence of a man who is about to give a great speech, and this was all immensely to his credit for he had taken an all but literal kick to the groin earlier that day. Indeed, it could even be said that an all but literal spear called Panic had poked into his heart, and his mind had been given an electric jolt. The man who knew more about Clinton than anyone in the White House had been asked to resign in the early hours of Thursday morning.

The revelation, wholly disseminated to the public by now, concerned his activities through many a moon with a \$200-an-hour call girl, Sherry Rowlands. About the time Sherry realized he was a media celebrity, she sold her knowledge to a tabloid. The *Star* told us: Dickie Morris sucks toes. Sherry told that to her diary first, then to the world. It seemed Morris was incontinent when it came to matters of security—he blabbed: Hillary was The Twister; Clinton, The Monster. Pillow talk. She had listened on the extension while he talked to the President. He giggled while he talked.

Not all the details were in hand by the time Clinton got up to speak. That could hardly relieve

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the tension. Morris knew too much. If in-house anxiety had been whistling in the corridors of the White House for the last few years, it was now as loud as a siren.

For this could be the disaster everyone in the White House had been waiting for, the mother of disasters that would smash into all the still-simmering crises of the last four years, as well as the ones that had not yet blown up, but might. Who knows how many more potential disasters were out there? It is fair to ask: Could Clinton at this moment recall everything he had discussed with Dick Morris? If Bill had fear of a creature in a black lagoon, one of its names was Dick Morris.

Should

None wishes to feel pity for Clinton, this is the moment. After a wholly successful convention in which no major Democratic figure had risen to take him harshly to task for welfare or corpfare; after a week of praise-singers, no defections, and a highly successful campaign train through the Midwest, Clinton had been ready for a coronation. Doubtless, given the blows he had taken over four years, he must have been looking forward to his accolade. The Morris bomb went off instead. It might just as well have been under the podium. A stink bomb. It cannot be easy to deliver a major speech when an immense question is grinding into the back of your head: Am I or am I not in profound trouble?

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If one wishes to admire Clinton this is also the time: It is very much to Clinton's credit (and a clue to how he and Hillary were able to weather the 400 blows) that he did his manliest to give a major speech and his energy never waned. He had the charisma on that Thursday night to give a great speech and indeed he would have—on one of the best and worst occasions of his life—if he had had a speech. But he didn't. He had a list of items, political items, most of them modest. He had, in effect, the kind of speech that a man running for mayor in a small city might give to the locals. He was bringing the presidency down to the level of the folks and suggesting it was democracy when in fact it was flimflam.

The wonder of it all, however, was that it took something like half the speech, a full 30 minutes, for the emptiness of the offering to become apparent. Clinton had risen in his person so completely above his text that he stood before the TV cameras of the world—tall, ruddy, handsome, vigorous, confident, even proud. His manner provided the assertion: He was going to do wonderful things for the country. But his text was offering less than any president had promised in a long time.

There is no need to quote at length from what he said. It is all pretty much the same, a demonstration of the inner life of political sin. Clinton's punishment for his sins was that he had become intellectually dull: "We must require that our students pass tough tests to keep moving up in

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school. A diploma has to mean something when they get out (*applause*). We should reward teachers who are doing a good job, remove those who don't measure up. But in every case, never forget that none of us would be here tonight if it weren't for our teachers. I know I wouldn't. We ought to lift them up, not tear them down (*cheers*). With all respect, we do not need to build a bridge to the past, we need to build a bridge to the future, and this is what I commit to you to do (*cheers, applause*).

"So tonight, let us resolve to build that bridge to the twenty-first century, to meet our challenges and protect our values. Let us build a bridge to help our parents raise their children, to help young people and adults get the education and training they need, to make our streets safer, to help Americans succeed at home and at work, to break the cycle of poverty and dependence, to protect our environment for generations to come, and to maintain our world leadership for peace and freedom. Let us resolve to build that bridge (*applause, cheers*). . . . The real choice is whether we will build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past, about whether we believe our best days are still out there or our best days are behind us, about whether we want a country of people all working together—(*cheers*)—or one where you're on your own."

Audience: "NO!"

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President Clinton: "Let us commit ourselves this night to rise up and build the bridge we know we ought to build all the way to the twenty-first century (*cheers, applause*)."

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He mentioned that bridge to the twenty-first century more than 15 times in the hour. It was his metaphor.

How good he looked! It did not matter what he said. He never lost his vigor. Still! Excitement began to ooze out of the occasion. The delegates had heard too many other speakers go on this week about children and the family. One felt at last as if one were trapped in one of the old (by now classic) MGM films, one of those well-made dung heaps of sentimentality. We were receiving the world view of the long-gone Hollywood studio lot with its L. B. Mayer star and starlet system.

In an interview Clinton had done for *USA Today*, he had listed the books that had been "sources of real inspiration." He had shaped his values by those books. They were *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*; and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas ~~A~~ Kempis, and ~~William E. C~~ ~~Greasy~~. Christians should, Clinton said, "tend to their own soul's health before all else." There was *Moral Man & Immoral Society* by Reinhold Niebuhr and that had influenced Clinton about "how you can deal with the question of personal integrity in public life." There was "Politics as a Vocation" by Max Weber. "If you have power over other people," suggested Clinton, "we risk our soul in the exercise of that

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power. It's a great call for humility."

Finally, there was his weekly reading of the Bible. He quoted Saint Paul: "It is the very thing I would not do that I do; the very thing that I would do that I do not." Romans 7:15.

He was so bright. He was worthy of becoming a great character in a novel. It wasn't what he had done, but what he had failed to do. Gogol would have enshrined him. He was perfect for *Dead Souls*. He had failed to go to the root of any problem. He had a mind that wonked and wonked, and none of the vehicles of thought that his reading brought to him had been able to make a real stir in his political world, not Marcus Aurelius, Thomas ~~A~~ Kempis, Reinhold Niebuhr, Max Weber, St. Paul, Jesus or Jehovah. If only just once he would say, "Look, I'm no good and I can prove it, but for a bad guy working in a very bad town, maybe I am entitled to say, 'I have accomplished one thing. I never gave up. I take a good punch. You can't keep me down.'"

a) → Would he be ready to listen to a reply from someone else who was no good and could prove it? The words would go like this: "If you screw around a lot, it may do a great many things for you (increase your experience, expand your ego and/or reduce your chances of getting cancer). It will certainly make you more knowing in the art of seducing the electorate, but in most cases, you cannot pretend that it is particularly good for the kids."

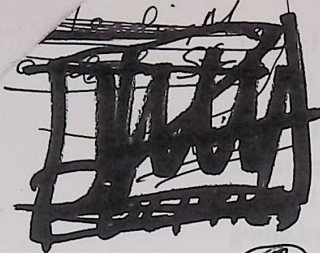
2458

We could end here. But the novelist with whom we commenced this piece ~~on two conventions~~ is eager to conceive of conversations taking place today, tomorrow and next week, between Dick Morris and the emissaries of the White House.

After his fall, when no small town American could think about Dickie Morris without feeling good (they knew what he did in bed!), Morris became House Problem Number One for Clinton. Dickie not only had a book contract but he was in position to write with words of fire or miles of milk. So the White House was obliged to keep him happy or, at the least, live with his suffering. Encourage him not to brood. Telephone him often. ~~Be gentle emissaries.~~ Assure him that the American public is understanding. Be ready not to flinch when the reply would come: The public are assholes. They would have to be patient. Bring him back to calm. Tell him that the American public really is tolerant about these things. All parts of the body are equally healthy, equally holy. Unless a person is a mental case and terrified of bacteria. Dickie, we're with you.

If Clinton beat Dole and he certainly would, provided Morris, or any number of other creatures did not rise up out of the black lagoon, the credit could go to the last 40 years of television. For a majority of TV-watching Americans, it was likely that Clinton was by now the most fascinating character to come along since J.R. That large share of America's viewers would not wish the Clintons to go off the air. For this is a TV entertainment with the potential to rise above all the video heights of the past, and even the Simpson case could pale before the future adventures of Bill and Hillary. ©

2454



He had never taken an assignment as a reporter without looking to give himself a name. A new role demanded a novel tag. Now, he had two, Dean and Neophyte. He decided, of course, on Dean. He was, after all, the dean of political correspondents on every plane—always the oldest man aboard. Yet when it came to knowledge of how to cover a presidential campaign, it was fair to call him a neophyte. He had been close to a major election campaign only once before, and that was for *The Mail on Sunday*, back in 1983. It turned out to be a one-sided battle for prime minister between Maggie Thatcher and Michael Foot.

Foot had been a decent man and honorable but soon grew cranky that the Labour campaign was going nowhere. Maggie Thatcher provided the bonus. You could learn a lot observing Maggie. She would have made a mighty actress.

In Edinburgh, speaking to the gentry at a Conservative party dinner, she played a country lady with an old name. On a visit to a small factory in the Midlands, she wore a shawl around her head and managed to look as plain as a pudding while conversing with middle-aged factory women. "Not as bad as I thought," one of them said.

But at a press conference in London, Thatcher turned into Queen Elizabeth (of the sixteenth century). In answer to a penetrating question from a prestigious journalist, she replied, "Mr. Kingsby, I don't think you've done your homework."

"Oh, I have," said Mr. Kingsby. "No, no, no," said Maggie. "I'm going to send you a batch of our papers, and you can sharpen up."

She was beautiful in profile. Bette Davis would have picked up a few nuggets from the manner. Of course, Thatcher may have been cribbing from Davis. The dean was left with a useful rule. You know nothing about political candidates, the precept would declare, until you perceive what kind of actor they would make.

It took a while, however, to recognize that Dole was a leading man, whereas Clinton was star material, a category usually reserved for great athletes. Michael Jordan, Dennis Rodman, Charles Barkley, Deion Sanders and Muhammad Ali come to mind. Or entertainers like Madonna and Elvis Presley. Or movie actors like Jack Nicholson, Sylvester Stallone, Warren Beatty, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor. Few thespians,

however, become stars, and when they do, they are no longer like other actors. A new kind of entity arises, not yet a king, but as difficult to comprehend.

Let us, however, get down to business: The debates were the

November '96

"She's not

Estimated 27 pages

* the same distaste one reserves for those social occasions where one invests much and receives little. He had watched all three carefully and got back nothing but carefully machine-cut nuts and bolts delivered by Clinton and Gore and old Republican assertions from the old men.

Box in red... in left margin

The debate's opening remarks summarize much of what they would say the first evening.

CLINTON: We passed Family and Medical Leave; now let's expand it so more people can succeed as parents and in the workforce. We passed 100,000 police, the assault weapons ban, the Brady bill. Now, let's keep going by finishing the work of putting the police on the street and tackling juvenile gangs. We passed welfare reform; now let's move a million people from welfare to work. And most important, let's make education our highest priority....

DOLE: America's the greatest place on the face of the earth. Now, I know millions of you still have anxieties. You work harder and harder to make ends meet and put food on the table. You worry about the quality and the safety of your children and the quality of education. But even more importantly, you worry about the future and will they have the same opportunities that you and I have had.... I'll try to address your concerns and not try to exploit them. It's a tall order, but I've been running against the odds for a long time.

There had been a subtext to this debate in Hartford on October 6. The question had been whether Dole would attack. Clinton came into the evening with a 20-point lead in the polls; but he looked uneasy. Or, so the dean saw him. Dole, however, looked splendid in TV color: ruddy, healthy, young indeed for 73 and highly focused. Clinton looked wan, irresolute, even nervous. Much too pale. His make-up (as opposed to the healthy facial colors he had shown in Chicago on the night he gave his convention speech) seemed a near disaster. The bags under Clinton's eyes, despite an eighth-of-an-inch coating of cosmetic, looked as crumpled as crepe paper. Of course, Clinton had much to be nervous about.

Dole, however, had obviously decided to present himself as a witty man, warm and agreeable, nice enough to live with for the next four years. He even said: "I happen to like President Clinton personally." (2)

That was probably a mistake. If Clinton had looked at first like a pallid boy with a long sad nose, he soon began to see that no ghost from the past was likely to strike tonight. So he could present himself to those who knew him least (which had to be the overwhelming majority of TV browsers) as a good man. When the debate ended, the dean called it a draw.

Speaking next morning to a woman who was going to vote for Clinton, the dean was told that Dole had been nervous. Clinton seemed vital to her. He had excellent makeup, said the woman.

Good makeup, indeed! Back in 1972, covering Richard Nixon's convention in Miami, there had been an hour when all the media in town gathered around TV sets to watch George Wallace make what the dean recollected to be his first public appearance since the handgun attack that paralyzed Wallace for life. Everyone was curious to see if Wallace would ever recover enough to run again. Well, George had certainly looked robust on the TV set that the reporters watched. The adjoining room, however, had another video, with a different setting for color, hue and brilliance. Wallace now looked paraplegic and the victim of a pasty if not nasty cosmetic job. It seemed obvious. Wallace was out of politics for 1972.

The moral, then: Any impression that Americans received of the first Clinton-Dole debate would be in large part a function of the different color settings of their TV sets. So, the outcome of the evening would hardly depend on the issues. Of course, it had barely been a debate. The names of bills passed and vetoed, dates, imprecations ("Liberal!") and buzz phrases ("bridge to the 21st century") all spewed forth at a great rate of speed. The determination one was obliged to make was which spew gave better splat. Such events, the dean decided, were by now a part of the ongoing American disease. Neither candidate had gone any-

where near the real problems. Real problems bite back. If we had had such a debate, the argument might have gone, *Resolved: It is neither seemly nor healthy for a great democracy to maintain a condition where the very rich get richer and the very poor grow poorer.* Clinton and Dole were no more ready to cross such a divide than an average suburbanite would walk into the inner city on Saturday night.

So this debate was decided by other elements. ~~After all~~ the color balances in all the TV sets had offset one another, the polls showed that Clinton had won by about the same margin as he held in the election polls—20 points. Many respondents complained that Dole blinked too much.

On studying video of the debate with no more than this in mind, the dean saw that Dole had, indeed, been blinking an awful lot and looked, sad to say, like a salamander on a wall oscillating its hooded eyes as a telephoto lens zooms in. No wonder the dean had been off by 20 points.

The next debate was three days later, on October 9, in St. Petersburg, Florida. If the new question was whether Jack Kemp would go on the attack against Gore, such speculation was ended by Kemp's reply to the moderator's first question.

JIM LEHRER: Mr. Kemp, some supporters of Senator Dole have expressed disappointment over his unwillingness in Hartford Sunday night to draw personal and ethical differences between him and President Clinton. How do you feel about it?

KEMP: Bob Dole and myself do not see Al Gore and Bill Clinton as our enemy. We see them as our opponents. . . .

It was the kind of remark you make if you have a comfortable lead in the polls, but it made few Republicans happy. Most of them had only one political passion this year: To dismember Bill Clinton. Dole had failed them. Now, given the opportunity, Kemp had whiffed.

He would soon have other troubles. Jack was not a debater. He did

not live for structured discussion but for the exposition of his own ideas; he had a hearty, manly, cheerful style, full of enthusiasm. These 90-, 60- and 30-second responses were totally unsuitable for him. He was more like a ~~man~~ in a bar who has an idea and will harangue everyone with it.

Bellows

All through the debate Jack kept coming back to the same theme—small business was great and big business was great. All you had to do was remove the stultifying effects of heavy taxation. Bring the freedom to be a capitalist right into the ghetto. Empower the poor. Empower the rich.

Whether Kemp's argument did or did not have merit, it was too large to be summarized in a debate without sounding like a high wind. Besides, there was Al Gore to confront and Al was looking as principled as a parson who has just sniffed a dog turd *in the vestry.*

Al Gore had been doing his homework for four years. He could memorize squadrons of statistics and reduce them to talking points: "10.5 million new jobs in the last four years... 105 empowerment zones and enterprise communities."

Jack, however, kept trying. "The single greatest problem, in our opinion, in the domestic economy," he said, "is that this tax code—83 years old, a relic of the Cold War and hot war, inflation and depression, 7.5 million words long—overtaxes capital, overtaxes working men and women and families. Clearly the Gordian knot needs to be broken in one fell swoop.... Dana Crist of Lancaster said the day [a new] tax bill is passed in Congress, she will open a new factory with 40 or 50 or 60 employees.... He [Gore] will call that trickle-down. I call it Niagara Falls."

Gore: The problem with this version of Niagara Falls is that Senator Dole and Mr. Kemp would put the American economy in a barrel and send it over the falls. *[Laughter]*

In boxing there is the term "a manager's punch." In the dressing

room, your manager tells you: "Before he throws his right, he clears his throat. When you hear the phlegm, duck and take him out with your left hook." Kemp had been using his line about Niagara Falls for years and Gore was more than ready. The only knockdown of the evening.

Kemp's only hope was to attack Clinton. And there were ways. You did not have to get ugly. The dean had heard a story that Al Gore and Jack Kemp had gone to lunch together before their debate and Kemp had said: "Al, you're the loyalest vice president there ever was. No vice president was ever more loyal to his boss. Why, you went over and became a Republican just like Bill Clinton. Just for him."

Apocryphal or not, the clue was there. In the debate, Kemp could have said, "You're a decent man, Al, but you work for a fellow who has betrayed everything his party ever stood for. He is now a Republican, and we welcome him to our side. But he would worry us. He is too much like a hermit crab. He changes his shell every time he finds a better one."

That would have ~~been offense. Could have~~ opened the debate. Kemp might have gone on to say: "Clinton is the kind of Republican who likes to hobnob with bankers and big boys. We in Dole-Kemp stand for ~~empowering~~ the poor." Of course, it would have been hyperbole—a veritable whoopee cushion of party gas. The only real race that the Republicans and Democrats were in was to see who could pick up the richest corporate support here and abroad. But this was a debate, you were supposed to win it, not look for an honorable draw.

Kemp lost. You do not beat the brightest boy in the class when he has had four years to prepare and you have no new strategy.

Coming up soon were Dole's difficulties with the format of the last

bringing opportunity to

debate. The candidates would be speaking before a carefully chosen group of "undecided" citizens. Such a venue would not be comfortable for Dole. To attack, one has to ask one's opponent a question, then follow his answer with a second question. That is hard to do when you have no idea what the next question will be.

The small, elegant theater at the University of San Diego where the two candidates would meet had seats for only about 300 audience members, most of whom were Southern Californians of such prosperous substance that an old hand like Dole could tell with one hawk-eye sweep that propriety of manners was going to count ~~more~~ with this gang ~~than loose morals~~.

Shortly after the selected 113 questioners were seated in a semicircle on the stage, Liddy Dole, dressed in good Republican pale green, came out from the wings with her stepdaughter, Robin Dole, and they were warmly applauded. But the Clintons were handling the event like a heavyweight bout where the idea is to keep the contender waiting in the ring for the champion. So, Hillary Clinton did not show. After five minutes, the soft-throated stir of the audience grew noticeable.

Now, Hillary entered. She was dressed in a silvery-cream gown. It was luminous. It confirmed the impact of her royal appearance at the Democratic convention last August. The audience, supposedly balanced, broke into applause at her entrance, more than they had offered to Liddy Dole. Bill and Bob now came out, and the last debate began.

It was, as suggested, no great event. The true drain of the occasion came out of the recognition (which would be felt often during the campaign) that if we are a great nation, which we are always being told every day and in every way, why then must we, like spoiled children, keep hearing these endless repetitions of our worth when our real need may be to comprehend that greatness is not a stable condition of existence, but rather, like love, has to be re-created over and over.

In any event, if we are a great nation, there was little evidence of it on this night. The two principals kept offering up incense to the idol of the voracious American ego. "This is the most religious—great country in

history," said Clinton and had the minimal good taste to add, "including the freedom not to believe." (After all, he could hardly insult Thomas Jefferson.) And Dole, never one to hesitate before a patriotic encomium, had already said, "I think anybody who wears the uniform is a great American."

Ah, well. Dole was in trouble from the start. He had to sound like a nice man and he had to attack. Meanwhile, political questions from the onstage group of "undecideds" kept being presented to him with all the dead-ass of a civics class. "I'm a beginning educator in this country," said the first questioner, "and I really think it's important what children have to say. They're still very idealistic.... A sixth grader says, 'If I were president, I would think about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington and what they did to make our country great. We should unite the white and black people and people of all cultures. Democrats and Republicans should unite also.... I believe that when we are able to come together and stop fighting amongst ourselves, we will get along a lot better.'"

So had spoken the sixth-grade child. The teacher who quoted the boy now asked, "If you are our president, how will you begin to practice what we are preaching to our children, the future of our nation?"

What other
man in
America has
ever had as
many vices
catalogued?
Yes, down
to the
distinguish in
mark" or
his penis. To
the crowd,
Clinton was
but luminous
He loved the
crowd and
loved him

DOLE: Well, I'd like to say, first of all, I think it's a very good question.... There's no doubt about it that many American people have lost their faith in government. They see scandals almost on a daily basis. They see ethical problems in the White House today. They see 900 FBI files, private person, being gathered up by somebody in the White House. Nobody knows who hired this man. So, there's a great deal of cynicism out there. But I've always tried in whatever I've done to bring people together.... I think we have a real obligation.... Young people are looking to us. They're looking to us for leadership. They are watching what we do, what we say, what we promise and what we finally deliver. And I would think, it seems to me, that there are opportunities here. When I am president of the United States, I will keep my word. My word is my bond."

Dole would attack again later that night. But what came through by the end of the evening was his essential lack of taste for the jugular—it was not easy for Dole to be cruel when the accused was standing before him. It was as if Dole felt his own hands might not be clean enough. His tone grew grumpy: "Seventeen new taxes. Spend \$1.3 trillion. Fifty new bureaucracies. Can you believe that? You couldn't even have been a cardiologist, because he had quotas. You couldn't—you're a cardiologist—it wouldn't affect you. But if somebody wanted to be a cardiologist, ten years from now, you'd have to be certain you complied with some of the rules in this extreme medical plan the government is going to take over for all Americans.

CLINTON: I don't have time in 30 seconds to respond, to fix all that. But let me just say the American Hospital Association said that the budget I vetoed could have closed 700 hospitals.

Clinton got better, and then better again as the debate went on. He remained mild, modest, informative. Indeed, he had begun by saying, "I'll do my best to make this a discussion of ideas and issues and not insults." He sounded young and presidential as he said it, happy, sensual, suc-

cessful—like the president of the best fraternity on campus. It was his kind of evening.

The questions were so serviceable. Just civics. Had there ever been a brighter civics student in high school than Bill Clinton must have been? Meanwhile, Dole kept flailing away at points that only made sense to those who knew congressional politics from the nitty to the gritty. He seemed oblivious to the possibility that millions of voters might surf into the debate and soon surf out again with no more impression than that the President seemed to know what he was talking about. One piety that issued from Clinton is likely to be quoted for a century to come. It was another manager's punch: "No attack ever created a job or educated a child or helped a family make ends meet. No insult ever cleaned up a toxic waste dump or helped an elderly person."

Ten minutes before the end, Dole could only come up with "honor, duty, country—that's what America is all about." Another ^{entry} candidate for the book *Great Sayings by Great Americans*.

At conclusion, the audience applauded generously. Having been present at a historic occasion, they were delighted with themselves.

The dean left the theater and walked over to the building where the spin-meisters of both parties were holding forth. The room was jammed with media and politicians. Everyone was talking. Everybody was sweating. If not for the phalanxes of fluorescent tubes overhead and the bare white walls, you could say it was an Arab bazaar. Certainly as noisy. The pols and the media had coalesced into one family. Everyone looked sickly under the fluorescent lights.

The Democrats, however, looked not only sickly but happy. Christopher Dodd was sitting in the corner, and he was beaming. When one met his eye, he winked. He knew the score. Clinton was still 15 to 20 points ahead.

Tomorrow, the dean would be on the road for three days. He would

join the press contingent who traveled with Dole. Perhaps he would come a little closer to the enigma of the campaign. Why were the Republicans so inept? Why had all the proposed solutions become so superficial? There was a good deal to meditate upon.

Dole left San Diego with about 100 reporters, staff and TV cameramen in two large planes, each the size of a New York-Boston shuttle. Dole bunkered in up front, and the press, sequestered in back, even entered and departed from the tail. But that was fair. Dropping in on three states a day, Dole was up by six in the morning and rarely in bed before midnight—he spoke to more than half a dozen groups a day and exchanged greetings with mothers and fathers and two-year-olds and ten-year-olds waiting behind a rope, a fence or a chain-mesh barricade. Then, back to his plane and the aerie up front.

The tour, however, was agreeable. There were times when it was not unlike working with a movie company on location. One was in a different place every few hours and kept moving from vans to buses to airplanes and back to buses. Half the assembled crew looked like recent retirees from Hell's Angels. Some of them probably were. The equipment toted for TV was heavy, and the raised platforms on which the cameramen worked gave no more sense of permanent stability than a motorcycle between your legs.

One slept in a different place every night, in carpet-stained old motels and in scientifically designed, midpriced motor inns with sealed windows. Comparable to life in a movie company, one could eat, if one wished, six, eight or ten times a day. Food was everywhere. Breakfast at the motel, breakfast on the plane, lunch and dinner on the plane, candy in dishes, tortilla chips in dishes, cold cuts, pickles, and another set of meals with dessert at every stop.

There was lots of chatter. As on a movie set, everyone talked, and all day long. Rookies listened to veterans, middle-aged correspondents ex-

changed war stories, and the candidate was analyzed—often in kindly terms. Some of the press had been on his campaign for months. If there was nothing new to write about on any given day, still there had to be something, some ripple in the seamless fabric of campaign speeches forever repeated, some minor turn of event that might yet be a major turn by tomorrow. When a Dole staff member came back to the rear of the plane from his sanctum up front, the press gathered about him like family members around a doctor looking to obtain a little more news of the operation.

The media were always on the hunt for something new. Yet, each novelty was invariably shared—one reason why their stories had so much in common. Indeed, the best of the quotes for the day usually came from the pool reporters, rarely more than two, who might be given an audience with the candidate. Here is part of one pool report by Blaine Harden of the *Washington Post* at the end of Thursday, October 17, on the flight to Albuquerque:

Q: Senator, you seemed full of vim and vinegar today.

A: Oh, you're not kiddin'. Had a good night's sleep. Slept through the debate.

Q: What did you mean when you said today, "You haven't seen anything yet"?

A: Just trying to titillate the press a little. [Laughs]

Seen up close, Dole looked tall and spare like a movie man, a leading man. Cowboy roles. Not Randolph Scott, exactly, not Gary Cooper or Clint Eastwood, but a casting director would put him in the file that said: HUMPHREY BOGART ON A HORSE. He was, all said, much better looking than he appeared on TV, and yet one could see how he did not appeal to women. But for the clenched right fist, as untouchable as a small wild animal, there was no other sign of vulnerability.

the debate

The dean had opportunity enough to observe him through the day. It was apparent that for all practical purposes, Dole was acting as if he had won. Most of his staff must have told him as much. Later that day the audience poll counts would come in and put him behind by the usual 15 to 20 points, but he looked to have thrown it off.

At the first stop, in San Bernardino, Dole went over to shake hands with a ^{score} ~~score~~ of followers standing on the tarmac behind the rope line. In the main, they were middle-aged men in work clothes, and they had a similarity of expression around their mouths as if to say, "Life is full of surprises, ^{score} ~~score~~ surprises." They would take pleasure in sour news; it would confirm their acumen.

Dole shook each hand, said a word or two, then was off with his caravan—a dozen police cars, many motorcycles, staff cars, his limousine and a ~~press~~ bus. The Mission Inn, where the candidate spoke first, was an old hotel with dark wood decor, and the crowd whooped and hollered with upraised arms. Dole talked to these Republicans as if they were children. "Yes," he told them, "you're going to get the tax cut. It's not a Wall Street tax cut; it's a Main Street tax cut."

The debates were behind him and he could cut loose on Clinton. "Just remember," he said, "it's not his money he's giving away for political purposes; it's your money." Robin Dole, standing beside him, a head shorter, kept nodding wisely at her father's remarks.

His daughter,

A little later, on the street outside the Mission Inn, there was another rally, ~~not~~ ^{not} unlike a village block party with a loud band. Never before had one ~~been so~~ ^{been so} aware of Dole's voice, his Plains voice. "The big difference between Bill Clinton and myself is that he trusts government and I trust you."

He liked to speak in spurts—stop—and off to the next spurt. He was like a roulette wheel. He had about 32 subjects, all one- and two-liners, and what he said next in a speech usually had no more to do with what went before than the successive drops of the ball.

"President Clinton never got a tax bill he didn't like." Stop. "The Democrats have so much money coming in that they have their own laundromat." Stop. At the whoop that went up, he added, "And I'm gonna get tough. I'm gonna put in tough, strict, conservative judges. Liberals need not apply." Stop. "Harry Truman said, 'I'm not gonna give them hell. I'm gonna tell them the truth. The truth is hell.' We're gonna fight for the soul of America."

Most of the people at another rally in a plaza outside the Mission Inn were young and there for a good time. It hardly mattered what Dole said. The kids and young marrieds were there to see real TV luminaries. Like Dole. In Glendale, next on the tour (after a 20-minute flight), the rally was outside city hall, and it was more of the same. A large banner greeted the occasion: DOLE'S GOLDEN RULE: YOU EARN IT, YOU KEEP IT.

There were black-on-yellow round signs, about 18 inches in diameter, saying 15%, and half of the street crowd seemed to be holding them. The band was playing "This Land Is Your Land." A good many high school kids had turned out, and on cue they yelled, "Dole! Dole! Dole!" Which soon became "Go, Go, Go." When he spoke of putting extra money in their pockets, the kids started chanting, "Rent. Car. Money. Rent. Car. Money."

At the New Mexico rally Friday morning, a Dole functionary told the crowd, "Didn't Bob Dole do a great job in the debate?" They cheered, but it was a little empty. A lot of them obviously had missed the encounter. However there were many signs in the park: WE WOMEN DIG DOLE. DOLE MEANS GOOD MORALS. HONEST BOB. SOCCER MOMS 4 DOLE. CHARACTER—IT DOES COUNT.

Governor Gary Johnson got up. "What do I say in two minutes to get you to vote for Bob Dole?" he asked.

But he knew what he would tell them: "When Clinton was here, he went out and played golf. Said he shot an 83. I asked everyone, Democrats and Republicans. None of them thought he shot an 83. With Bob Dole, you could bet the farm that Bob Dole would give you an honest score."

Dole said, "I don't know if he shot an 83, a 283, a 483. With this guy, you never know." Stop. "This is an election about basic values." Stop. "Bring back integrity and common sense to the presidency." Stop. "I will be a president for all the people. You ought to be able to trust your president." Stop. "He can't cut taxes. He can only raise taxes."

The next rally was at the Place Middle School, in Denver, for sixth, seventh and eighth graders, and Dole was flat. He was good at bringing out the child in adults, but it didn't work as well in reverse. "President Clinton," he said, "wants to increase spending up to 20 percent over the next four years. I would increase it by 14 percent. That's 6 percent for you. It's your money. Remember, it's your money." That made him a little happier. He always seemed most happy when talking about money. It had to be those Kansas farmers of his boyhood. They had taught him: Cash was the crop of crops. Your harvest. You deserve to keep your harvest. Not for too little had they made the American dollar green. "If elected, we will not sell access to the White House," he said.

The older Republicans all cheered. You did not need a scorecard to distinguish between Democrats and Republicans. The faces were there to demonstrate the difference between polymorphous-perverse and anus-rictus. But if you had any doubt, you had only to listen to the heavy sounds of approval that came up from the Republican crowd each time Dole told them, "It's *your* money. It's *your* money."

Finally he got going. A few sentences came together. "Here is a president who often talks about a bridge to the future. [I think] it's a bridge to wealthy political donors. It goes through a laundromat, takes a left at the Democratic National Committee and then rolls all the way down to the Oval Office." Later, in Wichita, the pool (Blaine Harden and Judy

Keen) would ask, "Do you really believe there is a money laundering operation going on in the White House?"

"In the White House? I didn't say in the White House. But something is going on somewhere. I didn't say in the White House, did I?"

Nelson Warfield, Dole's press secretary, tall, pale, with straight sandy hair, pale-rimmed glasses and the gloomy mien of a responsible aide—a bright young Republican if ever there was one—said, "I think he is speaking metaphorically. If they want to see where the laundromat is, we want to see where the bridge is."

By the time the first press plane got to Wichita, it was late afternoon, and the rally was in an airplane hangar. A crowd of about a thousand was gathered, and they kept yelling for Bob. At the appointed moment, the long hangar doors opened. Outside, it was early twilight. The loudspeaker system came on with *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the theme music for *2001*, and the white 727 saying BOB DOLE FOR PRESIDENT 1996 taxied up and wheeled around on the tarmac in full close view of the wide-open hangar doors. It was a nice piece of Republican theatricality, but later, the cameramen would complain. No one had told them. They had set their exposures for the artificial lighting of the hangar and so were not ready for a beautiful, cold October twilight, the last of the sun luminous on the white skin of the plane.

Dole soon got going on Clinton. "He is invited to retire right here in Kansas." Stop. "I believe the American people are looking for strong leadership, strong leadership." Stop. "Robin has been a godsend. I appreciate her a good deal." Stop. The crowd shouted after each sally. "No more years," they repeated, "no more years." A hand-lettered sign read: PISS ON THE POLLS. VOTE FOR DOLE.

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It was evening by the time this speech ended, and it had been a full day. Albuquerque, Denver, Wichita and on with the plane to Kentucky to be ready for the morning rally. Before he left Wichita, Dole worked the line at the airport. "The apparition of these faces in the crowd," Ezra Pound had written, "Petals on a wet, black bough." The faces had hands that kept reaching out to Dole's good left hand. They had gathered at every fence to watch and wait for the candidate. Sooner or later he might come by and greet them. Afterward, they would be able to say that he had said hello.

Standing near the candidate, the dean saw another face on Dole. It was old and concentrated and fragile. Distracted by the unexpected presence of a couple of unfamiliar reporters, his eyes were as bleak and empty of warmth as an eagle startled in its nest. Yes, it had been a long day. With each hour, the returns on the debate, now 48 hours old, must have settled in. One indigestible core of woe in the old eagle's gut.

That night on the airplane trip to Kentucky, one of the veterans began to talk of how much fun there had been on the Reagan campaign plane in 1980. One particularly powerful TV grip who sat at the back of the plane would try against all the force of gravity (as the plane went into its first steep climb) to roll an orange up the aisle like a bowling ball. Nancy Reagan got into the spirit and would answer with an orange from the front of the plane. By the time it reached the TV crew, it was traveling with major-league speed. If they couldn't stop it, the fruit would pulp itself on the back bulkhead. Much yodeling after a catch, groans from a wipeout. That had to be 1980. In 1984, Ronnie was running for re-election and Air Force One didn't have an aisle. Nothing but compartments.

The rally on Saturday morning was in Somerset, Kentucky, a beautiful town that did not look to have changed since the 1930s. There were no high-rise buildings in sight. It was too small a town for the powerful if aesthetically deprived hand of the corporation. You could even hear leaves rustle.

Somerset was, of course, a Republican (continued on page 82)

after
take-off

~~Barack~~

~~(continued from page 60)~~ stronghold, full of small-town virtues and small-town nastiness. The first speaker, another sparse-haired worthy, made a reference to Hillary Clinton. Called her "Hilarious." Even in a Republican town, that was going too far. But small-town wisdom is to attack when it turns uncomfortable. He adjured the crowd: "Get off your duff and vote. Send a message to the bureaucrats in Washington."

More speakers: "I can say, Bob Dole, this is the kind of country you came from. We believe in our nation, and we are going to fight for it. We need a president you can trust, like Abraham Lincoln, born here in Kentucky."

Dole came on: "The one bill we need to veto is Bill Clinton. He can't cut taxes and balance the budget, but we can." Stop. "This is a fight for the heart and soul of America." Stop. "When everything else fails, try a little common sense. That's a Kansas saying." Stop.

The last rally on Saturday was in Norfolk, Virginia. The dean had seen it once, 55 years ago, while hitchhiking from New Jersey to North Carolina. Norfolk had been one tough town. All seaport. None of the buildings were tall, and most of them were weathered gray. You could feel the mood. It was not altogether agreeable, but then not all moods are. A good many ~~seem~~

then

then

then

then

then

then

then

then

then

then

then

then

In those years

~~seem~~ to offer some ^{rather} sense of the complexity of good and evil. Norfolk was full of mood. Lots of prostitutes (and where is the prostitute who is not a mood standing on high heels?) and lots of commerce of the sea. He remembered Norfolk. It had been like a good many songs of the Depression—"Let's have another cup of coffee, and let's have another piece of pie."

Now, it had the typical skyline of a medium-sized burg, that half-finished and never-to-be-finished corporate skyline. Ugly vertical box-shaped buildings stood up like isolated iron plugs on the baseplate of a machine that once upon a time was actually being put together.

this hour

The rally took place in the National Maritime Center. Dole spoke with his back to the harbor. By ~~now~~, middle of the afternoon, the water behind him looked a dark gray. A storm was coming in, and Dole was wearing some sort of ill-fitting windbreaker, a hospital white with black lapels. It was the only time in three days that he did not look well dressed, but then the Norfolk rally was equally out of kilter for the occasion. The crowd gave forth an angry sound, reminiscent of the low, bull roar you can hear at a European soccer match, before the violence breaks out.

Like all Dole's rallies, this one was inconclusive. Whether charming or ugly at the podium, Dole was never signally lucid. The dean had by now concluded that something was drastically wrong with the Republican party, and he would have hours to meditate on the matter, for the storm hovering at Norfolk had delayed commer-

cial flights in Washington, and the dean didn't get to bed until early in the morning.

One point was awfully clear. Dole could hardly wish for insight on his real political situation. Such analysis would be equal to taking poison. Dole just had to keep campaigning. But, oh, how the Republicans were spoiled, intellectually spoiled. For years they had had need of no new ideas. The Cold War provided all their philosophical fuel. America, being wonderful, was duty-bound to defeat the USSR. Since the liberals shared the shadow of an idea with the Soviets—that the government should take responsibility for poor people—the liberals were always on the defensive.

Meanwhile, the conservatives drew converts. They were on the march. They succeeded in getting the average American to believe conservatism was a well-integrated philosophical house that could offer spiritual security to all who would approach.

In fact, it was a schizophrenic set of beliefs. At one end, it was the libertarianism of the free market, a philosophy that was not ready to face the very real possibility that the quest for money might succeed in closing out all other values. It has yet to be proven that a search for profit is equal to the expansion of human possibility. Who can guarantee that the growth will not be full of anomaly, spiritual entropy and a billion obsolescent sneakers?

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That was one half of American conservatism—the free market. On the other half was the political terrain that belonged to Pat Buchanan in the first primaries of 1996. It called for pro-life and rigorous morality. Yet family values, if truly pursued, call for strict restrictions on personal liberty. Such conservatives distrust big business and see the free market as an encouragement to crime, drugs, drive-by shootings. (21)

Marxism had accommodated—unsuccessfully!—a huge division within itself: social idealism versus party oppression. Ultimately, conservatism might develop as large a divide. Inflammatory were the differences between rich Republicans (free market) and poor ones (pro-life).

Dole was the victim of this divide. He had made his attempt to bind the two sides of the party—accepted pro-life (in which he probably did not believe) and touted the 15 percent tax cut (in which, probably, he also did not believe). Noble. He had given his body to one faction and his soul to the other. If he wanted to be president (and one side of him had to be cynical about that, too—dark humor doth not good presidents make), he had gotten himself into a most unhealthy condition—he was so divided that he could speak only by way of a new disease: sound bite—itis.

Well, Dole could tell himself: He was certain of one thing—Bill Clinton was a very bad influence for the country, a free marketer with the family values of a Turkish sultan. A true Rockefeller Republican. Ready to get government into every-

thing. Yes, try waking up each morning to hear that Clinton was still 20 points up.

Dole didn't really want to look into his problems. They were like Chinese boxes. One inside another. Polls had shown that values bothered people more than the economy. But what had destroyed the values? He might think privately that we had carried on the Cold War for too long. But how could he tell people that? Say that the Russians had not been in any way a real enemy for 20 years. Maybe 30 years. It would be political suicide to say that excessive use of patriotism as a political tool is debilitating to national intelligence. Or take advertising. Has to corrupt values. Has to be manipulative, meretricious, mendacious. Fastest way to dull a child's brain. Yes, just keep shattering your child's attention. Every 10 to 12 minutes. Do it with a TV commercial. Yes, fine things for him to say. Well, Dole could begin to feel sorry for himself. How do you restore those old American values? Two lonely fellows on the highway of life—Dole and his sound bite.

Over the next five days, everything got worse. Dole went to New Hampshire on Sunday, and the storm was so bad that all the oxygen masks tumbled out of their receptacles