

7/5/89

A Ranking of Reviews
of
Mailer's Major Works

Key: 5 = Highest Praise
 3 = Mixed
 1 = Lowest, pits
 X = not reviewed
 - = can't locate review

Totals: 304 reviews (of possible 478) rated, or 63.6%
 22 books
 26 periodicals
 average of 13.8 reviews/book

Highest rated books:

The Naked and the Dead = 4.36
The Armies of the Night = 4.06
Existential Errands = 3.75
The Executioner's Song = 3.72
The Fight = 3.67

Lowest: Tough Guys Don't Dance = 2.0
 Barbary Shore = 2.08
 Ancient Evenings = 2.41
 The Deer Park = 2.50
 The Presidential Papers = 2.50

Highest rated magazines:

Village Voice = 4.0
Commentary = 3.87
Newsweek = 3.71
L.A. Times = 3.38
N.Y. Times (daily) = 3.37

Lowest: National Review = 2.21
 New Leader = 2.30
 S. F. Chronicle = 2.38
 Harper's = 2.5
 Atlantic = 2.58



BOB LUCID

In Memoriam



WELCOMING REMARKS

Jim English

Jack Lucid

REMINISCENCES

John Richetti

Tracy Feld

Heather Love

Phil Bufithis

J. Michael Lennon

Al Filreis





In Memoriam

BOB LUCID

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Aesthetic Sensibility and the Idea of the Imagination in America

Robert F. Lucid

Louis J. Budd. *Our Mark Twain: The Making of His Public Personality*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. 266 pp.

John Raeburn. *Fame Became of Him: Hemingway as Public Writer*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. 231 pp.

Louis J. Budd's *Our Mark Twain* is subtitled *The Making of His Public Personality*. The concept of a public personality—like the somewhat related concept of a cultural imagination, and the idea of an individual-at-large in the culture—is familiar enough, but Budd's may be the first full-length literary study to address it formally. His book was released only shortly before John Raeburn's *Fame Became of Him*, which is subtitled *Hemingway as Public Writer*. This may be the second full-length formal contemplation of the phenomenon. The two books are very ambitious compendia of research materials and would be, for this reason alone, extremely valuable. Neither gives more than perfunctory attention, however, to the immense amount of material to have accumulated since the death of these two subjects, so that from a compendia point of view both books should be followed by volumes devoted to the posthumous years. No doubt they will be.

As analyses of the material their research has uncovered, the two books are also immensely informative. Both suffer, however, from a kind of intellectual isolationism that, for example, prevents Budd from mentioning Hemingway (or anyone else) as following in the Twain tradition, and leads Raeburn, in his few references to Twain, always to insist upon (but never to explain) the great differences between his and Hemingway's

public identities. Indeed, in their different ways both books tend to claim that their subjects are *sui generis*. The two works also reveal two very different ways of coming at the study of the public writer. Professor Budd worries repeatedly over the lack of an established scholarly method for conducting a study such as his, and justifies the work finally because of his personal belief in the greatness of Twain's accomplishment as a public figure. The book is deeply, almost apologetically committed to methodological caution, and, given its also very deep populist sentiments, it presents us with an unusual interplay between conservative and liberal scholarly impulses. Professor Raeburn, quite liberally unselfconscious about his methodology, presses strongly his personal belief that, at least as Hemingway lived it, the public literary life is a pointless and miserable waste. In the process he presents us with an interplay, also unusual, between a liberal openness of method (and of style), and an almost startlingly conservative espousal of high-cultural critical severity. By playing to the crowd, in this view, Hemingway had betrayed his art, and so grievous a sin could only call down upon him the most grievous consequences.

Whether the public Twain is actually established as a permanent hero in our cultural pantheon, as Budd maintains, and whether the public Hemingway is in the process of being permanently forgotten, as Raeburn more than implies, are questions difficult to discuss convincingly in a narrow context. And the contexts of both of these books are narrow, in that they focus only upon a single figure and, even then, propose no coherent, overarching idea of the public figure in America, in the light of which their particular figure can be examined. Thus the books, while extremely valuable in their ways, are perhaps most forceful in their catalytic capacity: they require us to reflect for ourselves upon the broad topic of the presence of the public artist figure in the culture, and to relate that presence to the culture's more general understanding of the idea of the imagination.

Ever since Plato banished the poets from his Republic, there has been an argument going on in Western intellectual history concerning the societal efficacy of art, the artist, and the artistic community. At issue was the question whether the cultivation

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of the aesthetic sensibility was a way of strengthening the cultural imagination or, on the contrary, was actually a fatal means of debilitating it. In America, however, the argument seemed to end, for we began our culture on the assumption that the jury had found for the prosecution: we not so much banished the poets as we rehabilitated them, openly articulating the proposition that telling stories, fashioning poems, or in any other way attempting to create aesthetic experience was not fit work for a grown man's hand.

The legacy which succeeding generations have received from this ancestral source is complex and far-reaching, but its most obvious and immediate effect is to be found in the way we have finally brought into existence the figure of the American artist, the structure of the American artistic community, and the full canon of American art. All are marked indelibly by their inherited sense that they perhaps should not exist at all, just as they are also marked by an almost messianic sense that they have been brought into existence for some intensely important purpose. One way of identifying this purpose is to remark our artists' sense that they are the keepers of the culture's imaginative flame; that as artists they relate to the imagination for its own sake, rather than for the purpose of accomplishing some utilitarian task; and that in their lives and artistic concerns they offer living examples of what close, long-term cultivation of the aesthetic sensibility can produce.

Of course the idea of the imagination in America can be approached without this special reference to our artists. For something like the first two-hundred years of its existence, after all, the culture assigned few if any of its major imaginers to the production of art, and if we now identify an artist's imagination at work in the careers of William Bradford, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, we should do so while understanding that none of them would have taken such identification as a compliment. That the imagination is not the exclusive possession of the artist, but is rather the exclusive possession of *homo sapiens*, would presumably have been Plato's position. So approached, an attempt to engage the idea of the imagination in America would address the understanding and employment of the imagination

not by the artist but by the individual at large in the culture. A way to do that, in turn, might be to set up an investigation of those figures in the culture upon whom the imagination of the individual at large has unquestionably been fixed: icons in the many pantheons the culture has created are, after all, fashioned by people in the culture to serve their imaginative needs. Our political and economic and military heroes, our scientist and educator icons, even our figures of legendary athletic prowess not only speak to, but to a significant degree emerge from, our imagination. To analyze their identities and infer from them the internal condition of the individual at large in the culture is, at least theoretically, an achievable goal, and what might be called the imaginative state of the culture might thereby be ascertained.

But the more direct avenue into the subject does, indeed, appear to be through American art, the artist, and the artistic community. For one thing the avenue has clear borders, in contrast to the immensity of the general subject of cultural heroes and hero-worship; and for another thing the area of art offers us an attractive kind of self-reflection with respect to the subject. The artist, after all, is by definition the figure of the imager, and when we address the way the audience undertakes to envision such a figure, we encounter (if one may say it) the imager imagined. An intensity of dynamic is possible in such a dialectic that would be most difficult to discover with any other figure, and this, combined with the fact that the history of the work, world, and life of the artist in our culture has charted such an unusual course, leads us almost inevitably to contemplate this aesthetic arena.

To contemplate the aesthetic in America is, immediately, to encounter the Platonic societal question: Is aesthetic experience a source of strength or of weakness for the individual engaged in the larger cultural struggle? Indeed, insofar as the artist does anything besides produce works of art, is aesthetic experience a source of strength or of weakness to the artist himself? The career of every American artist speaks in some way to this question, and the careers of what Professors Budd and Raeburn call our "public" artists speak to it directly. The public artist is properly identified as an exemplum, and what is being

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exemplified is the way close, prolonged association with aesthetic experience affects the figure's ability to deal with life outside the aesthetic sphere. What of the relationship with nature, with society and institutions and communities other than the artistic? What of the figure's relationship with the family, the other, the loved one or the nemesis or, finally, the self? These are the relationships required of all men and women, and they constitute what often is called reality. Imagination, as the idea is traditionally and centrally conceived, is the peculiar human quality that responds to reality, and is thought, historically, to be at once our most powerful weapon and our greatest weakness. An excess of imagination is said to make us unrealistic with regard to the experience life requires of us: we imagine things to be other than they are, and we must suffer the consequences. At the same time, an insufficiency of imagination strips us of our power to cope, to reply to reality with imaginative strategies and tactics, and in our helpless literal-mindedness we must suffer the consequences. How best, then, to condition and employ the imagination is a question of such seminal importance that it might be said to be definitive in any culture, anywhere.

In our culture the question, long regarded as settled according to the Platonic prescription, now sets us at war with ourselves. The possibility that cultivation of the aesthetic sensibility might actually prove redemptive to the cultural imagination conflicts publicly with its opposite: the possibility that the inadequacies of our imagination are the direct result of too great a cultivation of the aesthetic sensibility. In the face of such a conflict we turn to our artists themselves, and most specifically our public artists, to resolve the conflict. What does the life of Mark Twain say to the question? What does the life of Hemingway say? The lives of both artists constitute arguments for the defense. Their relationships with nature, with society, and with institutions and communities other than the artistic are made, by them and by us, very large and important parts of their life stories. As adventurers in nature, pressing always close to the vanguard of some kind of frontier, they are offering a proof, just as they are when they simultaneously attack the institutions of society and yet amass fortunes and honors there unachieved by the most

dedicated servants of "reality." They are not, as Raeburn would have it, abandoning the life of the artist; they are celebrating that life for an audience in search of instruction. It is *because* they are artists that they are able to command an audience while acting out, in these other spheres, these other roles. The connection between the prior artist identity and the subsequent non-artist role is vital and unbreakable. The same may be said of their roles as heads of families, and formidable friends and foes, as loner adventurers in search, at last, of themselves. We cannot determine whether or not they are successful until we understand what they are trying to do. They are trying to exemplify how the cultivation of the aesthetic sensibility adds force to the imagination as it engages the world of non-aesthetic experience. They are rebutting a prior cultural argument. And they are doing so because an eager audience in the culture—of which they are themselves no doubt a part—wants them to do so.

Twain and Hemingway are of course only examples, if very good ones, of the phenomenon. Each was a member of an artistic community that contained many other important figures who shared the artistic stage, and those communities themselves served, as the artistic community serves now, as examples to individuals in the larger communities outside. Further, both the individual public artists and their communities form into a chronology of tradition that is itself subject to analysis in the terms that have been suggested here. It is certainly proper to select out a single figure from a single community and concentrate upon that figure, but the danger is that the figure, in such isolated focus, can come to seem *sui generis*. Twain and Hemingway, considered as public figures, are anything but *sui generis*. They are representative spokesmen for a cultural point of view, and should be considered in that context.

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Forum

Members of the association are invited to submit letters, typed and double-spaced, commenting on articles published in *PMLA* or on matters of general scholarly or critical interest. Footnotes are discouraged, and letters of more than one thousand words will not be considered. Decision to publish and the right to edit are reserved to the editor, and the authors of articles discussed will be invited to respond.

Interpreting Shakespeare's *Sonnets*

To the Editor:

Adena Rosmarin's "explicitly purposeful" account of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, "Hermeneutics versus Erotics: Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and Interpretive History" (100 [1985]: 20-37), ends up perpetuating the very reading of the *Sonnets* it establishes as traditional. Instead of resolving her paradoxical characterization of the *Sonnets* as "sincere" and "artificial," Rosmarin sustains it by attributing it to the sonnets' dual identity as heart-felt love utterances and artful poems. By first implanting this reading in critical history and then ratifying it with critical theory, the article secures what it demonstrates has been entrenched for almost two centuries.

Why endorse what needs no endorsing? With Rorty's pragmatist critic, Rosmarin might answer, because such an explanation is useful to our understanding and appreciation of the text. We seek "the explanation that best explains the literary text, most fully unfolding its distinctive aesthetic richness, heuristic power, and conceptual challenge" (32). If this unfolding occurs when the sonnets are read as both sincerely spoken and artificially written, her explanation is no doubt useful.

Curiously, however, only in discussing the sonnets as artificial does Rosmarin attempt such an unfolding. Her reading of sonnet 138, for example, displays the bold gyrations of sound and sense by which the sonnet releases itself from referential fidelity and asserts its semantic independence. But what is the sincere counterpart to this irresponsible tropological writing? Indeed, the concept of sincerity seems strangely inapplicable to the exchanges described in "When my love swears she is made of truth / I do believe her though I know she lies."

The problem in sonnet 138 is not that words belie their speakers' feelings but rather that they are *true* to the speakers' mutual desire (to lie together): "Therefore I lie with her, and she with me, / And in our faults by lies we flattered be." At issue, then, is the correspondence not between words and feelings but between words and desire, or will, the term the collection favors. That correspondence cannot sensibly be judged sincere or insincere, for will speaks to realize rather than reveal itself, an attempt that not improperly involves concealment, misrepresentation, and perversion of the truth.

In a sense, willful speech is always sincere, always true to itself, though its very fidelity to self-interested desire might well preclude any such claim.

It is unclear on what grounds Rosmarin can single out the sincere strain from the multiple artificial ones. Unless we assume we know what sincerity looks like before the poet reveals it, how can we recognize it? In the line Rosmarin takes as a model of Renaissance sincerity, Sidney's "'Foole,' said my muse to me, 'looke in thy hearte and write,'" what authorizes singling out *heart* as the site of feeling from *heart* as the site of appetite or will, for example? And what is to prevent an Elizabethan ear from hearing *art* as well as *heart* if the *h* was, as phonologists agree, almost silent? (This particular conflation throws into question the divisibility of the very terms under discussion.) Though Rosmarin maintains that spoken words are not vexed by the tropological ambiguities besetting written ones, Elizabethan rhetorics classified the tropes she discusses as auricular figures, figures of sound.

The issue of sincerity is inapplicable not only to sonnet 138 but to the psychological and discursive circumstances of the whole collection. Rationalization (35), self-flattery (62), self-deception (93), conscious madness (147), perjury (152) all issue from a torn and conflicted self, too doubled up to be gauged by as single-minded and univocal a principle as sincerity. For the very possibility of such a pure principle, like *fair* itself, is challenged by the ambivalence of the sonnets to the young man and confuted by the negations of those to the dark lady. That no satisfactory equivalent for sincerity can be found in Renaissance rhetorics casts further doubt on the relevance of this principle. Rosmarin substitutes plain speech, but plain speech is itself an artificial style. (Consider Berowne's renunciation of "Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise" for equally artificial "russet years and honest kersey noes" [*Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.406, 413].) She also proposes decorum, yet decorum appeals to outer circumstances of composition and delivery irrelevant to a principle accountable only to private evaluation.

To dispute the appropriateness of sincerity to the *Sonnets* is not to opt for artifice but to question the

present viability or usefulness of the dichotomy. As Rosmarin herself reveals, it is in response to the late eighteenth-century need to read the *Sonnets* as psychologically sincere as well as historically authentic that the merely artificial is brought into play as a means of shaping, regulating, and maintaining the sincere. The sincerity-artificiality antithesis thus serves to identify Shakespeare with certain desirable traits and to dissociate him from objectionable ones.

Rosmarin's interpretive history is useful in treating criticism of the *Sonnets* not as an account to be set aside or passed through before confronting the sonnets themselves but as an account on which that confrontation depends. Yet her traditional terms no longer usefully characterize that confrontation, for the dichotomy misrepresents our current interest in the discursive and psychological schisms of the *Sonnets*. Furthermore—and this may be the same thing—it trivializes the impact of the deconstructive, not to mention pragmatic, challenges that affect the "inventive dynamics" of her account.

If such an account no longer satisfies us, we might prefer an interpretive history that does not settle us more comfortably into the traditional interpretive position—an unsettling history that would not restate us where we have been but rather question the necessity of our ever having been there. More conscious of its own historical status, such a history might begin by asking why at a certain point in the early nineteenth century it became necessary to interpret the *Sonnets*, to interpret poetry, as sincere and artificial. This question gives rise to a still more radical one: Why at that point did it become necessary to give and publish interpretations at all? For the truly useful question Rosmarin's article tacitly poses is, Why did the interpretive history of the *Sonnets* not begin until almost two centuries after the work appeared?

MARGRETA DE GRAZIA
University of Pennsylvania

Reply:

De Grazia's response illustrates our need for a theory of interpretive history. Her misunderstanding of the purpose and dynamics of writing interpretive histories—she thinks that solving a problem "secures" it, that plotting a history perpetuates it—issues from the traditional theoretical assumptions that surface in her conclusion. And these assumptions, in turn, engender the multiple misreadings that inhabit the body of her response.

To begin with these misreadings. First, I cite Sidney's famous prescription—that in one's "heart" one finds "art"—because its punning irony enacts my thesis: that "hermeneutics" and "erotics" are paradoxically one. De

Grazia, however, wonders how I "can single out the sincere strain." The answer is that I cannot and do not. The impossibility of doing so is my point. Second, according to de Grazia, I "maintain that spoken words are not vexed by the tropological ambiguities besetting written ones." As anyone who has read the *Phaedrus* or my essay knows, the idea is Plato's, not mine. I presume only to analyze its consequences. Third, de Grazia observes that "plain speech is itself an artificial style." I quite agree: "seeming artlessness requires perhaps the greatest art" (23). Fourth, she argues that correspondence should be construed in terms of "will," for "willful speech is always sincere, always true to itself." Again, one must agree—especially when the maker of these "sugred Sonnets" is named "Will"—and I do agree: "when a sonneteer speaks eloquently he is speaking in character or, as we say, sincerely" (30).

What is interesting is that de Grazia has misread not simply but significantly: consistently (mis)taking my topics for my tools, consistently taking my presumed tools as her topics. This displacement happens because de Grazia's own interpretive tools and criteria—note that she deems tropological writing "irresponsible"—are precisely those that I analyze, namely, those of post-1800 criticism and theory. Her critique thus constitutes an inadvertent self-critique, its assumptions "found" in my discourse and contested in her own. More important, however, are the assumptions about interpretive histories that remain unfound and uncontested, those that impel and inform her concluding questions.

But first, an answer. It is well known that Shakespeare's sonnets were a Romantic obsession because their generically "personal" rhetoric made them seem the key to Shakespeare's heart (20). A less well known reason was the publication in 1780 of Edmund Malone's Quarto-based edition, which supplanted John Benson's pirated edition, first published in 1640. Benson's editing, to say the least, was creative: eight sonnets, the dedication, and the 1609 title were removed; additional poems—some not by Shakespeare—were interwoven, and the recombinant results individually titled; other changes made the male beloved seem female. Thus, only with Malone's edition did the sonnets reacquire the story whose erotic enigma seemed at once to demand interpretation and to authorize "sincerity" and "artifice" as interpretive terms.

Now let us examine de Grazia's questions. They assume (1) that the first published text is a work's "appearance," (2) that this "appearance" is a self-evident and uniquely important textual origin, which the interpretive history interprets, (3) that the interpreting work is separate from the (temporally and logically prior) interpreted work, (4) that the interpretive history of the sonnets begins around 1800 and consists of "interpretations" (presumably critical essays or books),

(5) that this interpretive history has self-evident borders (hence de Grazia knows when it begins and what it contains), (6) that an interpretive history exists apart from and prior to its interpretation—much as the sonnets, presumably, exist apart from and prior to their interpretations.

These assumptions are in serious need of questioning. How, for example, would de Grazia deal with an interpretation published *before* the "appearance" of a work? Is Francis Meres's repeatedly quoted praise—Shakespeare's "sugred Sonnets among his private friends" (1598)—part of the interpretive history or not? If not, why not? What about sonnets 138 and 144, published in *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599)? Which "appearance" is the "appearance"? Which version do we interpret? Are the scribal manuscripts dating from the 1620s and 1630s part of the interpretive history? If not, why not?

Another question: why does de Grazia exclude editions from the interpretive history? Are they not interpretive enough? Many editors, particularly in the nineteenth century, have attempted to solve the "problem" of the sonnets by reordering. Are these not interpretations? And, in our own century, is not Stephen Booth's edition an interpretation? Further, is not Benson's edition one of the most influential interpretations of the sonnets yet produced? His "poems" in effect were Shakespeare's sonnets from 1640 to 1780.

This line of questioning leads us to ask whether Malone's edition is an "appearance" of the sonnets or an "interpretation" of the sonnets. We can and should question the 1609 Quarto similarly: is it an "appearance" or an "interpretation"? De Grazia assumes that the answers are so self-evident—the sonnets appear there, their interpretive history begins here—that such questions need not be asked. I am arguing otherwise: that not asking these questions leads to claims and assumptions that cannot withstand analysis. Asking and answering these questions, however, requires a conceptual language based on pragmatism and rhetoric, not on—or not only on—representation. My essay argues the problem-solving and change-making powers of this terminological switch, using the dilemma of the sonnets and their interpretive history to exemplify our contemporary theoretical dilemma. My goal was to break our institutional habit of asking the same old questions—to what does the literary work correspond? to what does its interpretation correspond?—by telling the history of how we came to think of these questions as natural and necessary and by showing the greater explanatory power of different questions, namely, whom are we—or they—trying to persuade of what and why?

This argument simultaneously stresses the importance of writing—and of writing about—interpretive histories without repeating the correspondence questions that deconstruction has shown us the futility and folly of asking. The fact that de Grazia's response everywhere

asks these questions without anywhere questioning them argues our need for a theory of interpretive history, for self-critical ways of reasoning about this pervasive but as yet unexplained practice.

ADENA ROSMARIN

Stanford Humanities Center

Kleist's "Dialogic Midwifery"

To the Editor:

While John H. Smith's "Dialogic Midwifery in Kleist's *Marquise von O* and the Hermeneutics of Telling the Untold in Kant and Plato" (100 [1985]: 203–18) offers a cogent reading of Kleist's dramatization of the limitations of conventional epistemology, I would like to suggest that, for all Smith's dazzling erudition, the hermeneutic bias of his essay is fundamentally misleading. Smith asks us to assimilate the absences in Kleist's tale to a reading that foregrounds the instrumentality of dialogue and applauds the "valuable birth" of new conversations and genres inspired by Kleist's text. Let me state at the outset that I am troubled by Smith's appropriation of metaphors of parturition without a thorough investigation of the dialectic of birth Kleist's story sets before us. Clearly Plato's statement—"So great, then, is the importance of midwives; but their function is less important than mine" (Smith 210)—is not a statement Smith himself would make, and yet Plato's assertion is symptomatic of Smith's line of reasoning. I suggest we look at Kleist's tale from another angle—one that places its "unnarrated center" in explicit dialogue with our culture's contradictory notions about the relation between epistemology and reproductive labor.

While critics like Smith and philosophers like Gadamer see silence as the impetus for more playful conversations with the tradition, Jürgen Habermas has responded by saying that it is "[o]nly when philosophy discovers in the dialectical course of history the traces of violence that deform repeated attempts at dialogue" that philosophy can further this dialogue. He suggests we seek a form of "dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed" (*Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro [Boston: Beacon, 1971], 315). (In Kleist's tale the suppressed voices are numerous and include the would-be rapists as well as the groom Leopardo. A hermeneutic faith in dialogic being does not seem to include sensitivity to dialogue's social constraints.) This reasoning suggests two questions that the reader of the *Marquise von O* must ask: What is repressed but also given a formal shape and therefore a "voice" in Kleist's narrative? What might be distorted or hidden about Kleist's story in Smith's decision to



THE PAPER CHASE

Libraries and universities are paying record prices for writers' archives of manuscripts and letters—and driving up the cost of literary fame. **By Richard Cohen**

ARTHUR MILLER WAS IN China directing *Death of a Salesman* when his house in Connecticut was gutted by fire. At the time his archival consultant, Andreas Brown, owner of New York City's Gotham Book Mart, was imploring him to do something with his papers, housed in Miller's nearby barn. "They're perfectly safe," Miller said. "I've got them in steel cabinets." Brown explained that should the barn catch fire the files would simply combust. Miller agreed to go through his papers with Brown, deciding which should be rehoused, and where. They came to a small package done up in brown paper and sealed with wax. "What's this?" asked Brown. Miller explained that it contained letters written to him by Marilyn Monroe before they married. "How many are here?" asked Brown. "Oh," Miller guessed, "perhaps a hundred."

The Monroe letters now reside in a bank strong box, in accordance with Miller's wishes, and are likely to remain there for several years after his death. Although not for sale on the open market, they would be worth a considerable amount of money. The last significant

Monroe letter to go on sale fetched \$12,000; the Miller package could well fetch more than a quarter of a million dollars, as across the board the prices for literary archives are soaring. There was a time when Joseph Conrad sold two of his manuscripts for £15; T.S. Eliot gave a friend the manuscript of *The Wasteland*, arguably the greatest poem of the 20th century. But in 1994, the poet Allen Ginsberg's extensive archives were sold to Stanford University for a reported \$980,000, the largest sum to date for an archive of a then living author.

The deal was brokered by Ginsberg's agent Andrew Wylie, who is famed for the book advances he has won for his authors, and Wylie hopes to more than double that sum this fall with what may be the biggest sale yet for a living author: Norman Mailer, whose archive, filling 400 cubic feet in a warehouse in Pennsylvania, com-

prises virtually everything Mailer has written. Started by Mailer's mother in the late 1960s, it spans his career, from his bar mitzvah speech to more than 25,000 letters; the manuscripts of more than 40 books; film scripts, several of which have not been shot; hundreds of photographs, videotapes, and films; all his financial records; and at least one complete unpublished novel, written when Mailer was in college and titled *No Percentage*.

But the current boom in literary collections began not in the lunchrooms of the New York City publishing elite but in the English department at the University of Texas at Austin.

Harry Ransom first came to Austin as a part-time instructor in English in 1935, and by 1961 he was the university's chancellor. As he climbed the academic ladder he pondered how he could put Texas on the map, and he urged the university

ILLUSTRATION BY IAN POLLOCK

to collect modern English and American literature. "Somebody should be paying more serious attention to the period since 1870," he explained. "That will be our undertaking." Manuscripts attract researchers and writers, which in turn attract students, conferences, exhibitions, and prestige. Ransom explained to the university's trustees that the letters and manuscripts of writers most of them had never heard of would establish their university for all time. The budget was expansive, since the funds for book-buying came from on-campus oil wells. He would make Austin, as he put it, "a center of cultural compass, a research center to be the Bibliothèque Nationale of the only state that started out as an independent nation." And today the Texas library, according to a recent *New York Times* ranking, is one of the top five in the world.

I found myself recently in the main manuscript room on the fifth floor of the Harry Ransom Center (as the library was inevitably christened), a vast building right in the middle of the university's huge campus. The first draft of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* lay open, in D.H. Lawrence's clear copper-plate script, ready for my inspection. A few shelves along was Joseph Conrad's handwritten *Nigger of the Narcissus*. E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* was there in green ink, the writing becoming wilder in the fire of composition. Robert Lowell's proofs were in a bound volume nearly a foot thick, emendations clipped to every page. Nearby, a scholar researching a biography of Tom Stoppard had discovered an early draft of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in which the duo, in England, make contact with King Lear. Several of Proust's original manuscripts are there too, with hardly an inch of spare space on each page.

THE POWER OF THE HARRY RANSOM Center is such that it now houses, in whole or in large part, the archives of Conrad, Lowell, Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Graham Greene, James Joyce, George Bernard Shaw, Evelyn Waugh, Doris Lessing, and Samuel Beckett. Currently overseeing the collection is Thomas Staley, a 65-year-old Joyce specialist appointed director of the center in 1988. Engaging and energetic, Staley combines a scholar's passion and knowledge with a keen head for business. According to one leading book dealer, "Most librarians faced with an asking

price will say yes or no, but not negotiate. Only Staley will say, 'Well, I want it, but I won't pay that.'"

Under Staley the pace of the center's acquisitions accelerated. It makes between 40 and 50 acquisitions a year, largely driven by the library's need to satisfy the changing interests of its younger scholars. But even for Texas those purchases don't come cheap. As late as the 1970s archive prices were relatively low, between \$25,000 and \$75,000, and then only for elderly, well-established authors, if not actually deceased ones. Most other authors had been cajoled into donating their archives, which could at one time be taken as tax write-offs, but in the early 1970s those tax breaks were eliminated—so why not get some money up front?

That money, in U.S. dollars, is a source of anxiety in Britain, which is losing the

started a new campaign for tax breaks and new rules to support a fund to keep archives in Britain. There is Seamus Heaney's main archive and the works of genre authors such as P.D. James and John Le Carré. Then there is T.S. Eliot's archive, which rests with his widow Valerie; Anthony Powell's, held by his two sons, who are mulling things over following his recent death; Henry Greene's, particularly rewarding because of his range of friends; and William Golding's. In each case the seller might wish the archive to remain in Britain, but the perception is still that America—and especially Austin—is where the money is.

Recently Holroyd and Staley appeared together on BBC radio and talked about modern archives, and Holroyd was asked what could be done to stop British papers leaving for America. He said that maybe the best move would be to offer Tom Staley a job in England. Staley laughed. He'd already been made several offers to leave Texas—and turned them all down. Money, he said, wasn't the issue.

Of course, money isn't the only reason authors part with their archives. One of the reasons Leon Uris gave his to Austin was that he supported the university's football team. Samuel Beckett handed over priceless drafts in return for a packet of tea. (The drafts went to Jacob Schwartz, a dealer who was by profession a dentist. For this reason, and his ability to acquire other authors' papers as well, Beckett dubbed Schwartz "The Great Extractor.") Most importantly, authors want to have some sense of where they stand in relation to posterity. As Staley puts it, "Literary reputations ebb and flow, yet the purchase of a living writer's archive represents a contemporary ratification of a writer's place in the literary canon. The investment by the library confirms, too, its belief that the writer will be studied in the future."

Once an archive arrives, there can be surprises. Kenneth Tynan's archive included a pair of Laurence Olivier's trousers; Anthony Burgess's had a square of James Joyce's wallpaper. When Emory University went through Ted Hughes's archive, it found fragments of Sylvia Plath's lost novel *Falcon Yard* on the back of some early drafts of Hughes's poems.

The Mailer archive is reportedly going for \$2.5 million—the most expensive ever.

archives of its major 20th-century authors to America. In 1997, for instance, even as the British Library paid £1.2 million for the complete archive of Laurence Olivier, negotiations were underway for a far more valuable prize. The papers of Britain's then poet laureate, Ted Hughes, were acquired by the Emory Library in Atlanta for around \$600,000. The papers were not even offered to any British institution. More recently, David Hare sold off his papers to Texas before he even knew that the British Library had funds for buying living authors' archives.

However, as biographer Michael Holroyd explains, "British libraries are not only greatly handicapped by the lack of money available but also by the enormous time it takes to get a decision." Some of the delay is due to bureaucratic infighting, some to legislation. The Heritage Literary Fund, for instance, is unable to provide money to bid for any artist's work less than 20 years old or for the archive of someone who is still living. Thus most contemporary archives are still landing in America, although in June the current British poet laureate, Andrew Motion,

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Some authors are not so fortunate in their archivists. In 1906 Dr. Frederick A. Cook took a photograph that made him famous. The photo buttressed Cook's account of how he had braved avalanches and ice cliffs to make the first ascent of Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America. "At last!" wrote Cook, "the soul-stirring task is crowned with victory. The top of the continent was under our feet." Three years ago, however, a researcher discovered in Cook's archives, deposited at Ohio State University, a negative that produced an uncropped version of the crucial photograph, showing that it had been taken 15,000 feet below the McKinley summit, at barely 5,000 feet above sea level. The photo was a hoax, one that might never have been uncovered had Cook not left Ohio his photographic negatives, but he had imposed no restrictions on what the library should make available.

Most often, writers do impose restrictions. Christopher Isherwood's archive has several diaries embargoed for 30 years; Georgia O'Keefe's letters to her husband are embargoed until 2006; Martha Gellhorn's entire archive is closed till 2024. But the opposite applies too. Samuel Beckett was alarmed to discover that a one-time close woman friend had offered his intimate letters to Austin, and he moved to stop their sale. He then learned that the woman was down on her luck and anxious to see her son properly educated. He got in touch with the university and said, "Buy the letters. And give her the very best price you can."

Then there is the current situation with Knopf, one of the few American publishing houses that have given their archives to a library, depositing its papers at Austin. However, Knopf's new owners recently decided to create an official archive themselves, and since they cannot get back what has already been given away, if they go ahead the archive will be split. Staley recently traveled to New York to discuss what the planned archive would cost in administrative and financial terms. "They plan to appoint a consultant to do a three-month feasibility study," he says. "I was able to tell them things they hadn't considered. They may go ahead, of course, but I'm hopeful they'll see the value of continuing with us."

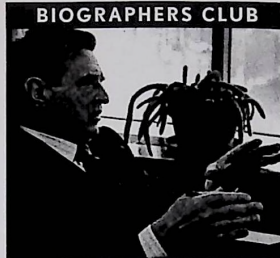
Overall the objective of writers and librarians alike is to create value: the value of a writer's reputation and the value of

the libraries' holdings. Unlike book publishers, libraries are not looking to make a profit and hence may take a long time deciding whether a purchase is worthwhile. As the Huntington Library's Sue Hodson says, "Who do we collect, and who not? The great risk we all take is, how can we possibly predict? It's a gamble in every way." Remarkably, the New York Public Library took two years to acquire the archive of Vladimir Nabokov and even rebuffed the first approach by the author's estate, but the library now regards the archive as one of the finest in its collection. Glenn Horowitz, a rare book dealer in New York who handled the Nabokov sale, says that most of the time "I feel like an 18th-century marriage broker in a shtetl, bringing the right two interested parties together."

Established assessors are wary of literary agents like Wylie getting into the action. And yet it appears that some libraries are willing to deal with agents used to top-dollar advances. Shortly after the Ginsberg deal Wylie's then London partner Gillon Aitken approached the newly appointed curator at the University of Tulsa library with the archive of V.S. Naipaul. The curator, who'd never made a purchase before, paid more than \$500,000. Next Aitken proposed to sell Paul Theroux's archive. One leading dealer Aitken consulted for advice told me, "Gillon came in and changed the whole methodology—or he tried to. He asked for a million dollars—for Theroux! A number of American libraries said they just wouldn't talk to him again. I asked him how he'd reached that figure, and he simply said, 'I made it up.'" Aitken confirms the story: "I thought it was a nice, round number." No one bought the archive—and no one has yet. Theroux is now represented by Wylie.

For the Mailer archive, Wylie is reportedly asking \$2.5 million, which would make the archive the most expensive ever. Andreas Brown acknowledges that there are institutions out there that might come up with the money. "But it would be poor judgment to do so without a professional appraisal."

Years ago W.H. Auden wrote of our "shameless, envious Age, when the Public will shell out more cash for/Notebooks and sketches that were never intended for them/Than for perfected works." His working drafts now reside in an American library. ■



BIOGRAPHERS CLUB

GEORGE SOROS

Michael Kaufman is writing a biography of financier and philanthropist George Soros, to be published by Knopf in February 2002.

I was a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times* in the mid-1980s, and my dissident friends told me about this remarkable and, at that time, very much unknown American who was funding all sorts of philanthropic projects. I came to know the workings of this international do-good operation and I realized how dramatic the things he was doing were, from creating radio stations for nomadic Mongols to building a university in Budapest.

He's probably the most broadly and deeply engaged private citizen in the world. I don't want to be dewy-eyed, but I can't think of another person who hasn't held public office who has had the impact he's had. In Russia he's entered the language; *sorosovayt* means to apply for a grant.

He says he would have preferred to have written a philosophical work that would last for centuries. And you say to yourself, "What is this guy talking about?" But he just wants to write something that is true. The fact is, though, that he can't. He's tried. When he was in his twenties, each day after he was done with his Wall Street job, he'd write. He was trying to explain how change occurs in the world, something to replace Marx and Hegel. He hasn't shown it to many people, but it is a tour de force. He scorns it now. He says it's banal. But to sit and have the patience to write that—that is not your everyday rich man.

—Reported by Nancy Beiles

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
ANN ARBOR 48104

November 7, 1971

Professor Robert F. Lucid
Department of English
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dear Bob:

This is to say how very much I liked both Mailer books. I've done a long essay-review on them for Saturday Review appearing, I think, in the November 13th issue.

I wanted to ask whether contributors' copies of the essay collection have been sent out. I haven't yet received one, although the fee did come through. I was grateful indeed for that.

Hope all goes well with you. I've asked Harper's Magazine Press to send you a copy of my new book, The Devil in the Fire, due out in January.

All the best,

Jack

John W. Aldridge

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA 19104

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Department of English D1*

Area Code 215 243-7341

November 23, 1981

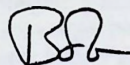
Mr. Jean Malaquais
508 East 87th Street
New York, NY 10028

Dear Jean:

Norman tells me that your Dominique is interested in applying to Penn. I would be most pleased to act as her host on a visit here, and to provide her with any advice or information she might want with respect to the University. Please do ask her to call or write.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,



Robert F. Lucid

RFL:lkd

212 - home
628-8064



September 23, 1991

Prof. Robert F. Lucid
Hill College House
University of Pennsylvania
3333 Walnut
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6193

Dear Bob,

Thanks for the fine visit. The meals and conversation were great; it was the perfect way to unwind after the Wilkes interviews. Your counsel was very useful.

I hope your house director is back from Tangiers or Oran--from Barbary Shore--and you have relinquished operational duties to her, so that you can get back to the biography. I am still somewhat stunned by your generous offer to collaborate with you. I hope that you will find me to be an apt partner. I'll give it my best shot.

Enclosed are the 50 pages listing all of my Mailer interviews--some 340 of them. I'll have to add ten more pages after Harlot's Ghost, no doubt. I just finished reading Scott Spencer's profile in the Times. Well done, I thought. I can see none of the snideness in James Atlas' Times piece of ten years ago, a sign, perhaps, that the new novel will ascend and blossom like fireworks. The signs before Ancient Evenings were so different, strained and uneven, herky-jerky. Let's hope.

I'll look forward to hearing how you make out with Ascend. Love from Donna to you and JoAnn.

Best,

Mike

JML/db

Enclosures



July 5, 1989

Professor Robert Lucid
English Department
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Bob,

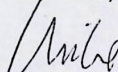
Here is the revised summary of Mailer reviews. The point I was stumbling to make on the phone is this: Mailer's best and worst reviews do not distribute evenly along left-right political lines. The New Leader pans him and Commentary praises him (although Podhoretz was obviously a factor in the case of Commentary).

Also worth noting is the very high rating of Existential Errands, a minor work, comparatively speaking. But Mailer's general standing was never higher than it was in 1972.

Also enclosed is the latest Illinois Issues. The book I mentioned, Jack Gance, is reviewed on p. 31.

I will call you in a few weeks.

All Best,


Mike

JML:ck

Enclosures