

Richard Wilbur and Norman Mailer "A"

Mailer & Wilbur at
U of Penn for Lucid
retirement, September 27,
1996

Host) . . . that famous artists come together to celebrate a moment in the life of a scholar, but that's exactly what's happening today as two of the greatest of our American writers, Norman Mailer and Richard Wilbur, join the English Department of the University of Pennsylvania in marking the retirement of Professor Robert F. Lucid. It's obvious why the English Department should be honoring Bob; he's been here for 32 years! He began as an assistant-professor here in 1964 and came up through the ranks as an associate-professor and full-professor. He was a graduate chair in the mid-1970s, a department chair from 1980 to 1985 . . . -And as chair I know how long those five years can be! . . . and he was again temporary chair for the department in 1990. He created the King's College program in London which we send our graduates to, and which is one of the best such exchange programs, I think, in the country. He presided over the Steinberg Lectures which brought so many notable writers into the university and brought them not only to read, not only to have their presence felt in a general way, but brought them into . . . -here in our classrooms and talk with our students. He was instrumental in setting up the reading project which holds the first-year class together, we hope. And he was active too in the tournament program, which is a fellowship for the very brightest of our undergraduates to go and study in England. He has won Winbach teaching awards, and long before the recent stress on teaching, long before a certain flag-waving about the glories of teaching became fashionable around here, Bob insisted on the importance of teaching, on our responsibility to our students, and on the pleasures that come from fulfilling that responsibility.

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It's obvious too why people who aren't in the English department should want to be honoring Bob. He was chair of the faculty senate in 1996 . . . -oh, 1976 to 7... -master of Hill House from 1979 until this year. Indeed, he helped create the basic concept of what it means to have a residential housing system . . . -residential house system. He has been chair of the Council of House-Masters from 1980 until his retirement this year, and he was co-director of the Twenty-First Century Project which was responsible, among other things, for creating the Writer's House, which is adding a great deal to the life of writing on this campus. Of Bob's participation in the Twenty-First Century Project provost Cheldorov has written, "He spent countless hours in bonus free-sessions and at subcommittee meetings on all aspects of the project, and, as always, he displayed his superb judgement and intelligence in the discussion of the issues. Indeed, Bob has been a great citizen of this university, leaving behind a legacy of respect for artistic achievement and a life of culture." And here, perhaps, you may see why not only members of this university community should gather to honor Bob Lucid but why great writers might do so as well, for just as Bob understands learning as going on in a community and must be as rich and sustaining as the actual pedagogy within it, he understands great writing as going on in a context too, a context of history, of leading ideas, of audiences and of creators, real people and real places and not just books. We can see this in the title of an article of his: "Aesthetic Sensibility and the Idea of the Imagination in America" and in his course, "Celebration in the American Literary Life" -great name for a course. One new project that has dominated his research over the past year is his

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authorized biography of Norman Mailer. Here's the way that Bob Lucid described this work:

"The culture illuminates Mailer's life, but the argument here will be that Mailer's life, in significant measure, also illuminates the culture, and, thus, this book will be about Mailer's times, about the postwar period, about what has come to be called 'the conclusion of the modern'." Bob is a scholar who never was limited to books, whose friendship and kindness both to writers and to his students make words like "research" and "university surface" sound paltry and inadequate. For all that he has been and done for us we say, "Thank you, Bob" and wish for you all the best in your retirement. The book that Bob had to choose for this year's reading project is Ernest Hemingway's "A Movable Feast" and all the freshmen in town who are coming this year to Carnegie seminars on "A Movable Feast" read it, I hope, before the seminar, and we're here to discuss it. And in that work . . . -That work, of course, is the story of how a very young man, an aspiring writer, became . . . -expatriated himself to Paris in the years immediately following World War I. Bob offered a course, also called "American Expatriates in World War I," but his consideration of expatriation goes well beyond the 1920s. One of the chapters of the projected Mailer biography is called "Carbon Paper Army in Paris, 1939 to 1947." The panel assembled for the symposium, Norman Mailer, Richard Wilbur, and Robert Lucid, will be discussing how it felt to be a young expatriate writer after the Second World War. They were there, and so they should know. I leave it to Bob Lucid to introduce the symposium, and will be inviting your questions and comments at the end of the evening's proceedings, so thank you very much and welcome.

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Robert Lucid) Thank you, Wendy, that was a wonderful . . . -a nice talk. Is this alright? Can you hear this okay? It seems funny to introduce Norman Mailer and Richard Wilbur to people again. I have been doing this for so many years, and the mockery of it, of course, is that, with the single exception of this occasion, what most of the audience would always do when I would try such an introduction was look annoyed because what they really wanted to know was who the hell I was and what I was doing up there, standing between them getting at these people, whom they had come, sometimes, many many miles to see! Anyway, you know who I am at the moment. Our guests you know, too, of course. We could bring them together on almost any justification in real life you might want that interests us appropriately, with respect to the verdict of the world, but today we thought that these two men, who are good friends of mine and of my wife and who I am most grateful to for coming to this event . . . -I would have liked them to come no matter what, you know, but it just happened that there was something about their backgrounds, besides standing in the very, very front rank of their generation as narrative writer and as novelist and poet . . . -There aren't . . . -There are no people more occupying the air of their generations than they, really. So we could talk about that in many, many different ways. Most frequently, what we've done on these occasions is ask them simply to read some of their material. It seems the most appropriate thing to do under the circumstances as a kind of ceremonial acknowledgement and an invoking of the very thing that would bring us together and bring us into a situation of rapport. And I might actually try to insinuate such an

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element into today's work . . . -today's proceedings, I mean. But that's not the main thing. This isn't a reading. What this is is a gathering together for purposes of seeing if we might have an interesting conversation. This might not work, you know! So we . . . -I'm . . . -It is more than simply true to say that we haven't worked our way through this experience in anticipation of it. We right now are riding a wave of self-confidence with respect to it, which we're about to test, so you be kind to us in this regard! You couldn't find three fellows with better intentions. What I noted when the invitations went out, and it became the case that when I discovered that both Norman and Dick were going to come, that there was something particularly that they had in common that I had never been aware of either of them committing to paper at all or anybody else writing about or, even in the various times I've seen them appearing and speaking publicly, I'd never heard them speak about or refer to it . . . -to mention of their experience, which I find extraordinarily resonant and potentially good for us to know. That is, of course, that they both not only served in the war, as their generation, of course, totally participated in that experience, but, coming out of the war, they addressed, or readdressed it I suppose, in a sense, in their writing. And their first books came very close to each other. "The Naked and the Dead" was published in the Spring of 1948 which . . . -And that was Norman Mailer's first published novel. And "The Beautiful Changes" . . . -is Richard Wilbur's first volume of poetry- . . . was published in 1947. What season? Was it in the S... ?

Richard Wilbur) Fall I think.

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Robert Lucid) The Fall? Well, there you are. So we're talking about . . . -the Fall- . . . -the academic year, as it were, from nineteen-hundred-and-forty . . . -forty . . . -forty-seven . . . -Nineteen-forty-seven / forty-eight, was the year in which, whatever else happened, the . . . -was marked in its first semester, as it were, by the publication of "The Beautiful Changes" and ended . . . -and in the second by the publication of "The Naked and the Dead," which is an enormous relief to academicians like us, you know, to be able to put things properly into place -which semester they happened in and maybe which academic year! I thought what I would do with the . . . -try to begin this conversation within which, at a certain point, you will be asked to participate . . . -And, I suppose, if it seems simply . . . -so outrageously impossible to wait, you could even try to participate in the . . . -before you were invited to do so, but no promises there. I thought that I would begin by simply asking each of our guests, for instance . . . -So far as I know they haven't published and they haven't said much about this . . . to just tell us a little about the very early days . . . -separately- . . . in which they, in fact, were in the service and came out of it and what they did coming into what we call "the postwar period." That is just, almost literally, stepping into it. Could you, Norman, start us out by just talking about it, that moment in your life, that period when you had no idea . . . ? Were you anxious, I'd assume? What did . . . -And then came out and began to address the writing? Did it start separately?

Norman Mailer) Well, you know that like something like five million other men in the

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army . . . -maybe even seven or eight million of them- . . . I had the idea that when I came out I was going to write a book about the war, and show that damn army up! And, so when I came out of . . . -I then just kind of sat down, and I wrote. I remember coming out of the army in May of 1946, and finished the book in late September of '47. And, immediately we were quite . . . -My first wife and I . . . -Beatrice and I . . . -were on our way to Paris because we dreamed about it. I'd dreamed of it all through the war, and I'd dreamed of it before that. I'd dreamed of it in college. My idea of heaven would be an expatriate in Paris. That's what I wanted. And while we were sitting here just now, a famous story of Lu... -Martin Luther's came back to me, which I think is relevant. And that is that there was a woman in a small Ukranian . . . -a small ghetto in the center of Russia, who could not become pregnant. And she heard of a famous rabbi who was going to be traveling about through part of the neighboring country, about 200 miles from where her ghetto was. So she traveled on these terrible roads . . . -Back in the late Eighteenth or early Nineteenth centuries this was a very dangerous road, but she traveled there, and she finally reached the rabbi about 200 miles from where she started. And he looked at her . . . -And he was a menacing holy man. He looked at her, and he said, "Go home my child, and have no fear. You will become pregnant on your return." And she did, so she immediately became a legend in that village. And the next year another woman who was barren . . . -And she became pregnant and had a child. And the next year another woman was barren, made the same trip over the same 200 miles to see the same

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rabbi, and when she came to him he said, "My dear, I can do nothing for you. You have heard the story!" So that was what happened to me when I got to Paris. I was the second woman, but I . . . -I had heard the story. I knew . . . -I knew everything about what it was to be an expatriate in Paris, and we were not in the news. We were living in a great little apartment, and I spent my first couple of months in Paris shivering because it was too cold. It was a terrible winter in Paris, equaled only by the awful winter of 1946 when I was warm. But the winter of '47 and '48 was pretty bad too. And I used to walk the streets . . . -My first recollection of Paris, of my first months in Paris, is walking the street conjugating subjunctive verbs! And it was agonizing. I mean, I'd had three years of high-school French . . . -three years in high-school- . . . one year in college, and I was a hopeless learner. I couldn't speak a word even then: the 'e' . . . -the 'e', that 'aaah' that comes upon Americans when they're in Paris trying to speak French. I'd grasp my throat and my tongue, but I couldn't speak, so I used to conjugate these verbs, walking the streets. And I was miserable. I will get to things that are more fun later, but I'll cease for now with the misery of the first three months!

Richard Wilbur) Well, let's see. When I'd been . . . -Actually, when I was in the army . . . -I was in . . . -I was a signal-manager in the 36th Texas division, and after the Italian business we came . . . -We invaded southern France laterally and came up through France to the Siegfried line. And the people in my company were marvelous soldiers, but they were country-boys from Texas, and they didn't have any French, so my rotten little French from

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high-school made me the interpreter for the company when we needed . . . -all of our needs.

I didn't think much about it. I had to . . . -but I had to say it. But that really was . . . -was my experience of . . . -my first experience of France, and that was no way to learn about France or the French language. In fact, I don't think I can even say barbed-wire even now! After the . . . -After the war I went on the G.I. bill to Harvard graduate-school, and there I encountered a couple of French friends who were refugees from France and studying at Harvard. And they sort of turned me on various French writers about whom they were enthusiastic.

They made me trans... -start translating this or that. I did a whole novel of Eliat de Lille-Abdon's (???, SP.) called "Claire Renoir", terribly unsure, but, in any case, they helped me to do that.

And they set me other tasks. And . . . -Well, pretty soon I became a member of the Society of Fellows at Harvard so that I was embarked upon being a scholar, you see. I was being given three years of the most luxurious and indulged conditions in which to become a scholar. At the same time, as Bob Lucid points out, I had published my first book of poems. And, so, I . . .

-From the very beginning of my postwar life I was a hybrid, you see, I was expected to be a scholar. At the same time I was conspicuously a poet. I say "conspicuously" because that book was fairly well received, actually. In the Spring of '48 it seems to me a good notion to ask the Society of Fellows for some travel-money to go to Paris with because I had been hounded into being a translator of French, and it seems to me that I ought to go where the French were and listen to them talking and experiencing . . . -experience it as a live language, so my wife and

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I went over there in March of that cold year, . . . -and it sure was a cold year- . . . and I experienced it in two ways. As a poet I ran into things like the works of Francis Ponge, which did a great deal to me and for me ever afterwards. And I met people like Henri Pichet, a young French poet who was very much celebrated at the moment, and I translated a few of his things. There'd be other poets I could name if my memories were not fading so fast. On the other hand, I went to the Ecole Francaise and to the Theatre Marine to see Baroux and Madeleine Reynaud play things like Hamlet and Les Oafes Confidence. And that started me off, though I didn't know it at the time, as a translator of classic French drama. And I too walked along the streets saying parts of speech to myself and trying to achieve some ease with the language which I have never, then or later, been able to speak with confidence and eloquence. I'll stop there too!

Robert Lucid) What did . . . -what did you actually do in Paris, though?

Norman Mailer) Well, theoretically . . .

Robert Lucid) I mean . . .

Norman Mailer) No, I'm being truthful. Theoretically, my wife and I would . . . -She had been in the WAVES, and she was a liberated woman at a very early date, chronologically speaking. She'd been a lieutenant in the WAVES, and I'd been a private in the Army. Given the fact that . . . -To go back one moment to the Army, the great joke in my barracks used to be, "Hey, man, do you salute your wife before you do it?" But, anyway, she was on . . . -she was on the G.I. bill, and I was on the G.I. bill. And we took a course at the Sorbonne called 'Le

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Couer de Civilisation Francaise,' which the French . . . -It was the first time that the Sorbonne in its 1000 year history had ever gone to the tank, which is they'd thrown a fight. They'd lowered their very high standards because France was desperately in need of dollars at the time. And, since The United States government was paying them in dollars for our tuition, they concocted this special course, this 'Couer de Civilisation Francaise,' which had about as much to do with French civilization as an American high-school course in Home Economics! And we had a series of courses, but they were all . . . -There must have been . . . -I forget the number. Let's say approximately . . . -somewhere between 500 and 1000 G.I.s taking the courses. We all signed-up for the year. We had a number of scams which produced scandal because we went to various . . . -We had to buy various textbooks, and we were able to . . . -We . . . -All of us had been in . . . -It was my first . . . -It was my first contact with the true corruption of the French commercialism! We all went and got . . . -The storerooms gave us receipts for the books we bought, but we could then use terribly used copies, you see, and they would charge us for new books, . . . -It was very . . . -The receipts were very odd . . . and then we'd be reimbursed for that. Theoretically, you went without a lot of money, so . . . -I don't say this with any pride at all. I just want to indicate something of the temper of the times. I mean, nobody who was taking the course was there for any other reason than that the army owes me a year in Paris! That says it all. You didn't worry about a thing, you know. Just . . . -We . . . -I think I left about two or three courses. I remember I was influenced by one course

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that I took which was with an old French teacher. She was very old. You could not call her "joie de laine." (???, WD. OR WDS. IN FRENCH MIGHT NOT BE CORRECT) She was repugnant. And she wore very heavy eyeglasses. She was a remarkable woman. There she was, this ugly, crippled woman with a passion for the French language, that used a terrible accent. Think of what we realized. This is something we had never . . . -We didn't have anything remotely like that with English. You know, we'd been forced to read Shakespeare in high-school, but we didn't have anything comparable with this. This woman had an enormous passion about French, and she used to speak with this harsh kind of voice. And the effect it had was that many years later one of my daughters had to enter a small school and needed French. And so I said "Alright, I'll teach her some French this Summer." And I used to drill her. She used to hate the lessons I gave her because I was imitating instinctively this wonderful old teacher, this teacher of French! And so I would say, "Bonjour, mademoiselle, comment vous partez vous?" (???, SOUNDS LIKE) And I would put my . . . -And she translated each book in fear and trembling! She had these tremors of fear going through her, that she should study with me! But it was incredible because I never could speak French with that good an accent, and her accent was absolutely marvelous. It was just the spirit of that old teacher going into a student who was hounded! And I remember the night she finally got in the school, the French teacher there said to me . . . -She was an American . . . -She said, "You know, your daughter's accent is better than mine," which I thought were extraordinarily jealous words for a French teacher . . . -a teacher of French at a

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small private school. You know, it was absolutely pro-bono. Well, at any . . . -at any rate, that was all I ever got from that course, was the remarkable passion of this woman for French. But, other than that, I never went to courses, and enjoyed to a certain extent . . . -As each month went by, I began to enjoy being in Paris a little more. But I remember at the end of the year some of us became worried because I know we intended . . . -fearing . . . -had taken this course in order to flunk, absolutely . . . -And that would mean our idyll would be over, or so . . . -Well, that's what we feared. So I went up with a tale to the proctor or whatever he was, or the dean or whoever it was controlled the course, and said, "Sir, I have . . . -I've tried very hard all year to learn French" or whatever. "I went to the classes at least." And I didn't, mind you -for good cause. And I think this didn't work. I surmised where he would . . . "So long, so long." And I turned around, and . . . "We will give you a special test." They had the special test arranged in order that . . . -We all had to do the test, you see. You know, it was all those . . . -It was all by themselves, when, in fact, it was one of a very long line, and we couldn't get to the very end. And the test went in December. You know, "Vous voulez cette parlez de Francais? Recommendez: oui, non?" Because of . . . -And, so, in other words, we all passed, and that was the end of it. And so that must be . . . -patient, as such. Anything I've learned which has helped to learn to speak French, I believe I have learned since, but . . .

Robert Lucid) Well, speaking as an educator and so forth it's a very edifying story to see

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that educational institutions got right at the ear! I guess they don't do that anymore. Dick, did you discover (???, UNINTEL., 2 WDS.) at any time?

Richard Wilbur) Why, I don't think so. Nothing as . . . -Nothing as substantial as you get from a book like the . . . -Hemingway's "A Movable Feast." There is . . . -There was such community. I was only tangential to it, but the fact is, Bob, that I was only in Paris for about three months. It didn't occur to me, actually, to be an expatriate, and I think I've only encountered two or three true ones of the Gertrude Stein kind. One was Stanley Geist who wrote, I remember . . . -Stanley Geist had been a quite brilliant student at Harvard, had written a Bowdoin Prize paper on Melville's "Silk Lip" (???, TITLE MIGHT, LIKELY, NOT BE CORRECT) . It's a . . . -Matthiessen gratefully acknowledged its existence in writing his "American Renaissance." And he'd gone to Paris after graduation from Harvard. And I think he went there to become another person, not to be what he had been in America and not to go into the family business. When I knew him there in 1948 he spent some time of every day trying to translate Constant's "Adolphe." And, actually, there are about 20 existing translations of Constant's novel. Undoubtedly, Stanley would have done better had he finished his translation. But it seems to me that his literary . . . -his conflicted literary career just faded out, and he gradually became, I suppose by way of literary exercises, a European. He's never come home again. There was another person I met over there . . . -I can't think of his first name, but he was M. Kaplan, a fellow named Kaplan Carrolton . . .

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Norman Mailer) Yeah.

Richard Wilbur) . . . who wrote a marvelous short story called "The Mohammedans" that was published in The Partisan Review, and it was about this Black, sort of had converted to Islam, I guess. Everybody waited for a second short story from him, but he didn't do that. He went to Paris and became something else. I'm not quite sure . . . -But I did meet him there, and he seemed an interesting, a bril... -indeed, a brilliant man, but I wasn't sure what he was doing. I think he was a man of mystery! But, in any case, these are two people who really did become expatriates. They left the United States. I think most people don't want to become somebody else to that extent. There are just certain classes of people who want to become somebody else. Alcoholics want to become somebody else. You can tell that because of the incredible lies they tell about their heroism or their romantic achievements. And actors want to become somebody else. They're not sure who they want to become, so they have to be in play after play looking for it! And then there are linguists, people who really feel that they can find another version of themselves by way of another language and culture. I remember Richard Alpert saying once that for him the French language afforded another self; it's another Richard when he starts talking French. And I think we've all known linguists who, once they set foot in Europe with all their linguistic equipment, rapidly become someone else. Well, at any rate, I didn't. I was there just for three months, and I did apply myself to writing whenever a notion came to me, as I've always done anywhere. I did have encounters with French artists . . . -with

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painters because that was one reason for going to Paris at that time. It was still, in the late 1940s, the painting capital of the world. And it was great to go to a show of Leger and Picabia and see all of painting-Paris there, and to make friends with someone like Jean Pelion (???, SP.) , the wonderful abstract painter who was at . . . -in 1948 converting to a kind of representational painting. I enjoyed knowing him, and he decided that he'd use me as a model, I remember. He thought it would be nice for me to pose with a guitar, so he rented a guitar and gave it to me to play. And I played the guitar during the three months of my stay in Paris, not always to everyone's delight! And there were . . . -There was Ferdinand Springer, another fine painter and artist who Charlie and I very much enjoyed knowing, and who whisked us off at a certain point to his house in Grasse, in the Haute Maritime. Well, I fear I'm running on, Bob!

Robert Lucid) Oh, that's the idea. See that's what we're doing.

Richard Wilbur) Yes. But I'm pleased to be fishing up so many names here . . .

Robert Lucid) Yes.

Richard Wilbur) . . . -that it feels I'm almost drifting to know, right?

Robert Lucid) Oh, yes. That's the whole point. That's the whole point. It's the water under the bridge which we're just taking for granted which is going . . .

Norman Mailer) Speaking of the water under the bridge . . .

Richard Wilbur) Yes.

Robert Lucid) Yes.

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Norman Mailer) . . . I need to tell something I can remember! . . . -for the little time before the entirety of my memory fades!

Robert Lucid) Who did you see over there at this time?

Norman Mailer) My recollection is that I met no French writer of any importance, nor did I ever meet a painter there. The only American particularly close to me that I . . . -At that time our closest friend was about . . . -friends were Mark Lilienthal, who was a professor at Harvard and his wife Alesandra Lilienthal, who has since become the short-story writer and an occasional novelist, Alasace (???, SP.) . And we used to go out and eat just about every night together. Most of the people that I've met there were through the Lilienthals. I met Jean Malagay (???, SP.) who's my oldest and dearest friend now. And I met him there in 1947. I remember we didn't get along at all because I was all for Henry Wallace, and he was a . . . -He was a . . . -He had broken with Trotsky many years before and was considerably to the left of Leon Trotsky! And he found Henry Wallace absolutely despicable; he was a pawn, a tool; he was scurrilous! So, ergo, we didn't get along at all when we first met. But in any event, over the years we met again, and by now we're great friends, dear friends. In fact, I left him in Tuckertown yesterday -earlier. But he . . . -"By Your Stamped Drawings" (???, TITLE MOST UNLIKELY) was a remarkable novel, and had an extraordinary critical power in his presence, so that if Stanley liked . . . -If he . . . -If you had a book that you liked and Stanley didn't like it, you couldn't help yourself; you became equal in your liking for the book! In

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other words, you didn't like the book quite as much as you did before Stanley had read it!
And, as a result, I would say that that was probably the seed of critical power so far as it affects the personality. You know, it's those critics who weaken you, who look at you, you know, and you feel a sort of desperation, who are true critics in my mind to this day. Stanley was a true critic in that sense. And I remember when he read . . . -when he read the manuscript for "The Naked and the Dead" he said, "You know, it's not bad." And I felt ennobled by that! And there was . . . -there was Malagay (???, SP.) ; there was Stanley Geist; there was Harold Hamlin. I think, looking back on it now, Harold . . . -I remember him appearing before The Congress of Cultural Freedom. It seemed to me, at some differing level . . . -whether I may be popping off the bat . . .

Richard Wilbur) Yeah.

Norman Mailer) And . . . -But, for the most part the people I knew were simple French people. There was a French painter, whose name I'm trying to recall, who was terrible, a sweet charming guy, you understand, but he was a terrible painter -really bad! And he had a mistress who was the loveliest, nicest . . . -not lovely but one of the nicest women in the world. And so Beatrice and I wanted to do something for him, but we couldn't buy this painting from him because it would look too obviously as an act of direct charity! But now my editor . . . -my editor, Bill Rainey, happened to come to Paris at that point, and so we said, "Bill, you've got to do something for us. We want you to buy . . . -We will buy the painting, but you've got to

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pretend to buy it." And Rainey didn't speak any French, and the painter didn't speak any English, so very easily we were the translators. And it was very much like one of the worst of the English/Russian translations that take place in Moscow about 1952, you know, where the translator was king, took care of everything. So we took care of everything. And what it was is we brought Bill Rainey over to this little gallery, . . . -He was very impressed with how tiny the gallery was, how poor the painter was!- . . . and we introduced him as one of the most formidable art critics in New York. Bill Breslin, who's gone now . . . -but Bill didn't know anything about painting, you see, but he had a wonderful pose for things. And so, to some degree, every time I gave him a signal he'd like something. So he looked at the paintings, and, as I said, they were all dreadful. But the poor guy couldn't . . . -He . . . -I mean, he couldn't draw; he couldn't do anything!- . . . And Bill would look at each one very solemnly, you see, and then he'd get the signal, and he'd go . . . -You see, and so he'd say, "My friend wants to buy that one." And the painter was delighted. I think he got something . . . -got some small sum which was huge then, something like \$75 for each. And that was . . . -Let's see . . . -I remember that as one of the nicer things I did when I was in Paris, although this painter was so bad that it may have been encouraging him -this foul plot!

Robert Lucid) That's a sweet story.

Norman Mailer) Who else was there? This is before the time when Plimpton came over -and his gang. And so what characterized most of us who were Americans, we slowly began to

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know the people that were . . . -who . . . -you know, part of the French middle-bourgeoisie, the very well-to-do middle-class people. And they were immensely knowing about everything; I remember that. But finally, we Americans hung out together, and we used to hate the French! You know, we'd go to a party, and we'd think this is a stupid party; they're all frogs here! Yes, yes, before you get political, you think of those . . . -The point was that we were using a politically-incorrect word before the concept of "politically-incorrect" even existed. But we didn't reduce them to "frogs". But the French we'd call them . . . -precisely say "fraugh"! I don't even know why we disliked them so. It's just that they had a confidence that we did not have as Americans. I mean, you'd go . . . -You'd really get a feel on . . . -I mean, at the time, I used to feel it was, you know, bad enough being Jewish, but I couldn't even count on my Americanism.

Richard Wilbur) They talked about it, did they?

Norman Mailer) Oh, but they . . . -You know, the . . . -And, you know, exactly the things I found most difficult about the French manner, I probably wouldn't have a hard time with now, which is that they have a culture, and they're proud of it; they're fierce about it; they will not let go of it, and just as sweet they are, they just will not let go of their own native culture . . . -They're habitually upset in a way that oth... -people in other countries are not becoming, so exactly the same . . . -What used to be so awkward about the French is what one can respect in them now, looking back on it.

Robert Lucid) I think you met each other in Paris?

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Richard Wilbur) Well, we . . . -we were . . . -We did, and we were sometimes at
a . . . -at the same cafe in . . . -of the "Deux Magots", you know, or at the "Flore"
or . . .

Norman Mailer) Or at "The Flanagan" (???, SOUNDS LIKE) .

Richard Wilbur) We also were wondering about Marion (???, UNINTEL., SURNAME) .

Norman Mailer) Were we?

Richard Wilbur) Yeah

Norman Mailer) Wow, what memory!

Richard Wilbur) Yes.

Norman Mailer) You know, Dick, I'm thinking, were you also on the soccer hunt?

I remember the . . .

Richard Wilbur) The violent thoughts of it. Me too.

Norman Mailer) No, I didn't mean that. I remember being to a party at the "Deux Magots",
-the "Cafe Flore".

Richard Wilbur) Yes.

Norman Mailer) I'd always been close to (???, UNINTEL., NM & A FEW WORDS) , but
be softened later.

Richard Wilbur) I see.

Richard Wilbur) Well, I first saw Genet there once, you know, in the . . .

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Norman Mailer) What did you think of Genet?

Richard Wilbur) It was rather a rowdy scene.

Norman Mailer) Now when was that? Years later, in '56, I was talking to some people who were . . . -Genet was having this sort of . . . -It was a humid sultry (???, UNINTEL., SEVERAL WDS.) and then Alec (???, UNINTEL., SURNAME) and so forth. And somebody at a cafe said to me . . . -He had be gay. This is Alfred Chester, who was with Marion (???, UNINTEL., SEVERAL WDS.) - . . . And he said, "What do you think of Genet? I didn't read him." And I said, "Oh, Genet, he's a big pain in the ass!" And he said, "Oh, (???, UNINTEL., SEVERAL WDS.) Genet, he was a little bit of a pain in the ass!"

Richard Wilbur) You know, Norman's mentioning Henry Wallace started a train of thought in me which I shall now spill. The . . . -Looking into the Hemingway book I was thinking, "Did we, in Paris in the '40s, have any feelings . . . -any of the feelings of alienation from America that Hemingway's crowd did?" I mean, there's some quotation, not in Hemingway's book but elsewhere, from Gertrude Stein, to the effect that America is a nice place to be a dentist, but if you want to practice the arts do it in France. I think there was that feeling amongst a lot of Americans in Paris after World War I. That was not, I think, the feeling of Americans after World War II. Our arts were a lot more healthy in America. There was a feeling after World War I that the publishers of America were a crass greedy lot who wouldn't print good stuff, and I don't think that that feeling obtained amongst American writers in Paris after World War II, but there was

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one feeling which made me feel abroad and away from my country for awhile, and it had to do with Henry Wallace. My wife and I had belonged in the latter '40s to the Progressive Citizens of America. We met in cells, which was very like the Communists and very romantic therefore. And we tried to elect local candidates back in '46, so that in '46 my wife and I were driving a sound-truck through the neighborhood, blaring at the citizens "Vote for Hughes! Vote for Stoats!" And we were trying to elect two Black ministers to local office. And then, of course, as the Wallace party . . . -as the Progressive Party formed and the Wallace candidacy developed, we worked very hard for that. By the time we got over to Paris for . . . -we were wearing Wallace buttons, and we were instantly very popular with the French, with . . . -They very much agreed with our residual Popular Front hopes; that's what it amounted to. In 1948 we hadn't given up the hope that it was possible . . . -not to be . . . -not to be "fellow travelers," . . . -That's the way the Communists talked . . . but to be . . . -but to join forces with Marxists toward common goals. We thought it could be done. And, back in America at that time, of course, the anti-Communism, which finally culminated in the McCarthy business, was building up, and the Marshall plan was about to be used, not only for the purpose of stimulating the European economy and restoring our markets but also for resisting the development of the Communist parties in the European countries. Europe resented that for good reason, and we, because we still had Popular Front hopes, shared that resentment. So for that period, at any rate, we had our feeling of alienation from some part, from some aspect of our own

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country. I hasten to say that by the time the election came around in that year I felt that the Progressive Party was altogether too despicably manipulated by the Communists, and I voted for Harry Truman!

Robert Lucid) Were you involved in the Progressive Party at all?

Norman Mailer) Oh, yeah. I . . .

Robert Lucid) Go ahead!

Norman Mailer) No, no, no, I was. I came back from . . . -I came back from Paris in the Summer of '48, in July, and jumped in immediately. I'd been planning to all through it. I used to just battle off all those arguments at that time. Looking back on it, I would certainly agree with you that, you know, the Communists did manipulate it. I remember how you used to see experiences of . . . -with it, because I was sent out to Hollywood because they had been . . . -had such extraordinarily big success. But people who were sort of running things at The National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions sent me out to Hollywood to see if I could get some movie-stars to sign-up . . . -say they were for Wallace. They knew they were for Wallace, but they couldn't come out with it. And I said, "Well, why'd you pick me?" They said, "Because you're a professional you're invaluable." But they said, "We know all the others. They've all had been signed-up. We know most of them, but they might have some news." So it was one of the most extraordinary evenings of my life. I just wanted to contact the Hays Office! Eddie Condon . . . -But they sat me next to Hedy Lamar. And . . . -But the thing that was

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amazing was that Bernshaw (???, SURNAME LIKELY WRONG) was probably the last . . .

Robert Lucid) No, no, no, that's just thrilling!

Norman Mailer) Alright. Well, let's assume that my experience in France had given me a certain intensity!

Robert Lucid) Yeah. No, that was sitting next to Hedy Lamar!

Norman Mailer) No, no, no, no.

Robert Lucid) That was probably just . . .

Norman Mailer) And, of course, I was trying to impress her. And she said something about, "Are you married?" I said, "Yes." And she said, "What's your marriage like?" I said, "Oh, marriage is a horrible situation." And I was 25 years-old, you see. She said, "Well, you're a very silly young man." And that was the end of my great romance! But what happens, when I got up to speak before all these people who had come out for Henry Wallace, I think I'm going to win them resoundingly because I started talking about how most artists had an element of corruption in themselves, and the way things are certain changes are needed. And I used to think, especially in Hollywood in those days . . . -And before it was all over some of the people had their hands over their heads, 'cause they knew they weren't going to vote for Wallace. And I remember Edward G. Robinson was at the party all night. He got up and he said, "See here. Hell, who do you think you are you big punk? It's the little punk here! You know, I'm known all over the world, and I've been world-famous, and you're coming here and telling me how to vote. I'll keep

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my vote to myself if you don't mind! I'll keep it private!" He wasn't going to come out. He was going to vote for Roosevelt (???, OF COURSE, ROOSEVELT NOT CORRECT, BUT SOUNDS LIKE) because I'm ashamed of him and so forth. And, finally, the only two people who signed were Shelley Winters and Farley Granger. And Shelley got up there in terrible shape. She said, "Norman, you're asking an awful lot of us. You really are just . . . -I don't know if I do . . . -I don't think I have the guts to sign this because I could lose my career! This is terrible! You don't know how much pressure there is here. This is just awful what you're asking!" And after the party was over she signed her name, gave it to me, and went out of the room crying, really. And she and Farley Granger were the only people who signed. So, of course, I never turned to their aides, but it was absolutely true that both of them . . . -you know, wiped-out in the Hollywood of '52. But I must say that I had to find some act . . . -I've got to find some grace to get me back to Paris with (???, MUCH OF PRECEDING THREE SENTENCES MOST QUESTIONABLY CORRECT) .

Robert Lucid) We were all . . . -We were . . . -We were all trapped in The Progressive Party, I think. And the ongoing political scene in The United States, which had been in one sense removed from our side, in any real sense of the . . . -It is interesting that the walls buttresses would be created with favor and courtesy and . . .

Norman Mailer) One element that Dick brought up that I'd like to agree with is we were not expatriates, and, in fact, I remember I probably have never been as much of an American as I

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was in Paris during that year. I was fully aware of all of the things I liked about my country, and I found myself defending America constantly in conversations with French people. One of the reasons that we . . . -that we Americans hung together and didn't like the French is that they didn't like us, that . . . -that . . . -quite rightly in a way. You know, in a certain sense . . . -I remember John Malgate (???, NAME CERTAINLY WRONG) talking once about them -It happened a year or two later, but a huge Cadillac was trying to make its way through a very narrow French street, and an old woman at one of the shops had to step off of . . . -into the narrow curb, practically in the shop in order to avoid being splashed by the Cadillac as it went by. So he was still that close, and she turned to Norman and said "Oh, you've got so many sad roles," you know. And there was that feeling, that we were rich, and we were spoiled, and we were corrupt, and that those books were (???, UNINTEL., 2 WDS.) . And, you know, that had been deserved. We had. Which, I must say, is a feeling that I could subscribe to because, as you know, there are a couple of places in the world where I feel there are people who are very very wealthy in certain countries that don't deserve the payback. You know that old devil oil is coming around.

Robert Lucid) Ah, yes.

Norman Mailer) And, so, in that sense, I remember just bristling with annoyance at how the French did not understand us, the way we talked and all of our pure character and all that.

Richard Wilbur) I remember being . . . -During our visit to Grasse I remember being

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supremely snubbed as an American. I was in a bookstore, and the woman behind the counter addressed a man in ecclesiastical garb and pointed to me. She said, "Conta go delle vendar."

(???, WDS. IN LATIN CERTAINLY NOT CORRECT) And what she . . . -She had figured out I didn't have any Latin, right, and that she could make some kind of a joke with this religious person about how America was like Carthage and cultured France was like Rome, and cultured France had to get those crazed people from America. They . . . -I didn't . . . -I really did take offense at that since I figured out what they meant!

Professor) Would you like to open it up now to the audience?

Robert Lucid) Sure. Why don't we do that.

Audience Member) I'd like to say I'm very flattered to be here. I went to school with both these two gentlemen. And Mr. Mailer, in my class at Harvard, had a terrible time with the section man because he was considered too vulgar. We read Studs Lonigan, and that nice man was smart enough to write a theme, and the section man couldn't handle it. And Dick stood . . . -I'm sorry. And Norman stood up and fought for his rights, so you young people here remember that determination can help you against a professor who's very constipated! Some people with Dick Wilbur . . . -And Dick Wilbur and I had a teacher who passed out cigarettes and then said, "Please don't smoke. It's the worst mistake you can make if you smoke!" I don't know about Dick, but I never smoked; it's because of that experience. And I . . . -I al... -My last point I want to say, I do "The Times" crossword-puzzle, not too successfully, and I think your

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daughter married Maleska. Were you ever able to influence him to make Egypt lose?

Richard Wilbur) Listen, you've just . . . -you've just torn away the veil from something. I must . . . -I must confess something. My son, Nathan, married Meryl Maleska, the daughter of Eugene Maleska, the crossword-puzzle editor of The New York Times, . . . -the late crossword-puzzle editor - . . . but Gene Maleska, as soon as I sort of came into his family, decided to make me a household word, and so . . . -and so the clue for words like "poet"

Richard Wilbur) Listen, you've just . . . -you've just torn away the veil from something. I must . . . -I must confess something. My son, Nathan, married Meryl Maleska, the daughter of Eugene Maleska, the crossword-puzzle editor of The New York Times, . . . -the late crossword-puzzle editor- . . . but Gene Maleska, as soon as I sort of came into his family, decided to make me a household word, and so the clue for words like "poet" came to be "Wilbur." This has spread to other puzzle-makers. Just yesterday . . . -In yesterday's mail I received a letter from Miller Williams in Arkansas, enclosing an Arkansas crossword-puzzle in which I was a clue to the word "poesy," and he . . . -Miller wrote underneath it, "That's real fame, man!" So now you may know why I'm so famous!

Professor) Are there any other questions, anything any of us can answer . . . -then we'd be happy to?

Audience Member) There was a wonderful newspaper coming out of New York in those days called P.M. And there'd be comedy writers and (???, UNINTEL., SEVERAL WDS.) and, I

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think, highly engaging liberals. I mean, they weren't Communists, mind you, they were just liberals.

Norman Mailer) Yeah, well, I.F. Stone used to write for P.M., and I think . . . -Isn't there a famous story . . . -Wasn't the paper started by Thackeray . . . -Ted Thackeray? But, in any event, I remember he was married to Dorothy Schiff, who owned The Post, and at a certain point their marriage gave it great trouble, and I think . . . -'Cause they broke up, and he started his own paper, P.M., which was more radical than The Post.

Richard Wilbur) Yeah.

Norman Mailer) And . . . -But here he'd been a lively . . . -And P.M. was very much like the present New York Post in a funny way, except it was left rather than to the right, . . .

Richard Wilbur) Yes.

Norman Mailer) . . . but it'd be readable . . . -immensely readable- . . . and full of stock-stories, but really a great . . . -great paper.

Richard Wilbur) Max Lerner, when he was still there, was awfully important to Nathan.

Norman Mailer) On The Post, not on P.M.?

Richard Wilbur) No, I don't think so.

Richard Wilbur) Alright.

Norman Mailer) No, I think Max Lerner's fame comes from all the . . .

Richard Wilbur) Ah.

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Norman Mailer) I think; that's my impression. He might have owned P.M. for a year or so after Jim Oldham quit, but he went . . . -If he was he certainly went back with Michael Pell.

Richard Wilbur) Yeah.

Audience Member) Mr. Mailer, I was wondering, did you . . . -in other words, if you actually read for the part of Picasso in that movie? Did you . . . -Actually, I wondered did you actually have any contact with Picasso at any times . . . -Pablo Picasso?

Norman Mailer) Did I have any contact with Picasso? No, no. No, we didn't. All . . .
-The only . . . -It was funny, but that year we sort of took Picasso for granted. He was a great painter, he lived somewhere in the South of France, and no one ever wanted to meet him. Years later, in 1961 I think, I wanted very much to meet Picasso in order to do a book on him at that time. And my third wife, Jean Campbell, and I were travelling in France, and she said . . . -"Oh, good," she said; she was English. She said, "Let's go down and visit John Richardson and Douglas Cooper because they know Pablo Picasso, and they'll be very happy to introduce us to him." Well, you know, with either of them you were absolutely right or dead wrong. In this case the latter as it happened! We visited Cooper and Richardson, and they entertained us. We had a fine evening, and not one word of Picasso flew. Jean kept bringing up the name and smiling and going on, and they were changing the subject, so that's the closest I ever came to meeting Pablo Picasso, when, in fact, we were maybe five or ten miles away at the time. They were neighbors.

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Richard Wilbur) I didn't encounter him either, but I did have an encoun... -one broad wonderful encounter at the Deux Magots, where everyone went to sit and knock-back feeds. I happened to meet Giacometti, and he was extremely accessible and amiable, and before I knew it we were walking back to his studio, he talking all the way about his aesthetic objectives, and when we got into his studio, which was about the size of a privy and which had a solid floor of smashed plaster and a few very narrow-looking figures rising up out of all that, he stood there and talked about his desire to create in his sculptures figures of perfect anonymity. And, all the while he was talking about the anonymity and the mereness and the minimal quality of the figures he was aiming at, he kept abusing these already meager figures by hitting them with a beer-can opener and knocking more plaster off them! And at one point he picked up a little bust . . . -a gay face- . . . and dug his thumb into its eye-socket and knocked its head off! He was continually destroying as he worked or lessening and making it more mimalist as he . . . -I mean . . . -Well . . . -But . . . -But that's . . . -Those were, in fact, his eloquently described objectives.

Audience Member) Having witnessed both the pre-atomic age and the post-atomic age how do you feel that the inception, creation, and use of the atomic bomb has changed American ideology?

Robert Lucid) Well, at the time was it . . . -was it . . . -was it initi... -was . . . -was . . . -Was consciousness of the bomb's mushroom cloud right there in '47 and '46?

Norman Mailer) Well, again, it was earlier. It was '45.

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Robert Lucid) The bomb, the bomb itself -'45?

Norman Mailer) Definitely, because I was in the Phillipines at the time the bomb went off, and we were . . . -The irony was we were happy the bomb went off! That meant we weren't going to invade Japan, and that meant we'd probably get high rather than dead in the next year. We were all set to be killed invading Japan, and I must say that by the time we saw the kind of defenses they had on Japan, it was very likely that we would have been dead invading Japan. So we just saw it as a bonus at the time, but even then there was a sense that the world was changed forever. And I think there is no . . . -I think that it has probably had the most profound effect of any single element in the second half of the twentieth century because it introduced . . . -The very spirit of denial that people like Bob Dole is always inveighing against now came, I think . . . -I think the root of this comes from the fact that for two or three decades at least people believed that the world was going to end . . . -not a certainty, but there was going to be an atomic war against which one country, whoever it was, tried to defend itself against the other, and everything would be destroyed, and that, therefore, life was considerably more meaningless than it ever seemed in the past, that, for all its horrors, the past, even including the absolute horror of the Holocaust, which was immense, but eve... -you know, eve... -You could still comprehend that, possibly, as being something that was the absolute triumph of evil for a period in human affairs, but the atomic bomb was beyond that. It was annihilation, and, so, you didn't know . . . -Is this . . . -Is this the victory of the devil? Is this God's verdict upon us, or,

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if neither exists, is this mankind's ultimate . . . -essential certainty of meaninglessness? All this . . . -But all for . . . -You could say 20 years later, 15 years later, what brought the Sixties? What formed a feeling then . . . -If our lives were that limited . . . -If . . . That . . . -That is, if our lives were out of our control, we couldn't plan for a family and for grandparents and for anything logical in the continuation of things, it was very important to get the most out of the time, you see. And so the notion of freedom and taking drugs and having a life that had many colors in it and many changes and breaking with all traditions came out, I think . . . -out of the . . . -out of the atom bomb, yes? So I think you must find the single most important factor in human affairs . . . -And then you again pull hell because, you know, you could approach another time of . . . -of when criminals took over.

Richard Wilbur) I think that's so. I think everything Norman says is true. I think also he's conveyed to people who still have some vestige of hope, and meant, a feeling that full-scale war is no longer a possibility, and that any politician who talks about socking-it-to-them in a full-scale war is not to be voted for, not to be admired.

Norman Mailer) I'd agree with that completely, but I do think there is a secondary difficulty that's been created. And that's a number . . . -I think in an age of optimism, when you've come out with the atom bomb . . .

Richard Wilbur) I agree with you there.

Norman Mailer) But I think that for this long period of atrophy that the thing that's

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happened is that the inner . . . -what I would call the inner degradation of capitalism began, which is if nothing was going to last then . . . -The great virtue of capitalism, if one could ascribe virtues to it, is there was a period in capitalism when it was very very important that the product be excellent. You see what I mean? Now . . . -Right now there's a great . . . -Nobody is very well interested in production compared to the force they're bringing to market.

Richard Wilbur) Right.

Norman Mailer) And the idea is . . . -is most people who are engaged in the human process would almost rather have a bad product. Then there's more art coming to market. If anyone sold . . . -I mean, would sell a true piece of crap if . . . -Dare I say it, it would work harder in any market if it were available. And I think that . . . -I think the flannel-suits would agree with me, which is that the emphasis upon any very good product began to diminish . . . -What's the sense of making all the sacrifices for your work, if you're working all your life at a company, when, finally, it isn't very meaningful that you make a good product if everything is going to be destroyed? Don't forget there were those 20 years, let's say roughly from 19... -very roughly- . . . from 1950 to 1970, when it was felt that the world would come to an end very abruptly. There would be a nuclear war that would destroy everything. And I do think that we may never . . . -We may or may not ever get over the fact that everything has gotten shoddier in terms of production, that the idea that you had anything well... -is just . . . -This is now eight fathoms.

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Richard Wilbur) It's all the more . . . -It's all the more wonderful, all the more glorious, isn't it, when, you . . . -when somebody's planted a tree in this . . .

Norman Mailer) (???, UNINTEL., 2 WDS.)

Richard Wilbur) . . . little . . . -And I'm grateful for this little . . .

Audience Member) What year was the (???, UNINTEL., 2 WDS.) ? What year was that published . . . -that published?

Richard Wilbur) '60 to '61 I think. Yeah, I think the poem was written around Fifty... -'59, maybe.

Audience Member) That's right. It's just . . . -just . . .

Richard Wilbur) Yes, but it's a . . . -I was . . . -I was on leave in London when the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, and a fellow soldier said to me, "I'll give you ten bucks if you can write a poem on that within the week." And . . . -And I said, "Keep your money. I couldn't possibly cope with that. Right away, you'll have to give me time." And it took from 1945 until 1959 for me to be able to find words in which to measure up to the threat of nuclear war. You . . . -There's no point in writing a poem that just says, "No, no, don't drop it!", you know, literally. You have to find a way of approaching the topic that'll be . . . -that's aesthetically effective and also of some emotional use to people.

Audience Member) I'm reading "A Movable Feast." I'm really fascinated by how much Hemingway talked about the process of writing while he's in Paris. I was wondering, since you

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didn't have the same kind of community of writers, how did you write as . . . -write in Paris?

Where did you write? Did you have a drink at a place? Did you write in cafes? How did

you . . . -Did you write . . . -do a kind of thing where you like . . . -routine work?

Richard Wilbur) Well, my wife and I were living . . . -By the way, one thing that . . .

-one thing that Hemingway's memoir talks about remained absolutely true over . . . -after

the Second World War. It was that she placed the bed. My wife and I lived for three months

at . . . -in the Hotel Dyslee (???, SPELLING) on the Rue Jacob for a dollar a day. And . . .

-And we ate much of the time at a prix fixe place called The Jug House, just up the block. And

you really could live for five dollars a day in the Paris of that . . . -of that time. And as

for . . . -as for the writing, I wrote a lot of the time in my cold room. I never tried to write in a

cafe. I feel a little chicken for not having done that, but I think it would have made me feel self-

conscious. And I only had a short period in which to adjust to the Parisian world where I'd

picked-up habits like that. So that it . . . -But I . . . -I did . . . -If you want to be a writer

you do keep at it wherever you are, and so . . . -so I had . . . -I wrote continually at the

Hotel Dyslee (???, SPELLING) . . .

Norman Mailer) Well, I remember I never wrote in a cafe either, but I used to distrust those

fellows who wrote in cafes! You know, there used to be something so marvelous and special

about them. And, you know . . . -You knew that whether they were a good writer or not they

certainly would look like a good writer in a cafe! And I . . . -As I recall, I started my second

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novel, "Barbary Shore" in Paris, and had a lot of trouble with it, but it started there. I think I wrote the first 50 pages at that time. And . . . -And I had . . .

Richard Wilbur) How did you write at home?.

Norman Mailer) I used to write on the kitchen table. We had a small apartment for which we paid thirty dollars a month, a dollar a day. And, I remember, when we'd eat out . . . -We could eat . . . -Let's say, for the minimum, we ate out five . . . -at least five night a week.- . . . -Martha used to have a huge appetite, and it was very hard . . . -The bill was (???, UNINTEL., 1 WD. [SOUNDS LIKE "METERED" OR "MEAGER"]) . We used to eat a lot of . . . -We used eat a lot of steaks, but they were made of horsemeat, that sort of thing. And sometimes the portions were skimpy. And so I will . . . -I will only eat them for Margaret, (???, UNINTEL., 3 WDS.) , saying, "Oh, this is a g-o-o-o-d restaurant" because the portions were large! And partly down about Main St. I used to do that all the time.

Robert Wilbur) Oh. Yeah.

Norman Mailer) It really tasted like horsemeat, but if he . . . -if he was there . . .

Robert Wilbur) Well, Hemingway would not have approved! One . . . -One . . .

-One thing I've noticed is . . . -Did George say something great to them about Hemingway?

Norman Mailer) I don't . . . -He might . . . -I mean, he never respected my knowledge!

Robert Wilbur) Well, he knows where it's at! I mean . . . -In preparation for this affair

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novel, "Barbary Shore," in Paris, and had a lot of trouble with it, but it started there. I think I wrote the first 50 pages at that time. And . . . -And I had . . .

Richard Wilbur) How did you write at home?.

Norman Mailer) I used to write on a big table because we had a small apartment, for which we paid thirty dollars a month, a dollar a day. And, I remember, when we'd eat out . . .

-We could eat . . . -Let's say, for the minimum, we ate out five . . . -at least five night a week.- . . . -Martha had a huge appetite, and it was very hard . . . -The bill was

meager. We used to eat a lot of . . . -We used eat a lot of steaks because they were made of horsemeat and that sort of thing. And sometimes the portions were skimpy. And so I will . . .

-I will only give them for Margaret, (???, UNINTEL., 3 WDS.) , saying, "Oh, this is a g-o-o-d restaurant" because the portions were large. And when Martha and I would go to Main St., we used to do that all the time.

Robert Wilbur) Oh. Yeah, yeah.

Norman Mailer) Okay. It really tasted like horsemeat, but if you'd eat it . . . -eat it there . . .

Robert Wilbur) Oh. Yeah, yeah. Hemingway would not have approved! One . . .

-One . . . -One thing I've noticed is . . . -Is it alright to say something great to them about Hemingway?

Norman Mailer) I don't . . . -He . . . -I mean, he never spit in my lodgings!

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Robert Wilbur) Well, in looking over . . . -In preparation for this affair I've read . . .
(???, UNINTEL., 1 WD.) chapters of (???, UNINTEL. NM.) book, "A Movable Feast," but I
did notice that, once again, some of the things that rattle me about Hemingway's personality is he
does want you to know that he is in . . . -he is . . . -he is in on everything; he's the guy
who talks to the trainers and the jockeys; he's the guy who knows the real horses.

Norman Mailer) Yes, I see.

Robert Wilbur) And he's the one who really talks to waiters in the way in which waiters
should be talked to! And he knows where the good fries are and the good potato salads! After
all that is a little much isn't it?

Norman Mailer) You know, I think . . . -I think you put your finger on it. Really, he
could have paid for stories like that. This is Hemingway's . . . -This is Hemingway's essential
vice, that he always had to be in this position of (???, UNINTEL., 2 WDS.) , whatever was
going on . . .

Robert Wilbur) Yeah.

Norman Mailer) . . . -and that this time it was work, too. One of the things that inhibited
all sorts of things, kept him from writing about about any number of topics, and any . . . -Most
of human experience was, therefore, closed off to him. It's also valid in that way with Henry
James . . . couldn't write of a thousand matters because matter had to be in his style, and that
with Hemingway not only was there a style, but it was . . . -this element in him was pointed so

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that he . . . -He finally had to know more about people and the topic than anyone else around.
And I should have thought that, probably, those are . . . -that irritated me greatly about him!
You know, it's not that . . . -I've had . . . -I had . . . -obviously have great respect for
him. It's not because of that. In fact, he gave me a lot of bad ideas over the years! Do you think
that he gave you any bad ideas, too?

Audience Member) My question is directed to Mr. Wilbur. You made a reference earlier to
classics in French literature, and I was curious to ask if you have any involvement with the
upcoming revival of *Candide* on Broadway and what it was like to be part of the original
collaboration back in the 50s with luminaries like Leonard Bernstein and Lillian Hellman?

Richard Wilbur) Well, I was . . . -I was brought into that enterprise, the conversion of
Voltaire's novel to the purposes of American visible theater in 1955, late I think. Five other
people had tried to write the lyrics for the show to their satisfaction or to the satisfaction of the
collaborators. And the last one of them, John Latusche (???, SP., SOUNDS LIKE) , had really
done some distinguished work. I think he wrote the funniest lines that ever got book... -written
for the show: "What a day, what a day for a (???, UNINTEL., 1 WD.) !" But . . . -Those are
John Latusche's (???, SP., SOUNDS LIKE) lines. But . . . -But he . . . -He had sort of
broken with Bernstein and with . . . -And so, I came in to mop up. And we did, in fact, do an
enormous amount of rewriting, with Lillian Hellman reconceiving whole scenes, during the
several months in which we put the show together. By the time the show was done I had written,

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according to my agent, 82.5 percent of the lyrics! On Broadway they . . . -they count them . . . -everything very carefully because there's money in it! I think that . . . -I think that we were probably . . . -that Lillian Hellman was probably unwise from the beginning to think of turning that into a musical show. There's a . . . -There's . . . -Not that glorious things didn't come of it, but I think there's very inherent difficulties in adapting Candide to such a purpose, because it's the same damn show over and over with no development done . . . -in it. There's simply again and again a situation in which pe... -perfectly awful things are happening, and those people are saying, "Well, it's all for the best." We had to try to make the characters change a little in order to make a show of it, but I don't think that was altogether successful. I think there was this . . . -There was, for all of the brilliance of Bernstein's music and all the cleverness that went into the show, there's a certain static quality to it, to which people always took exception. Still, I'm awfully glad it was done because I think it's by all means Bernstein's most marvelous music, and Leonard, who'd been . . . -I don't know whether I'm answering your question. I'm just . . .

Audience Member) I wanted to know whether you're involved with the revival that's coming up in another ten . . . ?

Richard Wilbur) No, I'm not involved with that. In fact, at the time when Harold Prince took over the show . . . -And I forget what year it was- . . . and put on the so-called "circus- version" of town near Columbus Circle, the one in which Dennis' paper fell from the

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ceiling and balloons rose and all that! At that time Lillian Hellman and I said that we would not have anything further to do with the show. Hugh Wheeler rewrote the entire book, not improving it in any way, but, at any rate, he rewrote Lillian Hellman's book, and I gave permission for anything I'd ever written to be exhumed and reused, and in some cases that was done. Steve Sondheim came in and wrote a few lines to make it possible for the show not to begin with a big (???, UNINTEL., 1 WD.) because they weren't going to do that kind of a production. They weren't going to do a concert production with the (???, UNINTEL., 1 WD.) people onstage belting it out, so there couldn't be a big opening number. Well, at any rate, I've had nothing to do with it since then except that when Beverly Sills wanted to make an opera out of it, the . . . -Jean Lachere, who was the director, got in touch with me and said, "We're going to change this around. Would you like to be the one to change it, or would you like somebody else to change it?" And, of course, I didn't want somebody even worse to tamper with my lyrics, so I did do some revisions at that time.

Host) Could you possibly find time for one more question?

Robert Lucid) Just one.

Host) Just one more? Okay.

Audience Member) This . . . -This is . . . -This is really, sort of, a common remark on the retirement of a scholar. I don't know if we're ever going to have a chance to hear you two talk about it . . . (???, UNINTEL. SEV. WDS.) , to talk about it, some of their feelings about the

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retirement of a scholar and for those already out there, and, perhaps, why you chose to be here on that all-night run?

Norman Mailer) Well, you know, Robert Lucid is one of my oldest friends. We've been friends for . . . -It's been nearly 32 years, and we were friends for about five years before that, and so, 37 years. And, you know, I had prepared some remarks for a possible statement later tonight about . . . -so I'll just say . . . -Oh, that he . . . -I remember once meeting . . . -I heard Bob speak . . . -I heard Bob give a lecture years ago here at The University of Pennsylvania on American literature, and I thought, "My God, this is really one of the best lectures I've ever heard in my life." And that was confirmed about ten years after that when I was giving a lecture somewhere or other, and a girl came up to me and said, "Mr. Mailer, I want to tell you something. I remember one of Dr. Lucid's classes . . . " -And I thought I've never heard any other . . . -anyone else ever can talk about a professor in that way- She says, "I'm embarrassed . . . " -She says, "because people say I used to love Ethel Matheson's (???, SP., SOUNDS LIKE) courses, you see." So this will embarrass you terribly, which is one of the reasons I do love you! But, at any rate, as you see, if you really care about somebody it's better for you to talk about them if you like them. You can only spoil them, so . . . -I can't speak for Mr. Wilbur, although I'm sure he has similar feelings, but there's any number of very very good reasons why I'm here today. The proof of it is that my poor overworked wife had to drive 400 miles yesterday from Provincetown to here, which is a nine-hour trip over the dullest

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American highways, and that doing never once thought, "Oh, let's call this whole thing off!"

There's a sense to it. There's a big sense to it. I mean, it makes me happy to be here tonight.

Robert Lucid) Well, [TO RICHARD WILBUR] I'm not going to put you through that.

But . . . -But . . . -What . . . -Well, we're just old friends. That's what it is. Dick and Charlotte, we met when I was teaching at Wesleyan, starting in 1959, just, I think, a year-and-a-half or two years after I met Norman. And we've all been friends right straight through so much. And that's it, you know. We're all . . . -I . . . -I just want to thank them very . . . -And this is where I finish, and It's alright. I just want to thank them both and their lovely wives for coming to this event. In both cases it was a very long and complicated trip. And I want to thank all of you for coming here today. Thanks so much.