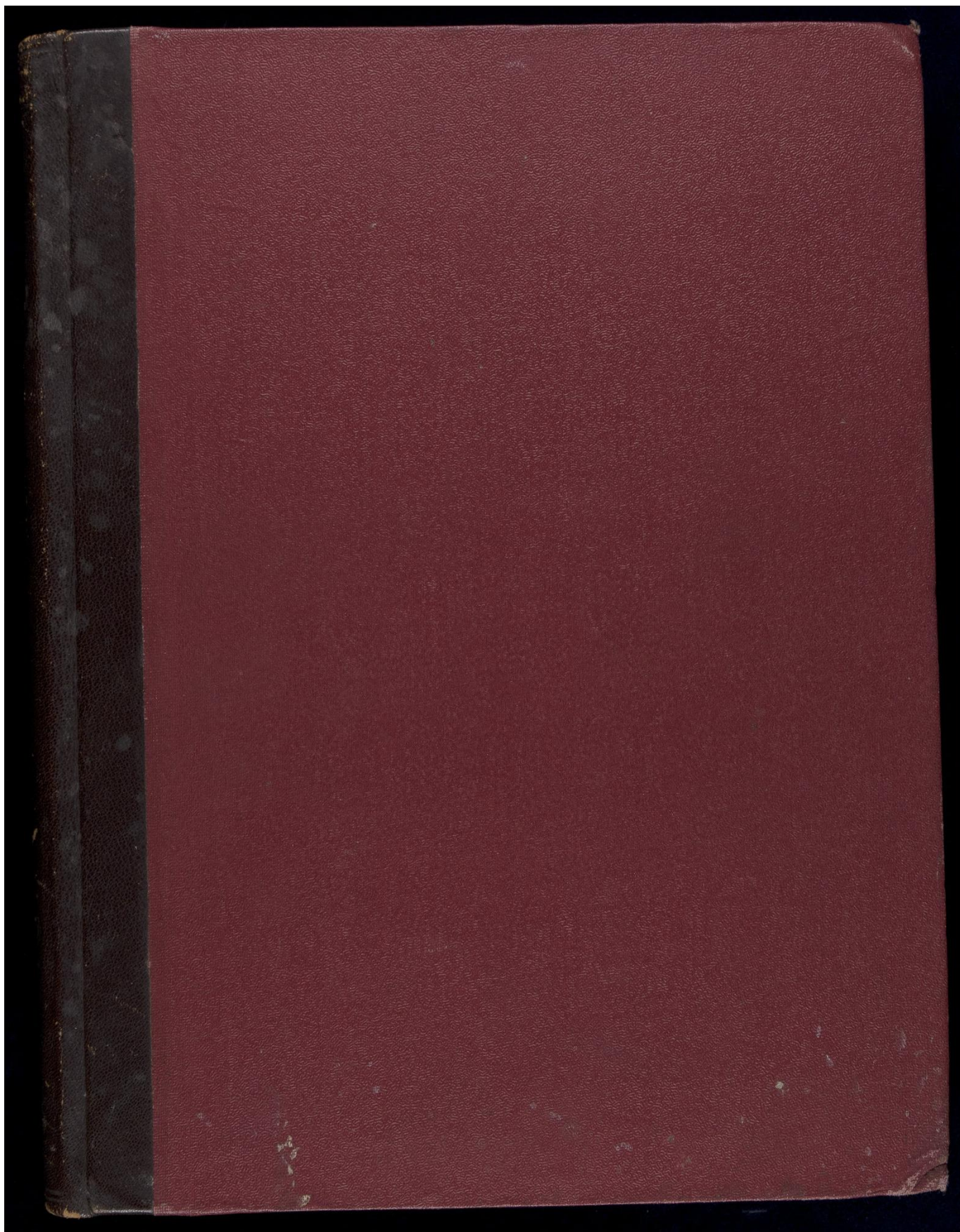


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HENRY MILLER

18, Villa Seurat

PARIS (XIV^e)

Tropics of Capricorn

First draft, scrapped.

Began at Clichy 1934.

HENRY MILLER

18, Villa Seurat

PARIS (XIV^e)

in splendor of an
Tropic of Capricorn

The most difficult thing for me is to write this first line --a piece of sincere insincerity~~++~~, a clue to my character, to everything that follows. The hardest thing for me is to begin, because I have never known a beginning nor an end. And if this, which is neither a novel, nor a story, nor a slice of life, nor a phantasy, if this which it pleases me so much to call "Tropic of Capricorn" is most difficult to begin it is because it has no ~~not~~ origin in point of time or space. This narrative then, which is in my blood, which will be told whether you like it or not, or what is more important, whether I like it or not, commences at a point before the people concerned in it had ever known each other, before they existed, as it were. But I am not vitally disturbed about this; an insoluble problem which I leave insoluble.

Actually I am not disturbed about anything, now that I have begun. It is the third year of my stay in Paris, the fourth or fifth year since I have begun to carry this story about in my blood. It is usual to let things die before one writes about them, and perhaps it was because I had not waited to give the events recorded a decent ~~funerak~~ burial that I failed repeatedly in telling of them. It is not all dead yet, my experience, but I see now that it will never die altogether, and since the funeral is always more important (to the living) than the death, I proceed.

In the first place I must make it clear that I am not a Tony Bring, which is the name of the hero in the novel I have just written, the novel I have just destroyed. As for the others--Vanya, Hildred, etc.--- what difference does it make what they are called? I am the one who counts--it is my book, my life, my creation. If I was dissatisfied with my novel, my hero, it is because I did not do justice to ~~me~~ myself. As for the others--Vanya, Hildred, etc.-- I am not concerned with doing justice to them....I would rather do them injustice. It is not an Olympian attitude I am taking, not the cold, scientific analysis of the realist that I would adopt. It is in my blood, as I said before, and not quite dead. I do not look upon my blood as a conglomerate of chemical entities; my blood is a part of me, nearly all of me, it is what I live by, it feeds me hate and love. And my blood is turbulent--it resists analysis, it still defies classification. The other day, seated in a banker's office, I picked up a book called "Moby Dick" and, glancing through the pages, my eye suddenly fell on that chapter in which the author describes the whiteness of the whale. At once I realized that I had a valuable document in my hands. There is an insanity about this writing which a calm, collected critic like John Erskine tries to dignify, to reduce to its chemical components, by calling it noble writing--I am not sure whether this is the term he used, but his intent was that. Mr. Erskine marshalled some of his finest enthusiasms, but it was not the white enthusiasm of the whale. The difference between "Moby Dick" and "Helen of Troy" is the difference between blood and chemistry. I detest "Helen of Troy" and "Adam and Eve" and "Unfinished Business"; by this token I detest a host of others, some greater, some lesser, than Mr. John Erskine & Co.

Here I have only begun and there are elements creeping in which I am sure no editor would approve of. It is impossible for me to write even the most fantastic tale without mention of books and authors, without extraneous details, as it is called. Far from worrying me it is a comfort to me; books and authors are a vital part of me, they too are in my blood, carried along with my living, part of my hate and love. How was it, then, that in my novel I described a home without books? How was it that I was driven to a pitch of the finest frenzy in describing the walls of our home, the walls which Vanya, my rival and enemy, covered with frescoes? (As a matter of fact, this was a lie; it was I who invented the frescoes, not Vanya!) There were so many lies in my novel, almost ~~in~~ everything I wrote was a lie, an invention, an evasion. I do not say that I will not lie now, but if I do lie, and I most certainly will, they will be better lies, bigger lies, more monstrous lies. For a man is known as much by his lies as by his truths, better perhaps.

Consider, for instance, how much better is this beginning than the one in my novel--"remote and desolate corner of America. Vast mud-flats on which no flower, no living thing grows, Fissures radiating in all directions, losing themselves in the immensity of space...From the snow-capped mountains that shoulder the sky strong winds blow down. With twilight the thermometer drops like an anchor. Here and there buttes and mesas dotted with creasote bushes. Tranquil the earth beneath the moaning wind." Etc. Etc. Rubbish all that. A lie! A lie because, however true it is, it was taken from an encyclopaedia, and an encyclopaedia is a vast collection of lies.

A worse lie because it was written with my wife standing over my shoulder and my friends sitting around waiting for ~~ham~~ me to toss them a page. Still more of a fraud because my wife, arch-liar that she is, guided my thoughts, arranged my lies skillfully, blew on them with her foul, lying breath. And this too is interesting to relate since, when I began the novel, my wife swore that she would aid me by telling the truth about everything, everything that had happened, that was past. Most interesting because it tells at once what manner of individual I was, am, that I believed my lying wife. I believed in her though I had found her nothing but deceit and flasehood. I had to come to Paris to discover that I did not believe any more, even in her lies. Her lies too were false.

Furthermore, these opening lines of the novel--they were not the real opening. There were several beginings I had made previously, each of them better than this, each of them vetoed by my wife, Hildred, whose name had changed with each beginning. And so now I am come to the last beginning, the definitive edition, as it were--unless my wife arrives unexpectedly and destroys it.

But it is clear, I hope, that I was enmeshed in falsehood, that I was a dead fly in this spider-web which they--my wife, Hildred, and her friend, Vanya-- had woven about me. It was as though these two great friends, these spiders, had hypnotized me and commanded me to sing their praise before putting me to death. And that they did not kill me is nothing less than a miracle, which is why I have emerged from my struggles a deeply religious man, which is why (I said it in my novel about my enemy, but it is I to whom it applies)"taken as I am and as I shall always be, I feel that I am a force both of creation and of dissolution, that I am a real value, and have a right, a place,

a mission among men." The words are borrowed from Papini, a failure like myself, one of those grand failures who inspire us more than a dozen heroes or saints. There was lots I wanted to say in my novel about ~~Pain~~ Papini, just as there is lots more I want to say in my next book about Salavin, ~~this~~ Louis Salavin, but my thoughts about Papini were vetoed--they were extraneous, I was told. It is all this extraneous matter which was ruled out that I am going to crowd into this book, my book, the book I am writing in my solitude, no wife hanging over my shoulder, no friends sitting at my ~~ank~~ elbow. The very flavor and quality of these lines summons up another writer, another being to whom I am greatly indebted, whom I wish to pay tribute to here and now whether it is out of place or not--Unamuno. How ironical it is that lying before me is Unamuno's essay "How to Write a Novel"! "My legend! My novel! That means the legend, the novel of me, Migeul de Unamuno, as he is known, which we have written together, the others and me, my friends and my enemies, and my friendly-me and my enemy-me.....My novel! My legend! The Unamuno of my legend, of my novel, the one whom we have fashioned together, my friendly-me and my enemy-me, and the others, my friends and my enemies---this Unamuno gives me life and death, creates me and destroys me, supports me and stifles me. It is my death-agony. Can I be as I believe myself or as others believe me to be? Here is where these lines become a confession in the presence of my unknown and unknowable me, unknown and unknowable for myself. Here is where I create the legend where I must bury myself....."

It is when I read such lines as these that I could cease writing forever. Therefore I am putting Papini and Unamuno aside--I will not let them stop me!

How it was that my wife ever liberated me, how it was that she sent me to Paris and thus permitted me to find my own salvation, is a mystery to me. Was it that she had no use for a dead fly? The novel was unfinished, I was still singing her praise, a peculiar praise indeed if one were to examine it closely, and then suddenly she came to me one day and asked me if I would not be happier in Europe, in Paris? She was to follow me after certain arrangements had been made, that is to say, after she had extracted ~~fr~~ a sum big enough for us to live on for the rest of our lives from one called Pop. It was difficult for her to work ^{on} ~~with~~ Pop with me around: I was undependable, given to fits of jealousy, I had a bad conscience, I was too tender, etc. So it was not just to make me happier, but to establish a clear field for her operations, that I was sent to Europe. We were making sacrifices for each other, sacrifices which we both wanted. In other words, quite in keeping with our mode of life, we lied to each other when we wanted to arrive at a truth. This departure for Paris is really the end of my story, except, as I said before, that there has never been a ^{new} ~~beginning~~ nor an end for me. What happened after my arrival in Paris, though it is outside the story, extraneous as it were, belongs to the story, is a vital part of it.

Two stories always-- the one I was thinking about and writing, and the other which I was living, which I am still living and writing. Each of these stories comprises a thousand stories, a thousand lives --there is not paper enough for me to tell it, nor time enough to live it. If it is confusing it is that I myself am still confused, always will be, that I prefer this confusion to any order or clarity however great, however noble or convincing. I am a confused man because my blood is thick, because I am nearly all blood.

7.

Nor is this a pretentious, artificial, that is to say, artistic confusion, such as Andre Gide loves to give us in his meagre works. Astonishing that a man who could write so illuminatingly about the obscurity of Dostoievski should fail so miserably when he becomes, or tries to become, obscure. The obscurity lies in the individual, or the individual in it, and no work of art can render obscure that which is thin and clear. No, Monsieur Gide's double-entry bookkeeping (in the "Counterfeiters", for example) deceives no one, not even Monsieur Gide. It is as palpable as a woman standing at the window pulling down the blinds. I am mentioning Andre Gide because Dostoievski is important to me; had there been no Dostoievski I would not be what I am to-day, I would never have written these lines and all the lines to come. But I can very well imagine Andre Gide, despite all the chrysalises he sheds so artistically, remaining Andre Gide, Dostoievski or no Dostoievski. All that he has written, Andre Gide, is a refutation of his development; he is [✓]worm that has been born a butterfly again and again, he never metamorphoses into a bull or a lion.

There were huge blocks of my story which I scattered, wasted, in novelettes, in talk, in reminiscence, in dreams. There was never any time when I was living one life, the life of a husband, a lover, a friend. Wherever I was I was leading multiple lives; the drama I carried within me I projected; wherever I made a contact I created a new character for my drama. Thus, whatever it is that I might choose to regard as my story, is lost, drowned, ~~inextricably~~ indissolubly fused with others' lives, others' dramas, others' stories.

Upon completing my novel I received a letter from a friend, urging me to eliminate all that was not strictly essential to my theme. I respect my friend's judgment--he is an artist whom I admire-- but I am not going to follow his advice, or rather, I cannot. This essential theme which he speaks of--what is it but myself? How can I eliminate what is not essential to myself? Everything is essential to me, otherwise it would not be, would not happen. My friend has lost sight of me in a "situation", but I have not lost sight of myself. A "situation" well handled ~~make~~ make what is called a good book but I do not care greatly whether I write a good book or not. For me the book is the man and my book is the man I am, the confused man, the negligent man, the reckless man, the lusty, obscene, boisterous, thoughtful, scrupulous, lying, truthful man which I am. That is why, perhaps, when I had finished the novel I gave it the title "Crazy Cock" and for foreword I wrote "Apologies to -----", my friend, and for preface "Good-bye to the novel, sanity and good health. Hello angels!" And why did I mention Louis Salavin before? Because people have recognized that I am a saint; some indeed are saying that I am a "false" saint. But that there is something of the saint about me is indisputable. I repeat, I am a deeply religious man. I see this world of ours falling apart because there is nothing for men to hold on to; I see individuals disintegrating, losing their appetites, their fervor, their sex even, because their souls are not geared to anything--free wheels! I hold that more important than writing books is to restore men their souls, their faith, their dreams. I think it is a calamity that so many people can read and write. I think it is an evil that we are fed by all the competent writers who exist to-day, a shame that men are not stuttering more, that tongues are not paralyzed, that people are not going blind or becoming demented.

If you think that my book is something to titivate you, to give you a catharsis even, you are mistaken. I want to bruise you and maim you, I want you to realize your lethargy and ignominy....I want to leave a scar upon the world. For I am what you are, a man of this age, a victim of the disintegration going on, a lost soul. But, my God, I am still man enough to recognize what is happening, to want to fight against it, to know in which direction to cast my eyes. My failure, your failure, what might we not make of our failure? This is an unheroic age--not a single great man in the world...not one! This is the untragic age, the period wherein nothing happens, a time in which we waste away. But this mould we are leaving behind--let us make it a rich compost!

Do you think the men to come will be interested in Thomas Mann, in Sinclair Lewis, in Andre Gide? Do you think they will reverence Lenin, Wilson, Mussolini? For a time, yes, because the individual is only slowly being killed off--there will be a long nightmare yet of democracy, of food, of solidarity. But I am not thinking of these immediate successors. I am thinking of that new Middle Age to come, when God is born again, when men fight and kill for God, when work is forgotten and books assume their true place in life. I am thinking that in that age to come I will not be overlooked. Then my history will become important, my scar will have significance. I can not forget that I am making history, that I am history. I regard myself not as a book, but as a history of our time. And history is made, not written.

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"Ifx she does not come and destroy it!" Last night, after I had written these' pages, I went to a cafe and read her letters. Four ~~of them~~ ^{letters}! All that she has written me in these three long years. One a year, you might say. And as I read them I wept; I would have given anything to have her here at my side, to have her destroy what I have begun, to make it impossible for me to write this book. She is not a writer, my Hildred. Her letters almost make me blush when I look at them, when I see that careless, almost illiterate scrawl. But these letters are more precious to me than any documents I possess. "As for my good spirits," she ~~says~~ writes, "how could you believe that? Don't you know that I drug myself, like your Russian friends, only in my case it is with youth and a willingness to commit robbery, murder, anything to make you happy and to be with you soon, not as the woman whom everyone knows, but as an insignificant little housewife, lover, friend to my..... Do you want to know why I am a great woman? Well, I'll let you in on a secret. I have had enough instinctive wisdom and a great love to discover the greatest, kindest, most sensitive human being in the entire universe. I have truly been blessed. I could say, if I were dying, ~~that~~ I have loved a man ~~that~~ whom the world of women would give their life to know (if they were not blind)--thank God they are, or what chance would I have unless I believe that there is a magnetic force stronger than everything in the world which guides our love.....It is you who have given me all--and that all is my love for you. If I am any one it is my love for you--I want to be only your woman--your love--your all. You beg me to believe in your tolerance. I don't want that. I want you to hold me, scold me, beat me, love me and never leave

me again, no matter what I do or say. I am your woman, your friend, your lover, your own child. Nothing, no one means anything ever to me. I am nothing without you. I want nothing except to be with you. My bad temper has sprung from the devil itself. I would give my life to make up for ~~the~~ my past nonsense and silly ego....."

That's how she writes to me, my Hildred. That was her first letter. The others are the same-- nothing but humility, tenderness, devotion, worship. She calls me her God even, and I don't doubt but that she means it, while the pen is in her hand. I don't doubt but that she would lay down her life for me, in these moments of exaltation. On the other hand, when her ego is in full swing, when she wants something desperately, she could see me die without batting an eyelash. Splendid creature! Fine breed! If I did not feel such a need to live, what more wonderful than to let her kill me! On page 248 of Gide's "Dostoevski" I made this notation in the margin: "Rewrite novel with fine opposition between Vanya and Hildred. Hildred a female Stavrogin, Vanya a female Parsifal. The suggestibility of Vanya! Hildred's lack of direction, inability to distinguish between good and evil. Blind force. And Tony Bring is simply the arena--because he understands all." The notation ~~stands~~ is written beside this confession of Stavrogin:

"Dans ces experiences, dans toute ma vie precedente, je me suis revele immensément fort. Mais a quoi appliquer cette force? Voici ce que je n'ai jamais su, ce que je ne sais pas encore. Je puis, comme je l'ai toujours pu, eprouver le desir de faire une bonne action, et j'en ressens du plaisir. x A cote de cela, je desire aussi faire le mal, et j'en ressens également de la satisfaction."

This new personage, says Gide, to which he is giving all his attention at present, is Stavrogin, the most strange perhaps and the most terrifying creation of Dostoievski. It is this strange and terrifying creation which I have for wife. Stavrogin has been born again a woman.....

It is no mere coincidence that my Hildred speaks so frequently of Stavrogin, that of all the roles she has played, of all the roles she is capable of playing, this role of Stavrogin suits her best, is her most constant role. I have been reading lately Virginia Woolf's "Orlando", this strange character (not strange enough, unfortunately!) who lives through three centuries and in the middle of the book changes sex. The book begins, very significantly-- "He--for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it----". But it is when I come to the following passage that I sit up in amazement, conscious of a deep truth, and to me a very personal, meaningful one:

"And, indeed, it cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life, often unknown people by the way, somehow contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past. Of them we can justly say that they live precisely the sixty-eight or seventy-two years allotted them on the tomb-stone. Of the rest some we know to be dead though they walk ~~ak~~ among us; some are not yet born though they go through the forms of life; others are hundreds of years old though they call themselves thirty-six. The true length of a person's life, whatever the Dictionary of National

Biography may say, is always a matter of dispute. For it is a difficult business--this time-keeping; nothing more quickly disorders it than contact with any of the arts....."

Now it is precisely this contact with the arts which is the germ and clue to Hildred's character. When I met her she was a "taxi" in a dance-hall, & a quite ordinary individual, you would say, to glance at her, attractive, but not astonishingly so, her body rather heavy, her face too full, a sort of drugged, lethargic, dreamy, animal quality about her. Her most intimate friends were whores, drug addicts, drunkards; two of them, a mulatto and a tough little Irish girl, were decidedly nymphomaniac. Another called Julia, of Mayflower descent, was always losing her false teeth when she got drunk, and in the mornings when she came out of her torpor and rubbed her eyes she would look at the man beside her and say "How the hell did you get here?" And when I began to woo her with all the powers that were in me, never having received a "literary" letter before, she would greet me like this--- "Say, listen, what kind of dope do you take?" This was her milieu, her language, her stock of ideas. When I introduced her to my friends I had to stand over her with a whip and give it to her now and then so that she would not make an ass of herself, or of me, so that she would not say, as she did on one occasion-- "Sure I know Bernard Shaw; I heard him lecture a few weeks ago at Carnegie Hall". And like the Philippovna woman, in the "Possessed", who could never forgive her benefactor because he had taken her virginity, so it seems to me, Hildred has never forgiven me for robbing her of her innocence. Frankly, I think she could have gone on in that dreamy, vegetative way for a thousand years, could have been another slut like Julia, a five-and-ten cent whore like her mulatto friend, Eve.

I don't think it was I who changed her, except indirectly. What roused her from her sleep was her contact with books. For almost a solid year she scarcely left the house--she devoured my books. And soon thereafter, with the aggressiveness and assertiveness of her character, she was criticizing my opinions; she quoted my words when it served to make an impression, and she ridiculed them for the same reason. She must make an impression always! Ideas intoxicated her--if they could be worn like plumage. She had not yet succumbed to them, as she was to later..... And then Vanya came along--her great friend Vanya-- who was poet, sculptor, actor, lunatic. In short, Vanya was everything. "The collision with a star of this magnitude flung her out of her shallow orbit; whereas before she had existed in a nebulous state, the tail of a comet, as it were, now she became a sun whose inner chromosphere blazed with undying energy." In the novel, this passage I have just quoted, referred to Vanya--it was Vanya whom I depicted as a sun blazing with undying energy, not however, as a result of her contact with Hildred, but from her alliance with another woman, the Krupanowa woman, who, alas, never existed. Yes, Vanya did blaze up when she collided with that sun which Hildred was, but it was Hildred more than Vanya who caught fire, who blazed with undying energy. And though nothing of the sort happened, it was deeply true what I said of them then-- "A singular life they led together. Drugged by the ritual of the mass, they staggered to the slaughterhouse, thence to the lives of the Popes. They ran their fingers over the skins of crotins and elephants, they photographed jewels and artificial flowers and coolies stripped to the waist; they explored the pathologic monsters of the insect world and the still more pathologic monsters of Rome. At night they dreamt of the idols buried in the morain of Campeche and of bulls charging from the stockade to expire

under straw hats."

But however true, in a pertinent way, may be these excerpts from my novel, they are also terribly false, most false because they give the illusion of truth. Except for certain passages which I wrote in a trance the whole work was conceived in my head, it was written with my hands, and my hands and brain were well coordinated, though critics may object to the result of the coordination. I was at work on it for four or five years (the time is blurred to me), writing, rewriting, correcting, destroying, pasting it together, basting it like a chicken, walking around it like a partly-finished statue, spraying it with toilet water, taking it out for a walk, dusting it, airing it--and all this labor for naught, all this to discover that I had written nothing adequate, all this without realizing who and what manner of people we were, thinking, thinking, constantly thinking. Result-- a monstrous, useless edifice, a skyscraper without elevators, a ~~tax~~ tomb without a bone in it. In criticizing this huge edifice which has been demolished, whose parts are scattered now over the four continents (some to be preserved in museums) I am pointing a finger at all that writing which goes by the name of literature, I am levelling it, razing it to the ground. Says Phillippe P. Datz - "I must confess that the great tenors leave me cold, whether it is a case of Racine or of Rimbaud, I am interested only in "miss-fire" books. The others are works that are placed." It may take me a thousand pages until I get to my "theme"--and I may never get to it-- but this forest I am leading you through is more important than any "theme", it is me in my immediacy, in this present which is crumbling, me the present supported, raised up, by the pressure of past and future, taking a last terrifying look before I am dropped from the heights and engulfed.....

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On looking over my old notes I am impressed by-- the quantity and character of individuals who were in love with Hildred (I have recorded forty-two men and sixteen women, all but about eight of these dating from ^{the} a period since I knew her); by the variety and number of friends I was constantly surrounded by, and yet a very lonely individual; by the staggering amount of books I read despite the hectic quality of my life; by the positions I occupied in my role of bread-winner; by the wonderful possibilities always open to me, which I almost religiously evaded; by my capacity for inspiring the most ardent hatred and the most tender, abject devotion, in men and women alike; by my candor and sincerity, truly monstrous, and my treachery, faithlessness, an almost god-like selfishness; by my callousness and cruelty, especially to those who were dependent on me spiritually or otherwise; by my great faith, my blindness, my inability to learn from experience; by my humanity, which has permitted me to enter so many hearts, which has deepened my cruelty, my callousness, my faith, my love; by my incurable optimism that permits me to embrace all forms of pessimism, that makes suicide seem ridiculous and romantic, unless it be creative, unless it be like Kirilov's in the "Possessed"; by the paralysis that gripped me for thirty years, that led me to ask every day and all through the day (even when I was on top of a woman)--"what do you want to be in life?"; by my humility, even more insulting and outrageous than my vanity, my humility which goaded me to wrong those who befriended me, to despise those who trusted me, to betray those who loved me; by my curiosity, so extravagant and unhampered that I committed crimes in the name of it; by my instaiableness, truly ferocious, truly in-

human; by my deep ingratitude, my recklessness, my inexhaustible hunger for life, a hunger that would destroy everything in order that we might live again--violently, passionately, unrooted in the past, heedless of the future, beautiful, desperate ingrates, unmoral in the highest sense, learned savages who have freed themselves from the thrall dom of the intellect to enter upon an orgy of living.

It is when I unroll this heavy scroll of experience that I feel a pity for others, that I envy myself, my many past selves, that I taste anew and relish with the utmost keenness my suffering, my disillusionment, my wasted years; for if now, because the hard core inside me has given way in places, if now, I say, I am able to let myself flow, to express myself after a fashion, it is only, I realize because I have arrested my living. And here, properly, I should, if I were like others, register a sigh, a regret; but I am incapable of that, I know too much about myself (without however any least illusion of knowing enough). In a sense I am like those most intelligent people who are "cured" by the psychoanalyst, who after being made acquainted with the nature of their malady find themselves sufficiently strong to live with their malady, to cultivate it, as it were, and utilize it for bigger purposes. The thought certainly is not original with me, but it has impressed me, influenced me--this idea, common to many great men before the learned jargon of psychoanalysis ever existed, that in expressing one's self through one's art one is effecting a cure, that is to say, one is getting better acquainted with one's self, training one's self for greater and more dangerous combats.

of ideas.

But I will cease this language of "one's self", which is deeply abhorrent to me; it is like Tony Bring again, he whom the novelist recorded as "sitting alone in a furnished room overlooking the harbor". I am far from being an anonymous individual, a character in a novel; if for a moment I dally with the idea of being "cured", if for the briefest interval I make use of that quixotic hocus-pocus which the psychologists have dignified and erected into a formidable pseudo-science, it is only because of my humanity again, my broad tolerance, my curiosity, my hunger to partake of everything, even that which is, or may be, harmful, false, poisonous. No, I am singularly untouched by ideas: I do not live by them, I absorb them rather, take them over, digest them, mutilate them, transmogrify them, spit them out, sweat them out, evacuate them, redeposit them in the soil, where they belong. I am not a slave to ideas; I am an agronomist who uses them in the way they were intended to be used --as fertilizers. And if we run short of fertilizers I do not worry either: we can always fall back on the natural elements--the earth will never go bankrupt!

It is here, in this manner of speaking, that I detect one of the greatest defects in Hildred's character, Hildred is such a force; she who lives like a volcano and with a pace I have never seen equalled before, she who is continually erupting and destroying, she will burn out, become extinct, because she is not putting back that which she is robbing from life. It is that which makes her so ugly and fearsome to many, that which makes her so truly immoral, so inhuman, albeit sublime and inspiring. It is that perhaps which led me, the ardent explorer, to the tip of the crater, which held me fascinated and terrified as I gazed into its bubbling depths. Who is more

attracted by death, by the prospect of total annihilation, than he who is all life, who devours and fecundates, whose hunger is but a reflection of his desire to be exhausted, that is drained, that is extinguished. When I first met her, as I said before, she was rather an ordinary-looking individual, much like any other crater, as it were. Her lethargy, her dream-like quality, her somnolence, that inactive, vegetative quality I remarked on, that statue falling asleep--I begin to perceive now why it attracted me. It was she who gave me the first glance, it was she who nodded to me and beckoned me to come. And instinctively I refused, or rather not instinctively, but wilfully I refused. My going to the dance-hall that night was precisely the act of a man who, against all warning, against all advice, against his highest wisdom, ventures into an unknown and dangerous realm. I remember so vividly how that evening, when I left my office, I said to myself "adventure at all cost", that I felt the money in my pocket (it was pay-day and it was a considerable sum for me) and I decided to spend it all, spend it on myself, no matter how foolishly. I remember how, when I left her--it was dawning and my pockets were empty-- I walked into my room where my wife and child were sleeping and, looking at them, at the room where I had struggled to write, seeing in them and in the room a reflection of my death (though it was a death many would have envied), I remarked to myself that all this was finished, that I had entered upon a new life and nothing would deter me, even if I had to murder them, from living my own life, a life with Hildred. How my life blazed up with this realization! How firmly and resolutely I carried through in that ordeal that was to follow! If any one weakened it was Hildred. When she saw the havoc that had been wrought she wept. Imagine the volcano weeping! Yet so it was. There was even a time when she

tried to kill herself, when weary, was it, of spreading destruction, she attempted to turn her powers upon herself. I must confess that I was never very fearful of her succeeding; even then I must have realized that she was attempting the impossible. Volcanoes do not destroy themselves, they destroy others, beings, whomes, country-sides. When they die it is not death, as we know it, but a cessation of will; they refuse to deal any longer in death, they go to sleep, and it is the most terrifying sleep we know of because there is no death in it; they do not dream, they haunt our dreams; there is no future, no beyond; there is only a black scar upon the surface of the earth. That awe-inspiring activity before which men prostrate themselves is equivalent in a way to the activity of microbes which, so we believe, lie dormant for thousands of years, which deal in death, know no other life than death.

It is with some such feeling about her as this that I can believe she is thousands of years old, that she never really died but simply ceased living, went to sleep, a dreamless sleep. And ~~since~~ volcanoes, like individuals, like nations, suddenly burst into untrollable activity, have their periods, as we say, for reasons ^{discover} unknown to us; that we give names and ~~known~~ causes makes it only too apparent that we are confronted with mystery. I have no more faith in the great causes of science than I have in mythology--less, in fact. If the language of science has become unreadable, except to a select few, it is only a proof (let us rejoice beause of it!) that knowledge is becoming more and more restricted, that knowledge is breaking down and proving of no avail. Instead of it being a deplorable sign that man is becoming less and less able to assimilate his knowledge, it is

on the contrary one of the most encouraging signs that we have. We are preparing to accept once again the mystery of life. The savants, with their heads crammed with knowledge, are beginning to appear in the cruel and ridiculous light of what they are--sports, freaks, monsters. They can do nothing for us, except to amuse us.

If all this seems tedious and out of place it is merely because I have delayed coming to the point. The enigma which I have always felt Hildred to be, the enigma with which I have wrestled and fought, which I have tried to fasten down and read with the most delicate instruments of science, this enigma I restore now proudly to its own limbo. I am done with trying to read the inscrutable.

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When therefore I congratulate myself upon my deliverance, when from this hard rock which was me there spurts ~~have~~ an uninterrupted stream, when not wishing any longer to know my characters and, ceasing my struggles, I envelop them in my spirit only to find that they in turn are enveloping me, discovering that what was mysterious in them has become mysterious in me, that it is in this dark, secret essence of them and of me that everything bathes voluptuously, that the dark places I feared, which I tried to seize and objectify, to penetrate by will and knowledge, are now the sources of my joy, my activity, then indeed, and not caring whether my words have significance for any one but myself, I cry aloud and know my freedom. Now it is that everything has new meaning for me, a meaning that I have created, forged with my own experience. Therefore the only meaning, the true meaning. Meaning and truth! Notice how we have shied away

from these words, how we have hedged when we were obliged to use them, how we apologized for the ^{very} mention of them. With what force these words of Dostoievski, ~~xxx~~ written two years before his death, greet me now: "Je constate souvent avec peine que je n'ai pas exprimé, littéralement, la vingtième partie de ce que j'aurais voulu, et peut-être même pu exprimer. Ce qui me sauve, c'est l'espoir habituel qu'un jour Dieu m'enverra tant de force et d'inspiration que je m'exprimerai plus complètement, bref que je pourrai exposer tout ce que je renferme dans mon cœur et dans ma fantaisie." Adds Gide:

"Il était de ces rares génies qui s'avancent d'œuvre en œuvre, par une sorte de progression continue, jusqu'à ce que la mort les vienne brusquement interrompre."

Do you suppose that I blush a little when I make these frequent references to Dostoievski, when I draw, as I shall more and more, comparisons and parallelisms between myself and him? Do you think this is a specimen of that vanity I referred to a while ago? Not at all! I can afford to be humble here because I am sure of myself. I can afford to introduce these digressions because they are not digressions at all, because it is in this atmosphere which Dostoievski created once and for all that I have actually lived all my life, because when I demanded more room, more adventure, more expression, I was demanding that atmosphere which belonged to me, which was denied me in America, which is denied me here even because nowhere in this world to-day are there men with ~~big~~ souls big enough to thrive in this atmosphere. I mean to say, with all the cheek in me, with a sneer on my lips and a curse for your poverty, that within the four walls of our home, within the pages of this book we lived, Hildred and I,

there was a world founded which you have never entered; and I mean to add, moreover, that I am not concerned whether you are convinced of what I say. I am happy even if you drop me here, you ~~xx~~ who are tried beyond your patience by my suttering and stammering; you will not find me stammering in the manner of Joyce or Proust, nor using an atomizer to spray you with the perfume of my cultural divagations. I am telling you that when Vanya, my mortal enemy, and Hildred who became my wife, when we three locked ourselves in a room, the things that happened to us in that room were so tremendous that if I could tell them smoothly and interestingly I would be ashamed of myself. I do not wish to infer it, I say it bluntly, that however small America's soul may be it is I who understand it better than ^{any} writer living, and that when I am through with what I have to say it will be recognized that I am the only Dostoievski America could possibly have. And if I render homage to any Americans at all it is only to two men-- Whitman and Dreiser, the first because he marked the limits of the American soul and the latter because he was the only one who effectively attempted to explore its depths. In both cases you will remark what I choose to call the ^{stuttering} suttering and stammering; in the case of Dreiser there is not enough time elapsed (living and dying) for us to appreciate his inglorious attempts. Only in an age of sterility, an age of competent writing, would a man like Dreiser be denied his due. That he has been given fame and money I do not call his due. I think that was the most ignoble, the most insulting way to espouse this man's cause. To pat him on the back, as he has been by big fellows and little fellows, is to treat him like a dog. For America, considering its enfeeblement, Dreiser was a magnificent stutterer. He was inarticulate in a big way, and not like Anderson, a clever little mountebank who passed the hat around after he had shown us his deformities.

What I am trying to say (to fall into one of Mr. Anderson's pet devices) is that the quality of Dreiser and the quality of Whitman was a high quality--I speak of Dreiser as dead already because artistically he is. We have to-day a lot of little dogs who have learned to stand on their hind legs and perform tricks; they are not even dogs of good breed. Just as the nation itself is mongrel so are its dogs. To expect a cultural renaissance of America is to expect the impossible; that is why a book like the "Rediscovery of America" makes me puke, why men like T. S. Eliot and Jean Cocteau, who are searching for God, appear to me to be ^{spiritual bums} sticking their noses into garbage cans. All these religionists of to-day are jugglers and acrobats, colossal frauds, though sincere enough at times. They are so glib, they know just where to search, they have maps even, and with every advance along the road they pause and give God a hand, whoop it up for Him, advertise Him, peddle Him, as it were.

I see no hope for America, none whatever! Unlike Dostoievski, I have no message for the outside world. I am not a Pan-American. I see America spreading disaster, a curse upon the world. I see a long night settling in and that mushroom which has poisoned the world withering at its roots. I feel myself drawn down in that defeat and so it is with a premonition of the end (be it to-morrow or five hundred years from now) that I write feverishly, pray that I may be spared to put it all down; so it is too that I find it more and more difficult to express all that I mean, that my thoughts sputter out now and then, that I rekindle the flame again and again, not with courage simply, but with desperation--for there is no one I can trust to say it for me. My faltering and groping, my search for any and every means of expression, is then a sort of divine stutter, a numbness, a paralysis, the last gush of emotion as the coffin is being lowered.

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Immediately after dinner every evening I take the garbage down to the court-yard. Coming up, I stand with the empty pail in my hand, and lean out the stair-case window to gaze at Sacre Coeur high up on the hill of Montmartre, resplendent in its whiteness. I was unaware, until I began taking the garbage down, that one could see Sacre Coeur from where we live; I would never even have thought to look for it. Similarly it was not until I was locked out one night and obliged to pace the streets until morning that I took the trouble to ascend the hill of Montmartre and make my pilgrimage to this shrine at the hour when it presents to us its most sublime aspect--dawn. Approaching it by that steep and twisting slope which brings you to the rear of the basilica I saw that a shack which I had passed time and time again without noticing it was marked "night-shelter". This fact, coupled with the associations which it gave rise to in my mind, created a feeling in me even more mysterious and touching than the living intimacy of Sacre Coeur itself. And as I turned to look back upon that sea of homes from which I had emerged I felt penitent, conscience-stricken, to think that it was only an accident which had led me to realize this magnificent moment, a moment I thought to myself which it was in my power to capture by a simple act of will, by less than that--by a mere wish. I must add, in all truthfulness (it is so human, so understandable) that it has never occurred to me since to resuscitate this moment.

Something analogous to this has occurred several times in my life with Hildred. A much deeper feeling, naturally, since it was linked with my very salvation. I mean that after a scene,

at that moment when I felt that she had wounded me most deeply, immediately after the most violent antagonism and hatred, there would come over me such a deep sense of forgiveness and with it such serenity and calmity that I would pray for strength enough to wound her, as she had me, in order that she might arrive at and enjoy my ~~unattainable~~ attitude. In such moments I would say to myself "think how you would act if you knew that to-morrow you were going to die", and accepting the thought as a fact I was not only amazed that I could no longer feel resentment but I was convinced that if, just for one moment, everybody in the world could feel that way our life on this earth would be altered instantly and forever.

I come back to Kirilov again, to that point in his conversation which Gide quotes in order to explain his reason for wishing to commit suicide; it has just been remarked that he, Kirilov, appears extremely happy, although it was not such a long time ago that he was in a very bad state of humor. The conversation runs as follows:

"Hum, a present je ne gronde plus. Alors, je ne savais pas que j'etais heureux....L'homme est malheureux parce qu'il ne connait pas son bonheur, uniquement pour cela. Celui qui saura qu'il est heureux deviendra tout de suite grand a l'instant meme....Tout est bien; j'ai decouvert cela brusquement.

"Et si l'on meurt de faim; et si l'on viole une petite fille, c'est bien aussi?

"Oui, tout est bien pour quiconque sait que tout est tel."

And then comes this most remarkable utterance of Kirilov's:
 "Ils ne sont pas bons, puisqu'ils ne savent pas qu'ils le sont.
 Quand ils l'auront appris, ils ne violeront plus de petites
 filles. Il faut qu'ils sachent qu'ils sont bons et, instant-
 anement, ils le deviendront tous, jusqu'au dernier."

I wish to put beside this statement of Kirilov's the opinion
 of a contemporary concerning the Surrealists:

"The revolution in which they are primarily interested, to
 tell the truth, appears to be a rather vague one--a spiritual,
 rather than a political revolution; an overturning of established
 modes of thought and feeling that will make possible a different
 life upon the earth, and, incidentally, a different art and
 literature."

"To tell the truth"--do I need to say it?--is the killing
 phrase!

I speak of these sublime moments with Hildred because ~~now~~
 whenever, so to speak, "I am taking down the garbage" I think
 of myself standing out on a high hill, resplendent in ^{my}whiteness,
 the self which I ignore so persistently trembling there in the
 cool, serene dawn. It is no Christ that inspires me--it is the
 god in me that I am thinking of, something better than a Christ,
 something bigger than a god, if only a man.

All this comes back to me forcibly as I relive the last mo-
 ments we shared together here in Paris, my friend Boris and myself.

In the realm of action he is a timid man, my friend Boris. (It is he who urged me to "stick to my central theme"). In running away from his wife and children he felt himself to be ~~such~~ a coward--so wrong, so utterly wrong, this! It might have been a heroic gesture--it should have been! All the right things he had done were wrong, and this one great wrong that he was inflicting upon them was the right thing, but alas, he was incapable of realizing it, or, if he were capable of realizing it, could not sustain the thought longer than an instant. And so, during the last few days wherein he wound up his affairs and made innumerable visits to his lawyers, arranging with them to transfer to his wife all his earthly, tangible possessions, I accompanied him and listened to him in amazement. For here was a man who for the first time in his life was doing the right thing and he was deriving nothing from it. He was tormented and perplexed, praising his actions when he should have been ashamed of them, apologizing for his behavior when he should have been boasting of it. How often, in alluding to his wife who at that moment was doubtless cursing him, he remarked "If she could only see me now! If she only realized what I am trying to do for her!" Poor wretch! He could no longer distinguish between the demon in himself and the angel. And all the while, as I ran beside him (he could not go fast enough for fear that he would renege) I kept saying to myself, for him, "Treasure this moment! Treasure it! Treasure it!" And he was saying to himself "What a fool I am! What a fool!" because he feared that she would not understand his gesture, or appreciate it, and because he regretted that he was doing what he was, yet felt himself incapable of doing otherwise. I recall now that once when I halted him to explain what it meant "if we were to die to-morrow"

a group of workers who were standing at our elbow suddenly began to pound away with sledge-hammers--an ear-splitting racket that completely unnerved him. Whereas I waited smilingly for them to stop, and the din was soothing to me, my thoughts held firmly, indeed with each blow of the sledge-hammer it was as if I were spiking a thought, driving it deep within; and at the same time I was comparing this kind of noise with that excruciating, intolerable sort which only the other day I had heard when walking along the Grands Boulevards-- the noise of riveting machines, a noise that seems insane, fiendish, monstrous, compared with the furious, honest blows of men using a sledgehammer. In this sudden, furious clatter which had upset my friend it seemed to me I could hear my wife's sobs when she had closed the door after her and left me utterly alone; I could picture what I had never stopped to think of before, in this situation--her anguish, her grief. Is it harder to run away than to remain? Harder to injure than to receive injury? We who are injured, do we think enough of the pain it costs the other? Alas, my friend Boris, he could not determine whether he was injuring or being injured, and the plight of him moved me deeply. I at least had known what it was to be injured and I had known also how to injure. And between the two there is no great difference that I can perceive, so long as the feeling is pure and fervid in either case. Between Hildred and myself there is a fine equivalence: when she adopts her role I know how to assume mine, and vice versa.

When I look up from the machine my eyes confront the large, many-colored map of Europe which I have pinned to my wall; it is criss-crossed with rail and steamship lines, with national frontiers, with indelible prejudices and rivalries. And the very raggedness of its contours, the big gaps that indicate sea and lake, the broken links that are the islands--all this strain and erosion exemplifies, in my imagination, the conflict that has been going on between Hildred and myself and of which this book is but a map. I am impressed, when I look at this map of Europe, that it is a much vaster continent than it seems, that in fact it is not a continent at all but part of a great continent that has been broken into by the sea. Gibraltar, the Channel, the Scandinavian peninsula--here at these weak points the earth gave way; and where the land held up, where it resisted the shock, notice how ridiculous are the formations it took. One would not have to know a word of geology to understand the vicissitudes which this continent of Europe, with its network of rivers, lakes and seas, has undergone. One can spot at a glance the titanic efforts that were made at different periods just as one can detect the abortive, frustrated efforts; one can actually feel the great changes in climate that followed upon the various upheavals. And if one looks at this map with the eye of a cartologist one can imagine further what it will look like fifty thousand, or a hundred thousand years from now, which is not long in the life of a continent.

So it is that looking at the sea and land which makes up the contours of our map I see certain ridiculous formations and ^{that} others again bear witness to heroic struggles. I can trace in

the island growths and the monstrous peninsulas the record of separatism and compromise, in the rugged Alpine chain the history of internal conflicts, in the long, winding rivers the gradual giving way, the slipping of faith, the loss of courage; I can see that the frontiers are marked with heavy, natural boundaries and with light, wavering lines variable as the wind; I can feel just where the climate is going to change, feel how inevitable it is that certain fertile regions will wither and other barren places blossom; I am sure that in some quarters the myth will come true, that the mythology of to-day will be relived, that links will be found between the unknown men we were and the unknown men we are, that the confusion which is the past will be marked by a greater confusion to come, and that it is only the tumult and confusion which is of importance and that we must get down and worship it. It is in this sense only that I am a cartologist, that in drawing a map of our struggles I am not pointing to the result of the struggles but to the existence and value of them. It is to recognize that water and land are constantly changing places, that this continent we have charted out together as a life has no reality as such, that if we decompose it or reintegrate it, atom by atom, we understand even less, that finally we two beings, Hildred and I, contain all the elements that make the earth, its real substance and its myth, that we carry with us everywhere our geo/graphy and our changing climate.

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I'm thinking of the sort of man I was before I met her-- that is, up to my thirtieth year. The most restless, dissatisfied, despairing soul imaginable. Nothing but unhappy love affairs, wandering from one job to another, running off to Colorado, Alaska, California, Mexico in the hope of escaping from myself, going through the most bitter sacrifices to make a woman happy while all the time I was in love with another. At sixteen, while I am still in High School (and the prize pupil incidentally), getting a dose of clap from a French whore, and when I am cured falling in love with one of my teachers and knocking her up. Taking my father's hard-earned money to go to college and no more than I leave the house hot-foot it to my mistress, a woman old enough to be my mother, and staying with her for four years--four of the most precious years of my life wasted! Continually surrounded by nobodies, by people who talked brilliantly but did nothing. My most intimate friends profligates and philanderers. Taking a job in the morning and quitting it in the afternoon. Never a cent in my pocket--borrowing, borrowing all my life--and yet having a grand time. The war breaks out and, hoping to avoid being drafted, I marry, and from the very day that I marry it is one long, continuous battle. My wife, who is capable of supporting me, gives up her profession and lies back on her ass. Just when the child comes along I realize that what I want to do in life is to write, but I'm fucked and so, in desperation, I go out and I talk myself into a big job. And by one of those miracles which are beyond understanding I hold the job, I am even regarded as an exceptional

man. Who knows? In ten years I might have become a vice-head president. In twenty years I might have become ~~president~~ head president of the Board of Directors and later President of the United States. It makes no difference that while I was being praised for the performance of my duties I was pilfering the cash-drawer and sleeping with the women I employed, that I hired insane people in order to bring them to the psychopathic ward where my friend, the psychiatrist in charge, regaled me with wine and cigars, that I consorted with the company's detectives for the pleasure of aiding them in running down crooks and perverts, that I made friends of the humblest clerks in all the branch offices so that I might drop in at any hour of the day or night and borrow a five spot, that some of these clerks, who later became my bosom friends, were henchmen of the most notorious politicians and gangsters in New York. The five years that I put in as personnel director of this great public service corporation were five full years replete with good deeds and bad, invaluable to me because I had in my hands the destiny of so many people, subnormals and abnormals, old and young, male and female, representing never less than forty nationalities.

And all this time, though I was well paid for my services, I had never a cent in my pocket that I could call my own. My wife, who never entertained, who did not even dress well, had nevertheless to keep a good home, a home with spare rooms that made me think of a museum; and since that was all she demanded of life, since moreover I was leading my own life, getting everything I wanted on credit, as it were, I kept practically nothing for myself--I pilfered the cash drawer, or I sponged on

my low-brow friends who were only too pleased to have my company. Or, as happened later, I promoted one of my mistresses to a position as ^{my} secretary, got her a substantial raise and allowed her to supply me with pocket money. Later still I demoted her (after we had quarrelled) and substituted for her a rather ugly mulatress whom no one would suspect me to be in love with. She was capable and efficient, this Camilla, and she loved me deeply. She was also a most passionate, savage creature, and devoted to me, first because she was superior to me intellectually, and secondly, because she was morbid about her negro blood. She was both a slave and a tyrant. She had money too--it wasn't necessary for her to earn a living; she worked merely because she was afraid of going to pieces. Naturally my wife, who spent everything on "her home", never had the money to pay for an abortion. And she was the sort of woman who was always getting in the family way, the sort, too, who when her belly swelled up a bit became shame-faced and locked herself in the house. In these emergencies I would turn to Camilla who was always ready to pay, and not only to pay, but to nurse my wife and look after my child. My wife thought a great deal of Camilla, as she did of any one who would make sacrifices for her. Strange situation! While my wife is having her womb scraped (on Camilla's money) Camilla is lying on the dining room table with her legs wide apart and her tongue hanging out. Stranger still-- a fact I didn't know until later-- is that Camilla, with her hungry, gnawing womb, Camilla who couldn't wait to be thrown on the bed but insisted on using the dining-room table, this same Camilla was at the same time keeping a mistress, a white woman even more ugly than herself, a woman with hairs on her chin and breasts that hung to her knees.

And not only that--but corrupting my office boy, a lad of sixteen who up till then had never known a woman. Ah, Camilla! What a life she had before her! What she wouldn't have done if she had had the strength to live! But that drop of negro blood--that terrified her. She was superior to any woman I had met before but she couldn't rise above this question of blood. If she were getting the better of me in an argument (as she invariably did) I had only to look at her a certain way and she was lost, she would come crawling to me like a dog and lick my hand, a trick that made me ashamed of myself and yet forced me to take advantage of her, ridicule her, and then later whip her back into a fighting mood so that she could be herself again.

Between times there were the women I employed: women who were hungry, women who were jilted, women who had come down in the world. I hired them right under Camilla's eyes, borrowed of Camilla to take them out to dinner or to go dancing with them, urged Camilla to look after them. And once there walked into the office a Lilliputian dressed as a boy, and when I had broken him down and discovered that he was a woman of twenty-five I turned him, her, it, over to Camilla and there was a beautiful affair which almost cost us our jobs. For Camilla could inspire passion even in Lilliputians and whether they were male or female seemed to be immaterial. All that she demanded was that they be white!

A gay, incongruous life! Interviewing such quantities and varieties of people that I had no more regard for a human being than I had for a fly; praying for "cases" rather than applicants; welcoming the criminal, the pervert, the dippy as a relief from

the tedium of dealing with sane, normal, healthy, dull persons. When I did spend an evening at home, which was rare, falling asleep on the couch, or, coming home unexpectedly now and then with my cronies and making my wife cook for them, a thing she detested more than anything. Outragging her sense of hospitality, which was nil, by asking my guests to shell out for the food, criticizing her ideas, which were meagre, before the guests, airing our differences publicly because that was another thing she couldn't support. In other words, in return for "her home", which she got, I made her sweat blood. Toward the end I ~~will~~ even informed her when I had fallen in love with another woman and twitted her because she wouldn't release me. But she clung to me like a woman who refuses to be operated on even though she has a tumor inside her big as a melon.

Just when the child began to interest me --I had regarded it as an animal up till then-- my wife suddenly decided to leave me and ran off to another city to live with her parents. I abandoned the "home" we had established and set up quarters in a studio with my bosom pal whom I had made my assistant and whom I could rely upon to cover me when I wished to make myself scarce. The studio developed into a sort of combined laboratory and whorehouse: we kept women there and exchanged them, we brought employees there who were interesting because of their abnormalities and grilled them mercilessly, experimented upon them as if they were mice or guinea pigs. I began to write and became less and less interested in holding my job; would go on bats that lasted three and four days; would arrive at the office after being up all night and sleep the day out on a zinc-covered table

in the dressing-room; would growl at my good friend, Joe, because he couldn't handle both our jobs; fired him, in fact, because he wouldn't obey me implicitly and gave the job to a scurrilous little Jew who never resented anything I did and who was always able to dig up money for me when I needed it.

And then one day I put on my hat, walked out of the office without saying a word, and boarded the train. On the way I wired Sam, the little Jew, what to say regarding my absence. It was evening when I walked in on my wife. We had a touching scene in the bath-room and then, for three days and nights, we lay joined like a pair of snakes. The result, I knew in advance, would be another abortion. But whereas formerly she demanded this and that protection, would whimper and make the most agonizing gestures, and hang her head afterwards as if she had committed a sin, now she was absolutely abandoned, wept with joy, begged me to treat her tenderly. The morning after I arrived she had a surprise for me--she brought the child out and lo, the child walked and talked. What a moment that was! What a feeling it was to walk down the street with that little tot holding my hand, to hear her frail, quivering voice. My wife meant even less than before-- I didn't need her, but the child I felt I could never relinquish. I was proud of it and I saw nothing in the child but myself.

It is a Sunday morning and I am walking toward Ulmer Park. It is the third day since I have met Hildred and I have already written to her that if I can't have her I will commit~~me~~ suicide.

I can repeat almost every word that she said to me--utterly strange words in a language that no woman had ever used with me. It was a torrent ~~she~~ that she poured over my head that night--the force of it emanating not from her mind but from her blood and her blood drugged, loaded with toxins. She has my letter, I know, because I sent it by messenger boy--letter saying "I can't live without you". I'm wondering how she will look at me when she comes to the door, will she say, as I know her to be capable of saying- "Please don't annoy me with your silly ideas"- or will she have that quiet, melting expression, that look in her eyes which seems to say "Strip me naked here in front of my brothers and sisters...fuck me.....do what you like....do anything....I'm all yours!" But I'm also disturbed a little; why hadn't she given me her address, though she permitted me to take her home in a taxi and at the very door of her home, while the driver sat and watched the meter clicking, she pulled up her dress and almost suffocated me with her embraces? Was that just her way with men who took her out, her way of thanking them for a pleasant evening? How could a woman talk the way she did and go mad that way if..... The sun is blazing and nothing is carried through to the end. Sunday morning and I've left the house before anyone was up. Only last Sunday I was walking along with the little one and planning what I would do for her when she grew up; I was letting her run loose like a dog and when she was exhausted I picked her up and carried her home to her hatchet-faced mother who didn't approve of the way I handled my child. And what sort of child was I? Did I run loose too? Were my parents too indulgent with me?

The sun is baking me-- a sun I felt years and years ago when they ~~it~~ let me loose in the fields and I came running up to my mother with tongue hanging out, panting like a dog. It's a sun I remember when I walked quietly by my mother's side, holding her hand, and even her green parasol didn't protect us. ~~The~~ bright splashing sun dripping through the heavy foliage of Summer, making the flies drowsy; a buzzing and droning, everything new in the world, the only touch of sorrow being that moment when you are ordered to go to bed. Suddenly the realization that it was here in Ulmer Park ~~that~~ my mother had brought me one Saturday afternoon and I see again a spacious open-air theatre crowded with tables and the tables foaming with beer; there must have been people, of course, but I don't remember people at all, I remember only a ~~sign~~ white card-board with the letters P A T T I which a boy in uniform carried across the stage after the curtain had dropped, and I don't remember Patti either, but I remember the applause and the tears in my mother's eyes which bewildered me and the name PATTI was sunk in my memory only to be resuscitated years and years afterwards when I read about her in the newspapers. And when I thought now of this name, of what it meant then, it seemed that I actually forced myself to recall the performers who had shared the program with her--acrobats, jugglers, bicycle riders and yodellers in Tyrolian costume. But it's the green of that day that persists in my memory--the grass, the leaves, the benches, the table tops--green that was so good for my sore eyes, green that I never then connected with hope, green squeezed out of an inexhaustible tube, that would remain bright and soft, bright and soft forever.

It's that sun, that liquid, green, bright, refreshing world that I'm walking through on the way to Hildred's home. There are other qualities now in the green, I know the green doesn't last, I've seen it turn yellow and then brown and then gray, I've seen all varieties of green in a single living tree and just green, the color, has intoxicated me; and I've appreciated green when it wasn't there any longer, greeted it like a thirsty Bedouin after a sojourn in the parched Far West. But now the green is in me, part of me, a symbol that I've created, a piece of that world outside which the child as he grows eats into, devours and dies of. The green I am carrying in me will yellow--that terrifying knowledge accompanies me, rings in my ears like the 23rd Psalm, has the finality, the peace, the healing quality which these words can never lose as long as we are born into a Christian world. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT. HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES: HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS. Golden, golden words--and I am saying them who have mocked the Lord. I am running to Hildred with these words on my lips, saying to her that we are born again, that this bright, green world is ours. YEA? THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME.

Only once thereafter did I taste the verdant quality of that Sunday morning and that was when I heard Pelleas and Melisande for the first time. Same extraordinary sensation of a vision on the road, voice commanding me to walk in the light, feet not just touching the earth but drawing from it power, radiance, the swiftness of light, joy too intense, too painful,

to be called joy, the delirium rather of the martyr ascending the stake.

And when I arrived at the door of Hildred's home there was the cold, disapproving look of her brother, a vague, mysterious response to my questions, a desire all too obvious to shut the door in my face. The impression I had was that I had committed an act of sacrilege..... On walking away I noticed a woman in the garden hanging up clothes. She was short, dark, ugly-- a Jewess without doubt.

I mentioned that at first glance she didn't interest me-- there was something too direct, too determined, in her manner. It was only after I had watched her a while, noticed the way she talked to her partners and the gravity with which they listened to her that I felt curious about her. I remember the firm way in which she laid her hand on me and the tremendous surprise I received when I heard her voice. The others, I remember, had pulled me close immediately, I had felt their warm vaginas beneath the flimsy costumes; there was one girl, I recall now, whose pants were always wet--they made great sport of her. But Hildred danced in order to talk: she used her voice in the way the other girls used their vaginas, only more effectively. And if you had the temerity to look into her eyes you were hopelessly enslaved.

All my life I have been aware of one faculty which I possess to an extraordinary degree: the power to make people confess.

It is a gift which has often proved annoying to me--what am I to do with all these secrets which have been loaded upon me without the asking? Perhaps it is this more than anything else which leads me to be candid and frank to the point of brutality; since I see nothing extraordinary in these dark secrets of others why should I be tender about my own? I have no secrets. I want none. When a woman says to me, just before she surrenders herself, "I feel that some day you're going to expose me", I feel like saying what Hamby said just before he was executed-- "I never killed a man without giving him a chance". They said that Hamby was a moral imbecile, that he killed in cold blood, but what Hamby says is "I never shot a man without first giving him a chance to throw up his hands".

The first thing I noticed about Hildred, when we sat down to talk, was that she wanted to confess. She even remarked that I exercised some strange influence over her. And so she began her confession which was mostly a tissue of lies. More remarkable still-- she has clung to these lies ever since though I have exposed them time and time again. She is simply incapable of telling the truth; when she is most sincere she is most false. Of course, I did not discover this immediately; in the first place, as I said before, because I am remarkably disinterested in people's secrets, and secondly because I am naïf, trusting, also in a disinterested way. I mean to say that I am so indifferent to the other person's welfare that I am as ready to accept a lie as a truth. But when their lies touch my welfare -- ah, then it is a different story. Then I become profoundly interested, then I become a sleuth of the first order, a man

without compunctions, without the least scruple, without a conscience. I have been capable, in my zeal, of fabricating the most scandalous stories in order to elicit a tiny grain of truth. But when, as in Hildred's case, I had a liar on my hands who lied for the sheer sake of lying, who lied even to her digestive organs, as some one put it, what then was I to do? It is not a question any more of her welfare or my welfare--it is a problem for the clinic.

But all this only seeped in on me gradually. When, for instance, she told me that first night that she was a bastard, that her real mother, a gypsy, died of childbirth, that she was born in Sherwood Forest, that her father had kept a string of racing stables in his youth but had since lost his fortune, was lying ill in a sanatorium, that he was a great friend of Caruso's, and so forth and so on, I saw no reason on the face of it to doubt her words. It was colorful and romantic, perhaps a little exaggerated, but why not? And all this was sandwiched in between other subjects equally interesting, equally romantic. I saw a very young girl before me who was obviously out of place in her environment, who spoke an English that seemed perfection itself, who might have been born a gypsy or a princess, who had already, at this early age, experienced the most startling adventures. I saw nothing strange in her hatred for her aunt, who was her guardian, in her worship for her father, whose life had been so picaresque; I was not even amazed that she should identify herself with a character of Strindberg's (Henriette, I believe it was) because she seemed so essentially good, so sterling, so brave, that she might well have wished herself to

be the opposite; I could understand why a woman who inspired worship and devotion in men would ardently wish them to detest her, why when they forgave her for her injuries she only despised them more and not only wreaked her vengeance on them but on others who were innocent. Nor was I disappointed when I learned that her lovers included the most incongruous assortment of types--artists, pugilists, financiers, gigolos, rouses: the variety of instruments only testified to her versatility. But when it came to the theme of "insult and injury", which she dealt with so extravagantly, with such refinements of cruelty and malice, with such passion as to completely change her personality, I did prick up my ears. It was then I saw her emerging into that Henriette which her imagination had played with, and as she related one harrowing experience after another, her face growing more and more distorted, it was easy for me to believe that this woman was capable of anything. I believed her to ~~be~~ making the most extreme sacrifice-- for this aunt whom she hated with all her blood, and I saw likewise that she could be malevolent to an ~~ex~~ insane degree where only a petty injury, a slight, you might say, had been done her. Did she hate her aunt because she had made such sacrifices for her or did she make these sacrifices because she hated her, to show her supreme contempt, as it were? I could not decide. I did not know then that her aunt was really her mother, that her mother was a Jewess and not a gypsy; nor did I know then that when she allowed herself to be deflowered by a ~~miserable~~ repulsive old man it was not to bring the money to her aunt (so that their home would not be taken from them) but to squander it on a girl friend whom she was keeping, an insipid little stenographer

named Maureen whose one great urge, as I learned later, was to empty her bladder frequently. And how was I to know then that her father had never been in England in his life, that he had never been on a horse, that if he knew Caruso at all it was through the back door, in a thoroughly professional way, that is, as old clothes' dealer. Why did she adore her father whom she represented as an angel to her when it was her father who gave her the beatings, her father who drove her out of the house and called her a little slut?

Did I mention her enthusiasm on the subject of drugs? That's another beautiful tale, the truth of which remains unsolved to this day. There she was, lying on her back with appendicitis, and refusing to be operated on. Even the ice-bags wouldn't still the pain. And so, the doctor who was in love with her administered drugs (through the rectum--she emphasized this several times), and when she finally recovered she took on weight amazingly, due to the action of the drugs. But when she spoke about the drugs she had the manner of a person who, in confessing to some horrible deed, appears grateful for the opportunity of being thrilled by his narration and totally oblivious of any feeling of repentance or any desire to be absolved of guilt. On the other hand she had the most convincing air of guilt when she spoke of redressing a wrong that had been done her--it was as though she wickedly enjoyed her guiltiness. And what was the wrong that had been done her? A mere trifle. A man had taken her home one night, and as they stood on the back porch, saying good-night, he had attempted to lift her dress. She had since made the poor devil a helpless victim: she made demands on him which she knew he couldn't satisfy, she made him desert his wife and children, she made

him steal for her, made him crawl on hands and knees to beg her hand in marriage, all of which, of course, she treated ridiculously. She was not finished with him yet, the poor worm: she would drive him to suicide. And here, where one might expect her to be fantastic, she was absolutely truthful. The man did commit suicide later--he was not the first.

And the one who had deflowered her--did she bear him any malice? None that I could detect. She spoke of it as one would speak of a rather painful operation. It was a contract which she had entered into with her own free will and, in the spirit of a contract, she carried out her part to the letter. But is this story true? Was she one to lose her virginity in that cold, calculating way? Is it not more likely that she had thrown it away on some worthless scamp, that when later she was obliged to sell herself to some repulsive old geezer she inserted the ~~myth~~ virginity theme to glorify herself? Why, for instance, did she dwell on the gruesome details? Why tell me that it took days for the old geezer to break her hymen unless it was to show me how courageous she could be?

And perhaps, you may be thinking, all these stories were handed me to whet my appetite--because it is true, now that I look back upon ^{the} ~~that~~ scene, that I displayed little sexual ardor. There was one moment, I must admit-- I was standing in the street waiting for her to leave the dance hall (she had requested me to do that); my head was somewhat in a whirl, but there was no deep feeling of need for her, no worship yet, just a fateful desire to know her, to satisfy my curiosity. I was standing at the corner, some few feet away from the entrance. Suddenly I saw

her coming toward me, suddenly I felt my guts twisted into a knot and I was trembling all over. And in those few seconds that it took for her to reach my side her walk, her head held high and proud, her fearless look, her dignity and animal poise, the ripple of her loins, all that sunk into me agonizingly. I said to myself "she is magnificent" as I would say it of a fine-bred horse. And when she stood close to me I noticed that she was taller than my wife, that she was as tall as I, and I felt in my penis that she was built right and for one burning moment she tempted me to lift up her dress, there on Broadway, and sock it into her.

All this fell away immediately when she opened her mouth. I was interested again in her soul. And as we walked into the traffic I noticed that she had not the least sensation of fear, that she was coolly reckless, scornful of danger.

When I stepped out of the taxi in front of my home that night I knew there was nothing to be done but give myself to her; if one had said to me you will be miserable all your life, if I had been permitted even to look into the future and see what was in store for me, not even then could I have resisted her. As a matter of fact, one of the last things my wife said to me when we were separating/ was: "I feel truly sorry for you. You don't know what you are walking into." And she said it without bitterness, as though it were the last honest thing between us. Since then I have heard others use almost exactly the same words. No one knows better than I the meaning of these words, but no one regrets less than I all that is bound up in the truth of them.

troia was in my blood, I looked for her in the street, I talked to her alone in my room.....

Sunday morning. I am returning from my trip to Ulmer Park. Victoria in my blood. I walk in and there is the little one, propped up at the table, and Blanche is feeding her. I sit down in a daze. What I have to do now is cruel, but I must do it! I begin to talk, slowly, gently, but with such earnestness, such conviction that even a monster must be moved by my words. "Blanche, I want to be free...." Oh, I had said it before, but my words must have lacked conviction. Now the words are scarcely out of my mouth when I see a round, nameless fear on her face, a look such as a person might have if you stood over ^{him} ~~them~~ with an axe and ^{he} ~~they~~ were absolutely defenceless. The words go on flowing out of me and the child is hysterical with fear seeing her mother weep so bitterly. This is a naked, shameless grief--I have never seen anything like it. It's not a human grief, it's not me that's responsible for it, it's not a woman who's weeping.... I can only say that it seems as if we were depersonalized, that it is not our private tragedy which we are enacting but the world's....MAN confronted with FATE.

What happened to the child during this scene? I am trying to think what we did with her--it baffles me that this should have escaped my memory so completely. I remember simply that the whole room seemed to be swimming in tears, that there were no sounds of voices but these awful, gasping sobs, that the house seemed to be rocking on its foundations, and that the objects in the room--the furniture, the clock, the dishes on the table-- all seemed ridiculous, mad inventions that were too difficult to grasp

When I think of that event which has so profoundly altered the course of my life I think of it as a sublime conjunction. The others who feel sorry for me never realize a conjunction: their loves and friendships are based on meetings, there is nothing catastrophic about their coming together with another, nothing of the divine hasard, of the glorious accident which changes the face of the world, swings the stars out of their orbits. That there are so few fatalities in the lives of the great mass is not surprising: one has to take one's destiny in one's own hands.

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At this point where I left off writing I happen to pick up an old manuscript dealing with this period just before I took up with Hildred and what amazes me now is how I sensed everything that was going to befall me, how I was, in a way, preparing myself for the event. I note even that I was intrigued with that expression "a grand conjunction", and how I wrote in the margin beside it "the confluence of the light and dark". And on almost the last page I see this passage-- "This world is my world, my stamping ground. I must run free, mad-hearted, bellowing with pain and ecstasy, charging with lowered horns, ripping up the barricades that hem me in and stifle me. I must have room to expand....."

But what tears me apart is a letter which I quoted from "Victoria", a letter which Hildred might have written word for word, which it seems more true to say --Hamsun actually stole

from her!

"Dear Johannes," wrote Victoria, "when you read this letter I shall be dead.....O God, if you knew how I have loved you, Johannes. I have not been able to show it to you, so many things have come in my way, and above all my own nature....If I got well again now I would never be unkind to you any more, Johannes. How I have cried and thought about that! Oh, I would go out and stroke all the stones in the street and stop and thank every step of the stairs as I went by and be good to all....My life is so unlived, I have not been able to do anything for anybody, and this failure of a life is to end now....And to-day I was thinking--how would you take it, I wonder, if I came straight up to you in the street one day when I was nicely dressed, and did not say anything to hurt you as I have done, but gave you a rose which I had bought on purpose?Ah, Johannes, I have loved you, loved only you all my life. It is Victoria who writes this and God is reading it over my shoulder."

It is fashionable to-day to ridicule this language. The young writers will tell you that Hamsun is a disgusting romantic. It is true--all this sort of thing is finished to-day. People don't ~~w~~ love like this any more, or if they do they hide their heads. But when I come to a declaration like this I weep, and I do not hang my head with shame, I shed my tears publicly, and I pity all this young generation which has nothing but contempt for such romantic love.

I must say that when "Victoria" was put in my hands it was

at a crucial moment in my life. It was when I was taking leave of my wife after that little journey which I spoke of just a few moments ago. Perhaps I gave the impression that this encounter resulted in nothing more than a sexual feast--for three days and nights we lay joined like a pair of snakes. I said that she was abandoned as I had never seen her before. Yes, but there was a great tenderness in it, too, and more than anything sorrow. She saw perhaps what I was capable of being to her were there no influences to thwart our love. She saw that I was capable of being the best of fathers, that I was something more than the callous, insensitive being who had tortured her so relentlessly all the years of our marriage. God knows what the woman felt for me then--she too was no longer the woman I had known, the woman whom I said "was wriggling through life on her belly, making of it a crawling, stinking affair." I think that in both of us there was the sad and irrevocable knowledge that we had come to know each other too late, that the past had eaten into us like a poison and could never be wiped out. As I was saying good-bye to her she slipped something into my pocket; it was only when I boarded the train that I recalled her gesture.

I read the book, while the train brought me back to New York, with tears in my eyes; at the end I was sobbing and I made no effort to control myself. But was it Blanche, my wife, who inspired this anguish? Ah, that is the strange thing. I had forgotten her already. No, it was not Blanche, it was Victoria who made me weep, and Victoria was not a character in a book but a living being, one whom I felt destined to meet. Vic-

at such a moment, that we rose simultaneously and with no volition and fell on the floor, her hair twisted around my neck, strangling me, and chewing her flesh I remember still the oily taste of her hair, rich, brown, luxuriant hair that entangled me like seaweed and dragged me under, and going down with my eyes wide open and the water pounding in my ears I lost all sensation of form and soul and personality, everything floating away in shreds, everything diffuse, like a glass bell descending on me and severing me in two.

When I sat down to write this which you have just read I had an entirely different set of ideas in my head. I had fallen asleep over my old manuscript and when I awoke I had some such thoughts as this: you are not writing for Americans any more.... you ought to give a full picture of your life in America because to the European it is so strange that it is almost incomprehensible...if you can make him see what it is to be brought up among foreigners in such a neighborhood as you were born in he will open his eyes..... nor does he know this kind of love you are speaking of...it is not a universal man you are talking of--whatever that may be-- but an American, a peculiar kind of American, a New Yorker, a man surrounded by wops, kikes, Polaks, a man who sees a foreigner only as a caricature...the problems that occupy your mind do not even touch him....be narrow, be sentimental, be idiotic, but be yourself. By God, I said to myself, it is important, if you want him to understand what you're saying, to give him some of this atmosphere which he has never breathed. I know what happens to a book when it is translated, or to a film when it is produced by foreign actors. I want my language to be

understood even if it is read by a Chinaman. And so now I am going to give you a dream which I discovered in that old manuscript. I want you to observe how it matches that outer reality of America which is part of my theme. I recorded this dream immediately after I awoke; it followed upon the scene I have just described.

"His dream was of such a character as we experience only in the trammelled depths of a profound stupor. It commenced with a nightmarish vertigo that sent him hurtling from a dizzy precipice into the warm waters of the Caribbean. He felt himself swirling down, down, down in great spiral curves that had no beginning and promised to end in eternity.

"During this ceaseless descent a bewildering and enchanting panorama of marine life unrolled before his eyes. Enormous sea-dragons wriggled and shimmered in the powdered sunlight which filtered through the green waters; huge cactus plants with hideous detached roots floated by, followed by sponge-like coral growths of curious hues, some sullen as ox-blood, some a brilliant vermilion or soft lavender. Out of this teeming aquatic life poured myriads of animalcules, resembling gnomes and pixies, streaming up in bubbles like a gorgeous flux of star-dust in the tail-sweep of a comet.

"The roaring in his ears gave way to plangent, verdant melodies; he became aware of the tremors of earth, of poplars and birches shrouded in ghost-like vapors, bending gracefully to the caress of fragrant breeze. Stealthily the vapors rolled away ... he was trudging through a mysterious forest alive with screaming monkeys and birds of tropical plumage. To his astonishment he

noticed a quiver of arrows in his girdle and a giant golden bow over his shoulder.

"As he penetrated deeper and deeper into the wood the music became more celestial, the light more golden, and the earth beneath his feet became a carpet of soft blood-red leaves. In trying to grasp its beauty he swooned away. On awaking the forest had vanished; to his befuddled mind it seemed that he was standing before a pale, towering canvas on which a pastoral scene of great dignity had been painted: a mural such as Puvis de Chavannes has given us out of the grave, seraphic void of his dream life. The sedate, sombre wriths moved with a measured, dream-like elegance that made our awkward earthly movements appear grotesque. He stepped into the canvas and followed a quiet path which led back toward the retreating line of the horizon. A full-hipped figure in a Grecian robe, balancing an urn, directed his foot-steps toward the ~~ex~~ turret of a castle dimly visible above the crest of a gentle knoll. He followed the undulating hips until lost in a dip beyond the distant knoll.

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"The figure with the urn had ~~dis~~appeared. But his eyes were now rewarded by a more mystifying sight. It was as though he had arrived at the very end of this habitable earth, at that magic fringe of the ancient world where all the mysteries and gloom and terror of the universe were concealed. About and around him was a vast enclosure whose limits he could only faintly discern. Before him rose the walls of a hoary castle bristling with spears. Pennants wrought with miraculously diabolical ~~signs~~ emblems fluttered ominously above the crenel-

lated battlements. A sickly green fungus growth choked the broad sweeps leading out from the terrifying portals; the gloomy casements were bespattered with the remains of great carrion birds and the stench they gave off was unbearable.

"But what awed and fascinated him most was the color of the castle. It was a red, but like no red he could recall. The walls, indeed, had a warm blood-like hue, the tint of rich corpuscles laid bare by the knife, but on going closer the illusion vanished--it was a red that preceded the birth of man. Beyond the frontier walls loomed more spectacular parapets and battlements, turrets and spires, each receding rank steeped in more nameless red, until it seemed to his terrified eyes that the whole monstrous spectacle was a butcher's orgy dripping with gore and excrement.

"In horror and fear he had turned his gaze away; it was but a moment, yet when he looked again everything was changed. Instead of the poisonous fungus and the scabby carcasses of vultures he saw a rich mosaic of ebony and cinnamon shadowed by deep purple panoplies from which cascades of cherry blossoms slithered in billowy heaps on the chequered court. Only a few yards away there stood a resplendent couch festooned with royal drapes and pillows of gossamer loveliness. On this sumptuous bed his wife was reclining languidly, as if anticipating his arrival. It was not a wholly familiar Blanche, though he recognized at once her tiny mouth. He waited expectantly for her usual inanities--instead there issued from her columnar throat a flood of dark music which sent the blood hammering to his temples. It was only then that he became aware that she was

nude, felt the vague, splendid pain of her loins. As he bent over her to lift her in his arms he recoiled with horror-- a spider was crawling slowly over her breast. Like one possessed he dropped her and fled toward the castle walls.

"And now a strange thing happened. The huge, rusty hinges groaned and creaked, slowly the towering gates swung open. Once inside he sped swiftly up a narrow path that brought him to the foot of a spiral stair-case. Frantically he climbed the iron steps...higher and higher without ever seeming to reach the top. Finally, when it seemed that his heart must break with the exertion, he found himself at the summit. But the ramparts and battlements, the casements and turrets of the mysterious castle were no longer beneath him. A black, volcanic waste unfolded before his eyes, a waste furrowed with innumerable chasms of bottomless depth. Nothing of plant or vegetable life could be seen. Petrified limbs of gigantic proportions and carbuncled with glistening mineral crustations ^{were} sprawled there in the void. Gazing more intently he discovered that there was a life below-- a slimy, crawling life that revealed itself in huge coils that wound and unwound about the crazy, dead limbs.

"Suddenly he had a presentiment that the towering steeple up which he had climbed in panic was crumbling at the foundation, and that he and this immense spire together hung teetering over the edge of this loathsome void, to be dashed at any moment into shattering annihilation. For the fraction of a moment there was the most profound stillness and then faintly, so faintly that it was almost inaudible, there came the sound of a voice--a human voice. Suddenly it rang out boldly, with a weird, moaning accent, and then quickly died, as if it had been choked down in the

sulphurous abyss below. And now he felt the great tower on which he stood lurching violently and as the tower swooped over the void like a drunken ship a babble of voices broke out. Human voices--human as the laughter of hyaenas...the shrill scream of the lunatic...blood-curdling oaths...the piercing, horror-laden cachinations of the mad.

"The rail gave way and out into space he was flung, catapulted with meteoric speed. Down, down, down he shot, his beautiful frail body stripped of its flesh, his very organs clawed by leprous talons, by beaks crusted with verdigris. Down, down, stripped and mangled by fang and tusk.

"Now he was no longer hurtling through the void but shooting down a paraffin incline supported by gigantic columns of human flesh that bled from every pore. At the bottom he could see the wide, cavernous maw of an ogre champing its teeth with fierce delight. Another instant and he would be swallowed up, his bones crunched and splintered.....

"But at the very moment that he was being swallowed the monster sneezed and in the explosion ~~the~~ the universe was snuffed out."

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There has been an interim of several weeks in which I have written nothing, and in that time I have been carrying the magnum opus about inside me, have felt it stirring in me--it has been sprouting quietly all the while. Things have occurred in this interim which I feel impelled to record--the march of history again. I put them down as they occur to me, without sequence; they will weave themselves naturally into the fabric of my tale.

.....

A manuscript about Mona (one of Hildred's many names) was put into my hands. It is written by a woman and the words sear me. I can't understand how any one (especially this one who scarcely knows Mona) could write so exhaustively, so penetratingly, about my character. I realize, as I read the manuscript, that there are whole areas in me which are atrophied. The splendor of her language, the cruel, quick divination, leaves me stunned--it is I who should have said all this! Where have I been that all this should have escaped me? With what manner of woman did I imagine I was living all these years? The wisdom and the justice of her words is almost enough to defeat me. I shall be fumbling with my task for eternity. Seized with rage I vow that my explorations will take the bottom from under her book: for every city that is uncovered I will ^{lay} ~~un~~bare another--not one Troy, but seven Troys. Her book is only another clue for me. Ultimately I will have in my possession all the clues. Like Aristotle I shall one day have an army working for me, collecting the facts. But as I write this I realize tragically that the possession of all the facts will yield but a skeleton.

Used in ^{2nd} part of Cancer - to p. 63 59.

Another day I am translating an article on sadism--"Sadism in Woman". The sadism in woman manifests itself differently, but no less intensely, than in man. If anything, it is more cruel even than man's. (I am repeating from memory). Since woman functions more primitively, the perversion of her instincts gives a flavor to her ~~own~~ behavior which seems monstrous and repulsive. We have to revert to the insect world for analogies. The sexual appetite, so closely allied to the instinct of nutrition, becomes in the sadistic woman a truly terrifying spectacle; she lulls and soothes in order to destroy. Certain lines out of my novel come back to mind...."like those monsters of the insect world which know exactly where to strike and strike without ever blundering". I am not sure even whether they are my own words--they may be Maeterlinck's. But I was on the right track, then, in my novel: I was following her down into her devouring depths, down to a level unknown to man--the level of the spider, the octopus, that baffling world of monsters whose study never ceases to attract man's attention, nay more, which fascinates him more than any other study, except the stars--why? Is it because there he hopes to discover the secret of his tragic doom? Think of the legends and symbols which have evolved around woman--legends as fearsome and mystifying as that goddess Kali. Woman the sorceress, woman the murderess, woman the abortionist, woman the succubus, woman the night, woman the dead, scarred moon. What lies behind this terrible black symbol woman? Out of woman we are born and through her we die again. Woman the fecundator and woman the destroyer. She creates flowers and crimes; she sacrifices

herself in order to enslave ~~xx~~ us; she is the slave who tyrannizes over us; she is the evil one through whom we know good, our temptation and our salvation; she is double-faced: she has inspired the greatest works of art and the most heinous crimes; she is almost like Nature herself--without meaning, without history, the blind womb of destiny, the enigma that rolls on mercilessly, devouringly, prolifically. Everything that she creates she effaces; she knows neither why she creates nor what. She is a monster and it is only because of her, because of our great mortal fear of her, that we have invented the God. But God is only a straw that we grasp at. We know in our inmost heart that God cannot save us. Before this which he has created God is powerless. As long as woman exists there will be God--but not one second after!

Another thing.... since there has been a woman in this house there has been nothing but dirt and disorder. It reminds me of my homes with Blanche and with Hildred. Female disorder. The bird fouling its nest--the lovely bird that soars through the streets with gorgeous plumage: if one could only see the nest from which it flew! How did the idea ever originate that woman is tidy and clean? Order and cleanliness--these are masculine symbols. Woman has acquired this sense through the course of civilization: she was brought in from the wilds, like the beast she is, and she was broken to the house--but only by rubbing her nose in the dirt. In the artist you have the great slovenly animal, the slutty bitch that wallows in its own mire. The female artist--personification of dirt and disorder!

Strindberg and Dostoevski! They were the two poles of her axis. I understand a little better now why Hildred enjoyed Strindberg so much. I can see her looking up from her book, after reading a delicious passage, and with tears of laughter in her eyes saying to me-- "You're just as crazy as he is! You want to be punished." What a delight that must be to the sadist when he discovers his masochist! And when she is a he! When the female sadist studies her own masochism, when she bites herself, as it were, in order to test her teeth! In those days, when Hildred was absorbed in her Strindberg, I was fed up with him, I found him boring at times, and not a little foolish sometimes with his ranting and grimacing. This wild carnival of maggots which makes his literature, it was this which had brought us together. And so swiftly was I sucked down in this vortex that when I came to the surface I could not recognize the world. We came together there in a dance of death and when I found myself loose the music had ceased to beat. And to-day, coming from the library, after I had bathed in the Ganges and studied the signs of the zodiac, I felt that I understood ~~why~~ that inferno which Strindberg experienced in the Pension Orfila--it was no mys^{te}ry to me any longer that he and others (Dante, Balzac, Rabelais, Gauguin, Van Gogh) had made their pilgrimage to Paris. I was in Paris for exactly the same reasons--reasons unfathomable, reasons so deep and certain that they defy explanation. I understood why it is that Paris attracts the hallucinated, the tortured, the great maniacs of love. I could see why it is that in Paris one can embrace the most fantastic theories, that here one reads again

the books of his youth and the books take on a new meaning, one for every white hair. And one walks through the streets knowing that one is crazy or possessed because it is only too obvious that Paris is an asylum and that its citizens are the cruel keepers of the demented. Paris has that cold ~~insanity~~ which breeds dementia; the wildest antics do not disturb her tranquillity--because she knows the disease. And why ~~is~~ it that Hildred cannot tolerate Paris longer than a few weeks? She is possessed, too, is she not? Yes, but there are demented ones who have the wild fear of animals in their guts when they come within sight of the walls of the asylum. When Hildred comes to Paris she tries to prove that the keepers are insane. I give you the other picture--Van Gogh walking into the asylum willingly, almost gratefully, and doing there perhaps his greatest work. To know that you are mad, to ask of your own free will to be incarcerated--what a release that is!

And Stavrogin--Stavrogin who is so sane that he cannot accomplish his madness. How that appeals to Hildred! Because Hildred too is lucidly mad, in her better moments. Hildred enjoys her madness because it is not altogether real--she has deep remembrances, she reels when she thinks of the flights she has taken. And then there are moments when she feels herself soaring, above the void of sanity, higher even than the highest peaks of insanity, and then she is terrified--her faith is not enough to support her wings..... For me "The Eternal Husband" was the great book; for her it was always "The Possessed". She hugged her tragedy, I hugged mine. At the North Pole was Strindberg, at the South Pole Dostoevski.

The long interim in which I wrote nothing culminated today in the library, where I felt ill at ease, a little ridiculous, in fact. I had come to read about the Tropic of Cancer, what it means ~~astromomically~~ in scientific language, and I found that cancer (which was once written chancre, too!) goes back to the Greek meaning crab. And while I was thumbing the pages of the encyclopaedia a man suddenly tapped me on the shoulder, and lo, it was my friend, the astrologist. What are the signs and the constellations that play a part in my horoscope? Capricornus, the goat, Scorpio, the scorpion, Libra, the balance, all of which you will find on the outer rim of the great circle of the northern hemisphere. And there is Saturn, too, the great dolorous ~~st~~ planet which augurs poverty and melancholy, the whole nexus of woes and miseries. With the great dates of my life --the grand conjunctions--in my hand I survey from a new altitude the fatalistic course I am pursuing. Cancer, the crab, and Capricornus the goat--the northern and southern limits, as it were, of the sun's orbit, the two points in the heavens at which the great ball of fire arrests its course and with a crab-like movement turns back on its path. I know nothing yet about astrology. I do not profess to be talking the language of this ancient wisdom. I am simply attracted by the nature of these symbols, the correlations between their significances and the deep laws of my being. At the most important date in my life, without having dreamed a word of all this, I commence to write the "Tropic of Cancer", knowing that it would be followed by the "Tropic of Capricorn". More than this, stranger than the choice of titles was the inner illumination, the conviction that took root at the moment of the book's inception that I was making a big swing backward-

or forward-- to retrace the path which I had covered from the other important date in my life. I have the possibility, says the horoscope, to become either a person of great eminence or a great destructive force, a sensualist, a degenerate. Through the great oscillations which describe my orbit there is Saturn the pole star with its weight of grief and melancholy, the great inert drag of failure and misery. But there is also Libra, the balance, the sign by which I rise and fall, so that when I have reached the tipmost end of Cancer I swing away again through the far-reaching splendor and drama of the stars to the tipmost end of Capricorn. And there comes a point in my trajectory when the night equals the day, when the balance is at rest, and all the signs are for a brief solstice equalled out. Observe now the significance of my words, words from my novel, which I inserted under an hallucinatory spell. See how they parallel this wisdom of the stars, how without even the most rudimentary instruments I was piloting my course, charting my destiny.....

"What he remembered of his life were the shocks, the seismographic orgasms that said "Now you are living", "Now you are dying". And the broad tranquil valleys that were coveted was the cud which cows chewed, was the love which women took between their legs and masticated, was a bell with an enormous calpper that broke the wind with its clangor. The peaks and the dips-- there was the living, the rush of mercury in the thermometer of the veins, the pulse without a bridle. The peaks--saints going up to peep at the hinderparts of God...prophet with dung in his hands and foaming at the mouth...dervish with music

in the balls of his feet, with snakes squirming in his entrails, dancing, dancing, dancing with maggots in his brain. Not heights and depths, but ecstasy upside down, inside out, the bottom reaching as far as the top. Abasement not reaching just to the earth, but through the earth, through grass and sod and subterranean stream, from zenith to nadir. Everything that was loved being hated fiercely. Not the cold pricks of conscience, not the tormenting flagellation of the mind, but bright, cruel blades flashing, scorn, insult, contumely, not doubting God but denying him, flaying him, spitting on him. But always God?"

Coming away from the library I noticed the flower-stalls. It occurred to me immediately that I have never been the least bit interested in flowers, that I do not care for gardens, that I detest "a quiet day in the country"; I have never enjoyed the sight of tilled soil in which things grow. Nature attracts me only when it is awesome, sublime: lofty mountains, grand canyons, the desert, the sea. The crater of Kilauea is to me one of the most inspiring sights in the world; so also is the strange region of Tierra del Fuego. I love equally the virgin forests of the tropics (which is death to the white man) and the teeming metropolises where nature is ruled out. For the farm lands and vineyards, the great feudal estates and the cultivated parks, I have not the slightest ~~inter~~ regard. When I think of travelling I think of the ends of the world, of peoples and tongues that are incomprehensible. In the library I picked up a book and the table of contents was filled with nothing but the names of strange cities: Jaipur, Benares, Colombo, Singapore, Honolulu, Shanghai, Kyoto, Lhasa, Timbuctoo.

I felt at home with this book: it was like a voyage among familiar constellations. And so it is when I read about deep sea life or dream over the insect world--all this seems familiar to me and vital. Was it accident then that placed me once in a position where I dealt with hundreds of people daily, where I had to pick my way through a maze of conflicting nationalities, where I had to discern almost at a glance the worth or the value of an individual? I remember that I had a code by means of which I marked the applications of those I employed, a code which ~~to him~~ enabled me to trace the correctness or the falsity of my judgment. How excellent were my intuitions! I navigated without instruments, with only the stars to guide me, and I always brought the ship home.

And now behold me after my collision with Hildred. In the space of a few months I am reduced to helplessness; I can neither steer the ship nor propel it. Like a battered wreck I toss idly in a Sargasso Sea. I am at the dead center of those two great currents which flow through the waters of the earth; I revolve slowly in a stagnant whirl, a drifting hulk hemmed in by all the flotsam and jetsam of the seas. Like the men on the Santa Maria I cry out to be saved, but there are no passing boats in this region, nothing but derelicts, nothing but sea-weed, ~~a~~ islands and continents of floating debris, and everything that is alive sunk fathoms deep, ~~hallow~~ in a world so monstrous and strange that I would rather deliver myself to the carrion birds above. And when the drama had progressed to its climax, when delivered over hand and foot to these monsters of the deep, I found my voice and I cried out, what

were my first words? I remember the moment well, a moment when I was most completely at their mercy (I am referring to Hildred and her Vanya)-- so sure were they of their triumph, so sure were they of devouring me, that at this moment when I was in my greatest anguish they laughed, they railed, they mocked me. "It is good for you, this suffering", they said. "It will help you to write better". Never were words more truly uttered. I want to thank them now, these monsters, for the gift they conferred upon me. Yes, it was necessary that I should first be paralyzed, that I should be fixed in the grip of their slimy tentacles and taste the acid of death. In the supreme agony of that hour I discovered my strength: I made the choice against surrender, and having made the choice to live and to triumph, I eventually found the means to escape. There is something obsessive almost about the pattern of my conflict. Again and again it has happened to me to find at the direst moment the source of my strength. And the further down I am flung the greater is the rebound. At the moment when there is scarcely a stir of life, when listless and rudderless my slow rotary movement threatens to end in a fixed calm, then it is that I flare up again, and with an energy and resolve that comes from the devil himself I hew my way out.

I could carry these analogies on endlessly, I could write from now ~~but~~ till doomsday in a hermeneutic tongue. For example, the atmosphere in which we lived during the great struggle. What was our home? A cellar in which no ray of light penetrated from the street. Was it that we were so poor? No, it was choice. Hildred found the rooms. Like a bat

seeking its lair she flew straight to this dark and evil den. Inwardly she must have known what a splendid choice she had made. There was no dissuading her. Guided by her instincts she realized that in this cellar where the walls dripped with mould, where night reigned perpetually, she could carry out unmolested, ideally, as it were, her cruel practises. Here she dragged her already paralyzed victim; here she tortured him and wounded him almost to death. Even the bell was disconnected. She went about her work as accurately and methodically as a spider. The walls were painted black, crucifixes were dug into the backs of the chairs, the plates were put in mourning, around a cast of her face she draped a crape. Over a bare wooden table on which a candle burned she looked at her cards, invoked the fates; not a breath of ventilation in the place, the chimney choked, the mattress reeking with the odor of dead cigarettes. And when the food had given out and not a penny to be found, when the helpless victim roved like a maniac from one corner of his web to another, then she sang --mad, ecstatic songs in which her voice broke and grew rusty as an evil blade. Then her Vanya, inspired by the cruelty of her adored one, retired to her room and, as if poisoned by her own virus, gouged her womb.

Amorous tyranny! When I see this phrase in my notes I recall shreds of the past which are still quivering. I recall that when I made note of this expression it was at the very commencement of the drama, perhaps a month or two before we had moved into the cellar. Vanya had only been on the scene a few weeks--she was not living with us yet. But I had sensed already everything that was going to happen, and as if to fortify myself I had begun to reread all the books in my possession which dealt with the pathology of love. Among them were Krafft-Ebing's "Psychopathia Sexualis" and "The Sexual Question" by Forel. I remember being in bed one night, reading Forel, when Vanya and Hildred walked in on me. Hildred glanced at the book and, seeing certain passages with her name marked opposite, began to read with interest. And after she had read a few passages aloud, Vanya listening with a mocking smile, she tossed the book back to me and said: "Those books are out of date, I'll get you something more interesting." And soon thereafter she came home with Freud and Jung and Stekel and, whenever during her wanderings she encountered a psychologist, she laid herself on the operating table in order that she might astound me with the complexities of her case. And there was my friend, Bunchev, who was studying to be a psychiatrist--as soon as he got wind of the situation he stuck to us like a leech. During the day he poked around in the entrails of cadavers, ~~and the afternoon~~ performed experiments with poisons for his chief, the toxicologist, assisted at the clinic where a more distinguished friend of mine carried out his theories on glandular disturbances by experimenting with mental defectives and criminal-minded patients.

The atmosphere which we created about us was like those stews which the bacteriologist concocts in order to segregate a microbe. ^{an open} It was heavy with suspicion, lies, inquests; it was as though a sewer ran through the house and was poisoning us with its foul gases. It was impossible to be sincere: not a gesture escaped unnoticed. We were trying to deceive one another, to put each other on the wrong track. If we broke down and confessed it was only to vomit forth a more monstrous lie. We were the actors and the audience at the same time. When we grew weary from the tautness of it Bunchev was ever there to stir us up, to dip his dirty ladle in the broth. Even he, who was actuated in the beginning by scientific curiosity, could not remain sincere. He lied to all of us, he took sides first with this one and then with that, he professed to understand when he was most perplexed, he contradicted himself, in the morning he had one theory and at night another. He became so involved that Vanya whom he regarded as a freak of nature, whom he regarded as insane, whom he regarded as a hopeless invert, whom he regarded as a genius, whom he regarded as a criminal, this Vanya whom he tortured like a fly he at last tried to rape.

"Amorous tyranny", says Forel, "constitutes another variety in the apthology of love. Lovers of this kind constantly tyrannize and torment the object of their passion, by their desires, their observations, their sensitive temper, their contradictions, their exigencies and their jealousy. This atrocious manner of loving is common in both sexes; perhaps more so in woman than in men. There are women who will not allow ~~themselves~~ the husband to shut himself in the water-closet

for fear that he will betray them. Other psychopaths are affected with hyperaesthesia, and the least noise, the slightest touch, or any sudden sensation, is enough to throw them into excitement and make them a nuisance both to themselves and to their surroundings.....In women, hatred and vengeance, aroused by jealousy, are especially blind and tenacious when the chronic passions of psychopathia intervene; this being due to the perseverance natural to the sex. By the aid of their refined intrigues, by their misrepresented statements due to the illusions of a memory distorted by passion but uttered with a consummate dramatic art, some women play a truly diabolical role, and even deceive a whole tribunal."

The book is out of date, true, but in all that concerns "amorous tyranny" not a word is out of place, especially concerning a Hildred. In the beginning she was simply slavish in her admiration and devotion--there was no sacrifice too great for her to make. I could not leave her alone for five minutes, so attached was she to me. If I had to go on an errand, to the corner merely, she was waiting at the door for me, she would throw herself on me as if we had been separated for a month. If I had only the slightest wish it was instantly fulfilled. She was like Aladdin's lamp which I had but to rub and instantly the desire became real. And when I had no desires-- except to be free for a few minutes-- she invented them for me, and when I protested she wrangled with me and pleaded and coaxed until I was convinced myself that it was my direst need. If she went to the bathroom to pee I had to

go with her because everything she was saying was so important for me that she could brook no interruption. Everything was magnified to a scale of colossal proportions. If sometimes when I was kissing her I happened to glance at an object--anything--out of the corner of my eye she was hurt. A trifle like that would require hours to be adjusted. It is easy to understand, how with everything so askew, one could go through the events of the day in a dream, how one could sit at the breakfast table until noon trying to iron out a little wrinkle, how one could go into orgies of excess merely to prove that one's love had not grown cold, how one could listen far into the night to a trivial tale of childhood suffering because it meant so much to her. And one can understand how, while the world was going about its business, everything seemed to stand still with us. When it was time to go for food the stores were all closed, when it was time to telephone the clock had stopped, when it was time to go to bed it was no use going to bed because our neighbors were just getting up, the world was stirring itself.

"The question is often raised", I read elsewhere in Ferel, "whether a woman can love more than once in her life.....it is certain that a hysterical woman is capable of loving several times, and very different persons at different periods of her life. The personality of certain erotic hysterical women is even so dissociable that they can love with all their strength several men at the same time.....In woman the hysterical imagination and dissociation facilitate a polyandrous irradiation of the sexual appetite, which is otherwise rare in the female sex.

In this respect the sexuality of hysterical women resembles that of men and differs from that of normal women." ~~My husband~~
~~my husband~~

When I was reading these things in Forel I was like an adolescent who has just begun to rebel against ~~and~~ the idea of God. Doubt had sprung up....I was going to add "for the first time", but this is not so; no, I had had my doubts before, but they were comfortable doubts, familiar doubts, doubts in which I could navigate without fear of being shipwrecked. But this other doubt, for which I can give no name, but which strikes at the very roots of our being, that formidable and wholly ^{novel} ~~unfamiliar~~ fruit I had just commenced to taste. It struck terror into me. Never before had I known a ~~new~~ fear like this. A more sickening fear than ~~death~~ ~~the~~ thought of death. Now I saw the ground opening up beneath my feet and no matter where I tried to land the bottom fell from under me.

Up to this point I had been practically free from jealousy. My friends used to laugh at me because I was so trusting, so naive. They would ask, when they visited me sometimes-- "Where is Hildred?" and I would answer smilingly-- "Why she's out with so-and-so", meaning one of her lovers or admirers. And my friends would shake their heads over my innocence. But was I so innocent as I pretended? ~~And often~~ Often when I smiled so carelessly or when I agreed jestingly that at that very moment she might be lying in some one's arms, often, I say, I felt that it was more than a mere possibility. And if, in a spirit of utter truthfulness, I conjured up a scene of this sort, and

for the space of a few moments experienced torture and grief, I was always able to dismiss the thought because, said I to myself, what difference does it make if she is giving herself to some one else so long as she loves you....it is futile to worry about the fidelity of your wife.... it is almost better that she deceives you this way because at least you know that it is done in love, done for your sake. And so, oftentimes, we had queer scenes in which I pretended to be jealous but my uneasiness, or lack of uneasiness, was so transparent that Hildred was enraged and then she would confess to things which were meant to hurt me, which were truths, no doubt, but which amused me, which bolstered me up, in fact, because I refused to believe them. What did it matter to me if she slept every day with another man so long as she clung to me stubbornly, so long as she was jealous, so long as she thought of nothing but me and what she could do for me? I remember too that I was even solicitous about her admirers; I would urge her to treat them better, to be more kind, more tender, more thoughtful. I would remark with astonishment that she had allotted some one a mere quarter of an hour, and I would add naively that it seemed inconsiderate, considering all that they were doing for her. I would stand by her side as she wrote a preposterous note, watch her give it to the messenger boy, and then say "Can't you be decent enough to go and get it yourself?" It was hard for me to understand how the others obeyed her slightest whims and caprices; it never occurred to me that they were behaving towards her exactly as she was reacting to me. True, I thought now and then that they were probably being ^{rewarded} paid for their services, but what sort of reward? I worried about these others--

I feared that they were not getting enough.

Understand, we were living like a couple of parasites. I had given up my job (it was too difficult to get out of bed in the morning!) and, at Hildred's instigation, I had begun to write. That had commenced, of course, before I knew her, but sporadically, with great stretches in between of despair and futility. Blanche, my first wife, had pretty definitely convinced me that I would never be a writer; she regarded my writing as a peculiar form of revenge upon her--as an avenue of escape from her tyranny. Hildred, on the other hand, would listen to nothing but a career; having a writer in tow enhanced her own values--she might even prove to be the subject of my inspiration! And at the same time it meant this for her-- that I would be constantly under her surveillance, that I would be dependent on her, that I would be grateful to her and worshipful. And everything turned out exactly as she had hoped--except that the subject did not resemble the sitter and that the gratitudebut one can well imagine all the rest. But in those early days I was very conscious of all that she was doing for me-- I was almost conscience-stricken. And more especially since I was not doing as well as I had imagined I would. There was no balance between my meagre creations and the toll that I was exacting of her. And the more I thought of this discrepancy the less able I was to rectify it. Sensing my conflict, Hildred would lull me with her easy words: "don't write, don't think, don't worry, don't struggle....let me take care of everything!" Day in and day out I heard that refrain. And day in and day out I said to myself "that's precisely what's the matter! You should write, you should think, you should worry, you should

struggle!" And in my heart I accused her of being the cause of my failure; for every sacrifice she made I hated her more and more. And the more I hated her the more I loved her, the more wretched I became at the thought of her sacrifices. And now and then I stood up and rebelled. I would fight with her like a demon--just for permission to stand on my own feet again! Had any one, not knowing the cause of our dissension, heard our words, how strange must they have sounded! Two people quarreling so violently --in order to secure the right to sacrifice themselves. It was always represented as sacrifice...why, why? Why could I not have been permitted to assume the normal role of man, the role of provider and protector? Was I really as weak as she pretended? Was I really incapable? There was the past to prove that I was not. "But you didn't want that," she would say. "You did that merely because you had a wife and child." My wife and child! The moment that subject came up we looked at each other gravely. It was not only ourselves we had to look out for but these two which belonged to the past, and not only these two but others--Hildred's mother, her sick father. Whereas a moment ago we were quarreling about our privileges now suddenly the discussion would take a practical turn, an intensely practical turn, and from this moment on the battle would be lost for me. Once she said "How are you going to take care of them?" I became helpless. And without dwelling on this aspect of the question another moment she would commence to intrigue me with plans and schemes, all of her own making, all cut to her own pattern, a vast network of activities that left her free as a bird and me ~~sitting~~ with shorn wings sitting helplessly, idly in the nest, waiting for her to deliver us.

People talk of sacrifice as if it were some great Christian virtue inculcated only by deep suffering, by some illumination born of rich experience. Perhaps for the great mass of mankind this is so. But for a woman who has the mission of love to accomplish what a facile, what a joyous task is this sacrifice. All her being expands. Every sorrow is but another rose blooming in her heart. The most ignominious surrender, instead of degrading her, exalts her, lifts her to higher and higher levels. Seeing her bloom under her heavy sacrifices I was more than ever paralyzed. If I were to extricate myself I would be destroying her child, I would be committing sacrilege. It was for me to make myself more and more helpless, not to grow up, as a child does, but to grow smaller, younger, each day, until at last I would be back in her womb where she might carry me forever. That was my mission. The only difficulty was that I was a living being, that the laws which controlled me were beyond me, beyond her.

When I think of the life we led, before the big drama set in, when I think of the places we lived in, the people we knew, the situations that were created, the difficulties we had and the damage we created, I don't wonder at all that I found it so difficult to write as I imagined I would. I want to give a brief picture of this period before the big drama set in, before I was jealous, before I had any grave doubts. Before Vanya, in other words.

I give this picture because in a way I want to explain it again to myself. It was only the other day that I was thinking of the novel, the circumstances under which it was born, the places I carried it to, the struggle it was to preserve the manuscript. I thought of the synopsis I drew up--the barest sort of outline--which covered twenty-five pages, which when I examined it more closely seemed to me the basis for five or six novels rather than one. The day I drew up this outline Hildred was in Paris with her Vanya--at least, I thought she was in Paris....I discovered later that she was in Munich. The drama was over then; I was working in a cemetery, as the assistant to an old boyhood friend. He had rescued me from the cellar life and made a place for me in the office where he worked. I was listed on the books as a grave-digger. It was a political job.

Jimmy Murata was the name of my savior. I shall never forget him. Over fifteen years had passed when I met him by chance that day on the street near my home. I looked very much like a bum, and Jimmy-- Jimmy had a big cigar in his mouth, a smile from ear to ear, his voice was as hearty as ever, he grasped my hand warmly, he walked with me to the door. He made no attempt to conceal his amazement as I related briefly the nature of my life since leaving school. He said he would like to help me. I brought him inside and lit a candle. The place looked as if a cyclone had struck it. We sat on the bed and talked, and as we talked Jimmy grew more and more sympathetic. We decided that I was to go to work in the morning--Jimmy had plenty of work for me to do. He was in the midst of a political campaign and I was to write his letters, keep in touch with the newspapers, prepare his speeches, and between times, make reports

for the cemetery officials.

I shall always remember that morning when I first went to work, a Spring morning with traces of mud and snow on the ground, the inscriptions on the tomb-stones, the fresh, yawning graves, the dull, stupid faces in the office, the atmosphere of gambling and killing time, the corrosive routine, the morbid view from the window where I sat writing political speeches. At noon we jumped in Jimmy's car and drove to a tavern where we had a big lunch in the company of his henchmen. We had plenty to drink, we joked, we talked about the Mayor and the Governor as if they were old pals. And as we left Jimmy stuffed some bills in my hand--I was not to worry about a thing, everything was to be O. K. from now on, for life, if Jimmy had anything to say about it.

It was excellent. I was making a new start in life, as a grave-digger! When pay-day came..... No, the day before pay-day.... When I came home for dinner the place was empty. I saw the trunks lying about, half-packed. I saw my picture, which had been hanging in the toilet all along, stuffed away in one of the drawers. I took it out and put it back again in the toilet. I sat down and waited for them to return. At two o'clock I went to bed. I lay in bed wide awake. In about an hour they walked in, strangely elated. "Are you moving?" I asked. Hildred sat down on the bed and held my hand. I don't remember what she said any more--her talk always commenced nowhere and ended nowhere-- but I do remember that there was mention of Paris again. I didn't take it seriously; besides I was sick of hearing about Paris. But Hildred was explaining

to me earnestly that the time was drawing near, that she expected any day now to raise the fare for herself and Vanya. Vanya already had a passport under an assumed name. "But how are you going to live when you get there?" I said. She didn't know about that, but she had plans, as usual. "I don't want to listen to all that crap," I said. "I know all about your plans and schemes...I'm tired.... I've got a job now and I've got to sleep." Before we retired Hildred called me into the bathroom to show me a sweater and a beret some one had given her. She became very tender, she put her arms around me and kissed me passionately. I loved her in that beret. I made her promise that she would wear it every day. And she agreed. And then she put her arms around me again and in a coaxing, pleading voice she said: "You won't be angry if I go to Paris with Vanya? You'll join me as soon as you, won't you?" I said "Yes" and kissed her, and then suddenly I pushed her away and I began to rant and curse. "You're crazy", I said. "You can't go to Paris on a shoe-string. And what do you think is going to become of me? How am I going to get to Paris--swim over?" We continued to quarrel in bed, but instead of fighting me she seemed to be hurt. She did everything to pacify me. She begged me to take her in my arms, but I pushed her over to the wall and turned my back on her. I was so riled up--it was the tail-end of the drama and my nerves were completely gone-- that I got up out of bed and actually danced with rage. And then suddenly I vomited.

In the morning, as I was leaving, she came to the street with me and again she was very tender. "To-day is pay-day," I said. "I'm going to bring something home for you to-night." I thought it was strange the way she took this simple remark-- the tears suddenly came to her eyes and she thanked me profusely.

"Don't bother," she said, "I really don't need a thing." As I turned the corner she was waving to me. It was the first time she had done that in years. I was touched. I thought to myself everything will be all right soon....she'll get over that idea of going to Paris.

When I came home that night with the things I had bought for her the house was dark, the trunks were gone. A panic seized me. In a moment I saw a note on my desk, fastened down by her death-mask. She had left a few minutes after we said good-bye.....

And now Jimmy proved to be a real friend. He told me frankly that he had no use for Mildred--he couldn't understand a woman doing such things-- but since she was my wife, since I loved her, he would do what he could to help me. She was hardly gone more than three days when I received a ~~make~~ message from sea saying that she needed money. Jimmy loaned me the money. A few days after she landed in Paris she wired again--"pocket-book stolen". I heard from her regularly, by cable ~~ways~~. A month passed. Two months. At night, after the office was closed, I came back to the cemetery and typed stories which I forwarded to her because she had wired me that there was a market for them in Paris. And to make it easier for her I signed her name to the stories. One day I got a letter, covered with wine stains, saying how much she thought of the stories, how people wept when she read them aloud at a cafe. I wrote more stories, I wrote her letters twenty and thirty pages long. I cabled her when she needed money; I sponged on Jimmy, borrowed from the fellows in the office, stole carfare from my mother's purse, as I used to do when I was younger.

When Lindbergh landed in Paris on his epoch-making flight I was sick at heart. I was standing in a park, watching some old men putting up a band-stand; the Commissioner was going to make a speech that afternoon. Suddenly word came that Lindbergh had landed safely; the news spread like wild-fire. People walked around congratulating one another, as if they themselves had made the flight. As for myself, I had tears in my eyes. I couldn't understand what had made me grow so weak and sentimental. Lindbergh meant nothing to me--except that I saw in his flight a great gesture, a gesture I had failed to make myself. Here was a man who had braved every danger--not for love, but out of a high sense of adventure, out of sheer courage and will. Had I had only a tenth of that courage I would have found a way to get to Paris. I would not have needed to take an aeroplane. But here I was sticking at my job, making silly little sacrifices, writing to her the most extravagant letters about my suffering and my love for her, but doing nothing. I was making literature of my anguish instead of taking the bull by the horns. What was that life in Paris on the terrasse? Would I sit some day and listen to some one read his masterpiece aloud? What sort of life was she leading there with her crazy friend Vanya who climbed out of windows like a Romeo at night, who wore pants and a red sash about her waist, who mentioned celebrities like Brancusi and Hemingway as if she knocked around with them all day and all night? Supposing I sneaked over there and walked in on them at the Cafe Dome some night--would I see them sitting in the midst of an admiring throng, or would they be strolling from bar to bar like a pair of drunken tars? And I--what was I doing in a cem-

tery? Wasn't Paris the place where I belonged?

I went back to the office that afternoon--it was a holiday-- and I wrote a thing called "Cemetery Idyll" which I dispatched to Paris with a letter saying that if she did not promise to return soon I would commit suicide; I even fixed a limit in which she must reply by cable, and then before she had ever received the letter I wired her to disregard the letter. But that doesn't matter; the important thing is that the very next day I drew up the outline for the book. The fact that I had touched bottom gave me a new lease of life. My suicide I regarded as a fait accompli; the drama was finished. And I was certain that she would return--but if she did not return there was the book and the book had already become more important to me than her return.

But as I was saying a while ago, it was in drawing up this skeleton of the past that I began to realize the full complexity of our life, the richness of it. As to the significance of this great tapestry of events, that I must confess was not altogether clear to me. It is only latterly that I have begun to comprehend the nature of this drama. And so I come back again to the beginning in order to pick up the thread. It is only a rapid survey I propose to make, in order to refresh my memory.....

See me then as I was when I met her-- a man just turned thirty, with a job for life, and a wife and child to support. The first creditable thing I had accomplished in my life was, almost immediately upon meeting her, to write a story. I was still functioning as personnel director in the corporation I mentioned. The day the idea came to me to write a story I made Blanche, my wife, telephone the office and say that I was ill. I ordered her to make a big breakfast and during the meal I joked with her in a cruel way. I told her I might never go back to the job. I was insanely happy. I decided to go to the country and lie down under a tree to write my story. I was too impatient to make decisions: the first street car that came along I boarded and no sooner did I take my seat than I began making notes. I was insane that day and I wrote insanely. Toward evening, instead of going home I called on my friend, Emil Sluter, who had a studio uptown. I read him what I had written. I read it to him while he painted, and when I had finished I picked up a pencil and began sketching his model, a negress who was posing for him in a pair of striped drawers. I had never attempted to draw before but now it seemed to me that I could do anything--I could build a house if I were asked to. Just before dinner some of his cronies arrived and the bottle was brought out. I talked in my rambling, disconnected way; I insulted his friends which only seemed to make them like me all the more. Finally I got so drunk that they put me under the shower. When we hit the street I was skidding: an automobile was standing at the curb....in two bounds I was on top of the shed dancing a jig. We went to an open air restaur-

ant in the Village. There was more to drink--and there was song and there were women. There was a woman seated a little distance away from me whose husband was lying in bed with paralysis; they told me she was making a martyr of herself for this man. It sounded incredible to me; I made coarse jokes about her husband and finally, under the pretense of searching for my watch I climbed under the table and ran my hand up her legs. In the morning, when I awoke, I found myself lying on Emil's floor with candles surrounding me; they had laid me out like a corpse and left me there.

This it started--with a bang. And it continued that way uninterruptedly. I seldom went home for dinner--my nights were too full. On pay-day I borrowed in order to make up the deficit in my salary. When a bonus was distributed I invited my creditors to a banquet and paid them off; afterwards we went to a burlesque show and after that we went to Hildred's dance hall and we danced with her. Once I took my wife to the theatre; she was so amazed that I asked her out that she almost wept. But it was quickly spoiled for her, because during the intermission, when we strolled out, I pointed to the dance hall and I asked her if she wouldn't like to go with me. "So that's why you took me out?" she said, and I suppose that was the truth of it though I hadn't known it up till then. At any rate she went home alone, with real tears in her eyes, and I went to the dance hall, and later I went to the park near where I lived and while I was lying in the grass grappling with Hildred I saw a cop peering through the bushes, watching us. We got up and tried to walk away nonchalantly and of course he grabbed us. I told him it was

my wife I was wrestling with, but of course he wouldn't believe it, and so I offered to take him home with us, and he accepted the offer. When we got to the door he relented--probably because I had already handed him a five spot. In the bedroom my wife was waiting for me with her dander up; we exchanged a few words and then I cracked her; the ^{child} ~~baby~~ sat up in the crib and began to scream, and my wife screamed even louder, so that the neighbors came down from upstairs and threatened to take me to the police station. But by that time I was as meek as a lamb and whatever powers of language I possessed I wielded eloquently. And soon after my vacation came round and I moved into my friend Emil's studio in order to write a book, because it annoyed Blanche to see me wasting my time that way. Evenings when we were through work Hildred dropped in with her mulatto friend, Eve, who was the most lascivious little bitch I have ever seen. Between times Camilla was getting after me, and seeing that nothing was of any avail, tried to make me jealous by parading her woman friend, the one with hairs on her chin and breasts that hung to her knees. Blanche knew all the while about Hildred--I had told her everything that Sunday when I returned from Ulmer Park. If she saw me changing my clothes after dinner she would say "getting ready to meet your sweetheart?" and I'd say "Yeah, I'm getting ready to meet my little whore." And sometimes I'd have to ask her for carfare, as I was going out, and she'd give me a dime or a quarter and chalk it up on the slate. "It's funny," she'd say, "my giving you money to meet your woman." And I'd smile at her and tip my hat respectfully, or pinch her but-

tocks playfully which always made her angry because now she regarded herself as private property. And sometimes when I had been out with the fellows for nights on end, coming home all jazzed up I'd get to feeling sorry for Blanche, and I'd put my arms around her in bed and try to talk to her. But she wouldn't have anything to do with me. "Go to your other women," she'd say, or else--"What's the matter with your women, don't they treat you right?" And that would make me furious: all night long I'd torment her, not because I wanted her so badly, but because I didn't want her to resist me, to treat me like a leper.

Finally I was caught with my pants down. Very cute the way Blanche trapped me...very cute. Though why she had to trap me when I was begging her constantly to release me is a mystery to me. At any rate, she said to me one day that she was going to the country for a few days to stay with a girlhood friend. I took her and the child to the train and kissed them good-bye. That evening, quite by accident, I brought Hildred home with me. We slept in the marriage bed and in the morning I made breakfast for her. Hildred was walking around in my wife's kimono. We were moving about leisurely, preparing to take a walk. Hildred had removed her kimono and was standing naked before the mirror, brushing her hair. Suddenly the rolling door slid open and there stood Blanche with two neighbors from upstairs. There was no scene. She merely asked me in a quiet, steady voice to escort the woman out as soon as possible. "You might have had the decency," she said, "not to use my kimono." That was typical

of Blanche, to be disturbed about her kimono.....

I called on her the next day to remove my things and to talk over the practical aspects of the situation. No tears were shed--we confined ourselves to the subject of alimony. Meantime Hildred and I took a furnished room in the home of a Jewish doctor who lived in the Bronx. It was my friend Bunche who recommended me to the doctor; he had a way of popping up whenever I was in difficulties. The doctor was a very interesting chap, a brilliant man, but his home was like a pig-sty. In the basement he had a billiard room; the walls were stained with urine because it was one of the doctor's theories that children should be allowed to develop naturally. He had all sorts of theories, the doctor, but none of them related to sanitation. When we went to the bathroom to take a shower the walls were alive with cockroaches. The doctor said it was useless to combat them--they would be moving soon to a new home. The doctor kept three servants--it was necessary because all his relatives and his wife's relatives were living with him. We ate in relays, and we ate Kosher food only. One of the servants was a Hindu whom I had once employed as a messenger; he had syphilis now and was writing a history of the world. He watched over Hildred like a faithful dog, brought us our breakfast in bed, loaned us money out of his meagre earnings. Soon my office boy took a room in this menage and fell violently in love with Hildred, as he had fallen in love with Camilla, and with my other secretary before that. He regarded me as an idol--whatever I did was right--and so, taking advantage of that and of his affection for my women,

I used him as a slave. Once a week I went to see my wife to give her the alimony. Divorce proceedings were pending. We got along well when we met; I would usually call on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, take her and the child to the park, and then go back to the house with her for dinner. We enjoyed these dinners together--there was no longer anything to quarrel about. Sometimes she would ask me wistfully if I intended to marry this woman I had taken--she always said "this woman" rather than mention Hildred by name. And often, when I would be getting ready to leave she would be undressing the child and the child would say innocently "Why don't you stay to-night and sleep with mother?" After a time, whether it was through hearing the child say this or perhaps that it was most natural, or whether it was because we got along so beautifully and there were so many tender recollections that bound us together, at any rate, soon we were going through a storm. I would call on a beautiful afternoon in Summer to find Blanche lying on the couch clad in nothing but a kimono; she would lie there languidly as if inviting me to join her. And when I lay beside her and began to fondle her she would put me away, telling me I had no right to behave that way now, that that was all finished, that I should have thought about such things before, etc. etc. But she would put me off in such a way that I would only struggle harder, and how I struggled! Oftimes, in the midst of our embraces--it was hard to tell whether we were fighting or loving-- I would think to myself how absurd it was that I should want this woman so, this woman whom I had put away from me so cruelly and deliberately. Then, too, in the midst of the conflict the child would come up to me and

tug at my sleeve. "I want you to play with me!" she would say, and Blanche would reproach me--"you come only once a week and you don't pay ~~as~~ any attention to her...I think that's a crime". And like a sentimental idiot I would jump up with tears in my eyes and run to the garden to play with the kid. I remember ~~some~~ that there was a much older child who used to come and play with my daughter and immediately I saw this girl (I suppose she was twelve or so) I fell in love with her and it must have been very obvious because even my daughter felt the injustice of it--and as for Blanche, Blanche was shocked. I was shocked myself. ~~It~~ Such a thing had never happened to me before, but I did love her, it's true. I used to go away wondering what I should do about it; I felt like a criminal. Here I was deceiving Hildred with Blanche and deceiving my daughter with another child. I had been told that the doctor with whom we were living had a passion for girls under sixteen; I looked upon that as a downright perversion.

During this period at the doctor's home, which lasted but a few months, I became better acquainted with Hildred's companions of the dance hall. It was customary for me to call for Hildred after midnight and take her home; usually we stopped at a restaurant in the theatrical district and chatted for an hour or so with Maureen, her bosom friend. I felt quite at home with her friends though we hadn't a thing in common, nor did Hildred, as far as I could see. I noticed that her friends idolized her, that they took pleasure in putting forward their worst side in order to emphasize the contrast. Hildred never had any friends except those who

admired her extravagantly, who attached themselves to her servilely and devotedly. This was interesting to me because in my own case I had always fought strongly to keep free of such attachments and encouraged my friends to find fault with me, to ridicule me even. I never demanded loyalty or understanding--on the contrary I despised these virtues. But I think I liked these cheap friends of hers particularly because they were so natural; they made no pretense to be anything but the little ~~cheap~~ trollopes they were. And they had a sense of humor which is rare in women of better taste and learning. Furthermore I was deeply interested in their lives which were replete with the shadiest adventures: they impressed me always as being the stuff of Dreiser's women and for Dreiser's very human, very common, and very unfortunate female creatures I have always had a strong predilection. It is the type of woman I feel closest to, so close to that the idea of wooing them seems repellant--incestuous. They were lax, indolent, lovable, good-natured whores; they talked about their experiences with men as easily and naturally as one would talk about yesterday's football game. Maureen, for example, would relate the most minute details about her affair with a doctor whom she had come to know in a professional capacity at first--a ~~calp~~ dose of clap and gonorrhea at the same time. And while he was treating her the doctor fell a victim to her wiles; like me he used often to wait downstairs at the door for her to come out. And sometimes she would leave him standing there and sneak out by the back entrance to keep a date with some loafer who owned a car and could better satisfy her abnormal cravings. Or she would join us at the restaurant and make sport of the doctor,

say that he wasn't big enough for her and finish it off by giving us the dimensions of her ~~max~~ cunt. "I've never found a man big enough to satisfy me," she would say, throwing her head back and laughing heartily..... Yes, I liked these early freinds of Hildred's--much, much better than the later ones. They reminded me of my childhood days, my life in the Fourteenth Ward which was rough and tumble, where side by side with the old American stock there grew up a settlement of "foreigners" who eventually displaced the American element. I saw nothing in that life of what is called culture or refinement (thank God!); as a boy of five I was turned loose to roam the streets as I willed and I conducted myself like a little savage. I made friends with the worst children in the neighborhood; at six or seven years of age I was paying my penny, like the other boys, to fuck (?) a little girl in the cellar. Sunday mornings I would see her crazy brother standing on the shed masturbating --the goat of the nieghborhood to whom we fed rotten bananas and tortured in divers ways, as only children know how to torture an unfortunate one. I saw the Spanish-American war break out and the soldiers coming home broken down with dysentery and drink--the minister's own son standing at the lamp-post in his wonderful ~~max~~ uniform puking up his guts and swearing and cursing in the vilest tongue. I joined the little rowdies who found amusement at night in breaking the show-cases of the "sheenies". I knew what a fairy was at seven years of age and remember well how I used to wait for a little sissy to pass by and then pelt him with mud or snow-balls or horse shit, if nothing else was handy. I remember my life from five to ten years of age vividly and I'll say always that it was a glorious childhood. In that period I have the remembrance of liv-

ing vitally and that others about me were living vitally, if crudely, perhaps sottishly. I saw the saloons wide open and men reeling from the swinging doors; I saw the sailors standing on line at the burlesque shows and heard their coarse jokes; I saw the politicians standing on the street corners, picking their teeth and I heard their talk of Bryan and McKinley; I saw the dancehalls packed with toughs and heard the bottles crash against the mirrors and the sluts screaming and moaning; I saw the cyclists assembling on Sunday mornings and the long stream of colored sweaters streaming out in Indian file along the narrow strip of asphalt against the curb; I attended the funerals of my grandparents and saw the cheap, sentimental, hypocritical grief of my relatives, their gluttony and coarseness in the beer garden adjoining the cemetery when they downed their beer and sang their melancholy German songs; I went to the country in the summertime and in bed at night I buggered my little country friends and instructed them in the ways of the city; now and then I was packed off to Yorkville where I joined my cousin along the riverfront in rock-fights with rival gangs, and there I remember I learned things about girls that I had never dreamed of before, so that when I returned to my native precincts I was looked upon as a fountain of vice. An invaluable introduction to life, as I discovered later when we moved away from the neighborhood and I entered upon a dreary adolescence.

All this seemed to be revived in me as I took up my life with Hildred; I felt the sense of adventure stirring in me again--not that my life had been tame prior to that, but that

my adventures were going to be of a more reckless, vital character, entered into with a free will and not produced by morbidity or starvation or rebelliousness..... They came quickly enough, and in such doses that I had not the capacity to cope with them. I had met some one who lived continually in an atmosphere of adventure, who courted danger as if it were a necessity, who never stopped to take a breath, as it were.

I am trying to hurry on with this portion of my tale, to give the barest review of this period leading up to Vanya's appearance, but the events are so numerous and so turbulent, and withal so important for an understanding of what followed that I find myself incapable of proceeding more swiftly. I find it even necessary to go back now and then to my life with Blanche because of details which, looking back on it all now, seem to link themselves with that life which was to come. For instance, I happen to think of the days when we were first married, when we were occupying a sedate apartment in a still more sedate neighborhood; the house was cluttered with furniture which Blanche had collected from her relatives. She had put in my room all the old chairs which she had no room for elsewhere. I used to repair to this room in the evening and read, now and then to write; the sight of these chairs ranged around the room like the reception room of a dentist's office infuriated me. I used to beg her to get rid of them, to sell them, or give them away, but her parsimonious spirit wouldn't countenance such a thing. As I remarked before, Blanche never invited any one to the house; she felt uncomfortable in the presence of people and to make friends was difficult for her.

I, on the contrary, made friends too easily: I had to run away from them if I wanted a life of my own. And so, after a period of isolation, during which Blanche and I became more estranged, I began to think that it would be good to have friends to the house again. Whenever I looked at those vacant chairs I thought to myself what a strange son-of-a-bitch I had taken for a wife, and from looking at those chairs night after night I grew filled with a desire to see them occupied. One by one my friends drifted back and with them new ones and all the chairs were filled and I felt happy again and in my element. When Blanche protested that she couldn't afford to entertain on such a scale I nonchalantly informed my friends of the fact and they very cheerfully paid for their own entertainment. Which of course put Blanche in a very bad light and made her even more bitter toward me. But I didn't care what she thought any longer--I was happy to see the chairs filled, happy to see the table creaking with food and drink, happy to see this museum of ours turned to life.

Now different as Hildred was from Blanche, expansive her nature as Blanche's was confined, I noticed however that they had this in common--they wanted to rule my friends out. They wanted me exclusively, Blanche if only to fight with me, and Hildred because she was hungry for love. But whatever the motive, to me it amounted to the same thing: they wanted to make a prisoner of me, and for one of my temperament such an attitude was not only impossible but disastrous. I was willing to be the slave to the woman I loved but I also demanded freedom. And somehow the women I loved never seemed to understand my point of view.

I am forgetting a certain little scene with Hildred which is rather important. It was the second or third time I had met her; we had had a wonderful bout in the vacant lot opposite her home. As I was about to get up and take her to the door she grabbed my arm impulsively and pulled me down beside her. "You're wonderful," she said, "I love you, I love you." And then almost immediately she gave a queer, silent laugh, and added brusquely--"And now for the dirt!" She wanted to know if I could lend her fifty dollars--her mother had to meet a mortgage on the house. I agreed at once to get the money for her. It appears to me, as I reflect on this incident, that she was astonished that I assented so readily. Certainly I was more astonished by the way she thanked me; she insisted that I go back to the grass again and lie down with her, and then as I was leaving she suddenly threw herself at my feet, and kneeling there in the street, clutching my legs, she repeated fervently "You're my God.... you're my God!" But I suppose as long as I live I shall never forget that moment when she said "And now for the dirt!" Coming from her lips it sounded terribly coarse, terribly vulgar. It sent a shudder through me. And later on, when she had commenced to make life miserable for me, when after a piece of wanton cruelty (or so I interpreted it) she came to me with such tenderness and humility, I would think of this scene and these words which I could never erase from my memory, and I would justify them by saying to myself that at bottom she was honest, truthful, loyal, that she had always been made to practise a role which she detested, that she could not bring herself to beg for things because she herself was the acme of

generosity, and that rather than put herself in a humiliating light she would prefer to coarsen herself, cheapen herself, rather than inspire pity she would prefer to invite contempt or scorn or hatred or disgust. But what makes this situation almost incomprehensible is that there was no real need to be making sacrifices for her mother (she was still calling her aunt); there was no need to ask me for aid since she was then living with a man who offered her everything she wanted. It occurred to me long afterwards that she was merely putting me to a test--she returned the money to me in a few days, as she had promised. And later I had still another idea: very likely some one had asked her for a loan of fifty dollars, and being by nature unable to refuse a request, she had promised it, and then not knowing what new lie to put to her lover she had thought of me. And when she realized that I had no money (she was under the impression the first night that I was well off) ~~she felt~~ but that I would borrow or steal it for her she felt repentant. And perhaps all her previous affairs had been one of cold barter--herselling herself to the old man was a case in point, but this I didn't know of then. I knew that there were several old men and that she was plucking them ruthlessly but there was never the least hint that she was offering them anything more in return than the pleasure of her company. And I remember that it seemed idiotic to me that she should be content with driblets and drabs when by going the full length she might once and for all free herself of all worries.

But this was the opening note of a theme that was to be sounded over and over again.....

And another scene of great importance that I have omitted relating is this----. Shortly after I met her she went to the country, to the Maine woods, where a cabin was put at the disposal of her and her girl friends by a kind-hearted old gentleman who was interested in their welfare. I had already made the acquaintance of the "kind-hearted old gentleman" at the dance hall; he was a man of about fifty, with prematurely white hair, very vigorous and youthful, a man of some learning and endowed with charming manners. Hildred had represented him to me as a man who had done her a great service when she was ill and destitute. They shared a little home together in the Village. They slept in the same bed but, so she said, they had no relations. And incredible as this story sounds, I swallowed it, even though I had met him and remarked his extreme vitality, even though, as Hildred explained, he had been living apart from his wife for several years--because his wife was so constituted that she could not have physical relations with a man. I understood that the man--Marsden was his name-- loved his wife dearly, that they saw each other regularly. Nevertheless he was going to the dogs, he was drunk every night--because there was some tragedy in connection with his marital relations which Hildred refused to explain to me. "Don't you find it difficult to go to bed with a drunken man every night?" I inquired naively. (I never for a moment questioned her sleeping on the edge of the bed!) The answer to my question was that Marsden had done her a service which she could never repay, that she had determined to cure him of the drink habit, and when he had rehabilitated himself she would leave him. Marsden and I liked each other immediately; we became good friends. At least that was the impression I had-- later I discovered that

he was violently jealous of me, that he had drawn caricatures of me and after hanging them on the doors he had plunged knives into them. But when she left for the cabin with her friends, though I knew Marsden was accompanying them, I had no uneasiness. While she was away I received a letter, a very touching letter in her illiterate scrawl, saying that she wanted to be my wife. When she came back she called me up and said that she couldn't see me immediately because she had promised to spend a few days at the beach with Maureen and Julia. I was hurt; I hung up curtly and went to the ~~studio~~ studio of my friend, Emil Sluter. A friend called and we drove to the country that afternoon. When we got back to town it was after midnight. There was note from Hildred saying that she had ~~not~~ changed her mind about going to the beach. She had been sitting on a stoop opposite my home waiting for me to appear; she sat there for five hours and then she added a postscript to her note saying that she was going to the beach after all. The next evening I got off the train at Edgemere and looked her up. We went to a hotel and took a room for the night. And then a strange thing happened: she was unable to "come". I fucked her four or five times and each time that she arrived at the point of having an orgasm she was frustrated. She strove so desperately that I became hysterical. "Oh God, don't laugh!" she groaned. "You're cruel." But I couldn't help it--I didn't want to laugh but it seemed so ridiculous: the more she panted and groaned the more hysterical I became. And yet she wouldn't give up; it was as if she would die or go crazy if she couldn't have that orgasm.

In the morning we lay on the beach exhausted; her words were cold and bitter. We had a quarrel and then she melted. She told me a long, rambling story, which I listened to impatiently, about her father whom she worshiped. She said I resembled him a great deal, that I was tender and forgiving, just as he was, that I was also a clown like him, and irresponsible, that I was neat and immaculate like him, that I had the same thin, trim figure and the same fine bones and the same tragic look in my eyes. I was not at all interested in her words, or rather I was irritated because I remembered bitterly that Blanche had the same feelings about her father, the same blind, incestuous worship, though with this difference, that Blanche saw in me the extreme opposite of her father. But I detested people, women especially, who had this slavish admiration, this infantile attachment to their parents. And I hated to be told by a woman that I reminded her of her father or of a lost lover, which was the case with so many women who had fallen in love with me. It is a common thing, of course, to fall in love with an image of some one else; I had done it myself time and again. It was in this spirit that I had made advances to Blanche's own mother when we visited her parents on our honeymoon; I saw a woman of about the same age and disposition as the woman to whom I had been chained for four long years. But the mistake I made with Blanche and with Hildred was to ridicule their relationship; whenever I wanted to make a cruel dig I ~~ma~~ lampooned the father--often I did it in the presence of others. And though I often ridiculed my own parents it was not the same thing; this sort of injury was never forgiven.

But to go on with the rush of events.... We are living on Riverside Drive in the home of an old friend, who is a musician. And Bunchek has also taken a room there; he has married ~~another woman~~ again, a month after his wife committed suicide. He sticks ~~me~~ to me now because he is half-mad; he doesn't love his second wife--he merely succumbed to her because she was good to him. He is interested in my life; he is a bit envious of me and he takes occasion whenever possible to chuckle over my discomfiture, to rub his hands gleefully. He gloats over my difficulties, but at the same time he sticks to me loyally and aids me in whatever way he can. I have known Bunchek for some time and I like him extremely; I ridicule him mercilessly, I involve him with other women, I deplore his bad ~~manners~~ taste, his vile Jewish characteristics, his inability to enjoy himself. But I listen to him attentively, I learn from him, I go to him when I am vitally in need of counsel. We understand each other perfectly; it is almost a love that we have for each other. But that does not prevent him from trying to bitch up my life or me from sparing him the least humiliation. He is hard, Bunchek, and so am I. We appreciate each other.

The friend we were living with was a Scotchman; he was married to a beautiful Jewess who resembled Hildred in many ways. It was quite natural therefore that my friend Edmund should be attracted to Hildred and I to his wife, Esther. Strange scenes we had there with the house full of Jews and Gentiles, Edmund trying to defend the Jews and yet hanging his head when Esther's relatives came; I ranting against them brazenly, while at the same time admiring Esther inordinately;

and Bunchek sitting back in a corner with a leer on his face and saying to me quietly, but maliciously-- "So you think that wife of yours is a Gentile, do you? You poor boob, can't you see that she's nothing but a kike like we are?" And Mildred, flaming with rage, could think of nothing more insulting to hurl at Bunchek than to call him a dirty little kike, which had not the least effect on Bunchek because he himself was always calling people "dirty little kikes", but which roused Esther to great anger and made it extremely difficult for the poor musician to arbitrate these differences. As for Bunchek and myself, we enjoyed these squabbles: we enjoyed seeing the cocky little Scotchman with his fair-mindedness and his cold logic writhing in the net; we enjoyed the behavior of these two jealous wives, two beautiful Jewesses married to two eccentric Gentiles. But what drove Bunchek almost to ecstasy was to observe my attitude when I finally learned that Mildred was indeed a Jewess. Now I both hated the Jews and loved them; retaining all my old prejudices, which were indefensible, I added new ones, favorable ones, which were even more extravagant, more indefensible than the old ones. I went so far as to propose that we get married by a rabbi; I even suggested becoming a convert. I was in earnest and at the same time I was acting the buffoon. I had never considered myself a Christian and I knew that I would never become a Jew, but there was something droll, something piquant, about adopting the religion of those one despised; it gave me pleasure to think what a time I might have ridiculing the Jews and then announcing in the same breath that I had become a convert. It was also a fine piece of revenge for the ~~knak~~ deceit that had been prac-

tised on me, because Hildred did not take to the idea at all; she regretted that she had ever admitted it to me and threatened that unless I dropped the subject ~~that~~ she would run away. And so there was no public declaration of her Jewish blood, no marriage in the synagogue, no relatives to congratulate me upon my conversion. She simply wouldn't tolerate the thought of introducing me to her parents and more than that-- in a very short time she was speaking about them as if they were Gentiles and if I reminded her that it was unnecessary to lie to me about it she would fly into a rage and look at me as much as to say-- "but whoever said that it was a lie...you know it's the truth I'm telling you" . And so rather than have a continuance of scenes I fell in with her lies, I not only never betrayed her, but I acted as though I myself believed what she said. Even Bunchek was impressed by the intensity of her passion on this point; even Bunchek would talk about her English father and about the racing stables and about Caruso and all the other clap-trap she had invented, but of course with such gusto and extravagance that Hildred would soon change the subject of conversation. And there is this much to be said for Hildred's attitude--she did sincerely detest and despise her own kind. She loathed Esther's mother; she loathed Bunchek's friends; she loathed everything that smacked of Jewish blood and Jewish tradition. When it came to discussing the Jews with Hildred it was I who defended them; I might loathe them too but I could not deny their virtues.

I must also remark here that my Scotch friend and his wife had little respect for Hildred's intelligence or for her capabilities. They treated her like one would treat a child--with an indulgence and a tone of superiority which infuriated Hildred. Add to this the undercurrent of jealousy, the rivalry between the two women, the unpleasant relief in which the Jew was being shown up, the fear of exposure, the indifference I displayed about getting married now that we were living together, and the intimate, harmonious relationship which we three men displayed, a relationship which seemed to exclude the women entirely--consider all these disturbing elements and you can see that it was anything but smooth water were were sailing in. Frequently I was so involved ~~with~~ in a discussion with Edmund and Bunche that I forgot to go to the dance hall to meet Hildred. On the one day in the week when she was free I would visit Blanche and oftimes I overstayed my time or I returned brimming with inner joy or I dwelled sentimentally on the child or I expressed remorse that Blanche was having such a difficult time of it. The result was that every week or so Hildred would pack her things and threaten to leave me; but she always waited for me to appear, I noticed, and that amused me and I would treat the situation callously. Sometimes I would help her pack her belongings; ~~xxx~~ we had no valise and each time it came to leave she would have to hunt for paper and twine, and of course she could never wrap the bundle. So I would wrap it for her, and I was not very good at it either--naturally I never intended to let her get farther than the door. She would march to the door with that grotesque bundle dragging the floor and I would adopt my most serious, humble, penitent expression--until she relented-- and then I would sit down and howl with laughter and

she would laugh herself because what could one do with an imbecile, a clown, a buffoon on one's hands?

Living with Esther, who ^{had} ~~was~~ a sharp intelligence, who was a mature woman and a dangerous rival to boot, Hildred began to become keenly conscious of her status. Esther was a capable woman, she had had a wide experience, she was no mere wife to Edmund; and Hildred observed with pain and despair that my conversations with Esther were on a quite different level than the ones I had with her. She would remark occasionally, in a petulant way--"Why don't you talk to me the way you talk to her?"--and what answer could I make but the inevitable one that she didn't inspire that sort of conversation. "I know," she would say, "you think like they do that I'm just a silly child." And if I said "no, I don't think that at all...I know you're a woman, and you're a bigger and finer woman than Esther" she would say that I didn't mean it, that I was trying to apologize for my behavior. And that would inevitably be followed by a long discourse on how other men regarded her, the respect they paid her intelligence. "But don't you see that they're only flattering you?" I would answer, because it annoyed me when she tried to defend herself unwarrantably. "I can't lie to you about your intelligence," I would say. "You are ignorant about a lot of things, and worse than that," I would add, "you are not even aware of your ignorance, or else you won't admit it to yourself. Instead of bickering with me you ought to listen to me...you ought to listen to Esther too, she could help you a great deal." But she would not listen to me or Esther--she would go her own way and she would compel us to

respect her.

She went her own way.... She came home one day and announced triumphantly that she had secured the role of understudy for the leading part in a famous play. Esther received the news with a smile--it was impossible for her to believe that Hildred could even memorize her lines, much less act the part of the great character ~~that had been~~ whose role had been given her. And I thought to myself that the man who had selected her must either have been an idiot or another dolt who had fallen in love with her at first sight. I was both amazed and pleased, deeply pleased because it had grown painful to see her wasting her time at the dance hall.

The morning I commenced to write this entr'acte of events I cut my finger; I don't know whether I cut my finger in order to slow up and write in this easy, unilateral fashion or whether I was slowed up because I was minus a finger. At any rate, I am bringing this summary of events to an abrupt halt; I am thoroughly dissatisfied with it, as method, as revelation, in every way imaginable. This is not my style; my style is to turn over sidewise and retrace my course--I am born under the sign of the great crab, I swing backwards and forwards, and there is always the heavy weight of Saturn to remind me of the murk through which my star must roll.

It was after I had finished the last page that I commenced to relate a dream of the night before, and when I had related the dream I began to pour out in a quite unconscious manner the contents of my thoughts, in order to allocate the elements of this strange dream. After writing ten pages I stopped; I stopped with the realization that I could go on writing indefinitely about the events of one day, with the further realization that I was writing more honestly and excitingly in this manner than I have been in these preceding pages. I stopped because I had written the phrase "compromised again"--that is what I have been doing in these last pages...compromising. I never had any intention, when I set out to write this book, to make concessions to my readers; and here for twenty pages or more I have been stringing out a tale, in unilateral fashion, as I said, because I felt a need to introduce a measure of intelligibility to my narrative.

"I give this picture because I want to explain it again to myself." Those were the words I used. A lie. I gave this picture because it was easier for me to write this way, because I grew weak and began to think about my readers, and not about my subject, about me.

When I left the house to air my brain last night I was elated. For the first fifteen minutes it was a struggle ~~to~~ not to return; everything that I had been withholding in these last twenty pages or so was crowding into my head, and with such furious insistence that I was like a man possessed. I knew that walking up this side of the street my thoughts would in no way correspond to those on the other side of the street--on my way home. I knew that it was my mission, if I have any mission at all, not to say things as they had been said before, that the more chaotic my book became the more truly it represented me, and not that alone, but that this chaos was the finest symbol of the plight in which the artist finds himself to-day. I was disgusted with myself for having lied so feebly, for telling truths that were not truths but little pieces of fact, incidents divorced from their texture, recollections without any of the emotion that accompanied them. I realized that these memories were unworthy of me, that they bore no resemblance to the memories which Proust summoned and which are the only right memories because they were not summoned but burst upon the mind in full raiment as the result of accident.

It is necessary to understand that the inner events of the last few days were turbulent. For forty-eight hours I

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had been immersed in a book on American literature. Certain things I read shocked me deeply. Above all, I made the discovery that of all our writers the one I esteemed most was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Whitman, who had heretofore been my chief idol, was relegated to second place. But as I made this inward decision I was also formulating a letter to the author of this volume (Ludwig Lewisohn) attacking him bitterly for his inadequate handling of Whitman and attacking him still more bitterly for having done so well by Emerson. The forty-eight hours prior to the dream I spent in a frenzy of bitterness. The object of my bitterness was Mr. Lewisohn. Because I disagreed with him? On the contrary--because I was so heartily in accord with him. They were complex, my feelings about Mr. Lewisohn--I am not sure that I can even state them clearly. I admired the way he had presented his material and in the main I agreed with his judgments, his tastes; but the more I found myself in agreement with him the more I felt it imperative to attack him, to ~~xx~~ wipe him out. It incensed me, for one thing, that he had left his job standing in that cold and rather perfect light, that he should have closed, as it were, all the avenues leading to his thesis; I had the feeling that the wrong man had said the right thing, that it was his intelligence which had guided him and not his instincts. I was annoyed that a Jew had to make this sweeping and almost final attack upon our sickness--Puritanism. I almost wept to think that nowhere before had I read such a high and sound appreciation of Emerson, and here at last I found some hope: that where this Jew had left off an American would some day step in and fill the breach, because it required an American,

an Anglo-Saxon Gentile, if you will, to complete the picture. But that none had yet appeared, that the Jew with his keen intelligence, his ferret-like nose, should have been the first, that rankled in me. And the truth of Mr. Lewisohn's words could not be denied--what has been lacking all along is a soul ...there have been no great souls in America, no complete beings, no enthusiasm or courage below the neck. Think of it--our two greatest literary figures, ~~Emerson~~ Emerson and Whitman, the one a eunuch, the other a homo! What a commentary upon the American life! And these men said things that were inconceivable--the most daring, the most revolutionary, the most shocking things! And scarcely any of that has seeped through, penetrated our lives.

"These novels will give way, by and by, to diaries or autobiographies--captivating books, if only a man knew how to choose among what he calls his experiences that which is really his experience, and how to record truth truly." These are Emerson's words. "Life", said Emerson, "consists in what a man is thinking all day."

Can you see why I pause and turn over on my side? How is a man to go on writing in the manner of these last twenty pages when he is confronted by a truth like this? I believe in Emerson's words implicitly; I believe that if we artists and writers grasped this truth we would upset the whole American continent, we would bury everything but a few volumes of the past and together with all that sterile literature and art which was created by the crippled and paralyzed we would destroy our great men, our institutions, our machinery of government,

our educational institutions, etc. I believe that if the torch which was held by those half-men--Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman--is ever rekindled it will put to flame the whole American tradition.....

I have not yet crossed to the other side of the street; I am still walking up the Avenue de Clichy searching for a cafe which will permit me to continue my thoughts uninterruptedly. The volume of Mr. Lewisochn's which I have in my hand I know in advance I shall not open to-night. I am too full. I do not need Mr. Lewisochn, nor Emerson, nor Whitman. I have something more to say than any of these. I am the man that America has been waiting for, a whole man, who is going to say things that cannot be ignored, cannot be accepted tranquilly, cannot be apprehended by the intellect alone, cannot ever be interpreted by a Jew because a Jew is never a whole man and it is my mission to appeal to whole men and to be understood by them. It is my purpose to sow discord and strife and rancor so that by these differences, by the tremendous resistance that is set up, men may develop their powers, sharpen their acumen, justify their choice. It is my aim to take this arid plateau of good health and by setting loose the germs of disease, of hatred, of conflict, to ravage the land, to cause such distress and suffering that the most colossal war will seem tame by comparison. It is war that I would create..... but I am getting to the other side of the street too soon.

I have found a quiet, unobstrusive spot just across the street from the Gaumont-Palace. I have found another reason for the feebleness of the preceding pages; it comes to me now

as I recall the antecedent images of my dream. I wrote it down myself-- "a fear that when I returned to the house she would be sitting there waiting for me, perhaps tearing my manuscript to pieces". Yes, for the last two weeks there has been fear in my soul, though I did not acknowledge it to myself. "I am joining you soon" she cabled the other day. And for the last two weeks I have scarcely thought about her coming so thoroughly did I succeed in dismissing the idea from my mind. I have been telling myself that she will not come yet, she cannot come yet, but deep down I know that she is coming and there is a great dread in this knowledge. And so, though I was not in the least aware of it, I was hurrying on with my book, gallivanting through these pages so that I would have a good nucleus to refer to after the smoke of the battle lifts, for when she comes it will be a battle, the decisive battle of this seven years' war. Looking back upon my activities of the past few months I see in them only too clearly a preparation for the great conflict; I see myself as a nation that has been invaded and ravaged again and again, but which with each defeat has gathered up strength, so that when the final test approaches the people find themselves calm and collected, awaiting the dreaded invader with a sure strength, prepared this time not to defend themselves but to attack and to slay. And what is born of this conflict will flower everlastingly. The other struggles bore their fruits; the last invasion gave birth to the "Tropic of Cancer" which, in a way, was like a new Bill of Rights, but this invasion will give birth to a cathedral, the foundations of which ~~inam~~ ~~already~~ are now being laid in this "Tropic of Capricorn".

as with

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And ~~like~~ those great cathedrals which arose in the first free communes it is possible that the work may go on for centuries, that there may be alterations in the original conception laid down by those great architects; there may be new truths, new impulses, brought by the invader which will be utilized in the course of the cathedral's erection. It may be necessary to invite the collaboration of other minds; it may be necessary to die here on the foundations and entrust the work to the generations succeeding. But here in the foundations, where I am digging away, lies the secret, the hope for the future. Around this a village will assemble and later a great city, and the day will also come, and sad it is to contemplate, when the cathedral no longer dominates its environment, but is stuck away like a forgotten relic amid loftier and uglier buildings, buildings that have less meaning but more usefulness for their petty day.

These thoughts are going along and are directly provoked by a strange incident, an event taking place right under my nose on the terrasse of the cafe. It is one of the most unusual incidents I have witnessed since I am here in Paris and I am one who is going about with eyes wide open. A little whore has passed by several times and given me the eye; I haven't the slightest inclination to talk to a whore now, so absorbed am I in my thoughts, and yet I cannot but observe that she is attractive, that there is something very delicate about her and fragrant. And now she is returning, walking up to this very terrasse with a stout, well-dressed gentleman and a clochard. The three of them take a seat directly in front of me. The stout gentleman puts his arms about the girl in a solicitous,

fatherly way, and bending forward with the same solicitude, perhaps a little more unctiously but doing his best to repress his obvious enjoyment, asks the clochard what would he like best to have. The face and the body of the clochard causes me intense suffering--the way he sits on the edge of the chair, his thin legs, the rigidity of his pose, the sombre attention he pays his benefactor, the deep lines of his face carved as in stone, the bleak look in his eyes which not even salvation will soften, his uneasiness, furtiveness, sitting there on the very edge of the terrasse with a well-dressed gentleman and a poule, another unfortunate like himself but so infinitely better off than himself. The incongruousness of it, which he registers so eloquently in all his gestures, is quickly perceived by the passers-by, and the way they stop and stare, as only French people can, tortures me. I am becoming a little mad watching this trio--it is a situation with such tremendous possibilities, so un-French, so typical of a Dostoevski theme. I mean not only in the incongruity of it but in the quiet, pathetically humorous, grotesque way it opens. I can hear Dostoevski's words describing this setting, this chance encounter, ~~see~~ hear it rolling on page after page with minute observation, with reflections, with all the undertones of the tragic misery of life now touched lightly and humorously and now swelling like a full organ note until the heart bursts and there is nothing left of the scene or the characters, nothing but a blinding, shattering light as if the seeds that were scattered by this fecundation contained the radiant light of the stars.

But what I would not give, at this moment, to know the manner in which these three came together; that I will never know this seems intolerable to me. This is so important to me --this would shed a great light upon all that is happening before my eyes. But I shan't know--not unless I go over and question the stout gentleman--and that will destroy all that is going on now. I am forced to sit here and watch, to speculate, to go crazy thinking about it. To know, to know! I am thinking of half a dozen things at once. I am even beginning to smile as I watch the stout gentleman's behavior-- this picture of misery and humiliation is entertaining me. But at the same time I want to know--I want to know everything--I want everybody to know everything, everything that is to be known, so that at this point where knowledge comes to an end, where science confesses its helplessness, at this point I may begin--not the psychologist, not the realist, but the poet who bursts with knowledge in order to flame like a rocket in the great heart of mystery. Oh, the disgust that wells up in me as I see these French faces taking in the scene, the fever that their callousness creates, the hatred I have for the garcon who remains so impervious and aloof to this spectacle, who when asked for his little contribution of sympathy and understanding merely shrugs his shoulders and throws that blank, helpless, ox-like stare into his eyes--"his misery, your misery, I am safe for the time being, my job is to serve you, I am not paid to be sentimental, I am not expected to be charitable, I have a wife and child, I am looking after them, leave me alone, that is all I ask, let me hug my brief, quiet contentment."

The wives and children standing around, who look on without morbidity, squirrels looking on, waiting for a crumb to drop, dirty, niggardly souls, people who make the world go round which is why it wobbles so, people too proud to beg because they do not know how to give, people who parade for old revolutions-- I wish the ground would open up and swallow you! I would rather have only this clochard, this little whore, this sentimental idiot of a stout gentleman with which to start afresh. Everything that you are supporting is a nightmare to me; I don't wonder that you hug it so tightly...what would you do if to-morrow you were made free? I feel an overwhelming pity for you--I know it is not entirely your fault--but what can we do with you, how can we give you organs to sense your misery, your servility, your insuperable supineness? Teach you to know yourselves? What is there to know? The reason I can feel about this trivial incident is because I have shot roots down into my soul and there is no end to my roots and no bottom to touch; it is only the image of an image, the symbol of a symbol, but it is all there is of reality and the proof is that it nourishes me, the proof is that I grow, expand, that I do not live on a plateau and move in unilateral fashion but that I live simultaneously in all directions, with every part of me, and that to understand the least thing I must understand all. I must become so drenched in the complexity of the elements, they must all become so essential, so vital to me, that nothing which you have parcelled out and given name to can satisfy me; your great truths are not lies, they are admissions of your impotency merely.

Just as I am about to continue (there was a break of twenty-four hours in which I got drunk to relieve the insupportable tension) a letter arrives; the letter refers to my dream, to the events preceding the dream, the inner disturbances which caused me to unload my unconscious. And when I finish the letter I give a great shout and stretch myself and look at the sky without a shred of cloud in it. "Sapristi!" I yell, without any more reason for that word than Walt had when he made his ridiculous yawps in French and Italian. But I can understand why Walt let offsteam that way, why he chose to make an ass of himself occasionally; I can understand why Melville had his long interludes in which he foamed at the mouth and for a critic to take these explosions and deplore them (to harp perpetually on the "rounded work" which permits of a complete catharsis) is a lack of sensitivity, an arrant tampering with all that is divine in the artist. The letter puts me back again on that plane of exultation which I had forty-eight hours ago when I sat on the terrasse of the cafe, when I walked home on the other side of the street saying over and over again, like a maniac, "my eyes are tired of all this, my eyes are tired, my eyes are tired", and with that phrase repeating itself obsessively I felt that I had arrived at the last frontier of human pain and suffering and pity. A strange note I made in my note-book, standing in the crowded subway, writing illegibly, the elbows around me pushing my arm so that I wrote like one of those automatic writers who is handed a slate, who writes without bidding and reels when he reads what he has written. Apropos of that walk home, those final groans, those curses

I could no longer put into words--nothing left me but an incoherent babbling, a man in a trench, mortally wounded, lying there in a pool of blood and everything that man had taught him, the highest wisdom, the most ineffable grace, all reduced to ashes, burned to an obsessive animal cry repeated a thousand thousand times--"my God, my God, my God, my God, my God!!"--his my God greater, deeper, wiser, more inscrutable than all the poems ever written and all the poems and paintings and music coming into the end to that piercing scream of agony, hanging there on something between a curse and a prayer, knocking with the last beat of the heart against the forever impenetrable veil of mystery.

This interlude of raving madness, set off by the veriest trifle, I feel justified in inserting with all its contradictions, its wisdom and stupidity, its meanness and glory; this interlude is the pure passion of deliverance, and only this is valuable to the artist and nothing more; and what is valuable to me is valuable to the world because the world is contained in me and what expresses itself through my words, or stands at the threshold of expression, or is distorted in its expression, is the manna which sustains you, that permits you to go mad without losing your sanity because I am going mad for you--it is I who have my hand on the throttle and if I ditch the train it is only to save you because I am the one who sees the fate that is ahead of you and I can only choose between fates, between a bad or a worse one--there is no good fate..fate is terrible, ineluctable..fate is the word for destiny and the destiny of all is to be broken on the wheel of life.

My note: "the bull's dying thoughts..man the conqueror..nobility of that agony...his body still strong...all the blood spilled matters little....the spiritual death, the defeat! If that bull were saved, if those last thoughts could be transferred in sex, what kind of issue would spring from those loins?" It seemed tremendously important to me to make this note; everything I had to say was saturated with the emotion clinging to this image; I do not say now that I am incapable of expanding this thought k--I prefer not to...I prefer to leave it in its sacred fragmentary character. I say this because the fever was so high that to write about the subject with even one degree less fever is to destroy utterly the value of it.

In the corridor, as I was changing trains, I made a further note: I know these interludes mar a work but there is no place elsewhere to tell them...the process is fine for perceiving how the artist adapts his material and circumstances...I am showing you the scaffold as I erect my edifice." And as I walked along jotting down these fragments I was exasperated by the slow, stolid walk so characteristic of the French. Yes, it is a healthy, normal pace, and I have enjoyed this pace after living in New York, but there should be more nervousness, more excitement, more enthusiasm. In that walk I felt the sturdy, resisting qualities of the French--the whole story of her great history which is nothing more than the story of a great people defending its land, its homes against countless invasions, the story of a great tradition built upon blood and suffering, the story of art whose roots lie in massacre. But now I feel in this walk that France is only making herself more and more impregnable--she does not

impregnate any more! And that is a great pity. The strong, healthy race which has bloomed in this terrorized soil, this race has need to express itself, and it is not expressing itself by erecting walls; it has taken unto itself the great lie of civilization and all these fine bulwarks, while protecting the past, permit no egress into the hazardous roads of the future.

But what is the impulse goading me to root myself here in these unconscious ravings and maunderings? Despair! Despair in the realization that the greatest that is written bears no equivalent to the inner reality...a well-known despair over which it is said the true artist triumphs through his work, but this is a lie. The only triumph the artist experiences is the mild and second-rate one of "catharsis"; but the artist does not want merely to be relieved of his pangs, the artist wants the impossible; it is on this insane wish that he breaks himself. And what is born of his struggle may liberate others, may give them their catharsis, but never himself. His finished work, despite all the clues and threads of the pompous psychologist, remains a hideous distortion of his reality; the effort to interpret that reality, by readers and critics and physicians, is the most vain and deceptive attempt; at bottom it represents the secret wish of the "others" to annihilate him, because the understanding is the one destructive weapon left the "others" to combat him. The mission of the artist is not to reconcile man with the universe but to put him at war with it, to make man realize his separateness, his unique loneliness. There is no greater bosh than those vain efforts to hoist the serene spirits into the limelight and say "there is the divine artist, the all-encompassing mind, the lofty spirit, the god in man, etc.!"

It pains me therefore beyond words when I see a man of letters, himself an artist, trying to make us understand the other artists of his country by reading their works like a physician. I come back to that cafe in which I was sitting, to the moment when the kind-hearted stout gentleman was fingering his wallet, riffling the bills, in order a moment later to bend over magnanimously and thrust something in the hands of the clochard. Is it possible that I could ever--that any man-- could ever render the poignancy of that moment, as I experienced it? I limit myself to a few bare emotions, the most I can put in words, but how inadequate this is. There was the clochard, holding the sandwich in his trembling fingers; his face was averted, through shame, through scrupulousness, through greed or fear (??). The stout gentleman was stretching that moment to infinity, extracting from it the last ounce of self-satisfaction; the whore beside him was looking at the wallet with the sane, predatory eyes of a whore. One could feel the ^{current} ~~shrouds~~ as it ran the circle of these three divided souls--a terrible, primitive drama here, and none of them conscious of it, except superficially. The world without drawn into it, eyes pop-eyed, jaws hanging open like lanterns, tongues protruding, admiration, hatred, pity, scorn expressed in the passing faces, in those who clung to the spot, rooted by the most shameless curiosity, the most blatant indifference for everything except the spectacle, a free spectacle, which made it even more savoury, more appetizing. And my heart beating like thunder--with what?--with the hope that this stout gentleman would do the impossible. The impossible? Yes! That he would unroll those bills, and commencing with a ten franc note, fling them out one after the other, tens, fifties,

hundreds, until people became mad and would pounce on him, smash the table, kill him to extract every last sou from his pockets. I could not bring myself to stop--to imagine where he would leave off. At a thousand, at five thousand? Why? Could there be a price on what he was receiving now? Everything about this man proclaimed the fact that it was his highest moment--the biggest, finest, bravest thing he had ever done in his life! No doubt about it. It was in the air, it communicated itself to the dullest souls; it drove me frantic. "I am giving," he was saying to the world, "I am giving all I possess to this man because he has made me happy!" He protracted the moment, as I said, to an eternity, because it was a moment that he would never again be able to recapture. He knew it. And being an ordinary man, a dull, prosaic, kind-hearted individual, he did not know what to do with the moment except to stretch it; it would not fertilize in him... it would pass simply. Terrible, terrible moment, even for a clod! The very gates of heaven opening up for him--for a moment only. The whole story of human hopes and aspirations, of despair and frustration, in that moment.

After he had fingered all the greasy bills, after he had looked out of every corner of his eyes and caught the image of himself with a thousand haloes circling above his head, after he had bathed in the panting breath of the whore who had already crucified and sanctified him, he bent forward and put a five franc note in the man's hand. At that moment it seemed to me that the whole world went to smash, that it was blown to smithereens, and that no god, no accident, could ever assemble again the pieces, the atoms, the trees, the beings, that made this world.

"Now",--I said to myself, "in this generous gesture you French are showing me the colossal nature of your ~~fx~~ defects." In this moment I crucified the French for the sins of the world. Not for nothing have we thought you miserly, cautious, secretive, aloof. No, all Frenchmen are not this way, but as a nation, as a people, you have identified yourselves through the ages as a mean people, as poor in spirit, as cowardly and wanting in grace and generosity. No one would make this accusation against a Russian or a German. This is a wholesale accusation, but it is a just one--the proof is there before me, not in this one incident, but in thousands of incidents which I have brushed from my mind, which I have refused to take too deeply, which my understanding would not accept. But to-night I take it as deep truth--before my eyes there is the symbol of your defect-- I cannot deny it longer. Now I will pour out my hatred, my profound disgust for you, my pity for you, to counteract, to balance the admiration, the praise, the love I have given you. Now I will denounce your rounded works, your tradition in which you sit comfortably furred like a polar bear, your cool reason which permits you too look on and explain, to be touched without being moved, to guard your individuality, your privacy because the least breath of fresh air would destroy it; not even your courage can I defend now because it is the courage of the coward, the coward's courage that is greater than bravery, because it is based on fear; and your great septic irony leaves me, as it must leave all warm, human individuals, cold; it is faith you need and not irony, courage not fear, danger not security; your virtues stink....you are splendid only in your defect! Your defect is the epitome of man's defect and it has blossomed in you to that monstrous degree, that to-night in this symbol of your mean generosity I feel that you have

blasted all our hopes. I know how extravagant my words are, I know that the day may come when I will have to eat these words, but I will never retract them--they are uttered in truth and conviction--it is for you to wipe them out! "If only a man knew how to choose among what he calls his experiences that which is really his experience, and how to record truth truly!" This is my experience, my truth. It is not the rounded expression, the complete catharsis of the classic man; but I tell you these classic figures are dead for me, they do not speak to me, they are incapable of making themselves heard. Goethe, ~~the~~ Shakespeare, Dante, Homer--and your great Montaigne-- why don't they compel me to listen? It is their fault, not mine. Why are they so dead, so powerless, so tongue-tied? Why don't they answer me? I am accusing them! I know there are some among you who are saying what I say now, and perhaps better, but I must say it again, in my own language, as an American.

Nor will I cease foaming at the mouth even here. Here I could stay and ejaculate for the rest of my life. Here like a sadist I could stay forever in the dream of ripping open the womb.... "the man who rapes with a corn-cob!". The sadistic fury of ripping away without hope of ever finding satisfaction, the instinct perverted, turned in on itself, and rending one-- not rending the womb, not even ejaculating, but ripping, ripping ceaselessly for the sheer joy of ripping. When the stout gentleman bent over and asked the clochard if he still had the five francs and the poor devil pulled it out of his pocket and exhibited it, oh the ripping that went on in me. All that science will discover depends on the instruments employed--knowledge is the history of the extension of our senses. Futile quest. The more subtle and powerful, the greater and more com-

plicated the instruments, the bigger eyes grandma that you have will only be the better to see with, but it is not sight alone that you need, nor touch, nor smell, nor hearing. When all the data is classified, arranged, schematized, when you bring to bear upon it the most powerful weapons at your command, your task has only begun, or rather it is finished. It is not the interpretation that is wanting, but the possession. When one can take even the smallest fact and possess it one has already made infinite strides beyond the boundaries of science. And how is one to possess a fact? Like one possesses God, like one possesses a woman in the frenzy of orgasm; one must go at it like the sacred bull, skidding on all fours, horns lowered, snorting fire; one must rip and rip and rip, for the sheer joy of it. The data of experience is cold and lifeless, the telling of it is lying and distortion, the classifying of it is sheer stupidity, the interpreting ~~mimic~~ is humbug; we are neither gods, ~~xxx~~ poets, scientists or psychologists, we are only men, unique, isolated, lonely, hungry. We do not marry woman when we fuck her, we do not get god when we pray, we do not unveil mystery when we probe, we do not get release when we create. We are doomed, and that is what is borne in on the bull when he makes his last charge; that is why the bull-ring is a mighty symbol, why people who kill bulls have the heroic strain, why the blood and sand of the arena is more sacred than all the altars men have erected to the divinity. One hopes that the matador will triumph but one wishes that the bull should not be defeated. The ritual has been degraded to a game, a sport, only in the measure that man has lost his high fervor, that he has turned his face away from ~~his~~ his doom; the echo of his fear is heard only in his soul,

and the more hollow his soul becomes the louder it ~~knacks~~ echoes.

It was a profound despair, I said, which ~~inspired~~ that trivial incident at the cafe inspired in me, a despair yes, but also exultation....exaltation. That I was determined to arrest my narrative and root myself for a space in this welter of emotion was due to a realization of two things, first that it was only in such a state of fever that a man like myself expresses himself truly, and secondly that for ten or fifteen years of my life I had repressed these moments when they came to me; I mean by this latter that before I started seriously to write I had these visitations often, but I ~~it~~ did not know what to do about it...I did not even know that I was an artist, and later when I began to set my thoughts on paper, instead of embracing these moments and utilizing them, I crushed them because they interfered with what I had in hand. I mean to say that from the age of nineteen or twenty I have the vivid recollection of walking the streets and writing passionately in my head; I carried on conversations with myself and with others, I described things as I went along, I went back and corrected my sentences, improved them, expanded them. I remember that for a period of a year or more, at this age, I would walk from Delancey Street and the Bowery to Fifth Avenue and 31st Street, my route to my father's shop, writing at top speed. And when I arrived at the shop, which was like a morgue, I would become a prey to the most terrible depression, to a melancholy verging on suicide. I had little contact with people of any value to me. In desperation I would often take my book (usually some

work on philosophy or criticism)...I began reading novels much later) and sitting beside the bench in the bushelman's room I would read to the workmen, humble, ignorant men who scarcely spoke English. When I think of how I read to these men from Bergson and Nietzsche, reading aloud the most baffling passages in order that by interpreting it to them I might better understand the work myself, I ~~think~~ look upon those scenes as among the most touching, in their desperate, frustrate quality, of any I have known in my life. When I think of the letters I wrote from my father's office to my friends, none of whom understood me or shared my feelings, I regard myself as a pitiful, blind wretch. All my life I have been writing letters to people, thousands of letters concerning my spiritual strivings. There is a deep meaning to this and I have been aware of it only in the last few years. But even when I became aware of my inner needs I still did not realize the direction I should take. The more I wrote "for others" the less I revealed of myself, the more urgent it became to pour myself out in letters and it was only in my letters that I wrote what might be called literature. The rest was trash, worse than trash, because it was false, cold, studied, calculated. And the more I tried "to make the grade" the more exasperated I became, the more inhibited, paralyzed, stuttering, until at last I could not write at all and I fled from my work and considered myself a failure. But even then I had fits and starts, something irrepressible welled up in me and urged me to begin anew and so I would write about being a failure, ridicule myself, expose myself shamelessly and more coldly and cruelly than could my worst enemy.

This scene at the cafe becomes a tremendous document. The culminating point in a series of revelations and illuminations, which I am about to relate, it marks the high-water mark of the great tides which have swept me on to higher and higher levels, and as that flood-tide recedes I feel myself ebbing away with all the drift and loam of the past, plus a new drift and loam which has been nourishing me of late. At each new level ~~known~~ ~~from~~ registered by these tidal waves there comes a deeper consciousness of what I am, what I represent. In such a moment, for instance, it would make little difference if this book that I am carrying around inside me were destroyed--and how much it means to write this book only I can know. To write a book is to express and communicate one's value, but to know, to feel that blinding illumination, transcends creation.

Back of the cafe scene, back of the dream, back of the train ride and all the glowing red windows, back of Lewisohn's book and my introduction to Keyserling, back of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Mary Baker Eddy and Mark Twain and that pronounced and aggressive homosexual, Walt Whitman, back of the sign of the crab, back of "L'Enfer" and of "Salavin", back of the colossal excrescences of Faure, back of Mlle Claude and little Germaine who when she "showed me her pussy" cured me of so many things, back of the psychologist and his death instincts.... back, back, back is me, the man with an insatiable hunger, the man who wants to know who and what he is. At twenty-one, when as they say, one comes to manhood, I was sitting on a bench in Union Square Park, so desperate and frustrated, so ignorant of my direction, so helpless that even suicide seemed futile. I ~~had to~~

had to know what I was destined for. Taking the last few dollars I had in my pocket I walked into the office of a phrenologist and asked her to read my head. She told me that I would make either a great architect or a corporation lawyer. I was dissatisfied-- I knew that I didn't want to be either of those things. I was in love--my first love-- and I had been cruelly disappointed, or rather, I had deliberately created my own disappointment; not thinking myself good enough for the woman I loved I so jeopardized my chances that only a miracle could save me. Had I had the least ounce of faith, of self-confidence, the miracle could have been achieved, but I had none. I had already complicated my life by taking up with a woman I didn't love; for three or four years I did nothing but repeat to myself day in and day out "you must run away from her", and the oftener I repeated this the closer I stuck to her. I made it impossible for myself to take the woman I loved; I exulted in my misfortune because it seemed to me that a zero such as I was deserved no better fate.

And about this time when I sat on park benches and debated whether to kill myself or not I made the acquaintance of Challa-spiritual combe. That is the first important ~~spiritual~~ date in my life. There have been four or five since then and they all bear the same character--they are concerned with my being, either with the preservation of my being or the expansion of my being. They represent the only times in my life when I have had anything like an adequate realization of what I am. They represent the peaks and the dips and that is the only living I am aware of--the rest is a nightmare of biology.

Challacombe was like an unfathomable well; he had read perhaps no more than half a dozen books in his life, but no man I have ever met had more wisdom than he. ~~My~~ Before meeting him I had led a vegetable existence; he changed the whole course of my life. Had it not been for Challacombe I might have become a great architect or a corporation lawyer, but the very fact of his existence made that impossible. Like myself, he was a man destined to suffer the most harrowing misfortunes; like myself, he welcomed his misfortunes, knowing that they would nourish him; like myself, he was obsessed by women and through her he learned his greatest lessons; like myself, he had no more than freed ~~of~~ himself of one experience than he was enmeshed in another; like myself, the worst catastrophes which overtook him were born of his goodness. What the man did for me was to restore the sense of life's mystery; by doing that he made me a whole man. All my efforts since, by which I mean the sum of my experience, has ^{tendency} been to reintegrate myself. I have the ~~quality~~ ^{even}, more exaggerated than is normal in this age, to disintegrate; the violence of my nature is the expression of this centripetal force. To it are due the creation of my worlds and these worlds which have burned out, these dead planets, by the force of their attraction hold me to my orbit. The pull of them engenders in me the resistance which keeps me from falling apart.

What I mean to say about Challacombe is that through him the most fecundating experiences came about: the knowledge of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, the exploration of America, the meeting with Benjamin Fay Mills, the evangelist, the meeting with Emma Goldman which enriched my life immeasurably, and above all, the realization of the distinction between wisdom and knowledge. Challacombe was the sort of fellow who, after a lapse of ten years, would begin the conversation at the point where it had been dropped; all that had intervened was only by way of corroborating his central theme, the core of him, which is to say, his philosophy, his attitude toward life. A sage at twenty-eight or thirty, he remained one; experience did not intrigue him, it merely illumined his wisdom. Such a man is rare to find in America; such a man was above friendship and love. And this man is my double.

Twenty years ago, when I first met Challacombe, I had a deeper understanding of life than at any time until recently. But, as if to test my wisdom, I was subjected to the most cruel ~~tests~~ ordeals; as an intellectual and physical being I went through a plethora of experiences; the light that had been kindled in me at twenty-one dwindled and dwindled until the flame was almost extinguished. I might say that I was never alone with myself; the demon in me seemed to drive me into the world, to divide myself, to share myself with others, to listen to others, guide them, comfort them, incite them to good or bad; a perfect froth of activity which prevented me from coming to grips with myself. If I did extraordinary things, be they good or bad, I took no credit for them: I was scarcely conscious even of doing them. I attached no importance to myself, therefore

my actions were neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy. I was a moral polyp, I was indifferent, I was untouched, I knew no development. I adjusted myself to the environment in which I happened to find myself; I believed in nothing, I was a nihilist. It was this attitude which aroused in my friend Edmund, the musician with whom we were living, a profound hostility. He was unable to provoke in me a resistance; he found me dangerous. Others have had the same experience. They have been able to lead me on and on, to the absurd, to the mad, to the vicious, but nothing happened to me. Or else, unobserved by them, I eventually retreated to my central position, quietly, almost like a thief, and they were left high and dry, reeling on the brink of disaster. They had the uncomfortable feeling of being immoral; I had no moral sense. I had scarcely any feelings; in crucial moments, whether of personal danger or of moral disaster, I was practically anaesthetic. I was like some impossible vegetable which is immune to experience. All climates agreed with me; no matter in what soil I found myself I shot down my roots; and if I were transplanted I flourished anew.

But soon after I met Hildred my moral sense began to revive. In her I saw the monster that I was becoming. I detested her apathy, I demanded that there be choice, direction, distinction, I began to establish values.

For the first time in my life I found a woman who wanted to make sacrifices for me, who demanded only one thing of me--that I do what I wanted. You would imagine this an ideal state, and so it was for a while. But it wasn't long before I discovered the worm in the apple. In order to do what I wanted I was

obliged to shut my eyes to what was going on about me. Soon after we were married, for example, Hildred decided that we were to move into better quarters. A modest little place was not sufficient for her--she wanted something above the ordinary because "it was important for me". It was useless for me to say that I didn't require such a home--she knew better than I what was necessary. So we moved into a palatial apartment, far beyond our means, a place which was supposed to give me inspiration. But instead of inspiring me I was depressed by it. As long as we were both working it was just possible to make ends meet, but we were hardly there a few months when I gave up my position; I was not obliged to give it up but I hadn't the courage any longer to lie about my tardiness and my frequent absence from the office. And Hildred--Hildred rejoiced. Now I could devote myself entirely to my writing. But how were we to make ends meet? Oh, that I was not to think about--that was her affair. And soon after I quit my job she gave up hers; again there was no need to sacrifice her position-- she deliberately picked a quarrel with the director of the theatre. There we were--free to do as we chose!

I was terrified. It was not ^{only} that we had to look after ourselves, and that was a big enough problem, but there was the alimony which I had to pay and Hildred's mother to support. How was it to be done? I hadn't the faintest idea. Frantically I dropped my writing and began to look for another job; and now an ironic thing occurred--I could not find another job! I who had hired people by the thousands, I who had so many connections in the business world, strangely I found myself being rejected everywhere. Was it that I didn't try hard enough, or was I marked? Inwardly I felt that I was a failure; it is true I didn't try hard enough, because when I went to make

application I knew in advance that I would not succeed. And upon returning to the house I would find Hildred in a state of despair--not because I hadn't found a position but for fear that I might! She would plead with me to abandon the idea, to let her manage things; if I said "well, look at the mess we're in...is this how you manage things?" she would look at me reproachfully and say: "I have no heart to do anything when you show no confidence in me". And then she would get down on her knees and beg me to stay home and write--and of course I would capitulate to her because I really wanted to stay home...and write. I stayed home, but I didn't write. I cursed myself for an imbecile, a slacker, a pimp, a waster, a failure, a dreamer, everything imaginable--but it didn't help me to write. But Hildred never made the slightest reproach; she was content that I remained home. She made excuses for me, she pampered me still more; I was overwhelmed. Day after day she made her appointments, day after day she came home with her pockets full of jack; on Saturdays she would hand me the money for the alimony, and as if that were not enough she would throw in a gift for the child, or give me something extra ~~in~~ so that I might take Blanche to the theatre. Everything I needed she bought me; I scarcely dared to open my mouth for fear that she would discover that I needed something else. It was inhuman--I couldn't fathom it. Not a thing did she demand of me except that I do what I want, and now that I had every opportunity I couldn't do what I wanted. I was paralyzed. It seemed to me that if I wrote another Bible it would not compensate for all that she was doing for me. She was stifling me with her generosity; her sacrifices were killing me. Instead of dreaming about what I should write I thought only of how to liberate her. But I never dared to breathe that; if I did I would

destroy her, deprive ~~me~~ her of all reason for existence. She was never more happy, Hildred, than then when there were so many claims on her; she was radiant with joy and her resources seemed unlimited. What did it matter to her that I was a failure? She was immolating herself for ~~my~~ idea; for her there was no feeling of sacrifice, only of power, of liberation, of creation. Did she not say sometimes that she wished I were an invalid so that she could prove to me how much she loved me? To make me entirely helpless, that was her real wish. When she urged me to do only what I wanted did she know perhaps that I was incapable of doing anything? At bottom wasn't she really antagonistic to my writing? There were times, I remember, when I did come out of the slough, when I went to work with a vengeance. And what would happen then? Was she pleased? Ostensibly yes; she would pick up my manuscript and gloat over it. But if I persisted in my work, if I failed to take notice of her as much as usual, if I expressed a desire to be left alone, if I fell into a reverie and had nothing to say, if I went for a walk in order to mull over my ideas, ah then what scenes would follow! I didn't love her any more, I was a fanatic, I was selfish, I put my work above her, etc. etc. And in order to pacify her I would drop my work and soon I would be lying on the bed, and then when I thought everything had been cleared up I would spring out of bed and tackle my work again--and that infuriated her more than anything. To think that I could leave her lying there on the bed, like a job that had been finished, to think that I could put her completely out of mind, so quickly and so easily, to think that there was something more attractive, more compelling, more urgent than my need for her--that she could not tolerate. And when everything was ruined, when I had exhausted myself through bickering with her or pacifying her, when I lay on the bed exhausted and helpless, and not

only incapable, but saddened and dispirited, then she would shower me with her affection and, forgetting the destruction that she had wrought, literally drag me to the desk and beg me to go on. And then my real torture would commence. I would sit there steadfastly, with an empty head, and try for her sake to make my thoughts flow. Like a man whose bowels are paralyzed I would sit there trying to coax my thoughts, praying for an idea--and only a short while ago I had been bursting with them. And now it seems to me that I understand better why it was that, when I came to Paris with my novel half-finished and full of confidence, certain that it would be terminated in a few months, I made so little headway. Though there was three thousand miles of water between us, though she was not by my side to plague me or to love me, I was still chained to her, still dependent on her. Instead of devoting myself wholeheartedly to the problems inherent in my book I was worrying about her, frustrated when I did not hear from her, saddened when I did hear from her, fearful that I was not writing well enough for her, dismayed because she could not read what I was writing, frightened when I told the truth about her, tied to her by a thousand and one little details; but above all, attaching less importance to the book than to her, feeling that if she would only come the book could go to the devil. The more I added to the book the more I destroyed; my judgment was completely lost. I wrote in despair; I hastened to finish it, not in a creative way, but in any old way, to get it done with so that I might sell it and have her by my side again. And just as I realize how futile my actions were then so I perceive now the reason for my creativeness when I began the next book--"Tropic of Cancer". I was at that point of desperation where nothing could any longer afflict me with pain. Sunk to the very lowest ditch I had nothing to fear any

more; if I looked in any direction now it was of necessity up. I had given up all hope of seeing Hildred again; I expected help from nobody; I had no plans for the future and absolutely no concern about it. Each day was an event, a closed, perfect thing in itself, owing nothing neither to the past nor the future. I lived completely for myself and in myself; the least incident was a boon to me, stimulating, nourishing, fecundating; I did not know where my next meal was coming from nor whether the night would see a roof over my head. I lived for the moment and I stole from each moment all that it contained. I was richer than any man I knew, and I was aware of my riches. I had no responsibilities, no debts, no ties, no obligations; I had only myself. Moreover I was not concerned whether anybody would accept my book when it was finished; I had only one concern and that was to write it. It made no difference whether I was permitted to write for an hour or for eight hours; it made no difference where I left off or where I began. Everything that poured out of me was a sincere expression of myself, done in joy, and with no end in view but the doing. That is one way to live and to write. That is absolute freedom, which of course few people can support. That is madness, which nobody desires. But that is also an act of desperation, a choice governed and dictated by extreme suffering and privation. It is not a triumph over circumstance but a refusal to recognize circumstance; it is not a victory, as critics and biographers like to say, but an avoidance of conflict, a life in which external and internal are ruled out, a life of oneness which is either divine or mad.

I spoke before of the long intervals in my life in which I seemed to lie dormant. I am reminded again of another interesting fact: the one brilliant idea I had in that early period with Hildred, when in despair I abandoned one project after another, was the discovery of how I should write. I remember that afternoon as distinctly as if a tornado had swept the house. I had been looking up words in the dictionary. Suddenly, as if I were caught up in a whirl, these words began to seethe, to string themselves out into sentences and paragraphs; with such a fury did this tempest descend upon me that I ran home at full speed, and with hat and overcoat on, completely out of breath, I threw myself on the typewriter and began in the middle of a sentence. I had no idea from one moment to the next what I was going to write; I knew simply that I had to write and to write whatever came to my head whether it made sense or not. It developed soon enough that nobody saw any sense in it, but that affected me scarcely at all; I knew, and it was a most important realization, that for the first time I had done a piece of creative writing. I had never heard then of "automatic writing", or of Surrealism, or of Dadaism; I knew nothing of what was going on ^{among} the great experimentalists of the age. And when my friends ridiculed this "Diary of a Futurist", as I called it, my conviction only increased that I had made a great discovery, that I was on the right track, that everybody else was wrong or mad. I learned, moreover, the immense importance that words, by and in themselves, had for me; I sensed that they had a ~~power~~ use not merely as ~~medium~~ for ideas, but as touchstones, as power and magic in themselves, as symbols capable of unlocking directly the secret content of mind. More than that, I felt that whether they made no sense was beside the point; they had their own sense

since they spoke a language more direct, more vital, more real, more powerful than this other language which everyone could decipher, which obeyed the most rigid laws, which concealed rather than expressed thought.

But I hadn't the strength to go on writing this way, immersed as I was in a world of common sense, in a world of expediency, in a world where everything was subjected to the acid test of pragmatism. Once again it burst out, when I was writing my first novel. This was a novel written to order, to Hildred's order. "Somebody" had demanded that she write a novel; the moment it was finished this "somebody" was to fork up a lot of cash, enough to buy a house, to take a trip to Europe, to settle back comfortably for a few years and take it easy. The "somebody" didn't know, of course, that Hildred was incapable of writing a line; that "somebody" had faith in Hildred. Why not? Hadn't she shown him all my manuscripts with her name scrawled across the top in big letters? It was Hildred's idea that I write about her; that would be intriguing and calculated to please the "somebody" beyond all expectation. So I tried to imagine myself Hildred and sat down to write the novel. As the months went by Hildred grew impatient. The first eighty pages I destroyed because, in Hildred's opinion, they didn't seem as if they were written by a woman, however masculine that woman might be. I commenced in the middle of the book and wrote backwards and forwards. When I was about two-thirds through I began to worry excessively about the opening chapter, which I had not yet tackled. Parts of the book pleased me very much; other parts I knew were inconsequential, totally unworthy of me, sordid compromises. It lacked unity. It was incoherent. I had the habit of running away from myself continually, deserting

my theme, and indulging my propensity for ranting and raving. Nevertheless, there was a certain quality of violence and a certain wealth of scope and character which gave it force, inadequate as it was. It was apparent to everyone, of course, with the exception of Hildred, that it could not have been written by a woman. But whoever the "somebody" was who was going to pay for it Hildred was ~~certainly~~ confident he would swallow it; he had probably swallowed more inconceivable things than a novel written by a woman who did not know how to write. The months were passing, as I say, and Hildred was itching to go to Europe; she suggested lopping it off here and there, bringing it to a quick conclusion, etc. And I, with a certain amount of naive fidelity to my trust, was laboring over it with chisel and saw, trying to make it as perfect as possible. At the same time I was heartily tired of it and praying that I would find a proper solution on which to end it. But more difficult than the end was the beginning. I would dream about it at night. (I had during this period the most magnificent dreams of my whole life.) Finally one night, when Hildred was already in bed (she was sleeping in the room where I worked) I stole out for a walk. I began to think of a friend of mine whom I had left in Florida and as I walked along thinking about him I began to write him a letter, a very tumultuous letter explaining all that had happened to me in the interim since we had parted. And then, out of a feeling of affection and sympathy for this chap (whom I had left in extremely difficult circumstances) I began to atone for my neglect by saying to him that I would put him in my book. And

as I grew more and more remorseful I made wilder and wilder promises. I swore to him that I would make the pages about him the best in the book, that they would live forever, etc. Then, just as on the other occasion which I have cited, I was caught up again by some inner illumination: I had the feeling of being at the very core of existence, with the secret in my hands, and there were no irrelevancies any more, no contradictions, no confusion or error. Everything was clear to me. I remember coming to a crack in the sidewalk--it was night-- and getting down on my knees to examine it closely; I looked at that crack in the sidewalk as if it were the most mysterious thing in the universe. I felt positively holy looking at it. There it was-- nothing but a crack in the sidewalk; not even an ant crawling in it--just a crack! ~~and~~ And while I gazed at it ecstatically, feeling the whole world reeling about me in splendor and significance, my thoughts gushed up so violently that it was like a vomit. I ran home babbling like a lunatic and fell on the machine in a trance. Hildred awoke and reproached me for being unreasonable, but I silenced her with a curse. I was writing a letter to my friend in Florida and that letter became my first chapter; it was mutilated and excised, and part of it that seemed to irrelevant and too fantastic I have with me now and I am going to quote from it to show you the strange processes of the human mind--strange only when one examines them from the outside, stranger still when one realizes the effort the mind is constantly making to gain its proper expression.....

"These names, which are nothing more than the empty vessels into which we pour our dreams and desires, what are they often as not but the mistaken or abortive ideas of man?....In the first place, this book will be unlike any book ever written.....

No, there won't be any men in this document, except the chief figure, and I am not certain yet whether he ought to be a man or a demi-god. Perhaps I'll make him just an ordinary centaur. ... You understand, of course, that even as I ~~am~~ relate the plan to you, I am inventing the situations and incidents. Sometimes one carries the germ of an idea about with him for years, hoping that it will some day develop into a coherent unity, and then suddenly, perhaps after a day of thoroughly prosaic occurrences, the idea commences to germinate in the dark when you are in bed, the walls begin to breathe and heave, the place itself becomes alive and the creator a mere instrument of those dark forces which have taken possession of his mind and body. There is nothing mystical about all this. I should say, rather, that there is a toxic or chemical quality in the blood which, if we could analyze it and get to grips with it, would reveal very clearly to us the reasons for these seizures.

"I thought it best for the moment to give this creature of my fancy (who may be, as I said, just an ordinary centaur, or an acrobat, or a severed head--John the Baptist's, for instance) a name, an odd name, if you will, because he will perform sundry odd tricks as he glides from one sphere of activity to another. He cannot be an ordinary individual, you see, any more than..... And if I use the conventional handle of Mister I must beg you not to let that disturb you either, since you will find in some of our best Arabian and Muscovite tales the prefix Mister, even though the character is only a poodle dog.....At any rate, Mr. Pantuffle will have recognizable human feelings--sometimes even animal spirits or planetary lusts.I have even considered

the necessity of converting his sensitivity on occasion into that of a frail lilac bush which gives out such plaintive sounds when in the dead of night it brushes gently against the window-pane. Or, he might have the stern, rigorous quality of a thorn on a rose-bush, which is capable of recognizing a maiden's warm blood without ^{evincing} ~~smiling~~ a tremor.....Mr. Pantuffe will never be lost in the midst of a learned digression. He will be as close x to you as your skin--have the sweet, uncompromising ~~egg~~ flavor of the gristle which clings to your bones. If he undertakes the hazards of a soliloquy it will be Mr. Pantuffe speaking and not William Shakespeare or Simon Daedalus. If he lies down on the greensward "surrounded by swift nudes" it will be Mr. Pantuffe you will recognize in the foreground and not some enterprising critic from the Faubourg St. Germain.He will have the lambent flexibility of an aphorism embedded in the brain of a poet out for a Sunday afternoon's stroll....In his more delirious moments (what we earth-worms style our "tragic" moments) he will show no hesitancy in rolling in the gutter....In that greater reality of art, which parallels life and yet somehow gets above and beneath it, it is unnecessary to put on a cake of mud as a token of piety. Art does not clamor for a mystagogue. Mr. Pantuffe's behavior in the gutter will far more resemble the cosmic sophistication of a planetary being than the drunken antics of a priest.....Mr. Pantuffe inhabits a world that existed before the umbrella, a world that puts the umbrella to one side.....A world that will serve to remind one of a new hand in a poker game--new faces, strange combinations, queer hunches, silent incantations, etc.For Mr. Pantuffe there will exist no forced options, as our pompous professors label the enig-

matic semaphores which guide our way along the elevated structure of life.....When he communes with himself he will do so with his head in his hands. I mean that he will actually decapitate himself, and with the living, thinking skull in his hands, meditate afresh on stereotyped problems. Stereotyped problems, because in the final analysis the marvellous permutations of the universe never alter the fundamental mysteries."

Used in topic of Cancer to p. 156

At precisely this point she arrives! Like a driver who has fallen asleep with the reins in his hands I am suddenly rudely awakened and bend forward again to crack my whip, to put the horses at a gallop. At three o'clock in the morning I am informed that she is here in Paris--she wants to see me. Carl and I take our bicycles and rush to the hotel. She is in bed. And while she opens the grips to look for a picture of Greta Garbo (none of her idols having changed since she was last here) I espy the manuscript of my novel, the pages torn and jumbled, the color of the pages turned to coffee and smoke. "And where are all the other manuscripts that you were to bring?" I ask. "They are in the cellar, in Brooklyn--too hard to get at!" And just as on every other occasion when she comes to visit Paris we find ourselves at dawn leaving some stinking cafe and walking through the milk white streets. And she is talking to me--drowning me in talk--about things I haven't the faintest interest in. But I am more restrained now, more patient, more sympathetic--I am even interested! I am interested now in

ascertaining just why I am not interested in this kind of talk, interested in knowing why she talks this way to me. And before many hours have passed I get it--she gives it to me herself, voluntarily. The reason is that she is at war with me. She knows it now. She admits it to herself.

But I am going a little too fast.... We have a roof over our heads now, a little home in Clichy which I share with my friend Carl. She is here with us and she likes the place..... Carl has just shampooed her hair.....I am taking a nap, though I awoke only an hour ago from a long sleep.... There are manuscripts lying on the floor, in the kitchen, in the bidet; everything is begun and nothing finished....But the place is gradually getting to rights. She is cleaning it from top to bottom and her hands are very sore.....And by some strange fatality, Carl who was supposed to be her sworn enemy, is good to her, he is doing everything in his power to please her. And she makes x him dance on her, she quarrels with him, scolds him, criticizes him, etc. And I am watching Carl hopping around after her, scrubbing the walls with the sponge I bought, running out and buying fruit and cigarettes for her, coming home unexpectedly with little surprises, sitting up all night listening to her--- I am watching all this with relish. I am putting Carl in my place: I am making him the husband! And now and then Carl tiptoes up to me and says slyly-- "you're fucking me, eh? she's got me by the balls!" Oh, I am enjoying this immensely--and for complicated reasons. First, because Carl was so sure she was harmless--he could never be made to understand why she affected people so, why she put them in her power, why she was always regarded as dangerous, destructive, etc. Secondly, I

am amused, because Carl is doing all this as a sacrifice: he wants to protect me! He has been calling me the "saint" all along, but in reality he is the saint, a very sly saint, a temperamental one, to be sure, but a saint nevertheless. We discussed that, Hildred and I, on our way home to Clichy at dawn. She thought it strange that I should be referred to as a saint. But she knows now that I am not a saint, never was. "Carl is a martyr" she says. "He likes to sacrifice himself." But Carl is also one of those practical martyrs; he only crucifies himself in order to earn his reward. We were lying in bed talking the other night, Hildred and I, and Carl comes running in from his room asking me if there is a real "maelstrom" somewhere in the world. I hear him typing again and it is not difficult for me to imagine the character of the pages that engage him now. He is gloating over this "maelstrom" in which he finds the house engulfed. He is probably writing pages of "pity for his friend so-and-so-" who is now in the toils of his wife. We go on talking and Carl comes back to our room again; he wants to talk. While he talks to Hildred I fall asleep; I wake up frequently and I catch portions of the conversation, which is about me and about Vanya, about the book that I am writing, in other words. And I hear Carl grilling her; when he sees me stirring, raising his voice so that I will not fail to catch the gist of things. Everything he says, everything he asks, is for my benefit. He says to her "I believe you, Hildred....I have changed my mind about you--completely, etc." but I know by the intonation of his voice that he is lying, that he only wishes to expose her to me, prove to me how right he was in his opinions. But I go to sleep on him. I laugh to myself. All these proofs, all Hildred's

protestations---they mean nothing to me...nothing! As if they could add one tittle to this drama I have carried around in me for so many years! She says to him, just when she is revealing one of her most sacred "truths"---"Shhh---you'll wake him up!" No, that doesn't deceive me either. She knows damned well I am not fast asleep. She knows that I am listening to see if there will be any fresh "truths". "Don't wake him up!" means "listen, you, I am saying what I have always said...you see that I am consistent, at least, with my lies." And Carl thinks he is making discoveries; he is getting "material" for his book--fresh characters, fresh glimpses at old problems, fresh lies. He is seeing me in a new role; he is beginning to have respect for this drama which never interested him before.

A year ago when she left she looked like a dead woman. Now she is all alive. She thanked me for it last night, in bed. "I'm going to kill you!" she said. But wait--I am going too fast again.....

The very first time I left her here alone--I was only gone a few minutes--she had found the manuscript. She had already read ten pages when I returned. The manuscript had been put away where she found it. Not a word about it passed her lips. But I knew immediately that she had looked at it.....

Later in the day it comes out. She is amazed that any one could be so blind as I am. She criticizes the first ten pages--a withering criticism that would have reduced me to ashes a year ago. She relents. "Perhaps I ought to wait until I have read more!" she adds. "You're going to read more", I say. I give her the manuscript. "Here, read it while I write." I am typing

away quietly when suddenly there is an hysterical burst of laughter and I see her doubling up on the couch, her head buried in the pages of my manuscript, laughing, laughing as if her heart would break. "What's happened?" O h , it's nothing....just an error I made. "If you only knew the hundredth part of it!" And she laughs again in that heart-breaking way. Afterwards I look at the page where she left off (she reads in snatches only!) but I see nothing that would warrant this outburst.

Once the book fades out of the conversation she becomes pleasant again, very pleasant. She looks for things to do for us. And Carl is quite touched. "I'm going to be good to you, Hildred," he says. "Just wait...you' ll see.... I'm going to do things for you." I remember Hildred's words when I was falling asleep on them the night before. "The more you do for me the more I'll suspect you. For every gift you make me I'll give you another, that's all. Don't think you're going to get anywhere with me by being nice to me."

There is an interim during which we see "Scarface" together. Hildred insists that it is only to see Paul Muni that she has urged us to come. As we leave the theatre I explode--it is the first time I have lost my patience. I am quarreling with her at the bar as we take a drink. I am almost dancing with rage. "Don't ever suggest a gangster picture to me again...I detest them!" "But I told you it was a poor film," she says; "I only wanted to have you see Paul Muni." "But I don't give a damn for your Paul Muni...I don't ever expect to see him again either." While we wait for the bus there are more hot words. It isn't the picture so much that enrages me, but her interest in it. (As a matter of

fact the picture is a good one, as gangster pictures go.) I tell her that I am sorry for losing my temper. "It was a fine picture, Hildred, and I mean it, but...." Then I break loose again. "But that's one of the reasons why I am here in France. I hate your god-damned America, your god-damned American women. I want to stay here in a civilized world, etc. etc." She tries to tell me that she hates America even more than I do, that she was revolted by the picture the first time she saw it, that she went out of the theatre raving. "But if you felt that way about it, why did you insist on dragging me to see it? If a thing disgusts you why do you go near it again? To please me? Do you think Paul Muni means anything to me?" It begins all over again.

It's her profound and obsessive interest in these things I said disturbed me. I want to make that clearer. Lying in bed, after the theatre, I was reading the last volume of Proust. I am at that part where Saint-Loup pretends that he takes no interest in "such things", meaning homosexual practices. "I haven't the slightest ~~interest~~ notion of such things. If you want any information about that, my dear fellow, I advise you to apply elsewhere. As for me, I'm a soldier and nothing more....." And then adds Proust: "These subjects which Robert scorned in this way, Gilberte, on the other hand, as soon as he had left, was glad to take up in her talks with me. Not, of course, with reference to her husband, for she was unaware of all that--or pretended to be. But she liked to go into them at length as far as others were concerned, whether because she saw therein a sort of indirect excuse for Robert, or because the latter, vacillating, like his uncle, between strict silence on these topics and a need to unbosom himself and speak ill of others, had given her a great deal of information

on the subject."

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Now by Hildred's interest in the stuff of "Scarface" I mean something much broader--her interest in all the putrid, morbid, dying character of America, the violence of her language when she speaks against D. H. Lawrence (Lady Chatterley's Lover especially), saying that the excerpts I made from it are "vile"---because he reveals his homosexual qualities, the accurateness and the fund of information she brings to me about new "homos" she has learned of, her fanatical adoration of Greta Garbo..... In a day she discusses a thousand different subjects. Discusses them? No, it is a monologue, an inundation, a flow of lava that cools even as it destroys. It is in this eruption that levels everything that I can feel the vitality of America, but it is not a creative vitality, not the vitality of a ~~giant~~ Titan--it is a vitality that flows out in every direction without aim or control, a vitality that levels things, a vitality that produces exhaustion, sterility, death.

Her "interest", then, whether it is concealed or admitted, whether direct or distorted, is what rouses my antagonism. I am bound to fight when these things come up because it is a question always of life or death. To ask me to be tolerant, wise, broad-minded, is absurd. These are vital issues and I must meet them, combat them, with all my strength--or perish.

She confesses now that she is my enemy, my sworn enemy, that her mission henceforth is to destroy me. "Do you know something," she says, when we are in the midst of a dispute about the interpretation of a passage from a book--"X you are the greatest enemy I have!" I tell her that I understand, I agree with her..."but you ought to be ~~xx~~ proud of it", I add.

To this she gives a hoarse laugh and then her mouth twists with pain and the tears come to her eyes and in her voice there are curses and maledictions as of the Hebrew prophets. "When I glanced at your other book, the last time I was here, it nearly killed me. I've been going around dead all this time. You killed me with your hatred, but this time--huh, it's funny, this time I am not even angry. I don't recognize myself in your book. You know less about me than a dozen men I could name. You know what your book reveals? Your own distorted, diseased, petty mind. You're not a great man as I once thought...you're not a great writer either. I'm glad now that your book is going to be published; I want it to appear just as it is so that people can see what sort of man you are." Her words create no anger in me. I am really hurt that I must pain her. I wish she really understood better so that she could enjoy this warfare, as I do now. I am even more hurt because I have an advantage over her: I have words against her deeds--more, the sphere of her activity is too limited to give to her deeds and gestures the proper value; if it were not that I am immortalizing her now she would pass out unknown, unrecognized. I am creating the legend of her, furnishing her the weapons with which to slay me, resisting her ~~to~~ so that she may find unknown sources of strength and courage. I am as fair to her as one enemy can be to another.

In bed she began to pour out her wrath, in that cruel, low voice which is beyond human rage or pain. "You took a miserable little incident, which caused you suffering, and you have magnified it to such monstrous proportions....." Stop, I say to myself, and I ~~xx~~ listen with only one ear. That miserable little incident is the stuff of all I have written so far; it is that canker in-

side me which I am pulling out with my own hands; I am not going about it professionally, like a cool, sure surgeon, but with my own hands, I say, and with it I am pulling out the nerves and fibres and tissues...it is my own blood I am spilling. "Magnifying it!" Not if I were to write all my life long, not if I were to fill a library, could I magnify this "little incident" sufficiently. The suffering that you have inflicted upon me has raised me to the heights, opened my eyes, made me love life, taught me to estimate the full value of love. If I do nothing more than to record my suffering, and my triumph--or failure-- I will have accomplished a miracle. You say that I have understood nothing, that I have failed ignominiously (albeit you read only a few pages); you say that it is myself I am recording, not you. You have said the most profound things to me--but without knowing it. I accept your criticism gratefully, humbly. Nobody understands better than I the obstacles to be overcome. I have almost gone insane in my attempts to nail you down, to crucify you. You tell me that once you loved me so much, once I was such a god to you that you would have torn the stars out of the sky for me--there was no sacrifice too great for you to make. And now you say--but you are not cold enough about it!-- that you were the god, that the horrible truth of it is you could never have imagined me to be so small, so blind, so worthless. And in your malevolence, in your blind, abortive fury, you add that the truth is you never were interested in either the man or the writer--you were interested in something else. I laugh quietly to myself when you say such things; I am exultant that I should have read you so deeply, so accurately. But you don't know yet what it was that you were interested in. You have a blind mouth; you utter the most sublime truths without deriving

either wisdom or joy from them. Do you think, if it were possible to aid you, that I would not gladly open your eyes? I fear you no longer. You are dethroned..... And I would be generous to you now. A moment ago you said "I am going to kill you" and I heard it without emotion, unless it was sympathy, kindness, understanding. When you say "kill me" I know that you do not mean with dagger or poison. You said that you realized now that I was less the man and more the artist, though a poor artist, a vile one, a cheap one. I ask myself how is it possible for you to kill me? With what weapons? There is nothing in your arsenal any longer which I fear. Your greatest weapon was mystery--and I am embracing that now. Do you think I am proud or exultant because I recognize my strength? No. While I am crucifying you I look with longing toward those who will come after me and preach your glory. But I know it is my business to crucify you, and I will let nothing interfere with me.

For a moment you made me violently happy. It was when you saw Elie Faure's book in my hands and you said that you had read it with such joy, that you had gotten so much out of it, that it was all so clear to you and so true! But how could you say these things and be the person you are? Either I am wrong or Faure is wrong, or we are both wrong. Listen, I want to quote from this Bible which you say you appreciate so profoundly. I want to incorporate it here for fear that it may die out. I want not only you to understand it, but the men of two thousand years from now, who will have need for it then just as we have need for it now....

".....it appears to me more and more clearly that in order to liberate men it is necessary to the mechanism of society itself and of intelligence, that there should be slaves. Believe me, all is well, the passions and those whom passion kills, those whom the exercise of passion enlightens, and those who do not give in, and he who sneers every time an idea appears, and he who sacrifices himself that an idea may live, and he who, in order that his idea may live, sacrifices millions."

"Themyth is the necessary illusion which we imagine each time to be the supreme truth, and which is only each time a fleeting and temporary aspect of that supreme truth which we cannot grasp without condemning ourselves to death.....We have been witnesses of the cruelty of scientific myths--'the survival of the fittest!' for example. But pacific myths, such as that of Jesus, for instance are not less murderous. More murderous perhaps because they impose upon the spirit the greatest sum total of illusion, the illusion to which we cling the longest, because it is the most consoling, and which we attempt to propagate, to impose, to defend with the most fanatic passion."

"There are certain wars which make fruitful and others which destroy the soul."

"But war is always unjust for him who is conquered. War is always just for him who conquers. Except for the power of effort which victory makes sure, war can never be just. If that power is present it is never unjust.....Because the whole world, always, is responsible for warfare. But he is rare who consents to take this responsibility!"

"And if you can learn why morality sinks in the course of

revolution or of war, you will learn also why the spirit increases like a flame which embraces and enlightens all."

"Art is the spiritual transposition of love, which is already war, and which war exalts violently. The artist is the actual summing-up of the eternal tragedy."

"The hero is the artist, is he who makes no choice. ~~Whom I mean~~ I mean he who does not make a sentimental choice. Who will penetrate up to the heart into the influence of tragedy upon the artist, when the artist is tragedy itself, because the artist is the man who wishes to conquer, aloof from parties, aloof from systems, aloof from interests and contingencies of an hour, an unstable and dynamic equilibrium in the midst of the conflicts of sentiments which agitate and surround him, face to face with the terrible and clear vision which he has of final nothingness?"

"The pure being, because he is pure, is the stirrer up of strife. The just man is the irony of God."

"Man wishes to fly from the horror of life, that is all. And to live, for whoever begins to think, is horrible; while for him who persists in thinking, it is sublime."

"Whenever a just man is a great poet, he does not deceive himself. He knows that he is bringing war. He knows that he is upsetting hearts, breaking up homes, dividing peoples and races, exasperating religions. 'I do not come to bring peace, but a sword--my kingdom is not of this world. That which I dream cannot be realized. But you shall follow me all the same, and you shall abandon father and mother and wife and children and country. All this in order to obey me. Because I am a just man. Because I am

the just man. Because I am an artist.....Because ~~xxxxxx~~ I alone have the right and those alone have the power to realize a portion of the God that I perceive who have the innocence to believe, without looking elsewhere than in me, that it is I alone who have the right. Because I am a monster. A monster, you ^{do} understand? A necessary monster. A divine monster. A hero. A conqueror. A holy destroyer. A destroyer of dying rhythms. A maker of living rhythms. Because those who obey are the depositaries of force and I am the stronger."

"The most direct affirmation is the most sure mistress of the heart. 'Do this. Do this, and you will not suffer.' One does it, and one does not suffer, even if in order to do it it is necessary to tear out one's own entrails and bury the steel in the heart of a friend. The word alone delivers and creates. It is in the beginning. It is also in any fresh beginning....."

"Religion does not create art. It is art which creates religion, by incarnating into its images our desire to overcome life, to affirm ourselves, to spread ourselves, and impose upon our external universe the form even of our dreams, which torment us up to the moment in which we have formulated them. Art is identical with love, which is, in each of us, a need existing before the meeting with the man or woman with whom it becomes identified for a day, a month, or a year, and which survives this meeting to wander, unsatisfied and miserable, up to the hour that the meeting with another woman or man excites its resurrection. Religions are the crises of love of human societies, and the forms which they leave after their passage are nothing else than the images of the object of that love. Incomparable images, but also transitory, alas! of

the rapturous and despairing moment which we cannot keep."

"You look upon Bibles and religions as divine--and I say that they are divine. And I say that they all come from you, can come again from you, and that it is not they who give life, but you who give life.' Precisely! And I know now what the Holy Spirit means, that invisible force which descended from God into our hearts to give them the power to raise ourselves up to Him. I tell you truly, the Holy Spirit is art itself tending to realize itself, amalgamating in the humble instincts of common aspirations and inquietudes to form a religion which should favor its flight, ~~xx~~ amalgamating all religions, in higher consciences in order to favor the hope always deceived, yet never discouraged, of its conquest. God is, I do not doubt any more. But He is blind and deaf. Man is the only one in the universe who in flashes sees and understands. The Holy Spirit does not descend from God to animate the heart of man; the Holy Spirit arises from man to animate the heart of God."

Used in Tropics of Cancer — to end!

160.

"Yours is the triumph!" Those were the words that kept repeating themselves in my head as we were taking a last leave of each other. And a few days later -- "how to distinguish between incident and destiny". Because now it comes over me again that as I stepped on the boat to sail for Europe it seemed to me that I was performing an act of destiny, that it was fateful, ordained, irrevocable. And though I have said good-bye to her many times I knew the other day that this last good-bye was the last. And strange it is too that she should leave ~~x~~ in my memory the most beautiful picture of herself; when I returned, knowing that she would be gone, her picture was missing from the wall, and though at first I regretted that she had done this, soon I realized how well she had acted: I would have nothing henceforth but the memory of her face as she lifted it to mine to say good-bye. And that image, she well knows, will haunt me always.

It seems to me now that everything I write henceforth will be only a sort of requiem; there is a great void and all my words seem to be falling into space. Now that the fierce antagonism which kept us apart has given way, now that we are no longer constrained to move and speak and act in a prescribed way, now that there is no longer either hatred or love, that the orbits in which we moved have been shifted and our axes too have shifted, there is this feeling of falling into space, of falling, falling, falling. And this is worse than tears, deeper than regrets: this is like the abyss into which Satan was plunged, Satan who was so human, all-too-human.

I had to wait until she left before I could resume these pages--with the proper tenderness and longing. Because only now do I comprehend what the struggle for the unattainable means; only now do I fully understand the significance of Emerson's words when he said "if only a man knew how to choose among what he calls his experiences that which is really his experience....how to record truth truly." Almost immediately after she arrived I laid aside this work; almost immediately I began another book, and with such fierce energy and concentration as to make me smile now that I know the reason for it. The night before she arrived I was reading Elie Faure, and all that language about the monster, the just man, the hero, the myth, appealed to me inordinately. She was hardly here twenty-four hours before the word "monster" had become as common in our mouths as bread or milk; she recognized the monster in me only too clearly. And that inhuman aspect of myself was a true one; it was my only defence against defeat. I began another book, as I say, to defend my attitude toward life; the urge to write it was given me by a simple, thoughtless utterance. A man said to me "do this for me, you haven't very much to do now, have you?" And that thoughtless utterance sunk into me so deeply that I doubt if I can ever explain it rightly. "You haven't very much to do now!" This at a moment when it seemed to me that the problem of the world was resting on my shoulders, when if I were to do nothing but give up day and night to the problem before me I would be doing the impossible. And so I plunged into the book, with an enthusiasm born of outraged vanity, with an overwhelming urge to assert my ego, so that no man would

ever again have the temerity to say to me--"you have nothing much to do, have you?" And as I progressed with the work I began to formulate another reason for my enthusiasm: I was going to prove to the world that I am a thinker! Such a silly idea! Either one is or one isn't a thinker. And as I worked on I began to realize more and more how strange a book was my "Tropic of Cancer", what a distorted, vengeful thing it is, written in pain, with malice and hate, with poison. In giving it a final review, before consigning it to the press, I was impressed by how much I had left out of it. I wanted to insert another huge portion about Mona and, in fact, I did conceive a splendid idea for this insertion; but the hatred was lacking, the pain and malice which had once consumed me was gone. The pages I essayed to write refuse to be wedded to the book; they stand apart, like an apocryphal writing.

The one thing she had observed clearly toward the last was that I was kind to her. That killed her!

I am falling into space, falling, falling, falling. For seven years I went ~~xxxxxx~~ about, day and night, with only one thing in my mind--her. Were there a Christian so faithful to his God, his Saviour, as I was to her, we would be living in a different world to-day. We would all be Gods. Day and night I thought of her, even when I was deceiving her. And now that she is gone I think of all the things that might have been; and that huge void in my book, it is that I am going to fill in here. That which life cheated us of I am going to restore in its integrity. That Inferno which Paris has ever been for the madmen, that Paris which I am no longer aware of to-day because now it

is just another city, like New York or Berlin to me--that infernal Paris belongs here, side by side with that other New York I knew, with Vienna, Budapest, Prague and that little corner of Bukowina which is like some mythic fragment of a dream, an operetta written without music.

The moment I left her^e and was in the street a great lump came to my throat. I remembered how often I had walked down this street wondering would the day ever come when she would walk by my side, all those yearning looks I bestowed on the buildings seeming to be a part of them now, so saturated with her that she must feel them as she passes them now for the last time. And I remembered too how when we did walk side by side, through these very streets that were saturated with my thoughts of her, she observed nothing, felt nothing--they were streets like any other streets, a little more sordid perhaps, that is all. I thought of my lonely walks at night through Paris, the exaltation I felt when the image of her by my side would come to mind, and as I walked away from the house, after saying good-bye to her, the thought of one street in particular came to mind--the Rue Lhomond. Whether it was that I had so often walked this street in great anguish, or whether it was the remembrance of her saying to me wistfully one night--"Show me that Paris you have written about"--I do not know; I know that when she said this to me I realized the utter impossibility of ever showing her that Paris I had written about. That Paris never existed, except in my mind, except in loneliness, except in yearning for her. And that Paris was so huge! I felt it would take a life-time to explore it again, because it could

not lend itself to a tour--it was a Paris that one had to live through as I had lived through it and my experience was unique, no one could live it again. I remembered then, with what a weight of significance, my early days here when, stirred by some recollection of her, I visited one day the Pension Orfila and was shown the room that Strindberg had occupied. And they were offering me the very same room! Nothing very terrible had happened to me yet, though I had lost all my possessions, had been hungry many times, had wandered the streets in misery, had searched hungrily for some sympathetic soul to whom I might attach myself. But in reality, nothing very terrible had yet happened to me here in this Inferno of Paris. I walked away from the place with an ironic smile, as though to say to myself, "not yet, the Pension Orfila!" And now I have created my own Pension Orfila--not one, but several! There are no ready-made Pension Orfilas for the tormented; each one creates his own. That was something I had to learn. And I have learned it since. Now from the grave, as it were, I can see those plaques which will ornament the buildings fifty years ~~from~~ hence: Ici mourut Henry Miller, ecrivain. I can see those loving eyes wandering from the plaque to the neighboring scene, trying in vain to restore the picture of another time, exclaiming as we all do: "What a different Paris that was!" Which is so true and yet false. Because Paris does not consist in a collection of bricks and mortar, of ~~few~~ statues and museums. Whatever Paris is remains eternal and the eternal can always be grasped by those who have the vision to see. I feel this keenly on days when my heart is open and looking about me lovingly I do not ask for

a thing to be changed; everything I accept, the ugly with the beautiful, the commonplace with the rare.

"There are in Paris," wrote Balzac, "certain streets as dishonorable as can be any man convicted of infamy; then there are noble streets, also streets that are simply honest, also young streets concerning whose morality the public has not yet formed any opinion; then there are murderous streets, streets older than the oldest possible dowagers, estimable streets, streets that are always clean, streets that are always dirty, workingman's streets, students' streets, and new mercantile streets. In short, the streets of Paris have human qualities, ~~xx~~ and impress us by their physiognomy with certain ideas against which we are defenceless."

When I had copied this into my note-book I added below: "For 24 Rue Tournefort go behind Pantheon along Rue de L'Estrapade (Cocteau!) until it comes to an abrupt end in a triangle. Turn to the right." It is when I think of this little note, of all that lies connected with it, that I believe truly that the greatest book ever written will some day be done by a man describing what happened to him as he crossed a street. The history of a soul's voyage! The saga of the Unconscious crystallized in a moment of time!

Often I went behind the Pantheon, felt my way along those sagging, twisting, crumbling walls; sometimes to look at that other Pension, the Pension Vauquer of "Pere Goriot", sometimes just for the pleasure of walking along a street called the Rue Pot au Fer, sometimes for the exquisite melange of sensations

sure to be produced in me by tumbling into the Rue Mouffetard, such sensations as could only be produced in the mind of one about to embark on an unknown voyage. And whenever I went behind the Pantheon and came upon the Place L'Estrapade I was sure to think of certain lines from "Le Grand Ecart" which had an ugly connotation, of my ~~first~~ great joy when I ^{first} discovered this setting, of the Rue Daubigny which, by the law of pairs, always sprang to mind, a street which I have never come across.

And just as Strindberg in his madness recognized omens and portents in the very flagging of his Pension Orfila so, as I wandered about aimlessly, did certain words and signs fill my mind with dire forebodings. Wandering about the Abattoir de Vaugrard one Sunday morning I came upon a curious little street called the Rue des Perichaux which was stained with blood; it was a beautiful Sunday morning and there were birds in the windows and heavy peasant women leaning out with that sulmberous, semi-murderous air of Italians, the hens were cackling, and there were children playing in the yards such as I had never imagined to exist outside of literature; a little later I was walking beyond the Porte de Vanves and there I saw an immense deserted farm-yard which it seemed to me must belong to little Kai Molln, that wistful child in "Buddenbrooks" whom I was reading about at night in my garret. It seemed natural to me then to be walking all day through the streets of Paris; I had the miserable garret which I speak of but I was afraid to return to it until after midnight for fear of meeting the patron. The streets were my refuge. And no man can understand the glamour of streets until he is obliged to take refuge in them; then it is that his thoughts invest them with a quality which can never

be removed--shall we call it history? One passes along a street on a wintry day, looking at dogs for sale, and one is moved to tears. And the next moment one sees in huge letters "Hotel de Tombeau des Lapins" and one laughs hysterically. Or "Hotel de l'Avenir". So many hotels of the future! No hotels in the past participle, no subjunctive signs. "La Madone des Sandwichs" playing at a cinema, or "Mon Amant L'Assassin". After walking through the Place Violet, a dream which will never fit into reality, beautiful mauve and delicate tints, a slate sky, sienna walls and low doorways and beyond the gorgeous songs of Felix Faure hideous ~~gasometers~~ gas tanks and chimnies belching pure coke. Why do I remember the Passage des Thermopyles? Because that day a woman was speaking to a puppy scarcely a month old, and the puppy seemed to understand her, and I was a grown-up man, wrestling manfully with dictionary and grammar every day, yet unable to make out a word she said. How that oppressed me! And what oppressed me more, on the Rue Brancion, was not the sight of those pathetic dogs who were being sold, but the huge railing, those great iron spikes which seemed to be standing between me and my rightful life. And those blood-stains on the cobblestones in the Rue des Perichaux--it was not the blood of the slain which saddened me, but the thought of my own blood being spilled, the weary, blood-stained road I was travelling for reasons unfathomable to me. My world of human beings had perished; I was alone in the world and for friends I had the streets and the streets spoke to me in that sad, bitter language compounded of human misery, of wistfulness, yearning, regret, failure, wasted effort. It is after midnight and I am walking

along without thought of direction, talking to a friend whom my wife has sent to me. The last thing that stands out objectively, as we plunge into talk, is the remembrance of passing the Closerie des Lilas. After that it is a blind, aimless walk, no consciousness left of the streets through which we pass. The talk is about my wife, of her struggles in New York, of her longing to return to me, of the desperate efforts she has made to join me, etc. The talk is blinding ~~to~~ me to everything; everything is concentrating in me to a point of unbearable anguish, when suddenly I am aware of what street we are on; suddenly I remember that we, Hildred and I, walked this street one night, not knowing where we were, intimidated by the squalor and gloom. It was the Rue Broca, that section of it where it dives under the Boulevard Port-Royal. And at this moment when I recall the past my friend is telling me that my wife is ill and starving; if I had known when once we walked the Rue Broca that she would ever be ill and starving would I have let her go? Now the hopelessness of it all grips me; three thousand miles of water between us and no matter how desperate my longing, how fervent my wish, there she will stay and starve and here I will walk with hot tears scalding my face. That sort of cruelty is embedded in the streets; it is that which stares out from the walls and terrifies us when suddenly we respond to a nameless fear, when we have a sickening panic in our souls; it is that which gives the lamp-posts their queer, gnomish twists, gives them that lure of beckoning to us, of offering their cold iron bars so that we may strangle ourselves; it is that which makes certain houses appear like the relics of secret crimes, their shuttered windows like eyes that have been gouged

out. It is that sort of thing, written into the streets, which makes me flee when suddenly I look up and see "Impasse Satan". Such things which drove me to put down such a note as this: "the spider that found many cockroaches under the king's hearth-stone". To remember what Eugene said ~~xxx~~ to me after the patron of the cafe had greeted me: "~~His wife says~~ he smiles in his sleep-- it is necessary for his business!" To remember that at one of the entrances to the Mosque it is written "Mondays and Thursday Tuberculosis; Wedensdays and Fridays Syphilis". That everywhere in Paris there are grinning skulls over which are written the words: "Defendez-vous contre la Syphilis!" Syphilis everywhere--in the glasses we touch, in the urinoirs, in the eyes of whores, on the walls of the mosque. Syphilis written in the sky. Syphilis in the brain of Meryon, in those etchings which are being torn down now in the Marais Quarter, syphilis written in the words "Hotel de l'Epoque". Wherever I walk in Paris I see the process of decomposition, the syphilis. that is eating out our souls. If I walk along the Boulevard St. Germain, where other people notice shops and restaurants, I notice only this, an advertisement announcing that "The Moon is Dead". If I look at paintings I notice only these: "The Cosmos on the Flat", or "Bigarre mais Silencieux". If I look in the window of a bookshop I see "Rien Que Ton Corps", or "Une Femme a Sa Fenetre". And the cinema I was most fond of was called "L'Oeil de Paris" where, can I ever forget it, I saw "La Souriante Mme. Beudet".

"Stand in front of #8 Rue des Jardins! Perhaps here Rabelais lived and croaked." That is another note. Where people

lived and died! Obsession for the past, for great names, for tragedies. The street names haunt me because they are links with the past--Rue du Roi de Sicile, Rue des Lombards, Rue Charlemagne, Rue des Lions, Rue Quicampoix, Rue ~~de~~ Vercingetorix, Place des Juives, Rue Francois Villon. . There are other streets which haunt me for more obscure reasons--Rue Mademoiselle, Rue des Entrepreneurs, Passage des Patriarches, Rue Cervantes, Rue de la Tombe Issoire, Place Padeloup, Rue Maison Dieu, Rue Rembrandt, Rue Moulin de Beurre, Boulevard Beaumarchais, etc. etc. When I write Beaumarchais I recall, as if it were incredible now, how in the evening I would hie to the Place Bastille and walk down that Boulevard with ~~its~~ a sense of its former significance, how the little tabac "L'Elephant" would lure me night after night because there it was that Germaine kept her rendezvous, the pleasure I received in watching Germaine stroll in with her trollopes and, not knowing that I was there, stand at the bar and reveal her coarseness, her real whore's heart. And when the madame had tipped her off, ~~that~~ she would turn round with such a gracious air, attempting ^{one} ~~in~~ moment to remove from her face all ~~the~~ traces of vulgarity--it was so pathetic ~~to~~ ^{to} observe her trying to act the lady all of a sudden, a pose that lasted only from the bar to the table, because immediately she sat down beside me she was rubbing my legs and trying to get me interested. But that was only while she still regarded me as prey. Once she knew my real circumstances she became a friend, she would meet me with the most serious expression, most concerned about my welfare, would sit there and wonder what she could do for me. She even excused herself for not lending me money--for reasons

which we both understood. Somewhere I once wrote that Germaine did more for me, when she showed me her little pussy, than all the writings of Freud, Stekel, Jung, etc. Perhaps that is not clear. Certainly I was not suffering from any sex complex at the time. When I met Germaine--it was a Sunday afternoon and I was leisurely strolling ^{along} the Boulevard Beaumarchais-- I needed a woman. That was all. We stood in front of a jewelry shop and talked a symbolic language. In a few minutes we were in a very sordid five franc room on that narrow, queer-looking street just behind the Boulevard. Germaine wanted to show me that she was a good reliable whore, I suppose; she went to the sink and began to soap herself and suddenly, while she was rubbing her pussy, she advanced toward me and thrusting her bushy self toward me, her hand caressing it now affectionately, she began to speak about it, not as if it were a part of her but as if it were some object which she prized, whose value she recognized. Her words imparted to it a life and fragrance, a wholesome, carnal vitality; it was no longer just her private organ, the shameful hidden thing which women make of their sex, but a treasure, a magic, potent treasure, a God-given thing, and none the less so for being traded for a few pieces of silver. "This thing," she seemed to say, "as she flung herself on the bed," holding it now with her two hands as though it were a divine chalice, "this thing can be used for a multitude of purposes, and for you I am making it a thing of joy." And it was good, that pussy of hers. That Sunday afternoon everything clicked again. I looked at her as we left the hotel, and I saw very clearly what a whore she was, but she was a likable one, a comrade, a fellow-sufferer, and the fact that she was worming me for drinks and dinner and cigarettes and taxi had not the

least disturbing effect upon me. And when I came to write later, certain lines about "Mlle Claude" it was not her I was thinking of, but Germaine, a fifteen franc whore on the Boulevard Beaumarchais. "...while she's washing up and combing her hair all the men she's been with and now you, just you, and barges going by, masts and hulls, the whole damned current of life flowing through you, through her, through all the guys before you and maybe after, the flowers and the birds and the sun streaming in and the fragrance of it choking you, annihilating you. O Christ! Give me a whore always, all the time!" That was for Germaine.... Because Claude was not ~~and~~ that earthy, sensual, wholly amoral creature that Germaine was. Claude had a soul and a conscience; she had refinement too, which was bad--for a whore. Claude imparted always a feeling of sadness; unwittingly she left that impression on you that you were one more who had added himself to the stream of Fate for the purpose of destroying her. Unconsciously, I say. Because Claude would have been the last person in the world to consciously create such an image in one's mind. She was too delicate and sensitive for that, and her mind was bright, nimble, flecked with reason, justice, honor, etc. Claude was simply a good French girl, of breeding and intelligence, whom life had tricked somehow; something in her, not tough enough, to combat reality. Whereas Germaine was a whore from the cradle, conscienceless, thoroughly satisfied with her role, enjoying it, in fact, except when her stomach pinched her or her shoes were worn out--little surface things of no account, nothing that ate into her soul, nothing that created torment. Ennui--that was the worst she felt. Some days she was probably tired of

fucking, some days she probably had a bellyful, as we say--but no more than that! Plenty of times she enjoyed it, she came with you--whoever you were--sucker, pimp, drunkard, clochard, no difference. A man! A man with something between his legs that could tickle her, that could make her writhe in ecstasy, make her grab that bushy thing of hers with both hands and rub it joyously, proudly, with a sense of connection, a sense of life running through it, a sense of significance, of prime value. And when Germaine assured you that she had no disease it was a real assurance; she made you feel that it would be the greatest blow to her ego, that it wasn't for your sake she kept herself clean, but for her own. Would she be fool enough to destroy the instrument which gave her so much pleasure, and not pleasure only, but a living? Her work! She talked about it with as much seriousness as a cabinet minister would talk of his portfolio. Work and pleasure! How few of us know how to combine them! And if one has to be a whore to understand this, be a whore then, because the other is futile. Germaine's whorishness I prize. She was a whore all the way through, even down to her good heart, which is not really a good heart, but a lazy, indifferent one, a flaccid heart that can be touched for a moment, a heart that has no reference to any fixed point within, a heart detached from its proper orbit--which is to say wisdom, morality, etc., all those questionable attributes of civilized man which we cannot do without any more. In however circumscribed, vile, odious a world she built for herself, nevertheless Germaine functioned well in it; that in itself was a tonic thing. When sometimes I would go searching for her, stopping every few paces to talk to her comrades, they would twit me

about my passion for her and some of them would try so earnestly to get me to switch "just for once"; and when I would stubbornly refuse, saying I wanted only Germaine, they would laugh and say "You're in love with her!", a thing almost inconceivable to them. "Yes," I would say, and with vehemence, "I'm in love with her. I don't want any one but Germaine!" Which was untrue, of course. I could not more think of loving Germaine than I could think of loving a spider. If I was faithful, ~~to her~~ it was not to her so much as to some image which she had left in my mind, some image of healthful, wholesome carnality. I might add that it gave me pleasure to watch her ply her trade, to see her resorting to the same grimaces, the same expressions, with others as she had with me. "She's doing her job!" That's all I thought of it, and it was with approbation that I looked upon it. Later, when I had taken up with Mlle Claude, and night after night I would see her sitting in her accustomed place, her little round buttocks chubbily esconced in the plush settee, I had a sort of inexpressible rebellion-- a whore, it seemed* to me, had no right to be sitting there like a lady, waiting for some one to approach her, and all the while abstemiously sipping her tea or her chocolat. Germaine used to hustle for hers; I remember the holes in her stockings and the torn, ragged shoes, I remember too how she would stand at the bar, and with a sort of courageous defiance throw a strong drink down her stomach and march out again. Perhaps it wasn't so pleasant to smell that boozy breath of hers, that mixture of cafe cremes and aperitifs and cognacs and all the stuff she guzzled between times, what to warm herself and what to summon up additional courage, but the fire of it penetrated her, it glowed down there between her

legs where it ought to glow and there was that circuit established which makes one feel the earth again under his legs, the vital renewal that we seek in woman. When she lay there with her legs apart and moaning, even if she moaned that way for any and everybody, it had the ring of genuineness; ~~it~~ in any case it was the proper kind of feeling. She didn't stare up at the ceiling vacantly or look for bedbugs in the wall-paper; she kept her mind on her business, she talked about the things a man wants to hear when he's climbing over a woman--about cunt and nothing but cunt. Whereas Claude's delicacy, when in bed with you, was out of place, it jarred. Who wants a delicate whore? Claude would even ask you to turn your face away while she squatted over the bidet. All wrong. A man when he's burning up with passion wants to see things, wants to see everything, even how they make water! And while it's all very nice to know that the woman has a mind, literature, coming from the cold corpse of a whore, is the last thing to be served in bed. A whore had better appeal to the baser instincts. Some time later, glancing through a book on psychology, I came across these words (from the lips of a patient): "a queer feeling in the genitals, ~~if~~ as if it ate and drank down there." Marvellous, I thought! Is this a diseased mind? Then I have one too. This feeling of voraciousness, of wanting to devour everything, why this is my feeling when I have an erection, or sometimes before I have an erection, while I am in process of getting one, as it were. To eat and drink down there---I find it marvellous! A genital banquet. Oysters on the half-shell, breasts of soft bread, onion soup, chateaubriand --a point!--. And from that same psychologic work the chant of the Australian bushmen (unfortunately translated into Latin: "Non fossa, non fossa, sed cunnus!") That's what

they utter in a ferocious, more primitive tongue (which probably retains the flavor of the genitals) during one of their solemn rites. And this it is that civilized man has somehow lost. Too often, when he is standing over a woman with his pants down, it is a hole he's looking at and not a cunt. And sometimes it's not just a mere hole--sometimes he thinks he's looking at a ditch, or a sewer, and what a degraded feeling that must be to pour one's vital fluid into a ditch or a sewer. How many beautiful sewers there are who think themselves wife or mistress or lover! What a commentary on the state of soul when one looks at that thing and calls it just a crack or something of the sort. When one finds it empty, or no different than any other hole. When one has lost the ripe significance of that universal expression--"to tear off a piece of ass!" I love everything that flows! Was it Joyce who said it, or myself--I don't know any more. I woke up one morning with that expression on my lips, and I was thinking of Joyce and of his rivers and trees and all that world of night which he is exploring like some vast, fucked-out cunt. Yes, I love everything that flows--rivers, drains, lava, semen, words; I love the punctured bag that ^{releases} ~~behaves~~ the amniotic fluid in which for nine long months we swam blissfully, without pain, regret, remorse, conscience, trouble, worry; but I love too the kidney with its painful gall-stones, its gravel and what-not; I love the urine that pours out scalding, the clap that runs endlessly, the words of hysterics that masturbate in a void, that flow on like dysentery and mirror all the sick images of the soul. I love great rivers, like the Amazon and the Orinoco, where crazy men like Moragagine float on through dreams and legends in an open canoe and drown in the blind mouths of the river speaking at the

last only gibberish. I love everything that flows, even the menstrual flow that carries away the seed unfecond, scripts that flow, be they hieratic, enigmatic, esoteric, everything, everything that flows. Everything that has Time in it and Becoming, that brings us back to the beginning where there is no end--the violence of the prophets, the obscenity that is ecstasy, the ecstasy that is delirium, the wisdom of the just man, the fornication of the fanatic, the priest with his rubber litany, the foul words of the whore, the spittle that floats away in the gutter, the milk of the breast and the bitter honey that pours from the womb, all that is fluid, melting, dissolute and dissolving, all the dirt that in flowing is purified, that loses its sense of origin, that makes the great circuit toward death and dissolution in order to begin again. Talk to me of heroes and myths, of mother longing and incest barriers, of the mystery of crowds and the great cities that were whores, of the revelation of St. John on Patmos--talk to me of this forever...it is not the language of psychologists, but the language of the soul. The great incestuous wish is to flow on, one with Time, to never stop in consciousness, in gesture or moral, to merge the great image of the beyond with the here and now, fatuous, suicidal image which is constipated by words, arrested by fear, paralyzed by living. The artist is an insane negro dancing on a vase that perpetually revolves. He is the caricature of a hero, a horse trying to bite his tail, a myth coming alive and trailing its bloody after-birth.

