

Rowdon

WAITING FOR-MELLI
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When Angelo and I met we were still the children of war: he from the fascist world, I from the anti-fascist. But fascism was one of the subjects we never touched. And by not touching it we secured a first mutual freedom: the European dream began for both of us. It included our own countries but in a strange way was the best in our countries. It came in glimpses. We learned fast from each other. He really showed me Italy---through the horror he felt towards it mostly, and through himself. And I showed him a bit of the world outside---in myself. We felt we shared the same dream and had done always. Now, for the first time, we were meeting in each other the protagonists of that life-dream---in the flesh; that was what made it remarkable for us.

Only in those first weeks in Rome did we really see a lot of each other. It was in a strange and even disturbing way like arriving home---back to ourselves---after a long journey that had begun with birth. Yet this home was a place we couldn't recognise, the language spoken wasn't our own, there were no familiar faces, certainly no friends. It was like meeting in a dream, and perhaps it could never have been anything but a series of vivid glimpses, in the heat of an afternoon. It had to be a completely inner thing. It couldn't develop, even. We couldn't have a real daily relationship. We had a kind of one for years---but there were long silences, of months, sometimes a year or two, and during most

of that time (after he moved to Paris) we were a thousand miles from each other in any case. Our meetings were brief. Perhaps we could only glimpse that sparkling and darkly unexplained and ecstatic world between us by being total strangers at the end as at the beginning. Our actual living worlds really were strange to each other. Or rather, they were the same in the darkness of night, in the passing of thousands of years of time, but different by daylight.

Angelò had never wanted to be a lawyer. He seemed not to know how he'd become one, either. A pained look came into his face when the subject was mentioned: his eyes would fix themselves darkly and blindly in a stare that was like stone and seemed as if it would last for ever. I remember the feeling of barrenness and hatred in his little Roman studio: the office-furniture was brand-new---clean, shining wood and steel; a typing table which could be wheeled about, bookshelves behind glass, a swivel chair, a long desk with easy sliding drawers that looked ~~as if~~ custom-built for dead routine; a lamp that could be turned in any direction and sent out a blinding light. None of it was used. A few books lay in the shelves, legal textbooks with slips of coloured paper in them as markers. Each morning he left the flat at nine or ten on a tiny motor-scooter, whirling through the streets blindly, his stare tense, his head uplifted, as he weaved in and out of the traffic and skidded. And always there was a slight fastidious look of recoil on his lips, helped by his slim nose.

He had studied music for five years---a fact he kept very quiet about at first. He had put all his piercing and stern southern will into that music, then given it up with disgust. This subject, too, he always brushed aside. 'I wasn't good enough!' he always said. And with a long sigh, through cracked

lips, a cigarette stuck uncomfortably between them, he would say, 'And I had to live---earn money!' Actually, he earned very little. The commissions were few. He was more or less an apprentice to another man, whom he despised and who laughed at him. Angelo hurtled back to the flat as early as possible, soon after noon, and plunged into music at once---the floor shook with his powerful loudspeakers. And he would pace the room, puffing air with quick gasps through his cigarette-smoke, squinting, coughing, moving his shoulder in a characteristic little hunching movement. He would talk---suddenly. The nastiness of the morning would slowly be forgotten.

In those first weeks he revealed Verdi to me for the first time. He made me listen to Il Trovatore. Then I think it was La Forza del Destino and La Traviata. The sheer horror of Il Trovatore---the absolute strokes in the music that are like strokes of fate---he pointed out as he strode up and down. He had a way of conducting the music and standing over you making wild faces, which was irritating but at the same time the thing that kept you alive to every bar. Later, in Paris, he grew ashamed of this warmth, which Francine told him irritated people: but without it he wasn't really himself. In those first days he used to grip me in the arm at a stirring passage, squeeze me right to the bone, with a sharp, thrilling gleam in his eye. He really became Verdi. Verdi was Italy. Inside Angelo they were united; and, as he said with disgust, so little of it was in the Italy you saw all round you. For me he began a search into Verdi which is like going into a vast unknown landscape little by little; and even after eight years this search seems hardly to have started. He found things for me that I thought couldn't possibly exist in life---even in music to which I'd always gone as a child with my

last insoluble problems.

He took me into his own real country through Verdi---to the basic harmony where all the colours and heat and strong undertones of Italian life were joined and integrated like the unfolding of a story that had never been heard before in the history of the world but had always been there, latent in the hot, golden dawns, a breathtaking spell at the centre of things, a sun like a gong in a cave. There was something basic and final and unchangeable about Verdi, as if he got down to the first tissues of natural feeling, in the clattering first bars and the gradual unfolding of his music that seemed never to hesitate but ^{to} ~~always~~ contain the fullness of each moment of sensation in depth, always burnished wonderfully like copper, with warm, saturating light, thrilling with a peculiar life-thrill that touched all the sources of taste and smell and sight. That was the first impression he gave me---in the terrific clanging introduction to La Trovatore, and in the theme of the gypsies that contained the sparkling light of their fires, and the heat and cicadas round them, and to give the glint of their ear-rings and show their bright, dark eyes, and carry off their fine, fatal, unswerving passion that knew nothing but its object and never the consequ-

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-ences or future and so plunged into the singeing fires of providence in the end. And there was always Angelo conducting--- peering suddenly into my eyes, quickly pointing something out, clutching his hands together, pacing round, while Francine sat quiet and still, letting it all break over her like the sea.

Years before, I'd heard Verdi's Requiem in London, but it was one of those concerts you can't say anything about because the music never seems to get home to you; you're ~~like~~ an on-looker, in a strange numbness of spirit. The music just floated away in a great block of sound while I sat watching it disappear. But it left me afterwards in a divided state. I didn't just put it aside as a concert I'd missed. ~~In a way, I felt I really had missed Verdi, too.~~ It wasn't just the concert. The Requiem was too---real for me, then. I wasn't old enough, I think. It needs tremendous maturity because it has the pulse and yearning of real religion, which we aren't used to. We aren't used to religion as the real burden of sorrow and anguish in life---in our life. *italy* We're all a bit protestant. Religion can be a sorrowful and anguishing spectacle---the Passion---we arrive sooner even at Bach's St. Matthew Passion, it is so much more in our experience. But Verdi's Requiem is a kind of argument straight from life; it is more Catholic than anything we know nowadays, in the church or outside. I don't think it is any easier for the Italian than it is for the foreigner. I think this is why Toscanini, while he did tremendously elemental and true readings of the operas, didn't get anywhere near the Requiem. He once said he wasn't mature enough for the Bach; but he needed precisely the same stretch ^{of} ~~and~~ experience---the same revolution--- for the Verdi. I only really heard Verdi's Requiem---it was revealed to me for the first time---in a performance entirely

by Russians, under an Italian conductor of Russian origin. There you got the marvellous anguish and also terror and love that seemed to come out of the night, in lonely voices that had no beginning or end.

So this was my first real knowledge of Verdi. More and more I got the sense of a tremendous story unfolding before me, but something I'd never known a hint of before in my life--- something tremendous that was inside the music and yet made out of the most basic and original source of life, so that it came out unhesitatingly and without preparation; in none of these great operas was there the slightest preparation for the next moment of feeling, only a swift and breath-taking thrust forward along the path that seemed to have been prepared from the beginning of time, launching the soul with a terrific invigorating thrust that swept away every false or sentimental or even aspiringly spiritual element because it was always concrete, always glowing and vivid, to be touched, never a departure into attitude or self or wasteful reminiscence, always establishing the real world, a world so rich that it could be praised and depicted and sung every minute of every hour for thousands of eternities and yet not be exhausted or reduced in one particle of its wonder.

Like all real art, Verdi is his country at its moment of birth and impact on the world; and because a country is always straining away from its birth and betraying it, art always soundly contradicts it as well, always goes in opposition. Underneath--- or rather, in---all Angelo's bitter outpourings about Italy, his horror of it and outraged misery, there was the real Italy, that was complete in him, as it had made its original impact on the outside world. And he knew England through me, through the same horror and outrage, it became intimate with him through me, he

knew it at the soul.

You will often get Italians saying they dislike Verdi--- as a matter of course. It is a sort of socially compelling remark. It is quite the thing. If you teach aeronautics at Catania university and happen to be at dinner with a marchese in Naples a remark like that could help to prove you weren't uncouth---not the dark, sniffing provincial up from the south who is secretly gloating over the waiter with coiled white gloves and over the faded, threadbare curtains, it could prove you know a thing or two. Verdi-opera played and sung badly is empty bombastic melodrama, full of vulgar Italian brío, behind which there is just self-soaking and a pagan insouciance to other people. And this is the Verdi you want to show you disapprove of. It is equivalent to saying you reject the village---the provincial who is always raising his voice and hasn't learned the fashionable city-restraint yet---the hot, dark, ^{self-}self-enraptured individual without a fine thought in his head or any knowledge of the cool, disciplined, foreign world Italy has now come to terms with. And poor Verdi can be made to represent all that. He can be made into the dark, feared, vulgar past. A little too 'loud', you know; a little too 'rough' here and there; a little too 'melodramatic'---all the things you fear you are yourself. Go a man's country tries to get its own back on him.

But of course Verdi is none of these things, though he is loud and rough and even melodramatic as the moment of feeling requires, as the truth requires. There is always this absolute created order in his work which deals with dangerous elemental forces and still is unshattered---this is the astonishing power in Verdi, that the whole world is about to fall, there is almost too much disaster, but the marvellous order remains unbroken, there is

the absolute continuous faith underneath, which all the pagan forces in the world can't finally touch. And the Italian who plays safe and wants to climb socially to the new, cool, disciplined order of the citizen-world that has come from abroad (as all real attitudes come to Italy from abroad), this delicate, cautious, observant creature who isn't quite lost or quite damned---he doesn't like that elemental thing, he doesn't want to play with fire, he's finished with the Italy that elbows and pushes its way through life. He wants a different order and poor Verdi is one of the sacrifices, because Italy can never quite reach that new order, she can never give up that invisible elemental fire that plays in the eyes of slaves---which you can see in the Marche, on the Adriatic side of Italy, mixed with desperation and boredom---and that always destroys any form. It was all tamed centuries ago, but it never really abated---it was never mastered. And Verdi did master it, as an artist must. He made a stunning conquest of this elemental fire---the seed of squalor in Italian life---through terrific trials and failures. Only an Italian knows what endless hours and days of despair this means. Only one or two men across the centuries have the real organic will for it: their surroundings give them no help. There isn't a standard for them, or an example---only from abroad. It was the same with Manzoni; Angelo told me about ~~his~~ ^{Manzoni's} life once---years and years of painful rewriting, to achieve his monument. He had to take from life---but all round him life ~~is~~ ^{was} formless; there ~~is~~ ^{was} no morality---order---grown into it---morality ~~is~~ ^{was} all rules, outside, a kind of luxury; life ~~is~~ ^{was} formless, basically helpless, an endless kaleidoscope of sensations gripping this individual and that, held together only from the outside, by power---the police, the church, the foreigner. Right at the bottom, Italian

life is pagan.

You could see how Angelo struggled with this elemental and chaotic fire in himself as well---it was particularly strong in him. It was in his feelings for women. As I say, a woman wasn't a natural person in a room for him---in those first days. She was continuously and unabatingly and proclaimingly a woman all the time she sat there, quite opposite to a man, distinct and not really free, always in the shadow of this fixed relation with the man. He was awed, disturbed, pained, thrilled, frightened by women in those days. I can remember our going to a little party together---it was someone's flat along the Via Nomentana; I can remember him dancing with a young American woman, a singer from one of the night-clubs, and to my surprise he was desperately embarrassed, the sweat poured out of his brow and he kept glancing and smiling at me as they shuffled together, he almost ^{hung} ~~hanging~~ on to her. It wasn't right for him. A woman wasn't that for him. And this woman---the foreigner---was a dominant creature for him: awe-inspiring as his own women weren't. This little party, where people sat and talked nicely and quietly, sipping their drinks and smoking and nibbling sandwiches, in corners and on settees, a mixture of Italian and English and American people, ~~was too open and relaxed and easy for him---that ease,~~ ~~was~~ was too open and relaxed and easy for him---that ease, which is partly indifference to other people, was something he hadn't learned, it was Anglo-Saxon, or French, but he hadn't known it in his own life, he had known conversazioni and student-parties, but he didn't know this casual world where sex and drinking and talk were all taken easily and slowly and politely in a kind of inseparable trinity which sometimes ended in disaster but not publicly at least; the party always went on, so to speak. There was something delicate and good-willed in the air at that

party, and Angelo seemed to thrive on this and understand it, yet at the same time he felt unworthy of it; though what he felt unworthy of I didn't know at the time. The big, pleasant, long-haired, smiling singer, with her bare arms and low-necked dress, seemed to intimidate him and take away his usual direct and inquisitive approach to people---his questionnaire-self. He didn't know her name, he wasn't introduced to her, but there he was in her thick arms, being led round and round the little room in a dance he'd never done before. With a sound instinct, Angelo was always formal. He never allowed himself a moment's casualness with another person, even a friend: in clothes or habits. He let fly with his mouth sometimes, into a scorching vulgarity, mostly towards Francine, but that was as far as it went. He seemed not to trust his own path: a decided manner, dress, walk, speech, were his crutch. There was that wonderful photograph of Angelo as a student which I looked at again and again when Francine showed it to me: ~~there was~~ such a total absence of bohemianism in it, none of the middle-class cancer. And there was so much of the old world: it took my breath away at first---Angelo going into a concert at the Teatro Argentina with an umbrella in his hand, his tie so straight, his head lifted, musingly and painfully, with a sort of strained delicacy, his eyes narrowed slightly, his frown fastidious and clear-cut, while he was caught by the flashlamp.

In this formality his lonely and inimitable nature stood out much better than it would have otherwise. In that photograph he seemed to be walking right out of the hot Roman world of that time---a Rome whose streets were drenched with brilliant, stifling sunlight, not thick with traffic as now, though perhaps noisier than now; a village-Rome, lazy, undisturbed, very southern, a

tiny city on two sides of a sluggish river, its population less than half what it had been in ancient times; without the tall, pastel-shaded blocks of flats on the outskirts, but with villas among trees; a Rome where leaves floated down in the fall and stayed where they were; whose centre, round Piazza di Spagna, as far as the Piazza Venezia at one end and the Piazza del Popolo at the other, straggling along the river in narrow, mediaeval streets towards the ghetto opposite Trastevere, was still in a southern sleep. And Angelo seemed to be stepping out of that hot, chaotic, bright world into the dimness of the theatre's foyer for music: form.

When ^{were} we alone together he talked about women. They were close to music in one way: a whole world of half-forbidden sensations, formed and finished for him to goggle at. The subject haunted and pained him. Just the thought of the smell of a woman would start him off. He talked about their hair, their feet---how he liked kissing their feet, softly, and going slowly upwards---and their hips, how rounded they were, bigger than their shoulders, and their breasts that were unfolded suddenly like a glimpse of heaven, hardly bearable. Sometimes it was an actual woman we'd met. Was she too small? too hippy? too twee? too commanding? too passive, perhaps? Or it might be the one imagined creature who was always in his mind---the most beautiful of all women who filled the room with every hungry desire when she walked in, and who made the men stop and gasp in the streets. There was, in fact, one very beautiful Roman girl in our circle who nearly fulfilled his expectations: and he stared at her, he clung to her hand, he gazed at her bosom so closely that he seemed to have fallen asleep, smiling and gasping and sweating ~~until~~ everybody was laughing.

There was always a feverish and troubled desire in Rome, a gnawing and obstinate passion that was only contained by its being so fleshly, without mental sympathies. Only the languorous, yearning flesh---on hot afternoons behind closed shutters, in cars at night (making them tip and roll slightly as you walked past them), under the trees in the parks, in a contact that was sudden and compelling---could quell this desire for a moment: but nothing in daily life, in people; no dream. Everything referred to the flesh. That was how Rome combined health and boredom so perfectly.

In that provincial world the cazzo---the prick---was an important and proud possession from the earliest childhood. It was the man's special acquisition, something by God's grace which set him apart from the other half of the species, and superior to them. Male and female were the fundamental division of life: you talked of your children as 'the male' called Antonio and 'the female' called Paula, not the boy and the girl. And the female at birth was a disappointment. A male was a great occasion. There even lingers in Italy a sense of the woman as a handmaid of duty, and the man as a kind of guest, waiting for his food and calling for his wine. It is an almost Arab sense of women, sometimes. It goes deep into the ancient world.

And in this world the easy freedom of the northern woman looked like the most blatant sexual challenge. The sheer openness and unguardedness of the north in sexual affairs was like a maddening invitation to sex at any time. There are no x corna in the northern world, no cuckold's horns, no such thing as infidelity because everything is free: this is the ^{first picture} ~~version~~ of the northern world that the southern provincial makes at his first astonished glance. He doesn't see the key to that freedom, which is invisible. He doesn't readily perceive the invisible.

As Angelo told me, the Italian doesn't see the 'invisible man' inside another person. It seems so easy for him to invade that northern world---snatch some of its prizes.

We saw less and less of each other after Melli and I started to live together. Once we met by chance at S. Felice in Circeo, by the sea, one Sunday afternoon, and nodded to each other like pleasant acquaintances.

Whenever we did meet in Rome it was stiff and unsatisfactory. The old warm speech was gone. It seemed to be because we were four now---two couples. Yet more seemed to be promised, because of that. We just waited, let things slide.

A few weeks after Melli arrived Francine took me aside and spoke to me in a rasping and bitter way, saying I seemed to have lost myself, I never visited them now, and when I did there was no longer the old passion in what I said; I held back, she said, and seemed cautious and didn't give myself; what had happened to me? I couldn't tell her I was changing myself, as Angelo would later on in Paris---because I didn't know. I remember we were walking down the hill towards St. Peter's, just the two of us, and she was very angry, pale and quivering slightly. All I did was shrug ~~myself~~ and smile at her; she walked into a shop and that was good bye. Angelo, as always in this kind of argument, kept apart. He didn't say a word before or after, in agreement with Francine. Any friction of that kind seemed to make him feel ~~exhausted~~ tired. Anyway, there wasn't a word between us for many months.

Melli and I went on living on the outskirts of Rome, making our first lives together timorously, building up bit by bit and day by day what had been smashed in both of us. There was no time for anything else. Then suddenly I phoned Angelo one day

to see how he was. To my relief he made a cry of delight, and we were soon ^{fixing} ~~making~~ a date. We all met again. But really it was the same as before. There was no development. Nor was there real ease, either, no real acceptance. The first flush of our friendship---when Angelo thought we could make a wonderful group together---was clearly over. Now we were separate again.

Really Angelo and I should have seen each other alone all the time. Then Rome would have tolerated it: a male friendship was within its traditions; above all, within Angelo's traditions. Women excited and divided him too much. He could never get used to their being in the same room. Their presence---like a heady smell---meant only one thing. But he'd chosen another world by marrying a girl from Paris. And Melli and I belonged to that other world by birth. So excluding the women wasn't possible. Yet anything less than that was made impossible by Rome.

My only enjoyable moments with Angelo after that, in Rome, were when the women weren't there---in a café, sitting in his car while he poured out his ^{complaints} against Italy. But these were snatched moments: they were really only urgent plans for him to get away from Italy. He always asked my advice: should he leave? And I said yes.

In our friendship, even later in Paris when it seemed to have entered a more northern equilibrium, there was always a negative element that seemed to come from him alone. He never really found his ease with us. He never really accepted us, because he never accepted himself in our presence. He would be at ease for a moment, then it would be broken again: it produced a sort of constipation, a most intimate physical refusal to give, in all of us. Nothing could be taken for granted. Because you weren't accepted in your intimate nature. There was a touch of the

German in it, as if Fr^ederick II the Hohenzollern, who after all had given Sicily her form in the middle ages, had left some of his character as well.

Slowly we began to see how Francine suffered: and, on the contrary, how she needed his coldness to suit her own reserve, even while it wrecked her. I had always been too busy with my friendship with Angelo to understand her: she'd been smothered under music and books and long confessions that went on five and eight and ten hours, through meals and endless cups of tea and coffee. In Rome he had yearned for other women: that was one of his big 'problems' there. Even with Francine in the street he craned round if he saw an attractive woman, and stood still. But that was over in Paris. The Parisian woman taught him respect. And he gave it grudgingly and slowly: but it cost him his desire. That aching, squeezed lust seemed to go.

He was always changing position towards Francine, in the intimate things: one minute he wanted her as he'd never wanted her before; then all he wanted was a break with the family. She was already, by nature, a nervous person, fragile and quick, especially quick to doubt herself; and she doubly needed a resting place in her intimate life. Really he was alone, as perhaps only a Sicilian, in his strange connection to the ancient Greek world with its stark absolutes and ideals disembodied from daily life, is alone.

There was no development in our friendship even when I thought there was, for this reason. For a long time after they'd moved to Paris---for about two years---we heard hardly anything from them; just one or two letters. They couldn't see us, he explained in his letters, because they were living 'in such

miserable circumstances.' For the time being. In Angelo's world, I realised, people didn't show themselves to each other in misery. Only when they could cut a passable figure did they show themselves, even to their closest friends. We just read his letters and left it at that, not quite understanding. He wrote that they were waiting for their house to be ready: they'd bought a little house. Then we should come. And stay with them. He seemed to need the carefully prepared scene. If a scene wasn't properly laid it was a disaster for him. As it turned out years later, our friendship ended when the scene wasn't sufficiently laid: we bungled our arrival in Paris, and were in a desperate state. At the moment when we needed his consoling talk most, it stopped.

The world he came from had absolutely no sympathy in it, no love. It was the classical world, really. And he seemed to become more classical as he grew older. The leavening influences of Italy---which are basically those of the church---seemed to cease. He became more stark, more crisp and slim, more piercing, more direct, with a great air of loneliness and desertion round him, as I imagine the Sicilian landscape to be. His soul burned and penetrated. It didn't communicate, except in tiny bursts. It didn't console, nor was it consolable. It was like the appearance of an ancient Greek soul---eager, gleaming, unsympathetic.

And together with this his daily life was more squalid than before. He was squalid at meals---snatching at his food, guzzling his wine greedily. His teeth were black from smoking. He made sneering remarks to himself, under his breath. He shot

insulting glances at Melli, as if to pay her out for any love he might have spent on her. Francine cried endlessly, the tears would pour quickly down her face and disappear again, apparently unseen by him. He was like the land and sky of Sicily, I told him at one of our last meetings: 'You're getting less and less of a person,' I said to him half-joking, 'you're a landscape, as every man must be, I suppose, if he develops properly---he must grow into the landscape of his country--- and you're the rivers and hard rocks and long, deserted beaches of Sicily, you're the torrid nights---the pitiless sea---!' And he laughed in his strange way, like a deer coughing, only high-pitched, his eyes almost closed with their usual languor.

I read once that in Sicily there was great squalor among people, whenever they were together, an inner squalor, and that only if you get away from them, outside the villages and homes, in the vast, still countryside that sweeps down to the sea, do you get to the real soul and origin of Sicily. It is hardly a human soul.

Yet Angelo's ^gmaze had a wonderful softness. And in his long elegies---about death, how senseless it made everything, about his drudgery at the office, and his shamed horror whenever he was with a group of people to 'enjoy' himself---there was such a soft regret that it was like music.

He was most at ease when he was alone with Melli and me together. He talked mostly to Melli---it was quite difficult for me to get a point home. Yet he wasn't at ease with Melli alone. He needed us both---and then all the dry, stark, lonely side in him flowed away. He was an extraordinarily loving person. Or rather, he had enormous capacities for love---they were latent like hot energies that must find a direction: but the theme that love presupposes---a theme of respect, basically---wasn't there; you have to know where you stand, to love; you have to have an image of the human creature, planted almost at birth. The consistency was lacking. And our consistency tired him---as it will do any Italian. He needed it, it was a haven for him, but he changed too rapidly and wholly ever to share it. His one consistency was truthfulness, and this is where he differed from all the Italians I know. He had none of their circumspection and deep instinct for compromise. He was circumspect in situations---he wasn't the one to go out and ^{fight} ~~fight~~ anybody. But ~~he was always~~ ~~absolutely and totally truthful in private.~~ I never knew him utter one word of false account. He delved into his own life with an extraordinary stark clarity, just as if he were rocks and the dim blue sea, and only had to say what was there. He talked about Francine in the same way, making her shudder. Nothing was spared this stark, clear gaze simply because he knew no other way: it wasn't an effort but his natural state. This is a very extraordinary thing, and I had never met it before in my life---an incapacity, a rooted and very nearly physical incapacity, for anything but the truth. Perhaps this is why so much has come from Sicily to Italy by way of writers, language, strength. 'Sicilian' is rather a term of contempt among the continental Italians. It means the crooked, vulgar, bestial peasant; or southern

hysteria; or a lost, hot, deserted landscape. But I sometimes feel it is the actual reality of Italy---Italy's whole truth. You hear people say that wherever Sicilians are together, on the same level of society, there is hate. But there is no love in Italy, either. There is sentiment, which the Sicilian doesn't practice. Though even here, in Italy, it stops at sentiment, without action being influenced. There isn't love between the sexes; no love, I mean, that is planted almost at birth; what love comes about---and you see it sometimes, especially in the poor---is from effort. There is no natural background of love and respect. There are attitudes, pretensions, sentiments. But the actuality isn't so different from Sicily, though you hardly see it on the surface; you can live in Italy ten years without knowing about it. I think there is the same stark, fierce, lonely and un pitying world underneath; only the church has softened the classical element, and with it the element of truthfulness, and with that the courage. It substitutes a kind of circumspect, hidden courage which can be recognised by its ^eshore corrupt tenacity. For this reason, the opposite world to Sicily is not to be found in Tuscany, in Florence, in the Romagna, as one might think because of certain northern traits, but in Rome, through the closeness of the church: there you find softness, compromise and a subtle lack of pride; in the Sicilian pride gleams like a frightening wound, as it did in all the pagan peoples. But in continental Italy this pride it still there; in fact, it governs the actions of life in an intimate way, as a fear of cutting a poor figure; it is perhaps the one stable criterion in Italian behaviour, the one means to self-examination; only it adjusts to circumstances, it is rarely direct and obvious, though fascism encouraged it---the forward thrust of the chin;

usually it goes softly, tempering the truth and weaving endless cobwebs of prevarication and embellishment---it is the thing that creates the sentiment and pretensions; and it can come out as the little act of disprezzo---the treachery that can never be discovered. But in the Sicilian the pride is still a stark, gleaming concern, unflinching and consistent; sometimes it is called aristocratic, by romantic people; but ^{it} is the opposite of any aristocratic quality, because its cause is a lurking sense of smallness. And it is direct. It doesn't try to undermine the enemy subtly, gnawing away at the fabric of opposition; this is more the Italian way. It kills, outright. It governs by fear, openly and clearly, as you see in the mafia. The mafia isn't a game, much less an exclusive bunch of criminals; it enters into every form of Sicilian life, intimately; everybody knows about it, though he might not say ^{so} much. It is the face of Sicilian pride.

Angelo always wanted to come and see us alone, perhaps because he had to be alone to be himself. It was how he wanted to present himself to us, without Francine. Perhaps this was why the friendship was suddenly destroyed. We arranged to go to France, that last time, with Francine, not him; she did all the preliminaries. It became, suddenly, a kind of family matter. And there he suddenly felt betrayed. He chose to be absolutely alone. He seemed to say, 'Very well, if these are my friends, I shall have none.' And on that last visit he went out of his way to show me how different, not how close, we were; in nearly every conversation. Then, in a little burst, there would be the old dream between us again. It was a distraught and sickening month. In the first few days we were with him, when Francine was away, he sat with us at table and said in a completely exhausted voice, 'You see a destroyed man in front

of you.' His whole life seemed to have collapsed. He was finding his whole life in Paris impossible. His health had gone several times: there ~~were~~^{were} weeks in which he lay in a ~~kind of~~ feverish torpor, thin and sallow-pale. But he gleamed brighter in the ruins. It was more like his own world. He didn't really want anything else. The ruins made it possible for him to be alone---they offered the ~~necessary~~^{desired} stark comparison between their ~~own~~ disorder and his ^{own} invisible form, which he rehearsed every day, more and more, ^{alone} in his room, ^{at the top of the house,} at a little desk he'd bought. The ^{downstairs} room ~~was~~ with the gramophone and books, where we'd spent so many hours, all four of us, talking and laughing and drinking tea, with this glowing inner world before us which we could never describe, because it was like something ancestral---that room became dead: it looked more like a waiting-room even than the one in Rome; it was dismal and frozy; no life ~~seemed to go~~^{went} on in it any more. He seemed to have chosen his invisible ^{form} ~~form~~ once and for all: and---in the terms of the world he ~~belonged to~~^{came from} this meant ~~the~~^{the} ~~of~~^{of} death ~~of~~ humanity in him.

When he came to England on his first visit alone he seemed to bury his head against my surroundings at first. It was strange. As the three of us were passing the gaunt, dismal building where I went to school at the age of four, and Melli was pointing it out to him, he turned away abruptly and said something grudging about not wanting a biography of me. But later, when he'd seen the home where I was born, he was different. He was even loving and gentle. But there was some essential respect missing all the time: some basic curiosity in people. There always had been.

And when we were walking along the main road near my home, with its purring trolley-buses and sombrely brilliant shop-

windows, and the dark side-streets with their peeling paint and dusty-looking bushes, he had much the same kind of answer when I said something about the 'industrial horror'. He said, 'Oh, you're obsessed with the industrial horror!' I began to realise when he said this that he hadn't the slightest key to half of the things I'd been saying over the years about those streets. In a way, he did see---with his sure instincts. But it was only the 'sadness' he saw, putting it next to the 'sadness' of his own world in Sicily. In his way of perceiving things the two worlds met. This is how he judged everything---at its kernel. He knew nothing about my world except at the point of eternity, where it touched his own, in the same numbness of soul but with different scenery. Once I talked about a visit Melli and I had made to Pescara^a, where there was a bit of industry--- on the Adriatic side of Italy; I said I'd noticed the beginnings of an 'industrial walk' and 'industrial forms of body' in the people there, which I thought could never happen to Italians. And he had brushed this aside as well. I think he evaluated it as a moral horror^{in me}; that is, ^{as} basically romanticism; therefore, a middle-class attitude. He didn't see the actual ~~problems~~ problems involved which Blake and every real writer after him had talked about. He seemed to see ^{industries} ~~it~~ in the classical nineteenth century way---as an experiment justified by its production; and ^{thus he} attributed to me the classical nineteenth-century recoil (by exactly the same class of people)---romantic horror at the idea of experiment. In this as in many other things he seemed middle-class. You could even say that his punctiliousness and formality were middle class. But in fact this wasn't so. It was only his enormous distance from any of the birth-pains of the northern world he now lived in. He saw its fruits and liked them better than

provincial squalor, as most Italians will. Wherever he went he chose acutely middle-class friends; quite often rich ones, too. That came from a problem in his own world, as well: he was so much in flight from 'vulgarity', and in his world vulgarity was represented by the poor and uneducated. So it approximated to a northern middle-class attitude without being it.

Only much later, on his last visit to England, did he suddenly realise---through his food-experience at the 'fashionable' store---what this so-called industrial horror might mean, beyond a romantic attitude. He suddenly knew it was something you couldn't brush aside, but on the contrary it could brush aside you---as it had done whole populations, whole hopes of a lifetime, the whole health of bodies.

And only slowly did I begin to realise that this invisible skeleton of schedule that had come into being In England didn't exist in Italy---or Germany---even where there were industries. That is, I realised that it was a life-characteristic, which you find in the Anglo-Saxon countries and also in France. I began to realise that it wasn't simply the human accompaniment of industry. It was the soul, perhaps, that ^{had} brought industry into being, but it wasn't necessarily brought into being by industry. I began to feel that industry could never have started in Italy or Germany, for some reason; though---just for that reason---it could be exploited better there, because it posed no horror.

What I learned slowest of all about Angelo and me was perhaps the greatest difference there was between us, which constantly divided us from each other unawares---our attitudes towards the working people. For me they were a kind of paragon of moral behaviour and cleanliness; they were society's safe anchorage,

really holding things together. But for him they (as peasants, since a working people barely exists in Italy) seemed to represent a background of darkness and ignorance. That wasn't the whole story. Those people were basically of higher moral worth for him, too: but only at the end, at the last frontier, so to speak, as they ^{had been} were for Verga, the Sicilian writer, after he'd finished his life on the mainland of Italy, at Milan, the northernmost city. But it ^{was} ~~is~~ the moral worth of ignorance. And I think it is the same in Germany. You get the same distance from the lower people, in the middle classes. There is really a total psychological gulf, as there isn't in France and the Angl-Saxon countries. The lower-class background is essentially the dark, feared past of ignorance and above all superstition---to an extent we can hardly conceive.

This is why there tends to be one speech for writing and declaiming in Italy and Germany, and another for ordinary talk. There is a rhetorical speech and a human speech, whereas in France and the Anglo-Saxon world the spoken and the written speech are the same---literature is simply people talking, and if they use a special language this means they are precious and false. If you want to be healthy in your writing you have to be truthful and natural, and talk as you would to your wife or a friend. Choosing words too carefully, riveting up and tinkering with your sentences like little bits of jewellery or machinery, is provincial in our world. But a tremendous journey has to be taken by the Italian or German writer before he can achieve anything like this ease, which we inherit naturally. The snares of vulgarity---banality---are always in front of him, for the simple reason that any special speech always risks the rhetorical,

of which banality and vulgarity are the bowels, so to speak; if you talk too high and lofty you risk giving the impression not of being extra-clean but of having perhaps a stink in your pants, which you are trying to ~~hide~~^{hide}. This is the other side--- the arse-side---of measured and solemn and carefully worked-out sentences. What happens if you belch suddenly or let out a fart? You're caught! So it is better to start off natural if you can; and for the provincial culture this is easier said than done. What is natural? There is no natural way of speech that passes for every occasion; essentially, there is no society, no solidarity between people. Above all, the pervasive tenderness you get in people in France and the Anglo-Saxon countries, which comes from an intimate society that has grown organically over the centuries, is mostly absent in the provincial world. The tenderness is lacking because respect between people is lacking, basically. Society in the proper sense---and therefore literature---means respect. And in the provincial countries respect is reserved for power. Respect is shown to people with power, or to people when they show power---not necessarily money-power, but any sort of human power. The respect isn't for the creature in himself, who shares rights with everyone else. There is no monsieur or mister, essentially. A man with power tends to keep it and he is expected on the whole to abuse it, ^{in Italy and Germany} He isn't naturally disposed to share it or discuss it with those who don't have it. And--- unlike in the rest of the European world---power attracts the humble and intelligent, they find ready excuses for it even when they are its victims; while in our world power at once creates its rebels. Rebellion in the provincial countries isn't a tradition, it has no form and excites no respect: on the contrary, it is chaos. The wild, embittered assailant of power would be quite as unjust if

he had any himself. He hates it because he wants it and lacks it. Whereas, in our world, there is a form and tradition in rebellion; there is a natural stir of indignation in us, which brings a flush of freedom to our cheeks, and to be real this must be on behalf of other people, with whom ~~we~~^{we} are in solidarity not through identity of interest but through belief; the man of spirit tends to excite admiration in our world. But in the provincial world, especially in Germany, he is simply insulting: he excites disdain. This is fundamentally because each man is alone. In the provincial culture you are expected to be working for yourself---you flush with indignation at a challenge to your own interests, but hardly for anything else. Self is the basic reservoir of ideas and struggles, while in our world a man in his utmost solitude is still inside a community of souls whom he can address. If you want to go your own path in the provincial countries you have to be a real Hercules---both to avoid the world round you with its stings, and an excessive solitude. If you want to be distinct, as a writer or doctor or anything else, you have to go against everything round you, you have to choose a kind of bloodless and terrible isolation which we in our world can hardly imagine. We are wrecked in our world; much more so, in an open and public way. But we are always paid that essential respect, of having the right to choose for ourselves. But in the provincial culture that respect which should accompany every stage of life like music isn't there. You will lose your grip on morality---almost certainly---because you can't invent morality alone, it has to come through solidarity with others, it comes with speech. Alone we aren't enough. But in that ^{provincial} world your first stand has to be alone. You are like a person at the edge

of a vast flood trying not to get his feet wet---haunted by vulgarity, banality, madness, chaos, self-obsession, all the pitfalls of the creature who is denied society.

I only know one clear example of the same thing in England and that is the writer Joseph Conrad. He was brought up in the other tradition, close to the German world, but he used English. So you get a glimpse of it through the way the language changes under his pen. First of all, it isn't English. It isn't us. When you read Conrad you feel you are reading a kind of translation without it having the disadvantages of a translation: you are listening to a real man, only translated in some way. And because his concepts are for us lofty---that is, they begin not in a human situation but in the reflections of a lonely and cultivated man---there is a terrible vulgarity in his work now and then which you never get in an English writer of the same extraordinary powers. You see it sometimes when he talks about people of the lower classes, even when he is admiring them. They aren't quite whole. He can't quite see them. They're half caricatures, half serious sketches. The barmaid in one of his short stories has large bosoms---no name; she is Miss Blank. She has no speech when we go into the bar---no light little gestures; though we've been going into this bar for years and she knows us well. She seems locked in her low status. And this is really the status of vulgarity---a kind of blind inner ugliness and smallness: essentially, she hasn't got beyond primitive evacuation-difficulties---her sweat probably stinks, she might let out a fart through shere lack of proper control. This is probably what provincial vulgarity is at the root---something to do with evacuation, with the question of primitive control. It reminds me of Angelo's frequent recoil from people---his nose lifted slightly with distaste, from the

impression of stink. The barmaid isn't due, in other words, for Conrad's respect. But in an English as in a French story she would have a name, she would have little original mannerisms that seem to come out of a great organic culture and civilisation; she would be a living element in the story. She would have respect. She would be in a society---though the writer might snub her and think of her as a low element. The essential human respect would still be there. For Conrad it was a different question: he was only stating the values and standards to which he belonged, and to which for him literature belonged, and to which this barmaid certainly didn't belong. He wasn't being a snob, just a writer: by being that, he was at once separate from the elements of ignorance in the barmaid. For us this is loftiness and snobbery, but in the other tradition it is a real antithesis. While the language of the common people feed literature in England and France, while it is the fount and womb of all speech, it means in the provincial countries mainly the parochial idiom. I have heard an Italian writer say that he always tries to speak in 'correct' Italian, and that talking to the common people is becoming for him like talking a 'foreign language'. There isn't the slightest snobbery in that. It is just an acknowledgement of the fact that in the provincial world society begins with the educated: whereas in the metropolitan countries it is already there long before ~~the~~ educated ⁱⁿ start^s, in the working people and the labourers as in the higher classes, often more in the lower than in the higher. Each class in the metropolitan world is far from evacuation-problems, or vulgarity, and there are inherited forms of tenderness and respect which have nothing to do with ordinary social politeness (if anything, ^{which are,} greater in the provincial

world). Stendhal once said of the Germans that they were too lacking in modesty to be tender, and the same could be said of the whole provincial culture, the more so the further south you go, until in Sicily you arrive at a world where each man is a law to himself, hemmed in only by fear of other men's power, sometimes scheming to assert himself, with the resources of silence and isolation, so that 'respect'---fear---will one day be shown him in turn.

I shall never forget Angelo sitting with five or six other people in the garden of that little house near Paris, at our last meeting; all the others were French, by origin or upbringing. And he sat low in his deck-chair, a wan and terrible expression on his face, like a ^{dying} man, ~~near to death~~, his nose aquiline and thin, his eyes dark and half-closed and threatening, with the sheer exhaustion of the afternoon---of being with other people. Yet for the rest of us---each of us fairly shy, in his way---it was a congenial and easy afternoon, with that long inconsequential hum of leisure that is so beautiful on a hot summer day, in a garden. I could see what an enormous, and inwardly hysterical, effect it had on him; just the step necessary to talk to someone else seemed to need a huge effort in him far beyond shyness or any social reluctance; he wasn't shy. Each time, it seemed to mean the creation of society all over again, from scratch. It meant a conscious performance of some kind. You could feel it in the way he used the word cretini, too; the rest of the world was always a cretin. He was always trying to persuade his friends to pierce the enormous mists of cretinism all round them. It was right, he was less of a cretin---but it made one giddy. Was the saying of it enough? Was that all there was to be said for the great bulk of creaturehood? And his French friends recoiled

from this, while attracted by the appearance of certainty. Partly it was a sense of the happy few, like Stendhal's, and partly it was this other thing---a distaste for the ignorant, shuffling peasant-mass, with their primitive problems of control. Perhaps that was how he saw the whole world, even the northern world---in terms of that peasant-mass; obsessed more and more by the problem of vulgarity. It was certainly on his face more and more, in those last days, especially when he met people for the first time. It came out most sharply when he was talking to Kelli one afternoon, after a sad and tense lunch when we had had absolutely nothing to say to each other. Between murmuring and cursing to himself he said to her that of all the thousands of people in a concert hall listening to music only a hand-full, people like ourselves, really knew what was going on or really experienced anything. He told her this in a soft way, as if ridding her of an illusion---one of the public illusions/a real person is expected to grow out, like awe for newspaper personalities. But she fought him strongly. She wouldn't have it that all those thousands she'd seen pouring into halls in London were just---cretins. There was something more to it than that. And music was more universal than that. Real understanding was for the tiny hand-full, but there was more to what the others took from it than that. People had far more understanding than he thought, she said. She stuck to her point, with that flat and pouting resistance that seemed to come from aeons of freedom, while I kept to the edge, prevaricating, letting her fight it out, because I had no contact with him these days. And it was so clear that the crowds pouring into the concerts were quite different for him---they were more the hordes of the ignorant and brutish. That was 'majority' in his world. A certain tenderness, a certain

dreaming in their faces would I think be lost on him. He wouldn't see it, perhaps. I remember how he stared rudely at a young couple---really a boy and girl---in London once, in a train, and how disconcerted they were. Pity didn't make him turn away. They were abashed, and the boy---though Angelo could hardly have known it---was shocked and hurt, I think. It was strange: no pity came to Angelo's rescue. There was that final cold separation from the other human creature. Contrary to popular suppositions, the coldness between people grows the further south you go, not vice versa. Only it is never stiffness.

Perhaps in Angelo's world the mass of the people weren't free; I mean, they weren't seen as free. They were a horde. And one remained in thankful and stoic isolation from this horde. You got those hordes in a Sicilian square, with black suits and black hats, just staring. Perhaps that was the world at the back of his consciousness---the starved Sicilian world where you hate your equal, and where society must mean the conspiracy to obstruct. And you become more and more haunted by the endless web of this obstruction, which threatens you equally in a friend ^{as in} ~~or~~ an enemy---all are enemies basically. I remembered an Arab saying---a friend is equal to a thousand enemies? No good, in that world, could come from people joining together.

I saw this again so clearly when we were with a young French couple in a Paris café one evening. He was suffering hell at this time. He had kept on saying to me, 'I'm completely demolished, you know---this world has finished me.' Paris seemed really to have crushed him. And it had brought out his own world in him, more and more. I could hardly recognise him. He'd been so different in Rome. But then he had told me that his Roman friends had softened him so much. They'd had a good

influence. At this café it wasn't just that he was formal. There was something extra---something pained and disgusted. He seemed engulfed with disgust, and it coloured other people in his sight. He sat ^a aloof and straight-backed. They were our friends and he had met them for the first time. And I felt nervous on their behalf, just as if I were with a snob and was afraid they wouldn't come up to his mark. So much seemed to have changed in him, yet I suppose it wasn't a real change. As he sat there he was like a man listening to a hundred accusations, mostly about his dignity. He was all dignity. Nothing else---not the Angelo I knew; he refused to give a glance in my direction, and when I spoke he switched away abruptly. And, being a great person, he carried it all through outrageously, without proportion, like a clown. He lifted his head up so that his neck looked stiff like a giraffe's, and his lips were pursed as if he were playing the oboe, he turned stiffly this way and that and also made the most remarkable little speeches in French, like an essayist with five hundred words as his limit. They were like school essays. And he spoke as if he were the centre of all attention, naturally; not many months before he would have striven hotly for attention. Much of his self-doubt had disappeared, but with it his softness had gone, too. We sat at a table near the entrance; Francine was talking to the girl mostly, while Melli talked to the man. Angelo and I sat in silence, hooking on to the other conversations now and then. Every word I said provoked pained recoil in him. We had now been together two or three weeks, and in that time he must have murmured Basta, basta---enough, enough---to himself a hundred times. He had prowled round, sending out shafts of invisible hatred, which went to my stomach like wounds.

But in the silence of that café I began to compare him

with the rest of us and ask myself where the difference lay; because he was quite separate. And it seemed to lie in the matter of ease. We were easy, our talk was casual and without rehearsal; again, I don't mean that we weren't shy; simply that our natural and in-born mode of speech was an easy one. It had never occurred to me before how much this was so, but I saw it now by comparison. We all seemed to have grown up in a kind of inner society, and Angelo hadn't. If anything, Angelo had less shyness (an effect of society) than any of us. But he was alone in a basic way which we weren't. And every word he spoke, perhaps for this reason, was an act of figura; it was a deliberate making of an effect---he was cutting a figure. Not boasting, of course, or anything like that: just aware of the figure he would be cutting in every word he spoke. And when the rest of us talked we weren't making figures of any kind; we were just listening or asking questions; we were visibly passing the time, in the warmth of company, we were sitting in various relaxed ways, whereas Angelo was tense, nearly to the point of hysteria, as I could see. When the rest of us talked there was no competition between us. Angelo gave a little speech on Rome---after the other man had asked him simply if he had ever lived there. I could hardly believe it. The essay was pedantic and lifeless; he tried to give a kind of resumé of all the main features of the city, but in a school-way---character of the people, form of government, influence of the church, artistic achievements. It was staggering. And the other man---a business man---looked at him quietly, then gave it up and turned away. Angelo would have done much better to say 'I hate the city' or 'I love it'; this is what he would have said in the old days. Afterwards, when we were all standing outside the café saying good bye, Angelo was

at his peculiar giraffe dignity again; he bowed slightly to the woman, his lips dry and his eyes completely disenchanted---with so little charm, so little softness; no feelings for others whatsoever, no living sense of them. A dry, isolated, tortured man whose thoughts cut like steel. And when we got back to the house it was the old painful theme---the woman had been a 'cretina'. You could feel the awful barrenness of the world through him. The streets outside seemed wind-swept and deserted, terribly hollow. Yet in other years they'd seemed enchanted, when we'd all walked arm-in-arm together by Notre Dame or through the Champs Elysées.

That last visit to Paris came after nearly ten years of friendship. Suddenly all the life Melli and I had been trying to make in England collapsed and we had to get out fast. There was no money and we made a big scramble to get out before it got worse. Paris was our first stop: we would be there a month, recuperating from England and basking in our friendship, the four of us, with children close by; then we would go on to Rome, to our flat. Just as ^{Angelo}~~Angelo~~ had recuperated with us, ^{once} from Paris.

But I had an inkling of what was going to happen already in England. It was a dull sensation as I walked in that lonely and marvellous garden where we stayed, like a tiny island between hideous towns and highways; there was the red-roofed barn at the end, under elm trees; it was a dull sensation among many others, since life was falling to pieces so quickly and in so many respects. That was a great year of change. Everyone else's life seemed to have changed, too. It felt as if reality had suddenly come back---all over Europe. Hates showed through at last. Things found their proper level. Together with the terrific changes in our life, Melli and I were calmer and more

satisfied. We were ourselves.

It seemed that something had died---some ~~terrible~~ falsity hanging over life. New positions had to be taken. It felt as if an old experiment had died. The change meant ~~terrible~~ upheavals---we went through more than ever before; but they were in the right direction---they weren't useless suffering but proper, for the first time.

We were little pawns in this change. We just watched. And the collapse of our friendship was one of the things we watched. It was suddenly before us. But Angelo and I had no differences. It was even cool and aware. He was perfectly clear about it in the last few moments we saw each other. So was Francine. ^{She} ~~They~~ said he had changed totally from what he'd been a year or so before. He had to be alone. It was best for us, too. He said in a quiet voice, in that tone he sometimes had of ~~absolute~~ fatigue and yet clarity, that he had no right to use his friends like 'objects'. He couldn't make a spectacle of himself---a bad spectacle, to such close friends. He had to go away because he wanted to keep our respect for him. His respect for us made him want to go away. And he uttered one of the most terrible---and Italian---things I have ever heard: 'I never know what I shall be the next hour---the next minute.' And this, he added, was the only way he could live---by facing it. And Francine had accustomed herself to it---she went her way while he went his. It seemed that our relation with them imposed too much of a form on their relation with each other. This was why Angelo always wanted to be alone with us. And it was why the friendship collapsed when we had a thriving relation with both of them for the first time.

This happened, typically, in Rome. Angelo and Francine left Paris before us, for two weeks' holiday in Rome, and were to stay in our flat, awaiting our arrival. The friendship therefore began and ended in Rome. This city, which is no more than its people, brings everything out into the open. I've always noticed that. It takes the ambiguity out of every situation, and makes or breaks it thereby. People become clear in Rome for the first time, though you may have known them twenty years or more.

The tension between us mounted terrifically in the tiny, stifling flat, then broke---and they were both driving away in a taxi with their bags, for the last time. He was ill, pale, feverish. He couldn't bear to live in such proximity to us---so naked to us. We were calm and happy enough, and thought at first that the Paris friction must have passed: the chill of fear from those silent, threanted nights in the French countryside, the sense of political violence in the air, was over. We were delighted to be among our own things again.

But Angelo was still locked in his pale, venomous isolation. He kept to the bedroom with Francine---the door and windows tight closed despite the overpowering heat. Sometimes he flew into a rage and we could hear things flying about the room, and Francine crying. Then he emerged: he had to go---they would be better in a hotel---it would be better for us, too, more cour^eous---he must feel free, to come and go as he pleased. But couldn't he feel free with us, of all people? ^{we asked him.} We stared at him in amazement. No, he just had to go away. And, please, we were to feel no rancour.

Perhaps the friendship collapsed into its real self. Perhaps the friendship we have now---of silence---is what we were working towards. At the frontier of the invisible, when we seemed about to become practical friends and knew the recital of each other's difficulties by heart, it stopped. He took the necessary action; but only because it was inevitable, perhaps. It was a devastating shock, among all the others we had just had in England. It seemed ^{that} our chief consolation in life was dead. But afterwards, in a strange way, it was better. There was a sense of relief; a new sense of freedom which we couldn't understand. We both buckled down happily to work again in Rome. Perhaps Angelo's intuitions had seen this beforehand.

He could only take action from himself; from the state of his own feelings. In that way, he never used judgement. He acted straight from his thoughts; they were his spring of energy. That was the only way open to him because he had no society in him. He had to take his immediate, dazzling-clear appraisal of things, because he was alone. I remember how he described a young German once---'He's lost his eyes---when he sits at table he's looking for his eyes all the time---on the floor, under the table, but they've gone---!' And this was an exact description not because it hit off a characteristic of the man but because it conveyed his whole approach to things---it showed you at once an image of his pale, stretched face, that had taken so much suffering without ever understanding it or penetrating it to a cause.

Angelo's judgements of other people---or rather, his pictures of them---were never tempered with sympathy, so there was no danger of

sentiment. This is what his friends recoiled from; partly ^{asked for} they ~~wanted~~ sentiment, and partly they were held back by ^{feelings,} ~~these~~ of 'There but for the grace of God go I...' So there was an element of courage in Angelo's intuitions as well: he didn't care if the judgement was turned back on him; really, he wasn't aware that it might be---there was no society in him, as there was in his friends. ^{B.W} Suddenly this starkness of his would make a recoil even in himself, afterwards. I remember we were in a village once not far from Paris, buying cakes, and I said to him in Italian, didn't he think the shopwoman and her daughter looked awfully miserable? And he said at once, 'Don't deceive yourself. They haven't got feelings like yours. Don't put your feelings into them.' I shut up at once, as always when I hear something ~~really~~ outside my psychology. And he seemed aware, with his lingering sensitive ^{self-doubt,} ~~anxiety~~ that there was probably something more to be said. I think there was a ~~extraordinary~~ brilliant delicacy in him which regretted what he'd said.

During that last visit he talked to Melli---for the first time---about his fascist education, and what ruin it had made of his life. He'd been sent as a child to a fascist school, which I ^{hadn't} ~~didn't~~ know before. He said it had stopped all real education. And he had always suffered from this---from a sense of never being able to catch up; as if real literacy was barred him. Only Rome had shown him something other than fascism, he said. Otherwise, it was all he knew as a child. He talked about this in a pained and hushed way, like a man making a series of last confessions.

It was funny, I'd never associated him with fascism. But I remembered I had once, briefly, before we really knew each other. It was at our first meeting, in Rome, when

we were sitting at the lunch table, in the half-darkness, sipping the last of the wine, with the sun gleaming through little chinks in the shutters. And that subject, fascism, seemed there, in the shadows. But it was triumphantly passed over between us. I can see now what a triumph that was, so soon after the war, to forget that I was English and that he was Italian: to let a whole basic history go by the board, because we knew what a reward there was in store for us. We overcame politics---and five years of concentrated war-publicity, which is the most insidious and wicked of any. For me fascism was a kind of black core you might find at the heart of any Italian: something spooky. So I had no difficulty in keeping off it.

This was the kick we got out of each other at first: freedom from war. Suddenly we realised we needn't be the slaves of smear-journalism any more. Hitherto we'd never shared dreams with anyone outside our own worlds. But I think I can remember the dim sensation at the back of my consciousness of Angelo as a fascist: I don't mean fascist in thought, but by birth, by torture, if you like. It never came into my mind clearly, but there was a certain hidden recoil in Angelo, an hauteur---a certain imposed dignity that lurked there---which belonged to fascism. It was an inaccessibility to freedom. It was something black. It was a negative painted world---the world was painted bright colours but these were cheap and artificial; but of course the child had taken them as bright. It was a sense of a black negative centre that dangerously disturbed the natural world all round it. The colour was always black, even inside the bright colours. Black was the colour of the absolute negative; the no-colour; it was like the perversion of life to the point of exaltation.

Exaltation was a strong element. The black centre exalted to be putting an end to life. And it was strange that in the last months of our friendship, when all his childhood was reappearing to him and he was perhaps facing his past square-on, he and Francine ^{were} ~~were wearing~~ black most of the time, entirely black---black coats, black stockings, black shoes, black ties, even black shirts. They made strange figures in England---pale and clear-cut in their black, against the green fields and hedgerows. A great negative had been done to life. The black disturbed Melli. She said so at the time. She didn't know why.

He turned Francine into a kind of Clytemnestra in those last weeks. Her face changed. It became longer and paler, with stronger lines---not quite wrinkles but the tragic lines you see in the actress, from weeping and lamenting twice-nightly.

Everything round him had to be classical. There was now a classical silence in their Paris house, in the last months. His room upstairs was classical: a couch like the one Napoleon's sister posed on in the nude; a simple table, a chair, no marks of trouble or movement or even work. Everything became the assertion of form---logic and form: ~~but~~ not of course our intellectual logic---^{but} ~~this was~~ the logic of the Greeks, a harmony of universals. His clothes became starker and tighter: the lines were bolder, especially in black. And every vestige of human sympathy, erratic and unsteady, seemed to disappear from both of them. They became paralysed in this constructed form, which Angelo perhaps needed to save his life. And our presence (the voice of his past) made it all the more necessary.

Rome had softened him in the war-years because it was by nature

the least fascist of Italian cities. There isn't the right pride in Rome. There is a bit of the ancient bombast---cutting a figure again---but the city has passed under a lot of wreckage since then. There is something more like Jewish resignation in Rome, a sense of the passing of things, the doom behind all power. It comes from real knowledge. And this knowledge, from centuries of watching the rise and fall of power, acted on Angelo when he first came to the city.

There was something too neat and finished about fascism for Rome. She doesn't like too much assertion, just as she doesn't like finishing a building. I haven't seen a really finished building in Rome, either old or new. Something has to be left, a bit of nude staircase or a gaping cellar, to let the spirit out; you don't want to wrap things up too neatly. Too much logic stuns life. Opposite principles went on in Angelo---one said that for freedom you have to let things slide a bit, the other that some strict action is necessary---even some damage---to stop a mess. I suppose you are only free when these two things are melted into one intuitive sense of fate. Socrates had it, which is perhaps why he was persecuted. And you found it in English politics, when there was such a thing.

The Romans are empiricists as the English used to be, except that they don't wait and see, they just wait. When you've finished waiting for one thing to collapse you start waiting for another. The con^soling element in Roman noia lies here---you are waiting all the time in a kind of eternal ante-room, and you dream of the room on the other side of the door which you never penetrate, it gives a glow to your ante-room, even though nothing real can possibly happen here---because everything takes place in the other

room, in the last, magnificent salon of all. Nothing happens in Rome. And Angelo was softened under this first shadow of real humanity.

Fascism, like its child nazism, wasn't a political doctrine in the Anglo-Saxon sense at all, but a facet of the provincial temperament. Its basic interest was to cut a figure in the world. The Italian preoccupation with figura was its seed. And both movements followed a theme that had been going on in the middle classes of Germany and Italy for decades before: namely, that you have to show some vitality, there has to be action, something must be disturbed, otherwise there is death and emptiness. That, underneath, is the provincial situation. Thus, people completely innocent of the political ideas of fascism and nazism were the causes of it---they bore it in their way of talk and gathering together. In the provincial world, however you may try to escape it, you begin to cut a figure the moment you go among other people. I don't mean you try to show off. But you try to be lively, you have a certain idea of the form any conversation should take, and in some way every conversation you have outside the intimate family-circle is a performance. This is so in Germany and Italy. Really the effort Angelo always made when he was with other people---even, as we found out, with us---was the effort involved in all provincial gatherings. The idea of society as a source of ease and natural behaviour is absent to the provincial consciousness, so that there is no society in the proper sense at all. This lack of society was exactly what caused fascism and nazism,

not the arrogance of the Italians or the murderousness of the Germans. The Italian is rarely arrogant, and I've never known a murderous German.

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I believe that Angelo never really perceived me as a whole, only as moments. At one moment I was lively and gushing, striding all over the room, at another I was sad, at another comic, and at another I was just absent, a pesce morto, a dead fish---doing, saying, apparently thinking nothing. He often used these words: he would say, 'You're sitting there like a dead fish!' This is very Sicilian, too: everything is moments, without theme. You suddenly, in that world, achieve God: you suddenly put out massive branches like an oak, you tower over other people, delivering yourself---for a moment. Then there is silence again. For you aren't an oak: you are only one for moment, then you go back to

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yourself---to noia, tedium, being a dead fish.

And perhaps this was the cause of the ^vnerous unreality which always existed in our relation with Angelo. It was never safe and it was never relaxed. Being relaxed might be one of those moments, but it didn't embrace the whole. That was partly its excitement, too. But it wasn't friendship in the sense I'd always used the word. There was no real theme, no solidarity--- just brilliant moments. In the beginning it was an extraordinary exploration taken on by two strangers, one of them born in a London street, the other in a village near Marsala, with amazing affinities between them. And from that, after ten years, it threatened to become either friendship or, in the only other relation of comparable intimacy in the provincial world, family. And Angelo wouldn't tolerate family. Not after those brilliant moments.

For there is this basic difference between our world and that of the provincial culture, that in the latter you only let your hair down in the family. Friendship is reserved for other things---and least of all relaxation. And our mode is totally opposite to that.

If you let your hair down with a friend in the provincial world you run the great danger of letting your whole self go--- of appearing a sheer helpless mess. Power finally is what counts, and family is a shelter from the stings and humiliations of power. And here I was taking to Angelo all my indignation about power, while he ~~took~~ ^{heard} it as a kind of family-confession, ~~or~~ ^a as wound-licking! In his world friendship has to be solace--- from this wound-licking as from anything else. It has to be soaring moments. It has to be above the squalid shared stinks of family-life. In his world the family is still the reservoir of your shit on the one hand, and your sperm on the other.

And friendship offers a rescue from this. No wonder he murmured to himself in those last days, 'What friends these are!' I can see so clearly now how impossible the difference between our worlds made any friendship. I remember, on the last day we saw each other, in the terrific heat of Rome, Francine said to me quietly, 'You see, Angelo can't live ~~un~~unbuttoned.' There it was. All I could do was blink at her in a baffled way. Had we lived unbuttoned? I became conscious of my open shirt. But after all the weather was sweltering. I all of a sudden felt why Angelo was so punctilious about his dress. And he couldn't bear me to be slovenly, especially when other people were coming. It was as much as he could ^{do} to take off his jacket in the evening, when we were all alone together---friends of ten years standing. He had a marked horror of showing his body. When we told him once that we'd bathed naked with some ~~people~~^{friends} we knew he was horrified. 'The body isn't to be joked about.' Sex, like your most intimate doubts about yourself, were for the darkness. And family was darkness.

So quite suddenly, at the moment when we were offering him the first step towards real intimacy, by telling him our most intimate troubles, the friendship ended, when we least expected it. I think he began to see me as formless, even with a touch of vulgarity. And he turned away in horror---it was a great crashing blow for him, too.

Yet only a few weeks before, he had written to us in England, 'I'm yearning to see you again, just two days after leaving you.' It was so strange, their wearing black on that last visit. He seemed to take an intimate, hidden pleasure in himself when he was in black. He was reluctant to take it off in the evening, when we had visitors. They were like birds

^{the two of them.}
of doom, / It made them look dry, pale, utterly closed and symmetrical. Perhaps fascism was black because it had no real pleasure, no joy, no intimate affection or waywardness, no gentle little folly. Just the stark, clear-cut silhouette, in black. Nothing untidy, nothing left to chance, nothing badly done. At this time there seemed a real fear in Angelo of doing something shoddily. He would say, 'You wouldn't expect me to do it badly, would you? Then I'd rather not do it at all!' And when I said to him, on one of the last days, that he should by now have made his room upstairs his 'temple', staying there more and more, to tackle the bitter struggle of his work, he said, 'Yes, I know what you mean---and I do struggle---I give myself to it all the time---you must believe me---but you don't expect me to sit there and turn out bad work, do you?' It was such a rhetorical question that my natural answer, 'Yes!', was stopped. It seemed that the idea of figura was still operating, even in the silence of his own room. That was the bitterness of the struggle. ^{An} ~~The~~ invisible cruel spectator was still there, ^{looming over him.} Perhaps more so now than ever before. He had to have all his dignity to face him.

And in our world that cruel spectator isn't there. He isn't there at the beginning, at least, as we grow up in the community of the dead, with their wonderful consolations that are like the countryside---which are our countryside---and neither are they there at the end, when we've won through in the struggle. They're there in the middle a bit---making us stumble, but they seem to be of social composition.

It makes such a difference, this soil we grow up in, bequeathed by the dead. In the provincial countries there is no real soil of this kind. There is the wonderful sturdy natural soil. But the community of the dead is so remote. At best, in youth,

it is a dead school-idea, stuffy and ink-stained and academic: the museum of the past, which you need to have a connoisseur's knowledge of before you can lift up your head and talk^{about it.} So it isn't a real community. You must 'know' so much---especially if you give yourself the air of wanting to join that community. And Angelo was pained by that---how much it was necessary to 'know'. He studied hard---for hours in his room upstairs: he studied Italy.

In the provincial world there is nature---which we have got so far away from. Nature is ~~the~~^{the} strength^{of Italy and Germany.} But there is no soil in the sense of an inherited form of life---behaviour, speech and dreams that cut through all classes and constitute the inner society. There is no society based on the creature's act of identifying himself with others. In the provincial culture self-identification with the other creature is impossible. People are too far apart. Pride is left intact in each of them, a little fortress. And if you want to do anything extraordinary in the provincial culture you have to discipline yourself to live in a kind of Absolute---always a risky business; whereas in our world you live in a real invisible community. This invisible community was due, historically, to the great aristocratic families, who laid down the spiritual ends of life after the collapse of church authority. But the aristocracy of the provincial world was only noble for itself: in Germany and Italy it remained divided---simply families with land and power. It had its absolute standards of behaviour, it had its invisible tribunal before which it judged itself; each family looked after its own justice---and in both Italy and Germany there were private family-executions where some dishonour had been done. There was no shared identity, under one monarch, as in France and England. Each noble house-

hold in the provincial world was an island to itself. The thrill and desperate fascination of other people, the rustle of their dresses, the sound of their snuff-boxes being snapped to, the rattle of their carriages, the lights and sudden kisses, in a delirium of awe and curiosity for the human presence---personified completely in the royal presence---was the secret of the great aristocracies who left unified, or metropolitan, countries behind them.

This is the invisible community we inherit and which gives us our form---the form we can always safely and reliably lean back on however much we let ourselves go. And this collective form is lacking in Germany and Italy: it has to be made each time, all over again, with a bitter and Herculean effort, on the part of each man. Sometimes you'll notice that a German's face ---even his whole body---seems to change frequently: he looks a different person every few hours, so much so that sometimes you can hardly recognise him. The more alone he is, the more struggle he has---the more that will be true. For he has had to make his form for himself.

I think Angelo didn't really understand France for this reason. With his terrific mind that was still impossible: the organs and nerves and tissues in a man are what counts in that sort of judging. I remember him saying, in the garden of that little house near Paris, 'The French are so nice--- they're too nice!' And he added, 'It only needs a little blow, and they'd fall to pieces! They're so good---such good people! Good! Good!' I didn't think much about this at the time, but later I did, when he began prowling round talking to himself, and flinging dark, murderous glances everywhere. That was a chill month for us and no mistake! The gardener of the house

was always talking to himself outside, or cursing me for having pruned his roses too much. At night it was too silent. The houses in the village were all shuttered up, some of them with steel and metal grills. We slept very little. There were rifle-shots at night, it being the time of the Algerian bomb-outrages. There seemed a fixed, still hatred everywhere, and Angelo reflected it. The politeness of people---the use of the monsieur, obsessively, every few seconds---seemed to bring out all the pride in him. He lifted his head so high when he spoke in shops, and he spoke so carefully. And they seemed to recognise him as a foreigner, that was the strange thing, though he spoke perfect and fluent French. They seemed to recognise something souh^horn in him---his dignity wasn't based on respect but on self; they could feel it; he didn't really see them at all, and they knew it.

All that 'goodness' he found in France was just formlessness for him, I think. It was really the invisible society of respect; and he couldn't see it. I believe he felt that there were people all round him being vaguely good and nice to each other without reason; even out of a kind of weakness; out of a fear for each other which he didn't share. I think it was a reality absolutely closed to him. He didn't see the form in other people. It was mostly a silent and invisible form. And for the provincial culture this is a form that doesn't exist. I believe it was the form joining us together in that café, when he remained so aloof and excluded: for him I think all we did was exchange meaningless smiles and talk a lot of unprepared nonsense.

In that last month he even seemed to become a fascist for

the first time---a fascist of the heart, without the rank ideas; the man who jiggered about with the natural material of life (through being too subject to it) in the interests of vitality. It was grotesque to watch. Routine had to be broken. Some damage had to be done to the natural intimacies. The little French garden always seemed full of rifles and every sort of revolver, brought along by his friends. Since the last war, when I saw what a bullet the size of a pea can do to the flesh of a man, let alone a piece of schrapnel, I've had a horror, close to hysteria, of guns and things going off. Like all people who have used the things in earnest I can't bear to see them being played about with, especially by youths from well-to-do families who think they are cutting a fine figure with them. On Sunday afternoons the garden sounded like a battlefield. One of the youths---I say youths, but they were all quite half-way through life---had a habit of going 'BRRRR!' to express someone he disliked, aiming an imaginary machine-gun at the stomach of his victim. Yet he was the mildest and kindest person on earth, really. But this mildness wasn't enough for him. It was like a trap for him. He wanted to do things. In some way he hadn't proved himself. And nothing he did in life seemed to help. He just couldn't prove himself whatever he turned to. He tried sleeping in forests without a tent over his head, and no food. He tried staying up all night. He had quite a little philosophy of staying up all night. You discovered the real world, outside men. ^{at night, he said.} Which is true. You do. But in his case he couldn't discover this world in himself. He had to do something. He had to make a clatter because there was no real world inside him. He was like a man who had to pinch himself to prove he

was alive. The question, 'What are we going to do now?' was always on his lips. For when he was silent and still he was clearly---for himself---doing nothing.

I think fascis^m came exactly out of that terrible barrenness: out of the last chill tomb of the middle-class soul, which saw no light round it at all, only stillness and silence---its own. And our world was only saved from that by our inner society, which kept the stillness alive, even for the middle-class soul. But in the provincial world the middle-class soul threatened to go mad. It had to cling to a form. This form had to clatter and resound, to show it was there all the time: it had to seem on the march all the time, finally to murder. It had to be external. It had to be clear-cut, black, and so~~ff~~ forceful as to hide the barren chaos underneath. This is why fascism emphasised outward behaviour so much---the chin pushed forward, the truculent stride, the air of certainty.

A man who can't prove himself and yet will prove himself in some way has to destroy in the end. Just after the war, when I felt unable to prove myself, when the four years of being caught up in international murder were telling on me, I had that machine-gun image, too---I was always defending myself with it in my dreams, against the charge that I was nothing, inside or out. That, in the provincial culture, is where the vigour of fascism---the spurious vigour of impotence---would begin to make its appeal.

I can still see that young man---inventive, kindly, watchful, restless, with remarkably haunted, beautiful eyes. Like Angelo, he was a foreigner to the French world, and it was crushing him in some way. He had a good job, very well paid. His adventures were definitely Sunday affairs. This is in the fascist

tradition, too. You have a philosophy, but you don't let it go right through your life. You don't jigger with the basic things, like where your money comes from. So it is at one and the same time a craven conformism and a rebellion: this creates the negative and spurious element of fascism. And there again is a reason why it took root in the provincial countries, Italy and Germany, and not in our world: power in the provincial countries is the status quo that pervades everything outside the family. It isn't on the whole open to discussion. It is conceived as permanent and unalterable. The family is the real seat of discussion, unlike in our world. And of course the family is an island of interests to itself. But in our world power is a fluid and continually moving thing, always in the balance, and we grow up with an unquestioned sense of having the right to challenge it. This moral indignation doesn't exist in the provincial world---it is an emotion really and truly lacking. In our world having no power gives our challenge all the more grace and rightness. In the provincial world having no power robs our challenge of anything but self-interest. On this hub Europe---and the whole Christian world---is split in two. In America this split is so grave as to be a hidden civil war.

If you are poor in our world your challenge to riches is made clean. In the provincial world it is made dirty.

I think this is why my moral indignation, which I shall always have whatever the flux of my interests, was finally for Angelo--- though not consciously or willingly---self-interest. I think perhaps our friendship broke on this hub, more than on any other. At this point the two worlds ^o can't understand each other.

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All the subtle and delicate sense of what the other person is thinking that you find in the metropolitan peoples is lacking in the provincial world except as a facet of individual character, and a very unusual one, too. This is a source of enormous strength^{in the provincial.} It makes for vigorous, unhindered action, such as you find in Germany, and a thoroughness which in our world is nearly impossible. Where, in our world, the creature is held back by scruples, he is held back in the provincial world by law, that is, fear. The kind of solidarity with other people which for us is freedom is a tiresome and really insincere obligation to the provincial. He doesn't believe that you could possibly have that much interest in the fate of others. 'Other people' mean---separate zones of interest.

I think tenderness is almost totally absent from the provincial relation, too, except again as an individual thing, the fruit of special development and effort. Tenderness is the intimate expression of respect, which is the first public jewel of real Christian society. It produces fervour. In the provincial world this moral fervour is passion. Provincial fervour is always from personal and isolated conviction, or from foreign influence, like half the fervid movements that have existed in Italy. It is the fervour of a dream. It is designed not really to save other people but to make your dream of them come true; it is the fervour of Luther, Savonarola and---to bring it down to pantomime---fascism. But real moral fervour in our world is for others: puritanism originates here. There isn't a dream. It invites the other person to a freedom of conscience, to the real inner freedom. But in the provincial culture such an invitation means only one thing---that you want to dictate moral-ity to other people: you threaten your victim's freedom^{The provincial asks,} why

shouldn't a man do what he likes, if it's his own life? This is the provincial freedom. A man may go to the devil if he wishes to. You don't try to save his soul, for that soul's sake. So the tendency is for everybody to be left to his own world, and for life to consist of immediate interests stirred and spurred by lonely dreams. There are political dreams, religious dreams---collective dreams of every kind; and each time they happen there is a great upheaval. The development of the metropolitan world is opposite to this: its greatest modern revolution has been industries, namely, the slow or organic alteration of life according to practical observations, not dreams.

The provincial dream is the only form of collective action, the only patriotism: this is the same for Italy as for Germany. Like the German, the Italian is alone, he has to fight alone. Like the German he expresses nature, though less its vigour than its marvel. He has to fight through with the dream of self, the dream of power, the dream of work. The dream is all inside him, not outside. He doesn't translate it into outside terms, either. Whereas in our world that happens all the time, our dream becomes continually absorbed and materialised in life, our rooms and houses and family-habits reflect us intimately, they show the dream to which we belong, they are our ^{to} outer realised form. And this is rare in Italy. You will find maybe a clever young doctor, fighting to get somewhere in his underpaid and neglected profession, but you won't see evidence of his fight (dream) in the rooms he shares with his wife, there will be the same unⁿenchanted sitting-oom-dinng-room with its naked electric bulbs and hideous sideboard, the same lack of glow and mystery. And the woman who wants to get out of the old provincial life and be fashionable and stylish like the women in Paris, she sits

in the same rooms, too, she invariably has the same sense of unenchanted womanhood as most of the women round her, only she is troubled, often neurotically, having lost the natural balance which was her safest anchor.

In Italy there isn't any sex in the northern sense---none of the peculiar enchanted fascination one sex has for the other, based on respect. French love is respect, whether you like it or not. It explores all the exquisiteness and refinement of human respect. In origin it is aristocratic. But in Italy that can't exist. There can only be the dream of sex, usually from foreign influences: it gets connected with affectation, vanity, even rebellion; it isn't real enjoyment, natural enjoyment. Natural enjoyment in Italy lies in the short-lived act of love. This is what sex means in Italy. It means the literal moment of love, to produce children. The dream isn't in people or things: there is just the body, which has its natural appetites, for sex and food. There isn't a real development in people. There isn't development of character on a communal scale, just as there isn't in Germany; there is only development in single people, by terrific effort. The sex in Germany is a tremendous assertion of nature, it is nature as a vigorous and truthful act; there isn't the desolation in sex that you find in Italy; in fact, it has become a vigour that you get nowhere else. Sex is intact in Germany as passion. In Italy this has been curtailed, as a force, first by the slave-civilisation of ancient times---the inheritance of squalor---and then by the church, which discouraged all sex outside the family. The world of Germany and that of Italy are divided by the fact that Italians are historically an enslaved people, and when you have been humiliated you don't feel like sex, you don't have respect for your own body and you don't expect other people to. Your sex-

energy is the first^{thing} to die when you've been humiliated. But this hasn't happened in Germany. Character has developed in Germany with the force and splendour of something in nature, like a thunderbolt or an evening sky. But in Italy splendour is all outside the human creature: it lies there in the earth and sky, inert and also menacing because it shows how powerful God is, and you move about in it, sadly, not caring to look up. Italy is the saddest country in Europe, humanly. The spectacle all lies outside, and as for the human creature, he reflects nature, faithfully. The Italian is intimidated, historically and actually. The inner theme of ^{his} life is still squalor, no longer for most people the actual squalor of poverty, but squalor of status, the squalor of the heaviness of a body which has never learned its full glory; it has only learned its natural, physical glory, like plants and beasts; the glory of choosing for itself, of paying the enormous debt of tenderness and respect that freedom means, this is only being learned slowly, by foreign influence, with a wondering and delighting credulity.

The four of us were talking one evening in that village outside Paris and Angelo said that he'd now been away from his country for five years, and he wanted to go back. Just for a short visit. It would be an ~~enormous~~ upheaval for him, he knew that. Not pleasant but so exciting that he could hardly think about it. And he wondered what the experience would teach him. I said that my own experience---returning to England after as many years---had affected me in one way particularly. And he wanted to know what this was. It was one of the few occasions in that last month when his face really lit up with curiosity. I said that years of living out of my country had taken away my doubt. He wondered at this. He couldn't

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grasp me as he usually did before the words were out of my mouth. He looked surprised at the word 'doubt'. And he said nothing. I added that in Rome I lived in a little cocoon, barred by the tiny intimacies of language from complete absorption in the outside world; but in my own country I heard and understood every subtlety of language, I learned again that I wasn't the author of my own world; a pleasant innocent doubt returned, and I ceased to lay hold of an idea as if it was a log to keep afloat by; I learned the flow of real talk again, as you can only have it with your own people; abroad, talk is just an exchange, an exchange of ideas; among your own people it is a blind and tentative journey towards form. But Angelo didn't seem to see. At least, he only nodded and turned away. He seemed not to be thinking on those lines. Yet something of the same kind had happened to him: a great innocent doubt had departed. He seemed bent, wholly, on certainty. Angelo became more and more mysterious for me in those days, as he drifted further into his dry, isolated, pale world of absolutes.

He was clinging to certainty---for survival. It was a certainty he'd made for himself out of hard effort over the last few years, and he now seemed to be keeping it going by force of will. Calling people cretini was an aspect of this. The faith in him seemed to have gone, if it is true that faith and doubt are really the same thing. It seemed he could no longer rest in himself, leave his development to time. He had to cling to the invisible form, which he'd built for himself. Above all, his days at the office were a drudgery, and he hated his work with a fine loathing that got more and more reticent every day. Francine offered to take the job over for him but he refused.

He came back in a state of half-collapse every evening, he fell ill every few months. Nothing rots the body sooner than living by what you hate. So he clung to the dream he'd made for all he was worth, inwardly. You wouldn't think, to look at him, that even this dream had any enchantment in it, much less compassion. It seemed something hard and cruel, sharp as a knife, which made him turn away all the time---from his wife, everybody. But that was the only way a dream could exist in his world---locked inside single and lonely men. It meant having no friends, even the one or two friends all people are allowed in life. The blood had to be stopped. Then, in perfect isolation, his work could begin.

It was the opposite of everything you learned in the Anglo-Saxon world. It wasn't his being alone---that was something I'd always advocated and advised. But this solitude of his was all tension and effort. Real solitude is tender and easy, if properly achieved. It acquires a sense of spectatorship: the really solitary person isn't out off, he is given more to life than anyone else, he chooses his own time in which to look at life. But Angelo was entering an Absolute. He was being Absolute in his daily life. It wasn't real solitude^d; it was too artificial. And everything in me, all my Englishness, shuddered at that. He was simply keeping the outside world at bay, in a sort of chosen death. I wanted to get away from him, breathe properly again, return to the freedom Melli and I had when we were together, with each day growing unexpectedly between us, with its own new form, yet with the same form each time. Angelo had to impose a form. He had to cling to the form he'd made for himself, because of

the fear that he had no real form, only a kind of inner stinking charnel house of family-tears and hatred projected on to the world like the skunk's fluid. ~~He was in some sort of terrible misery, and he seemed to hide his head in a combination of exhaustion and contempt, telling the rest of the world to get away.~~

That absolute is dangerous. Absolutes aren't real friends. They are suicide---an element in the Sicilian suicide where the creature ultimately can't let go and clings to the dead eternal form as the stink under his nose gets stronger and stronger. For the first time since I'd known him Angelo behaved as if he had a permanent stink under his nose. And you felt you were part of the stink. You became conscious of your shoes, the way your trousers were creased. I felt wrong if I sat in a pullover instead of a jacket and tie. And Francine seemed to bear this terrible tension in her own life, permanently. She was ill---wrought-up, sad, nervous, sick, always crying silently, then brushing away her tears without saying a word. It was like a total constipation being imposed on life. In fact, Melli and I had constipation nearly all the time we were at that house, ^{near Paris.} It was Francine's complaint, too---permanently. Mild laxative pills were always going round. She took them nearly every day. You couldn't have a really easy shit. There was this tension in everything---this false absolute that had nothing human in it nor, apparently, any knowledge of what a human was or should be; there was this bad philosophy---as all philosophies of the absolute are bad, ^{which} Socrates always went out of his way to ^{demonstrate} ~~show~~ by refusing to tie up his doctrines ^{neatly} ~~nicely~~ at the end, into something finished and logical; there was this intimate unspoken verdict all the time that we were all disgusting---the verdict of ^{self-disgust.} ~~a creature who disgusts himself.~~ Once when I was reading

some lines from Hamlet to them, in those last days, sitting between Angelo and Francine on the settee, I felt his sense of vulgarity like a hot breath on my left side, whereas Francine was accepting everything, she was actually listening to Shakespeare; ~~but~~ he seemed to be withdrawing into a kind of prudish self-isolation---he seemed to feel, 'He's vulgar, he's reading Shakespeare vulgarly', in a conviction that was like the emission of a stink in its secretiveness; and it didn't seem to stop even at me---it seemed to include Shakespeare as well. Shakespeare, in that quick, rasping speech of Hamlet's, wasn't being sufficiently a monument. ^{Shakespeare and I} Both ~~seemed~~ seemed to have fallen short of that terrible Absolute for which only silence and inactivity were the answers to anything, the only really mystical answers, because they are like death. This is why I say the Absolute is suicide in the Sicilian. It really is choosing death.

Italy

The man who clings to the Absolute is really the most relative of all. He can't let himself plunge into the world---even stroll through it---because of its intimate claims on his attention. He is still prone to its claims, more than other men, ~~perhaps~~.
~~He overlooks that integrity is a living relation with the world.~~
~~This is the first part of learning solitude: you have to beware of the absolute, you have to train yourself to keep in living contact with things, and it isn't easy.~~ There isn't anything absolute in life, except death: speech and words and thought are relative, this is their god-given nature; and God gave no absolutes, only the lonely mind gives absolutes, which always imply a departure from the accident and flow of life, a departure you have to pay for in your humanity. The man of absolutes is a man in a corner so tempted by the world that he doesn't dare to touch it at any point; he can't go through the follies and disguises

and squalors that are its language and always will be. Really he is a man without a faith. He's alone, with his thoughts. He's in a dead world, just as a Sicilian is said to feel in a dead world when he's surrounded by nature. Nature lies round him like a pesce morto; he is oblivious to it. Yet he is part of it. This is his strength.

The loneliness round him, being classical in origin, is more or less inconceivable to us; he is the last classical man. He has a driving and cutting will, a power to see clearly even to the darkest point in his own self, and to make dazzling-clear reflections while up to his neck in squalor. He has this marvellous remoteness and spirituality, which leads to his suicide. The classical world was a tragic world, and so is his. There isn't any hope in it, finally. Yet there is no Italian resignation, either---the having a stink and accepting it. There is the alter ego of paganism, the revolt of the late-Greek---an obsessive horror of vulgarity, the precise opposite of anything Christian.

Being with educated Sicilians is like suddenly finding yourself in a nursery with children dressed as grown-ups. It makes you feel something awful might happen---somebody will giggle or drop a fart and the whole formality will fall to pieces. There is this high state of tension bordering on hysteria, like the German tension which also springs from an intimate rejection of the human creature. There is no Sicilian conversation in the educated sense: superb and lucid exposition, heights and chasms and clear rushing streams, and deserts, and the hard, baking sun, but not the give and take of conversation. There isn't any drama because there isn't any theme. There can

never be. And Angelo missed, for this reason, all the dramatic elements of my conversation---the English conversation; he never understood that I always chose a situation to talk about, unconsciously, for its dramatic substance, for its being capable of a dramatic theme which I then enunciated with horror or indignation or pathos, as the theme dictated. But that was how I saw life, as the conflict between fates, for high odds. Really there were no fates for him, which meant no people. There was no continual running conflict. That wasn't his arena. His arena was the invisible, the enormous pageant of the imagination, the world that teems round the lonely self, the tragedy, but not the drama. This is why he only saw ^{me} as moments. People had no permanent characters in his world. They weren't fates personified, as they are in ours. We see the permanent character ^{of} ~~in~~ a person and he is this for us all the time, when he is ill, when he is sad, empty, happy, all the time, unless he goes mad or dies. ^{In this} ~~Here~~ there is a certain safety and security of life, or rather of perception, which we take for granted as simply the way people always think. But this is denied to Angelo's world. Again that is classical. Sicilians are supposed to verge on hysteria all the time. This is classical hysteria. Talk goes on in high tension or not at all. There is silence---or ^{an} ~~this~~ outburst of high tension. It is rather like a Russian novel. And that is why I always felt tension with Angelo, together with this marvellous inspiration and splendour. It was a splendour in tension, the tension was like the overpowering suction and current of a wave. We never digested properly when he was at table with us, it was all a big rush; he attacked his food with a violence that left the rest of us chasing him, while Francine fed him, so to

speaking, throwing little chunks of bread across the table and putting another potato on his plate. He licked his chops, guzzled his wine and had everything down inside a few minutes--- talking the whole time as well. It wasn't that he'd lost his table manners: he'd never really had ^{any} ~~them~~. When he practised them they were hardly more than horror of vulgarity, namely, a form of hysteria again.

The tension would start the moment we were together, like a dynamo. It wasn't unpleasant---not at all a stiffness or restraint. It was even exciting. Nothing could be left to silence. If I was silent, especially in the early days, he would cry, 'Forza, forza!'---strength! Only for a brief and pleasant period, which was like a special inheritance for Melli and me, too ecstatic to be bearable almost, did that tension cease and life just flow along between us, with Angelo saying things like, 'Oh, words don't matter' and 'Let life take its course.' But Francine would always look at him doubtfully. For years we didn't understand why she seemed to doubt him so. But later we realised that she must have been reminding ^{him} with that glance of what would come after our ecstatic meeting, when he was back in himself, and the pesce morto of the ordinary world had returned, the corpse of daily life; and then there would no ^{be} flights for her, nothing would flow for her... She didn't understand him, we always said; it was true she didn't; but at the same time she knew her man, which was why he clung to her, why he listened to her like a child sometimes, and why---'in his terrible way', as Francine said---he loved her.

He didn't respect us, in ourselves, only the best in us: not our permanent characters. He respected in Melli the

'German greatness.' In me the 'English greatness.' And we in ourselves, in our bodies, participated in these moments of greatness; our bodies were the vehicles of these moments. We, as the creatures he loved, were creatures on a tense and high level, constantly. That was how he saw and loved us, on our tense level. These were the moments we shared---the ~~normal~~ ~~our~~ pageant of the imagination.

Then suddenly it was gone, on his side. We went ^{to Paris} expecting the ~~permanent~~ ~~and~~ consoling friendship which like nature ^{never} ~~doesn't~~ ^{fails,} ~~run away,~~ and it was finished in him. Even music, our great shared medium, was dead. Even Verdi. The world was dead. And we therefore were dead, too. There was nothing over and above his sense of our greatness---like forces of nature---to sustain him, none of the respect that joins other people permanently like a silver thread.

I remember when he first came to England alone. We'd taken a cottage in Sussex for a few weeks and he had to do a three-hour journey across ^{country} ~~the~~ from the airport in Kent, a slow, winding journey by train through some of the loveliest downland and valleys in England. He was happy to be without Francine. Her suffering didn't let him free---this is why he felt ^a ~~the~~ relief being alone. Their suffering pressed and sucked on each other, and only increased the mutual load.

He looked round him all the time, curious and excited. On the train from the airport he had got into conversations, he told us---people were intrigued at his foreignness. His

English could be remarkably good. All of a sudden, if there was no other way of getting through, he would start talking English, throwing in idioms like 'It rained cats and dogs' and 'I'm feeling blue.' But he always said that English wasn't his destiny.

We went for long walks through Itchenor to the harbour where endless clusters of yachts lay, their masts swaying in hundreds, and looked across at the Hampshire side with its rising lawn, and ~~beyond~~, the typical close, hilly countryside above Southampton Water. He said the same as on his first visit---he felt so free. He could see it in people's faces---it was such a relief after the 'tension' of the Continent. The 'ease' of English life, an inner harmony of freedom like a communal dream, was what struck him, he said.

We went up to London to see my parents and I remember the little cry of amazement he gave when he walked into the back room, in^{to} the blaze of little lights---the glow of intimacy that made the tiny place look like a palace. At first he said nothing as he walked into the hallway from the front door, only nodded in his solemn way to my father; but when the door of the back room was opened and the glowing light broke on us he made this little cry of appreciation.

And he told my parents later, 'I love your son all the more now, because I know you!' It helped him understand me, he said. It was something to do with the intimacy---the thrill of that room, which I still feel myself when I go there, intact from childhood, and which always makes Melli feel calm, as if she'd found her element at last. The world of the London backstreets is safe because it relies on nothing that isn't human. All its commitments are human; all its references. There is

absolutely no power, exercised by one person over another. Nobody has power, so there is no corruption. There is nothing but the human creature. And because there isn't any position he is the king of every place he is in, by natural election. But this working class isn't by any means just a natural or primitive conglomeration. It isn't a backward edition of the middle class: it has its own culture and also sophistication, as full as that of the middle class, only it doesn't rely on formal education or power. Therefore at one and the same time it is vigorous---more vigorous than anything in the classes above---and also frail and easy to defeat. Its delicate and respectful appreciation of people is the fruit of long Christianity, beginning not just with the Evangelicalism brought by the ^{nineteenth-century} middle class together with higher wages and better factory conditions, but with the centuries of rural life that went before. Perhaps it is the only surviving Christianity we have, that of the dwindling common people everywhere: their Christianity being a function, not a mental attitude.

The common people represent a guarantee of decency and goodness (practiced not from unction but as a necessity of daily life in overcrowded areas), and as their world dwindles, through higher education, so the middle class gets invisibly weaker too, because the general decency is weakened: until in the end there is a massive crisis when the whole question of intimacy versus power has to be gone into, and the choice has to be made as to whether we belong to a Christian civilisation or not, and if so what Christianity means. By the time that crisis breaks (in the form of public scandals, delinquency, sex-perversion on a massive scale, gang-war on the highest political level, barely controlled

epidemics, the collapse of physical well-being and even the weather through experiments in space, an appalling volume of chronic disease among the young) all the intimacy at our disposal will be used up, and it will have to be revived by means of conscious and chosen allegiance.

There is only one other place where I've known that same intimacy as in the London backstreets---not the thrill so much but the intimate sense of safety in a world where all the consolations ~~are~~ ^{seem} made ~~with~~ ^{for} the humble and thwarted and lonely ~~in~~ ~~and~~ and not the powerful, ~~the~~ ^{and} logical ~~is~~ ^{and} effective. And that is Italy (in almost any but the most corrupt class). Finally I've always had to flee back there, for it to save my life again. The power lies absolute round and over Rome, just as it did round the streets where I was born; but it isn't inside. Other people have it whom you don't see and hardly notice. They cut figures, have appointments and important occasions, they are restless, shifty, damned. But their activities are outside, while at the centre there is this glow of a hidden family-seat. There isn't the thrill of respect and freedom in Rome as in England, it isn't the same kind of thing as the northern peoples have, it isn't grounded in the thrill of people being together, but it comes from the same root, which is Christianity.

Angelo's background was stark in comparison with mine. That was why Rome could save him. Its world is sad and bored, but still there is the thrill of smallness that emerges from the boredom and which refuses no newcomer. Nothing gets refused in Rome. It all gets mixed up in a hot compost---the thrill is the steam that comes off, and the mysterious heat inside can never be localised because it shows no flame or even a glow. It

stinks of course, but so do we all atvtimes. And perhaps Angelo lost this influence slowly when he was in Paris, perhaps its softening touch was forgotten, and he drew nearer and nearer his own original world, where thrill is a forbidden and lonely dream.

His roots seemed to be puritan without having anything Christian about them. It reminded me of the Arabs. They are supposed to wash at once after they've made love, and to make love near a river if they can. You can see the difference between our world and theirs in their lavatories, where you squat over a hole in the floor. The tiny water-tap at your side is such a clear-cut physical device compared with the conceptual toilet-paper of our world, which prevents you coming into contact with your own flesh. In the Arab lavatory you just turn the little tap on, put the fingers of your (right) hand under the ~~tap~~ water and wipe your arse. Simple! When that is clean you wash your hands. Really that's cleaner than paper, if you come to look at it. The intimate connection between flowing water and cleanliness is still there. The sense--the horror---of evacuation is also there just the same as in Christianity, there is the same risk of confusing evacuation with the love=processes, as among all humanity, but it isn't conceptual. The different religions treat it differently.

As the middle classes grow in our world so the acute ~~stink-~~consciousness of our civilisation grows. The more in flight from his problems a middle-class person is the more stink-conscious he becomes. I suppose this is why some unhappy daughters of the middle class literally bathe themselves in scent, to hide the original stink of self; and why with universal education the market for breath-refreshers and de-odourises^r grows. The inner

natural self is putrid---this is the trouble. For while the middle class has vindicated historically the outer rights and dignity of the human creature, it has been at the expense of the religious faculty. In its first appearance during the middle ages the class aimed to show all the prowess a man was capable of--- every gift endowed to him by God; this in itself was a great step from pagan times, and the aim was certainly an achievement of Christianity, deriving from the new Law that even a slave was God's child and could demonstrate His extraordinary gifts. But the painful result was loss of divinity: not only did the church collapse, but the religious faculty as such began to fail in people. Men began to make the mistake that they were the authors of life, and not the interpreters. What started as an act of celebration, reaching its climax in the Renaissance, ended as a lonely act of pride. The more wonderful the things that men did, the smaller they seemed to become---until we have the pigmies of today. For every exploration into the mystery outside them brought them closer and closer to an immensity which made them look like dwarfs. So we are brought back full circle to the Christian law, that indeed we are dwarfs, and there lies our hope and truth.

The middle-class stink-self is precisely the creature ostracised by that great flight for ^w progress through the centuries: the middle-class child learns early---with frequent devastating effects on his nervous system---that in the area of civic relationships he is free, but in the intimate areas he's as good as---shit. It is a strange thing to happen, this sudden grounding of a world-religion in ordure. Essentially, middle-class upbringing is a long indoctrination in shame: the natural and spontaneous outburst of humanity which is every child's birthright is dis-

couraged. This doesn't mean he is punished or even thwarted in his desires. In that way he's freer than anyone in other classes, or anyone in history. But he learns that he doesn't count: he will count 'one day', perhaps; he sees that the world he opened his eyes on at birth isn't for some reason the world he'll make his way in later. Sometimes he notices the desperate struggle between those two worlds in his parents's eyes. His soft heart has no place in the scheme of things: his parents may 'believe' in it, woo it, and protect it; but he sees the truth. As a child he doesn't belong to the important scheme of things: not as an Italian child does, for instance; an Italian child is equal with his parents, he is only a smaller edition, and there is no difference of psychology between one age and another. But in our world the different ages are marked: each has its different intimate demand which doesn't fit the scheme of things.

In the middle-class world you are caught up in ambitions whether you like it or not and this must show to your children. Their upbringing must in all humanity be a subtle mustering of arms for the fight for Position which will one day take place: the Position may be a job or money or simply what your neighbours think of you, or it may be a brave rejection of all these things, but a Position of some kind it will be. Our social choices are necessarily grounded on power, not on humanity as all aristocratic society was and lower-class society must be if it is to survive. But in our world 'humanity' means rights, wages, living conditions---an abstract as far from our intimate desires as possible.

For the middle-class thrill is at root the sound of mighty machines---the sound of nature harnessed, the thrill of movement and spectacle; and the aristocratic thrill is the the thrill of other people, in the same way as the lower-class thrill is,

too. In our middle-class world other people aren't enough. There is the great world-struggle now preoccupying the middle-class mind---the mind that has to make its fierce demands on nature: and when these demands have been exhausted---as they will be by the pathetic flights into space, which are a last effort to turn eternity and even God into a civic right, there will have to be the thrill of people again, the thrill of the sound of their coats swishing, the thrill of the things they say and do with their own hands.

That will be the end of the stink-self. Every man can then be a slave and king in one, as only the working man is at present, though his position isn't a permanent one historically, nor an unadulterated one, nor an invulnerable one: he is for all that a child of something he doesn't understand---the victim and above all helpless reflection of the middle class (his master); and one by one he has to go into the middle class, send his children in, according to a process that has been going on for all to see since the eleventh century. The middle class has reached its utmost historical development---and its obsessive stink-consciousness is its consciousness of the last lingering odours of the intimate thrilling self which the mind has had to forget in its stern plans for the marshalling of power, which in its steelparts and regular noises and clean emissions of wanted commodities is as different from the farts and ordure of mankind as anything you can get. The middle class has tried to create a godly earth in distinction from men, and because of this contradiction it has collapsed inwardly more and more with each access of marvellous power, so that in the end when it has cleaned the whole world up and its great thriving project---freedom---has been accomplished, it

will have to committ a sort of suicide back into humanity.

For the real world---not the projects put on to it---is still there for contemplation, as unexplored as it always was. The whole hidden world of our own ⁷organs that do their work invisibly every moment, in secretions and subtle alchemies and evolutions from digestion to ⁷living cell, the hidden world of plants and the regular seasons and the movement of the heavens and the invisible attractions and influences of the earth, and the language of animals, everything that lies all round us nearly dead at the moment, which our senses and instincts have lost track of, so that we are like pale and hostile and unknown visitors, not knowing what we shall do next by way of destruction: all this awaits us again. Our intuitions, which the middle class has all but called invalid, will get their life back again. Clear and golden inutitions are the prize of civilisation, just as in a person they are the prize of health.

Where I was born nearly all the mystery of created life was still there intact, though there were no trees in sight: and Angelo felt this. The thrill of an outside created world is still there, quite beyond you, happily beyond your powers of changing it or your knowledge. The mystery of Christmas was still there, with the crisp air in the streets, and the stillness in the evening, the lamplights that made the roads look like village lanes. There was the nervous background of menace and factory routine: but the inmates made it natural. The ~~actual~~ streets had been put there as part of a mathematical proposition for somebody else's ⁷profit-and-loss account, and that could never fit into a lasting scheme of things: but the people made villages of them. Every Christmas was as mysterious to me as the

countryside. There was the crisp hush of the week before the actual day, and we used to go carol-singing in small groups; and the sky seemed as silent and vast as you find it in the country. The roofs were low, just like a village. Usually the sky was haunted and ghostly, turned into a frightening zone of oblivion by the great work-schedule that hung over everything and tried to make itself the only thing there was in all creation. The untouched intimate heart won in the end, though: it kept the glow, and you felt this most of all in the special seasons, at Easter, on Shrove Tuesday, on the Bank Holidays. The created world came back again then. It was still the breath of God, over the streets: you were still in the state of grace, that is, the child of creating forces which you didn't understand but the rhythm of which was inside you. The knowing and foreseeing face of the middle class wasn't there. The mark of that face is its lack of respect: this is what differentiates it from the working-class or peasant face. It has nothing to respect in the universe. There is just---nothing. The sky is---nothing. The invisible is---nothing. There are just hard, touchable objects and---space. But where I was born there was the wonder of active and irresistible things outside you; and that doesn't wilt in the old people, because it isn't an attitude but a total state of being which only the slow and painful initiation into the middle class can end. Once it has ended nothing can bring it to life again. And Angelo seemed to recognise this; I think it was what made him utter his astonished little cry.

I don't think there was anything like that in his own life. He used to tell me about the hysteria of his family-life in Sicily, the pale, quivering hatred behind everything, the

feuds. He used to imitate his uncle---sharp-faced and sallow--- standing at the curtains watching people go by outside, talking to himself, his eyes narrowed with a hatred as consuming and helpless as disease---'Look at that one! The dirty swine! He calls himself a priest! He'll die soon! Curse him, curse him!', his lips like knives already cutting. And then there were the 'occasions', when the family got together. The neighbours came to pay their respects and sniffed round looking for all the proper signs of hospitality---the coffee in the right place, the wine, the cake. And the hospitality was received as it was given---with a total absence of feeling. Under the smiling and hand-shaking there were asides---'When is this idiot going to offer us something? Is that all he's got? And he swindled one of his brothers out of a hundred thousand lire only last week!' It was a life starved like the hot earth. The heat baked feelings dry, turned the people into crushed slaves. Angelo always hated and feared hot weather. In the cold he was lively, clear, active. Just a day of real heat would knock him over.

Perhaps his world was pagan. I don't know. It is so difficult for me to see, across those oceans of difference between us, across the enormous religious divides. Perhaps Christ was lacking in his world. Perhaps only Christ

brought mercy, humour and a certain inbred humility to the Italian mainland. The world Angelo described was so stark. People were more like landscape than human beings---they were the hard, baking rocks, the massive and torrid sea, the miles of dazzling sand, the hot, still air. Yet they didn't seem ~~a primitive world,~~ ^{not primitive in themselves at all.} There was nothing primitive ^{even} in ^{the} hysteria. ~~There wasn't in Angelo's hysteria.~~ It was classical and stylised. There was nothing smudged or vague about it. It had the sharpness of conscious thought, almost. It wasn't an unseeing world. It wasn't the kind of ^{slave} ~~slave~~-world ^{that} ~~you hear~~ exists among the Calabrians---the people as good and bad as animals are. It wasn't an undeveloped world that Angelo seemed to be describing. ^{Yet} ~~and~~ it wasn't a Christian world, ^{either.} It could see Christianity, it could see Christ. Angelo had a ^{wonderful} ~~marvellous~~ hushed awareness of Christ. This came about after he'd left Italy, when the priests---who belonged to the suffocation and hatred of his early life---were no longer round the corner. He even stopped detesting the church. He began to see its mild and healing parts. But the priests, in his world, ^{were} ~~seemed~~ outside Christendom, too. They threatened and broke people inwardly, their Ave Marias were hysteria, there was the same furtive and dark and cruelly divided world. Christ hadn't brought any balm, really. He was just church: power. Which he isn't in the rest of Italy, not quite: he still has his appeal to the lonely, he still goes a little to one side of the power used in his name, he still accounts for odd little moments of grace and intimate compassion, ^{in Italy.} But he ^{wasn't} ~~didn't seem~~ really absorbed in ^{the} Angelo's world. The power was absorbed: Christ was one more vehicle of hatred and threat. He hadn't got far enough to touch the landscape, it seemed: he hadn't cooled the bare, hard rocks, he hadn't

put himself on the cool wind in the evening, he wasn't really in the church bells. The stark world hadn't been touched. It was the same in Angelo. He saw Christ. He understood him with an extraordinary mild charity, much like Christ's own: he taught his children carefully about Christ, too---he first tried the ancient classical myths on them, then the gospels, and afterwards he told me with great wonder that the gospels were what had really entered the children's imaginations and touched their lives, the mercy and intimacy of the story seemed to move them, like a wonderful reminiscence from before the womb, it was all naturally much closer to them, whereas the Greek myths were frightening, terrific, stirring, distant---they appealed like a thunderstorm does, they thrilled and struck awe but they hadn't got this lonely and intimately consoling thrill of Christ, the inevitable rightness of development that the story of the Passion has.

But Christ didn't enter Angelo's character. Christ didn't seem to change him. Angelo did change, tremendously, in the time I knew him. But it was a change wrought from his agony and despair. The change Christ brought about in him was more like that given by the revelation of new physical knowledge: it seemed the impact of a new kind of physical wonder outside him, like the sky at Ostia Antica in the evening, after the day's heat, where we used to walk sometimes in the early days. He always marvelled at those ruins in Ostia Antica: he said he felt the classical there more than anywhere else in Rome, the golden light that hung over these bricks and chipped columns; it was the most 'Greek' place in Italy. Perhaps it felt like Sicily for him. There was the Greek golden quality in the air, a kind of sparkling dust to which the ancient gods seemed to belong, so that they seemed to be talking to you,

across glowing spaces, as at the amphitheatre of Epidaurus where you sit looking across the parched Greek plains towards the mountains of Arakhaion, and the mild air among the cypresses seems to be eternal, the same as it must have been for Aesculapius and the sick people coming to him, close to that amphitheatre.

Christ entered Angelo like that, like the recognition of a new power in the universe. But it was a spectacle: Christ was a breath-taking spectacle that he saw clearly. But one spectacle can be replaced by another. You can't have the same spectacle before you all the time. And his next step wasn't to change inwardly, Christ had nothing to do with the inward moral character in his case. That would have been a northern evolution. For instance, after I'd become conscious of Christ there were things I saw much more clearly than before---moral actions of every kind. But the change it made in Angelo was to brighten his eyes, with yet one more brightness: it was like getting the benefit of a new sun. But nothing in it contributed towards permanent and decided moral character. This, perhaps, was the development lacking in his world. That was why he could say helplessly, 'You see, I never know what I'm going to be tomorrow. Or even in two hours' time. I never know how I'm going to feel, what I shall think, what I shall want to do.'

The more you know the Sicilian, the more you realise how different he is from the Italian. And you can generalise about him as you can about very few peoples nowadays. The stock description of the Sicilian applies perfectly to Angelo: musical---to the point of extreme and sometimes excess refinement; imaginative---to the point of the obsessive; rational---to the point of sophistry; humourous---to the point of the grotesque and cruel. A people veering between the tragic and

the idyllic, with little in between. Even physically the description is valid: of middle height, colour pale-brown, eyes luminous, dark-haired, slim, compact. In character, too---resolute yet also repressed: a gesture or slight movement of the face denotes a sudden change of feeling (quite unlike the Italian, this). The sense of being inferior goes hand in hand with plans for greatness: pride, jealousy, love, hate, constancy (also unlike the Italian) in both friendship and revenge, generosity---all are strong; a touch of mysticism, darkened by superstition; the final damnation for him is betrayal, the two finest virtues for him are courage in a man and chastity in a woman. All these showed in Angelo, as they showed in the history of his island. He had no joy of living, yet he had no tendency to indolence like the Arab; he was tidy and clean without being, like the northern peoples, optimistic. He spoke gutterally and drily, in a way sometimes reminiscent of the Arab; and with a sharpness---in speech and concept---reminiscent of the Greek.

There was a pagan triumphing in Angelo which was foreign to any feelings of mine. Once when we were driving through Paris he jumped the traffic lights and a policeman stopped us. Francine whispered angry little comments as we drew to a halt. Then there was a long conversation between Angelo and the cop. I heard my friend saying mildly and quietly that he'd got a little confused as he happened to be driving 'some English freinds' through the city, showing them the sights, and in pointing something out, why---he jumped the lights. A beautifully contrived, beautifully spoken Italian story. The cop was tall and grave, and listened sceptically at first. But a whole culture was playing on him, and he soon melted. Perhaps he was used to dealing with haughty pride. Anyway he left him go with a smile.

Then followed the pagan triumph. Angelo shouted a thank-you and drove off fast. He didn't seem to feel any gratitude, or realise that the other man had paid him a kind of homage. He was only exultant. As if he'd won in cards. And it made me realise more than any other tiny event how different our worlds were, how little we'd been ^{under}standing each other all these years. That policeman would have been a piece of wood for all he felt towards him. I realised what a deep moulding effect Christianity had had in my world, so deep that few people realised that their actions had anything to do with Christianity at all.

And the northern world must have given him a thousand little gratuitous triumphs of this kind every day. He was out of place in the 'goodness' of the Christian world. He wanted to see all desires quite naked, the evil and negative as well. Life had to be externally clear-cut for him. That half the desires had been put away under a civic decency confused him. It seemed to him effort: a strained formality he wanted to break all the time. Or something sloppy: a watery kindness everywhere. Life had to leave him alone, above all. And all this goodness seemed to put him under a continual unexplained moral obligation. What did these people want with their smiles and thank-yous? It reminded me of the way Italians take gifts, with a wary, narrow look, as if you want something out of them or are trying to cut a superior figure: gifts are still rather an affront in Italy, despite foreign influence.

The Italian face is rarely lit by a really unreserved and open smile, rarer still by laughter. There is an intimate humour in daily life but none of the bright and optimistic attitudes that mould the features of the northern face and give it depth and an encrusted individuality. History has of course

made its encrustations on the Italian face---violence and struggle, above all poverty. But these are communal lines, not individual. And they are classical in origin. They also tend to close the face. There is a sad and elegaic humour---something ironic, also intimate; but pleasantry is missing, that leaven of northern society. Pleasantry comes by individual breeding and effort. Italian faces lack light. They convey no hope or plan of life, and therefore are the most natural faces we know. They aren't on any quest at all. People aren't self-constructed as they are in the north; they're already made, so to speak---and see their own contradictions from a puzzled and helpless distance. After I'd been living in Italy some years I could recognise a foreign tourist easily, after hardly a glance, because of the questing I saw in them. The sight of them even began to thrill me, as I felt more and more surrounded by the other way of life. I asked myself what different quality it was I saw in them---how I recognised it, apart from clothes and complexion. It was something in their way of walking, striding: it was their whole rhythm of movement---it was quite different; they were questing for something, all the time, without knowing it. It was in the way they gazed at things, bent their necks forward, in the way they smiled, the open way they had of asking questions. They were deliberate about everything, as if they were fulfilling an unspoken plan. They always seemed to be going somewhere. But the Italian never did, even when he actually was.

In that comparison you have all the difference between the two worlds, of the north and south. In the north we don't naturally accept what lies all round us, we challenge it all the time for a purpose or solution, while the Italian at the opposite pole waits and looks on and accepts, strolling through life

however quick his pace. Angelo's pace was much quicker than mine. He shot through the streets like a torpedo. But the root-difference between our worlds remained. He had learned a bit of the questing ache, and I had learned some acceptance, but that root-difference behind us, at birth, remained, hardly conscious to either of us.

The northern man sets out early on his quest. Already as a child---alone with his conscience, and the king of his own conscience---he has it before him. I knew the direction I would be taking in life at the age of eleven and twelve, and I can't say I've swerved much from it since. But in the south there doesn't seem any need for a direction. The world is just there, made for you, and you fill it, in your turn, like everybody else. In a way you have no responsibility over your life. In the south, you know the world won't forsake you. There is always going to be fruit on the trees, and someone will give you a drop of wine. Above all, you aren't judged by your quest, as you are in the north. There is the healing sunlight, above all the mother---she passes from generation to generation as the unfailing fount of help which never wanes.

Life can pass in a dream, in the south. You wake up to your gifts late, especially if they are strong. You wake up to your own will late. Angelo only divined gradually what sort of life he wanted. And each step was a terrible effort and pain, like unsucking himself from a bog. He only really began to change his life about half-way through it, with ~~the~~ decisions of the kind I had taken in the years of puberty. And he'd studied so many different things, altered his course, his job---so many times. First there had been the safe road pointed out by his parents, which he accepted and followed (I think they wanted him to be

a doctor, like his grandfather), then there was the slow and spasmodic awakening, year by year, until music looked like the final choice; and he changed that.

One question dominated his life---that of survival. If he had any quest it was that---a quest for bare survival. There always seemed a threat to steal his soul, quite apart from jobs, and he was always clinging to it fiercely, to keep his identity. My quest was always a particular one---to start or finish a book, to go abroad, get enough money to work freely on, that kind of thing. But his was a quest to sustain his bare self---keep himself this side of madness and despair, to stop a plunge into the outer darkness which always seemed to threaten. For months of his life my friend has lain in darkness, apparently finished, without a word to say for himself, the victim of some helplessness from his father. He used to complain about his father, about how he spent most of his time 'crying and gnashing his teeth', and was always worrying about his health, though he was now past eighty and had never had a sickness. But Francine always said quietly, 'You're the same as your father, exactly the same.' He described how his father ran to church every morning, for the first Mass: the church was his 'pagan god', Angelo said; his father believed in God as other people did in reputation.

For his father, too, life had never been quite realised: his quest had never really begun. As for Angelo, the scene had to be laid so carefully for this quest to begin that it never came about: so many enemies to be fought off, so much solitude to be procured, so much to be placated and appeased in the outside world. All this before he could begin to be himself. And here the Absolute came in. The world outside was an absolute

power that had to be fought all the time, though the fighter was weak, being flesh, and not absolute at all. You could only get through by pitching one absolute against another in Angelo's world.

That was why there could be no quest: if you turn the outer world into an absolute you glorify its powers, you humble yourself to it---which makes the act of defiance necessary. You build the world into such vastness that you are left without any power in yourself at all: you have to assert yourself deliberately, in order not to go under; you tell yourself you have to be strong---that you are indeed strong, and that the fight will be long and bitter. Everything involves the long and self-destructive fight. Nothing is soft. Nothing comes easily. Nothing is relative. The world is all absolute round you; other people are absolute---they are enemies or friends, cretini or wise, great or small. This is where the fight for survival comes in--- your intimate flame of life is always at stake in this struggle with absolutes. And only when towards the end of your life--- if at all---you realise that the absolutes aren't there and that you yourself aren't absolute, and no act of defiance is necessary, only then are you free for the quest which ^{should} have begun in youth.

Angelo told me once how Verga had come to write his first real books---the ones for which he is known: late in life. He had chanced to see a leaflet describing an experience at sea, written in seaman's language; just a seaman talking about the sea, from himself. And that had suddenly set Verga's language free. Suddenly there were no absolutes for him: no monuments, no 'literature'. He found his own speech, after years. In that sea-talk he found just a relative creature talking about the relative world, in crisp, spare terms, not as if he were God. From that time Verga began to write properly, like a man talking.

In our world of the north all literature is that seaman talking. The relative world weaves in and out of his narrative. But in the provincial world, in Italy and Germany, the great battle with absolutes has to take place. The outer world is absolute. A man's statements are absolute. One statement clashes with another---there is none of the endless dialogue of free and wondering voices as in our world. There is none of the leaven of the invisible society.

Right at the bottom, those absolutes are pagan. And in Angelo's world they're classical pagan---still with their old dignity and fire. They don't belong to the Christian world,

which has taken one unifying absolute from the Jewish religion and rendered it the only thoroughly spiritual and invisible fact of all created life whatsoever. The greatness of the Jewish religion was its knowledge that if there are absolutes there is only one. There can only be one absolute, if there are any at all, simply because everything is in relation in our world: so, to be real, an absolute must contain everything there is. For life hasn't been created in different pieces: one piece isn't exclusive of another, the world is mixed and in continual and necessary affinity.

If you see life in absolutes[^]---which were originally personified in the separate classical gods---you see it in pieces: and a piece-world belongs to piece-perception. This is really what southern perception is. It is perceiving by moments, the succession of one sensation by another without unifying principle, with the minimum constructive theme, the minimum character. Angelo could change fantastically, from one moment to the next---so much that you could hardly believe he was the same person. He would show total chaos and collapse, followed a moment later by the most extraordinary order, strong and clear like a ~~was~~ light.

The 'truth' ^{in his} ~~of the~~ southern world ^{didn't mean} ~~isn't~~ an objective appraisal of what the eye ^{saw,} ~~sees,~~ as ~~is~~ in our ^{world.} Each moment ^d ^{own separate} has its/truth, in the southern world. And only in the rarest cases---the rarest individuals---^{was} ~~is~~ there any unifying sense of truth that pervades all these moments. 'Truth' in the Italian world, as in the German world---though much less obviously---is not at all separate from the individual; it isn't a unity of facts and propositions, standing apart from us, as we tend to conceive it. In the provincial world such a sense of unity

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would be the fruit of individual thinking---'philosophy'.

The world of absolutes is really a hopeless world. Also a slave-world. This is why there were hordes of slaves in ~~the~~ ancient ^{times} ~~world~~---hordes that could have defeated armies if they'd wanted to; but an absolute outer world creates a slave-inhabitant. Even as a king this man is a slave. All the terrible themes of Greek tragedy are really meaningless to us, and a bit irritating as well, because they look like blind and wilful slavery to absolute feelings---loyalties, family prohibitions, fate---which could be cleared up in a minute with a bit of sensible talk, in our world. There is terrific nobility---great stirring movements like the wind---people like rocks, water, fire---the golden dust of gods. But it's all false, in the end. It all collapses in the end, not as a civilisation collapses, with the movement and progress of time, but with inner collapse into a new form; not as downfall of power but as development; a new flower is put out, a new soil begins to work invisibly. And so the ancient world grew into the Christian world. The Christian world isn't the growth of a new civilisation, but the development of the ancient world. The Jewish world entered its voice at the crucial moment, and the contact went right through the crumbling Roman empire like a shudder. There began the use of fate, so to speak, in a conscious and clear recognition of the way it worked---not the dark slave-acceptance of it as something to be propitiated and wooed and bribed. The bribing of fate was wrong---this was what Moses laid down. It was no good trying to talk to the sky as if there were human beings up there---absolute ones. The absolute must be absolute---completely invisible, completely spiritual, completely inward, yet pervading everything there is. This was Moses's foundation-stone to our religion---our life---our civil-

isation---our perception---our character---our knowledge. In getting hold of one unifying principle in creation he provided us with the one unifying principle of character in ourselves, in thought, in sensation. He freed us from absolute fate by making us part of it---the absolute must also have a voice inside us, since we were created. That was the beginning of the quest in life which we have inherited as a natural thing.

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Angelo's attitude to women changed a lot in the years we knew him. I shall always remember how silent I was when he asked me that question in Rome, in the first days, about how I thought life would be with a 'really beautiful woman'. I hesitated, without knowing why I did so at the time. It just seemed a false question. But I never forgot it---or the nature of my own silence. I think I just murmured something about beauty being a 'moment'. Or perhaps I only thought that afterwards. What I came to know later through Melli was that beauty was always shared, it was between two people, never a picture of any kind; it was always a moment between two people, like a common breath between them; it engulfed them both, and in this way it was beyond them both, but it wasn't static, it was something that moved, like a sudden impulse.

But I could see his lovely woman as he spoke---it was in the way his eyes narrowed and he caught his breath: she was tall, distant, magnificent, speechless---impossible. She was impossible. And absolute. I naturally recoiled from that, as I can recognise now. I recoiled from what was to ^{own} my world inhumanity. It was completely bereft of humanity, his desire.

That was how he ^{stared} looked at women, too. They seemed jointed objects when he looked at them---breasts, legs, behinds. He didn't make them seem mechanical as the puritan does with his masturbating appetite; but they were just bereft of humanity under his gaze, though their heat remained; they became dark and overpowering zones of temptation. That seemed to be the strongest thing. Sometimes he would stare at their breasts with a hard, contemptuous, self-protective sneer, and say to me softly as they passed, 'Look at that one---just look at that arse!' There wasn't the puritan cruelty or ill-health. But there wasn't real enjoyment. And this also is Italian. The woman is a sort of reservoir of temptations that suck away your powers. And there is something definitely sinful in a woman's desire. In attributing sex to them you are rendering them cheap: the clean woman takes a grudging and economical attitude towards sex; she makes it a struggle, a trial of strength. This is Italian sex--- a bitter rivalry between the two types of humanity, who have no love for each other.

The woman is mother in the Italian world: she is family-
tedium, childhood-desire, nurse. She isn't really in your world, if you're a man. Men talk, play cards, entertain hopes, visions. Women don't. They say in the northern civilisation that behind every great enterprise there is a woman. But this isn't true in the southern world except in the most basic way conceivable: the women look after the actual vegetable growth of life---the tissues, secretions, evacuations, births, the food and all the intimate desires. The desires are her field, exclusively. They are her stage and dominion. The women maintain the inner flow of life, and the men are helpless spectators of this.

Angelo often used to say to us as a joke, rubbing his hands together in an exaggerated way, 'Ah, what wouldn't give for a really dirty woman now!' That was southern, too. The image was a plump, glum, unenchanted woman who coupled herself on to the prick without delicacy or even enjoyment, only a defiant contempt of all desire: a woman who braved the element of sin, but was dirty for that reason. In my world the lust-image was different---it was more the mature, hard-limbed, capable woman whose grip was strong. Not the yielding, plump woman of the south. Not really the mother, or the mother turned dirty. The mother scorches southern desire. As in the Arab world, the concepts beautiful-and-fat are often run together, as the real woman-attraction. It is the engulfing, dark, vegetative appetite, not the friend of thought, not real thrill. The thrill of the northern world is missing---the thrill of sex as a journey, taking you nearer and nearer the nameless goal: another quest. In the southern world it draws you down, it robs you of identity, it weakens; it sucks you back into the family where you have no future, no place in the outer life, no direction---you're just there, accepting, taking your pleasures as they come. And so you get the educated Italian who looks for thin women, or turns his women thin when he gets them. Sometimes he will try to distort ^{her} into something 'delicate'--- ^a the girl who isn't quite natural: being natural is the pitfall--- there lies the age-old plumpness, into which she might fall back if you let her; so there have to be little artificial touches, little 'fine' touches---try this hat, try this way of making love, try staying up all night to get interesting creases under the eyes, smoke cheroots, paint your nipples blue. This is

invariably the appeal of the foreign woman---the slim woman, the boy-girl. She is as ^{far} ~~far~~ away as possible from that other lusty image of plump and fruitful and heavily natural vulgarity. There is the same ^{old} ~~worm~~ again---vulgarity. It haunts the brain and gnaws pleasingly at the sex. And so ^{the} an attractive woman ^{Italian} ^{in Italy} gets that vengeful look of narrowed, half-frightened, defensive refusal in her eyes, challenging the man's whole position. She isn't a friend. In the northern world she is always a possible friend. But in the south sex isn't a ^g ~~homage~~---it implies no respect.

At first, Angelo always looked Melli up and down with a closed, fierce, darkly brooding attention, poring over her. In his own world she couldn't have been there---except as family, and therefore boring. When we were at the beach together, which was very rare, he always looked at her legs with a kind of horror-struck astonishment, more than desire, making Francine and me laugh. He nearly always addressed her and not me when we were together---in the Italian style. The presence of a woman puts a new flavour on life at once---her function is never forgotten by the man. This attention, while preserving her in her natural identity, which is healthy, also successfully separates her once and for all from the man's world, which isn't ^{healthy}. The man's world is therefore dry: there is little enchantment or thrill for the simple reason that women are missing, however much they may physically be there. And the women are used to this, through the centuries: the result is that they are without enchantment on the whole, never having been asked to provide it. They provide flirtation, the old sex-struggle, jealousy---but nothing that departs from vanity, and therefore no real thrill,

no lasting fascination.

The southern world is neither a man's world nor a woman's world, but is in a tenuous state of siege. The whole sex-process is seriously maimed, perhaps as much as in puritanism, but in a quite different way, and without anything unhealthy. The sexual ejaculation is still there intact; the inhibitions rarely touch on the vital organs, as in puritanism. But the whole thrill of sex through incorporation with the other faculties of life, including the religious ones---the ones of mystery---is missing, and there isn't the painful and tortured desire that you get in puritanism to win back the old forgotten natural mode of life. In the southern world nature tends to be the enemy of men, the enemy of action; while in the north it has to be called back all the time. Therefore in the end the greater loss is in the southern consciousness. But it keeps our world going by the sheer natural and wholesome function of its organs; it is a kind of living guarantee of human sanity for us.

Christendom would split right apart without this duality, I think. One day it may be joined together into one civilisation. But a long road has to be travelled yet. The Christian has hardly taken more than a first hesitant step---in two thousand years---towards the realisation of the living principles of his religion.

Angelo lost his old obsessive attitudes towards women while he was in Paris, but he didn't get the northern thrill of sex in exchange. All he did was lose the old haunting desire and certainly the hysteria attached to it. Women became friends. It was the women in France who changed him most. At first he was captivated and delighted. He saw with his extraordinary

clear insight the respect they showed themselves. They respected themselves as Italian women didn't, apparently. They respected their own desires. They even---marvellous though it was---respected their desires for men. And with that the haunting sexual desire seemed to fade slowly in Angelo. Once, in the last weeks, Melli asked Francine if ~~he~~ he ever flirted these days, if he ever went with another woman, and she said, 'Magari...', that sad Italian word which can do for almost any unrealisable hope: if only he did! But no. It all seemed dried in him. He was in too terrible a condition. You have to have hope for desires. And his life seemed all but crushed.

Really I think he was being crushed by the northern world. He couldn't see what the enemy was---he had his own enemies, but they put him out of focus with the world he was living in now. The same had happened to me Italy. I had all but lost myself. I used to get into a kind of wild, raging storm, through the lack of any intimate connection with the world round me. In ^athe foreign world you aren't understood in your most intimate gestures any more: you aren't of the family, and above all your indignation isn't of the family; it is seen as caricature, almost, a mechanical and meaningless operation. And this seemed to be happening to Angelo: he was getting separated more and more, he was alone in a way that was making real solitude impossible; every gesture singled him out as separate. Like me he was fighting the enemies of his childhood, in his own proper struggle, but he wasn't getting back the little consolations and even congratulations of his own country. Instead, nothing was understood in him. The French didn't understand him. He was admired and liked and even loved. But he always said, 'They

don't understand.' He complained about the men---how he had no friends. The blood his own world would have given him was missing. To fight your own country you have to be getting its blood in your veins as well. Fighting your own country is self-development. But if you remove the physical enemy you fight a ghost---memories. This is the danger of living abroad. It requires a long preparation---a terrific balance, before you're ready for it. What is properly interior to life has to be really interior to you, what is exterior must be really outside you: you have to have taken the measure of your world, you have to have passed through the trial by fire and water. In my case this took place in Rome. In Angelo's case, Paris.

But all the time I'm writing this I know it is only tentative truth. I know I must be blind to the depth and mystery of Angelo's struggle as he is blind to mine. We can only wash against each other like the sea. And we seem to join the same wave, to actually be the same wave, but then we separate again. And every search we make is our own search, we can never go beyond our own enemies, the truth is a state and not an experience---the truth is a glimpse we can get in a thousand different ways, it has a thousand different faces: it has as many faces as the sea, as the light that goes from dawn to dusk and nevers knows falsehood. In a way, it doesn't matter what your truth is. When I look for Angelo, when I think I find him in myself, it gives me the satisfaction of a truth, like a light that shines for a moment.

In the end it seems we have to turn away from each other to face our own enemies. It was Angelo who made the conscious and clear and self-sacrificing act of turning away. I never would have, through thick or thin: I would have clung to it. I

would never have allowed myself to reflect about it. But Angelo is safe in reflection---the quiet voice comes, the eye sees, and then there is action. My world would have had to see the action first. Only after Angelo began to turn away did I see what stark differences there were between our worlds. Before then there ^{had been} ~~was~~ just him and me, not two worlds at all.

We drew terrific sustenance from each other. Our world with each other was complete, after nearly ten years: that was the moment when real northern friendship could have begin, and for Angelo it was the moment to end. In his world the invisible remains the utterly invisible---there is no acknowledgement of it except in the silence and solitude of the single creature. So when we were about to grasp the invisible, in our lives, it had to end. In his world the invisible is never brought into life---it doesn't change life: only the single creature moves closer and closer to its silent obligations.

Yet his development and my development went on side by side. I could tell from the way he described the gradual ebbing of his desire to persuade other people, the ^{to} growing richness of his being alone, the slow dawning of the grand outer world as a spectacle beyond him: all this was the same. But then there was the further development, the last one of all in which we would separate and render each other invisible. For him the absolute waited. He had told me with an extraordinary excitement, taking me aside, gripping my arm, that he was starting on something he'd always dreamed about in a fearful way, always half-afraid, but he'd yearned for the chance---the power---the happiness to try. Could I guess what it was? I stood there gaping at him, so taken by his excitement---his gleaming eyes---that I thought he

was going to say he'd turned homosexual or something. No, he'd begun to write poetry. And we started to talk about it. He was unwilling to talk---I was, too. But he said the questions had to be gone through. He wanted to ask me lots of questions. He was half-afraid of it, too. He was afraid of ~~me~~ someone who had written for a long time now---in whom it was an activity as natural as breathing, and had been since early childhood. And he was embarking on something that had cost him years of preparation and tremor. He couldn't bear to be watched, either, in this process. That absolute was beckoning him all the time. He wanted to be speechless. But he couldn't help talking. He wanted to know in what sort of mood I wrote a book. I talked about the rhythm---the flame that rose and might rise every day for a long time, for a week or two or three, and then might suddenly die, and you would have to wait, you would have to be patient, you would have to search hard, waiting for the flame to light again, because it wouldn't light without great effort, the effort must always be there, the wait must be active and seeking, before the darkness would lift and the body would be taken as it were down from the cross, before the creature would rise again and the earth begin its right movement again, and the blood flow. And he said later---in Paris---to my surprise, just as if it was a reason why we couldn't be friends, 'Ah, that wouldn't be for me--- I couldn't do that!'

I never really understood this. Perhaps he meant he couldn't allow himself to collapse. Perhaps he meant he hadn't the faith to sustain himself in darkness. Perhaps he meant he could only go to his work in moments of flame, and then leave---his work must be occasional poetry, not more. And I remember he said at the same time, after a violent quarrel we had had due to some-

thing I can't even remember now, 'You see, I want to read your books, I want to read English, but I can't, I never shall, I know now that English isn't for me...' It was like an elegy on our friendship---it had the note of saying good bye; he seemed to be watching somebody close to him disappear, but with utter consciousness.

Or perhaps the whole pace of our northern world was too much for him---especially the pace of love and friendship. Perhaps that wasn't what his world had ever prepared him for. It had prepared him for the bitter lonely struggle against a massive obstructive world that fought with knives and little acts of contempt. Perhaps he ^{felt he} had to do something to black himself in my eyes. They say this is what a Sicilian will do sometimes. To make himself easy.

Before, I used to cooperate with this absolute of his, without knowing it. I used to write him letters that never went too deep into my intimate life; they were intimate letters, but general, not in detail---they were about the absolute world we had created between us. I wrote to him about our ^{friendship}, about the solace he and Francine were to us. And about the countryside. Sometimes about people. But after he and Francine came to England and joined in our life for a week, joined in our struggle, when they saw it was life-and-death like their own, when---after that---I wrote him desperate letters, even when I wasn't feeling desperate, ~~but~~ ^{and} in sheer celebration of the new partnership we had found, everything went wrong. And I felt it even ^{while} ~~when~~ I wrote the letters. I talked about the little life-blows that had started to rain in on Melli and me. And even while I was writing I felt a flush of bewilderment ^{creep} up my neck and suffuse my cheeks, a flush of shame as well. That surprised

me because it wasn't my shame. It was the shame that poured from our relationship, from the way ^{I knew} he would read my letter. I felt as if I was laying myself bare: that was what I meant to do---that was friendship, and I'd always done it as an act of homage to him and Francine; but now I felt this recoil on his side---and it must always have been there, only hidden to me. He seemed to feel now that I was offering him no longer my strong and rubicund nature, as he called it, but the slave, the wailing ^tvictim of life. That was how he seemed to read me and hear me; and always as if I were putting him under an obligation, to do something about it. For myself, I was just fighting and telling him what my fight was about. I had no more thought of losing, or complaining, or being a slave, than of flying in the air. It was just the fight that had been going on for years---the usual, commonplace but exciting and desperate struggle, to get yourself heard. A silly struggle in the end, but then death makes everything silly. ~~But~~ ^{But} it wasn't sufficiently the absolute for him. He really began to believe that I was taking the relative outer world in earnest. He thought I was really and intimately dismayed at the outer world: that I respected it. And he kept saying to me, when we met in France a few weeks later, 'You know, your work has to wait---all real work has to---until after we're dead.' [!] And I do believe he thought, for the moment, that this ^{idea} was new to me. Yet we'd talked about such things for years. It was like the collapse of a dialogue which had been going on for eight years. ^{Perhaps} There always had been a basic misunderstanding between us. [^] But now it was all that remained. Our two worlds stood facing each other, stark. And we were powerless.

There had been little signs, now and then, that our worlds

weren't really meeting, even when there was nothing obviously wrong. Once Melli arrived in Paris a day or so before me and Angelo said to her, sitting in the dim, still drawing-room that overlooked the courtyard, 'How is he? Is he in a good state--- or...?' He paused, '...funny?' And he seemed to expect her to know what he meant. But she looked at him questioningly, and he brushed the matter quickly aside, seeming to assume that she only wanted to be tactful. She was as baffled as I was when she told me later.

I think he missed the safe inner order of my world, the harmony that lies right underneath and therefore makes any sally away from it an adventure: there are no dangers of bursting the seams. My long dramatic descriptions seemed to tire him as much as stir him. They were journeys from safety; not desperate flights to achieve safety, as he perhaps thought.

One thing I thought afterwards: that he left us either to become great or become small.

111.

The northern world had nearly crushed Melli, too. When we met I knew she was convalescent from an illness, but not that she'd been in such danger. It was a mercy I didn't know, in a way---because we would have held back from life in those first months, we wouldn't have talked till late at night or walked at dawn, or done any of the things that I think helped her.

I was also ignorant in a deeper way---about health as a whole. And I learned this from Melli. She already had it in her---the power of health. She had the enormous natural-born silence that this requires. I'd had an inkling of it before---but it was all twisted and girdered-about with the prevailing concepts of health. I had felt these were wrong. I'd always felt strangely at odds with medicine---whenever I'd had to see a doctor. There was some contradiction here: I felt a loss of power and self-reliance and initiative which I thought was wrong, whenever I faced a doctor. But I didn't know why it was wrong. I tried to argue that he, the doctor, was wrong. But it was a difficult road. And, slowly, Melli taught me why. First she had the inner rhythm and silence of health, and secondly she was learning herself, as the ^{best} ~~rest~~ doctors do, through their own bodies.

Even as ^a child her's was a rhythm, a deep, in^{ner}der rhythm, which just doesn't do for this epoch. And as fast as the doctors looked for a cause they gave up. It was mad to suppose that the usual doctor of today could ever have found an answer.

When she was a small child her family was chased out of Germ--

any by nazism and settled for a time in Vienna. A day before the nazi troops arrived there they were tipped off by a friend and got away in the nick of time. From there they went to Sweden, where they stayed two years and her father was arrested for being involved with the British secret service against the nazis and was imprisoned for two months. They decided to get out of that country too, before it got hot, and travelled across Russia to Japan, arriving in Moscow the day the nazis signed their pact with Stalin: downstairs in the hotel SS officers were celebrating loudly, and they could hear the German ^{language} through the floor. But they got to Japan and after a last-minute fight to get visas crossed the Pacific in a Japanese liner, and then settled in the United States. It was there that Melli grew up and had all her first most conscious years. She had a marvellous childhood there. ~~But~~ At the age of puberty, when she was about fourteen, she developed what the doctors called hypertension---her blood pressure was found to be much higher than normal, after she was examined for continual head-aches. Doctors know that blood-pressure ^{can} come from an unbalanced nervous system, when it is too high, and one way of lowering blood pressure is to cut the sympathetic nerves, simply to remove some of them from use, so that they can't play their role too heavily any more. This is effective for a time, for five or six years---though this limit wasn't known then: it was thought permanent. It is a devastating operation, dangerous and a terrific shock to the whole system, especially a child's system. It obtains a kind of reprieve from the high blood pressure but of course offered ^s no solution. The surgeon remarked after he'd done it that it had been a terrible experience operating on a perfectly sturdy body which appeared to have nothing wrong with it. But she went through her university years without head-aches and free

of pressure. The heart was thus freed from an enormous burden in the crucial years of development. Or, at least, that was the story.

Hypertension doesn't mean a tense person. It doesn't even mean a nervous person. People with strong tendencies to hypertension are often calm, extraordinarily and distinctly reposed. And Melli has always been this---as a child she was placid and contented, and hardly ever cried. And no obvious self-suppression was involved here. You don't feel with her that the calm comes from suppressing hot feelings. There is difficulty in expression, but this isn't the same: the rhythm is simply one that doesn't ask for expression. It is like a clear underground pool that goes in a perfectly natural current which will always be found to be the same, however slow. And Melli always struck me from the first moment we met with the coolness and soundness and clear penetration of her mind. This is calm all the way through. You will get some doctors arguing about inhibitions, when they come to high blood pressure. But this calm goes right behind the formation of inhibitions or anything else circumstantial. It is a natural rhythm---natural like a stream---^{and} ~~which~~ is intimately challenged by our epoch, by its whole paraphernalia of false effects---its whole pack of fabrications, which can be blown down in a moment if you try long and hard enough, as a ^{Buddhist} ~~man~~ can shed the world. And here lies the struggle for health. It was this that I began to understand through Melli.

That can only be done by the self. It has to be a complete and thorough act of self. It needs an examination into the whole of life, in which nothing is spared. But not in the manner of ^y psychology, which is designed for happiness in the present status quo: on the contrary, ^{health must involve} ~~this is designed for~~ the destruction of the status quo, in ^{one} self.

And Melli only arrived at this completion of what was already her inner knowledge by accident, when she was in Germany on a visit after the war. The other side of our civilisation--- the vigorous provincial culture where you see huge thriving farms and people ^{still} working the land with their own hands---came to her rescue.

I believe the other world, the Anglo-Saxon world, never could have helped her. She never would have got a sense of plain and whole health as a medical reality: her own efforts would have been left aside; she would never have learned responsibility for her own body, because she would never in the Anglo-Saxon world have learned what the body was. It is no use being told that it is a respiratory system or lymph or kidneys; a subtle machine. You have to know it belongs to you, and in what way this is so.

The medicine of the Anglo-Saxon world was mostly drugs and surgery. Outside of that you just [^]grinned and bore whatever you had. There was no approach to health, apparently not much collective idea of what health was---unless it was getting ill and being cured again. Of course there were the vegetarians and homeopaths and nudists and dieticians: but they seemed to accept the same views of the body as the other doctors, only to cut out the drugs and surgery until strictly necessary. Their methods were rarely exact, as those of the ordinary doctor seemed to be: so it was easy to call them cranks and charlatans. Nor was this different in Germany, or in Italy for that matter: but a sense of nature had remained ^{in those countries.} The word 'nature' was still not a crank word as it had become in our world. By accident Melli found in Germany a new possibility for her body which suited her as nothing else had done, and which incidentally saved her life.

When I put this to a specialist in London---that Melli had

been saved not by drugs but ^{by} a total approach to her health---he only said, 'But it's old-fashioned!' This was some year^s after her treatment in Bavaria. The actual measurement of the pressure hadn't changed much, the London man said. Her health had improved miraculously, against even the predictions of her doctor in Bavaria, but the London man wanted her to take a drug that would get the clock-reading down to what most people had. He saw the thing from the point of view of the heart. And there was a lot in his argument. But that was the case with every doctor you talked to. They always had a different part of the body they were interested in, and they saw all the functions from that point of view. It seemed that no one had sat down and thought out for himself what health meant, and what the strange and marvellous balance maintained by the body consisted of. The only man who seemed to have done that was the man in Germany. And we found ourselves going back to his advice again and again, sometimes by accident, sometimes by a curious instinct of self-preservation. These other doctors didn't make us feel safe. They didn't even look safe in themselves. And he did.

The London specialist scared me, for which I was very thankful later, because he was the first to wake me up to the seriousness of Melli's disorder. The atmosphere in his room was frightening. And at that time ~~it~~ ^{this} was what I expected when ^{ever} I went into ^a ~~any~~ doctor's room. It was all heeby-jeeby land for me. And, though a kindly and considerate man, he didn't seem to mind ^{making} ~~giving~~ ~~me~~ this impression. In fact, he was out to frighten me. He fixed me with his eyes and told me straight off that if I didn't do something quick Melli could lose her mind, go blind or ^{die.} ~~was~~. At that time I didn't realise that when he took her pressure---

perfunctorily---it must have scared as it always did in the presence of a strange doctor. Pressure is notoriously dependent on present state of mind; really it is a flexible pressure of supply, to cope with the body's needs as they arise; and since no one has had his pressure measured in all his states, sitting and standing, arguing and working and getting angry, there isn't much evidence about how it varies; but it obviously does vary a lot. The important thing is the margin within which it varies. And the London man was alarmed by this. He was mostly right. The first part of Melli's treatment had been taken, but there was still a long way to go, and we hadn't started it yet, despite the advice of the German man, ^{who wanted us} to go back to him at least once a year and stay in his ^{clinic} ~~week~~ at least ^{at a time.} three weeks. We didn't take any notice of ^{and} this because Melli was eating well and sleeping well, /above all because I had no more idea of what all these charts and tables and figures meant than flying in the air. I knew Melli had been ill and that now she was well. That was what the prevailing medicine taught me to think: a person who was ill lay down, and a person who wasn't stood up. That was about as much concept of health as most people had.

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As a result of that doctor frightening me I went deeper and deeper into the subject. Until then her medical treatment had been strictly her province. The doctor's world was her world, and at first I felt as if I was interfering. A doctor would come to take a sample of her blood and measure her pressure, and I would hang about outside the room; the atmosphere was

always like that of a hospital.

I began to realise how astonishingly ignorant of the body I was. If anybody had told me that my liver was down near my boots I shouldn't have been too surprised. I didn't know if the kidneys were in the back or front, and I thought the stomach was below the intestines. The people who had ever tried to get me interested in what they called the 'body' had always come to me with charts and hideous diagrams and lurid colour-photographs of sores and wounds---in other words, with the sick body. That was supposed to be the basis of medicine---the sick body. Or the corpse. And naturally I was disgusted and turned away.

The body had no connection with me---that much was clear, it was like living with a hood over my head. I doubt whether anybody outside the Anglo-Saxon world could grow up quite like that. Italians invariably have a natural sense of the body. The Germans have their vigorous and inborn sense of nature. It is something the provincial civilisation leaves intact. But in our world you can grow up eating concepts, so to speak. Nothing is quite real. You don't look behind things. The city is an immense dream---it is all done for you, an unbelievable conjuring trick that has no more humanity than a factory-wall lit by flares at night. In Italy and Germany you will never find cities like those in France or England or America. They can never develop in that direction, either, given all the industrialisation in the world. The cities keep a definite human compass in the provincial world. You see it in their roads, the shape of their buildings, whether they're ugly or not. The single human creature has kept his claim on life, in his own senses. Whereas in our world he has only kept his claim on life ^{by} ~~in~~ rights and concepts.

In Italy, too, Melli would have recovered. Nearly every Italian peasant knows the classical treatment for high blood-pressure---which only one doctor in New York advised, and ^{he} was overruled by the rest. In the provincial civilisation the idea of the body as something alive---as continually active and changing---has survived, while in our world it is largely conceived as a static and helpless entity that falls unpredictably ill and has to be given first-aid. In our world medicine is a repair-service, not a concept of health at all.

All I could do was to ask the London man questions. And his answers seemed satisfactory. But all the time I felt there was something wrong. For he was the kind of man we both would ^{describe} say ~~was~~ ^{as} wrong about life from top to bottom. Science seemed to mean the reorganisation of life for him: its material---the body, nature, call it what you like---was a kind of unruly and ignorant mass that had to be shown the way. It was shown the way with instruments, drugs, injections. Whereas our lives were based on the absolute opposite---that the body, or nature, isn't unruly at all, and that it can show us the way if we allow it to. On that basis, after all, Melli's life had been saved. So she felt she knew, for herself.

And she kept on saying, 'No, no, I can't face it. I can't take that drug.' It was all she could tell me, while I wavered to and fro in my search, between the London man and the man in Bavaria (whom I hadn't yet met, incidentally). The drug was simple to take, the London doctor said. It involved little side-effects which you had to get used to, such as fainting in the first stages, watering at the eyes, congestion of the nose to some extent, and a tendency to constipation. This sounded very strange. The reading on the clock would be all right, her charts

would be straight, but she would walk round like somebody with a permanent cold in the head, going off into a faint sometimes, and so forth. What sort of health could that be? What sort of symptoms were those? If you went to another doctor with those, presumably he'd start treating you according to his special subject, in a never-ending process. Normally those symptoms would indicate a disorder: would it be ^e less of a disorder simply because it had been put there deliberately by a doctor?

Yet at present she was feeling completely healthy and lively. What sort of medicine was it that took these things away? For days we mulled it over between us, and for nights on end I tried to think it out, alone. It seemed so strange for a 'cure'. Yet there wasn't a doctor we knew in London who didn't advocate it or something like it.

Also she would have to go to hospital, to find out what dose she could take safely; she could faint in bed---it was better than fainting on the feet. All the tests would be carried out. If he found something wrong with a kidney he could cut it out. 'We can always cut it out!' he said, fixing me with his eyes. He said he agreed with the operation she had had as a child, only he would have gone 'much, much deeper' with the surgical knife. It was rather a horrifying picture.

And I didn't wonder that Melli was frightened. The thought of it alone was enough to put her pressure up. For me, that was what medicine was and always had been. That was what doctors were. Their consulting rooms scared the daylights out of you, and made you feel helpless and ignorant. But Melli knew the other kind of medicine. She knew it wasn't old-fashioned, as the London man apparently thought, because it didn't belong to fashion at all, either old or new fashion, and that was its

strength. Nor was it slipshod: in fact, the examination it offered seemed to be much more thorough than that proposed by the London man. It consulted every aspect of the body, it treated every stage in the process converting food and air into living cells, it watched the development of the body in all its cycles. It called itself 'biological' medicine. Whereas, at best, the London man's medicine was based on the vague doctrine that food---any food, more or less---was converted by the body into 'energy'. If you scrape almost any doctor's mind nowadays you will find that this is what his approach rests on finally, and perhaps unconsciously. It is the nineteenth-century concept of the body as a machine; which drove out all the previous medicine without proving its worthlessness.

In fact, the London man asked me one day what I wanted in Melli---a 'broken-down Ford' or a 'smooth Cadillac'. I just mumbled something, completely confused. It didn't occur to me to say that she wasn't a car, and I wouldn't want to live with one anyway. But there was the concept---a dead, silent machine which ^{started} ~~you started~~ up, and which you fed with fuel every day. This made us masters of the body---we were the drivers. But could we drive the body? He seemed to want to. That seemed to be his idea of science.

Melli could at least be sure of one thing, from her treatment at the clinic in Bavaria---not ~~just~~ ^{only} that the clock-reading was better, but that the whole of her body was going as it should. But with this drug she never could have been sure. And those symptoms would have indicated the opposite. She would have had to close her mind to the future---as to where these new symptoms were leading her. But in health you have to see ahead, for the simple reason that the body is a total organ, one that doesn't

suffer an un-balance in one place without everything else being affected in time. For this reason the 'biological' medicine sometimes called itself 'total' medicine. It treated a symptom--- or an organ---as part of a whole process, and the whole process had to be examined. It was better to see that all the organs did their work properly, and thus slowly eliminate the cause of--- the physical need for---the high pressure. If the body had to take the strain of high pressure, at least it must have the maximum health.

There was another thing---that no doctor could say what the high pressure was caused by. But only the man in Bavaria seemed to take this ignorance into account, and incorporate it in his treatment. He maintained that a new drug, produced in a laboratory, might upset the system in unknown ways, and cause an invisible ^eworsening of the seat of the disorder: it was safer to groom the body slowly to health, in all other respects besides the pressure, so that the cause, whatever it was, would be isolated as much as possible. In this way, he found out that the seat of the trouble wasn't the kidneys, as most doctors thought until then: ~~that~~, indeed, there was no visible organic cause---and this, again, the other doctors had been unable to say for certain.

As it happened, the drug the London man advocated to me, in his boyish goodness of heart, was later looked on as dangerous even in his circles, and was superseded by another which was said to have no side-effects. But only language called those symptoms 'side' effects. Who could say that they were permanently 'side', that is, minor? And who could say that just because, in this latest drug, no 'side' effects were visible, none existed (Invisibly and perhaps more dangerously)? Doctors seemed to show an extraordinary confidence in each other's words. Did

their words count according to their Position? What did Position have to do with the truth? Was medicine part of the surrounding social dream like everything else? Were there habits and traditions that existed because of the people that practised them, and not because of their truth? This London doctor clearly felt awe for other 'distinguished' doctors. The surrounding social dreamworld was sacred to him---this one's 'opinion', that one's 'experience', the other one's 'name'. Clearly, he hadn't passed through the lonely evolution necessary for the power to heal, in our epoch. He was still a boy of the middle classes, though over fifty---for whom there were 'experts', 'facts' proved by statistics, and 'medical knowledge' as fixed as an algebraic equation. He clearly wasn't working from himself, with his own thoughts and energy. It was all in reference to a world he was really frightened of, and in awe of, like someone aiming at a definite social position.

Which is why, perhaps, he always seemed frightened by his own subject; and why his own health wasn't good. His nerves weren't right, which meant he couldn't ^{put} his patient at ease. He was working very hard, with nervous strain all the time, but work never killed a man unless it was wrong work.

Our situation at bottom was this: we either had to say that the whole fabric of society round us was sound, in which case this faithful servant of it was probably sound as well, or that it was a disaster. We said it was a disaster. That was what we had always believed, both of us, and it was what we had based our lives on without realising it.

But that was only the reality underneath. In fact, I was more than half-convinced by the London doctor. I spent hours every day in a trembling panic. I ran to the nearest village---

to find out more about it in the library. I was hot at the collar and my hands were trembling as I opened the medical encyclopedia to look up 'hypertension'---what a fine state to study anything in! And partly this was because I wasn't in charge of my own body, though I didn't of course know this. I was helpless. If my body got a cold or 'flu or measles or gout or anything that came along, well, it just came along. I just had to wait. I had no sense at all that the body gives warning of what it will do, and shows its weaknesses intimately. I thought that was health. And now I think it is ill-health. All I could do, in the matter of the body, was to keep my fingers crossed. Now in all other respects in life I didn't keep my fingers crossed: that wasn't enough for me---never had been. I directed my will towards this or that object, lived towards this or that, and always had done. But in the case of health, it seemed---in the case of the basis of all will---I left it to chance, or to the society round us (in which I was supposed not to believe). It was little wonder I had such ambiguous feelings when I faced a doctor, as if I was being found out in some way.

And here was I trembling like a leaf because there was a medical book in my hand, sweating like a cannibal in front of a witch-doctor! I was superstitious, clearly. My approach to medicine was thoroughly and completely superstitious; I was little better than a pagan would be. You couldn't imagine that I was an Oxford-educated individual. What hope had I of doing anything for Melli in this state?

Knowledge would have held me---held my terror of Melli dying---in check; whereas I was ignorant. It seemed I first had to clear my mind of a lot of rubbish, but I didn't know what this rubbish was. I only felt it was there. Yet I couldn't believe that the textbooks were wrong, either. Nor could I quite believe them.

Most of all I had to change myself. I had to change my life. But the change only came months later, after long lonely reflection ^{during an} ~~in~~ the English winter, without a soul to talk to on the subject, even Melli---because the fashionable medicine was teaching me to look on her as a helpless victim of powers nobody knew anything about, and which it was therefore better not to discuss with her. It seemed we were only called on to make a 'decision'. We had to 'weigh the facts'. It was very middle-class, that language. I wouldn't have accepted it in any other field. Suddenly one used middle-class language for the most crucial step of one's life? That was strange. I was troubled and haunted, and lay awake at night, starting every time Melli moved. Where did I stand in matters of health---the body---disease? Did I really believe that these faithful children of the middle classes---whether they were twenty years ~~old~~, fifty years old, sixty or seventy---could help me, in anything? Could they help me in a dire crucial step, of life and death? But could I do without them, either? What was my position, then? Conveniently, I had never thought it out. Being of more or less robust constitution, I hadn't had to.

As fast as the London man tried to make his treatment seem a quite pedestrian and ordinary thing, it sounded more and more murderous to me. Melli would have to measure her own pressure two or three times a week and send ^{him} a note of the readings every month ~~to the doctor~~. All his old patients did it, he said. It was perfectly easy. And they had 'normal' lives: they went to bed as late as they liked, they ate when and what they wanted, they took planes all over the place, worked under heavy pressure; unlike Melli, who apparently led an 'abnormal' life. Their

lives didn't seem normal, much less healthy, to me, but they were top people, and for the doctor that seemed to be the test of validity in our world. I kept hearing in my mind the advice of Melli's doctor in Bavaria, 'You have to become an artist~~s~~ in the quiet life.' It would^{not} have done to repeat that to most Anglo-Saxon doctors, or perhaps to most doctors anywhere---at the risk of a ribald laugh. But it kept recurring to my mind.

I asked if any of his patients were young. It was always difficult for me to get a clear answer from him because he seemed to be defending himself all the time, and my questions went to him like cannon balls against a fortress. But couldn't these things be talked about simply? Was the body so complicated and difficult that a person of my intelligence could learn absolutely nothing about it? Had God created something you needed special credentials for, to know about? It seemed that at every point in life you were met with a person with credentials---who was like a barrier to clear knowledge. But could these people think? Had these people really studied, in the proper sense of the word? Had they thought things through? Had they ever stood alone? Or had they just swallowed what they'd been told, like faithful servants? Like nearly every child born into the middle classes?

No, it appeared that he had no other young patients. Had he ever treated one? That was vague. An answer was avoided. But I was left with the impression that he hadn't. Here was a further worry. His old patients had probably developed their high pressure after lives of normal pressure. But in Melli we had quite a different case. But he wouldn't admit it was a different case. It was only a matter of the clock-reading. The clock-reading was too high; it had to be reduced, whatever age you were. And I couldn't argue with that.

He said that under his treatment she could eat meat again. But she didn't want to eat meat. She felt better not eating it. In fact, not eating it had provided the first relief for her system, years ago. He didn't actually say it but the impression I took away was that meat would make her stronger. Perhaps this was because I believed it myself, in my heart of hearts. But she didn't look frail. In fact, she was strong. In fact, she often stood up to things better than I did. But my belief had never been formed: it was just there. Yet I began to consult some memories in my mind. I thought of an Austrian farm where I'd once stayed: there they'd only eaten meat on holidays---^{had} I felt quite a pig eating it every day. Bread ^{had been} ~~was~~ their great stand-by, dumplings in vegetable soup, potatoes. And they ^{had} worked twelve to fourteen hours a day in the fields, all the time I was there. That was strange. I began to find out other things. The peasants everywhere had been like that at one time. There was a sophisticated peasantry now, in Germany and France, but in former times only ^e the rich and noble had eaten meat once or twice a day, as we all do now. And the rich and noble were the ones who had needed the spas and cures, and had ^d developed all the peculiar disorders required to be treated there. Noblemen had been short-lived, on the whole, too: they'd been lucky to reach forty. I put two and two together. The doctor in Bavaria used certain of the old spa treatments. Were the old noble diseases becoming universal ones now, as a massive idle class spread all over the earth?

So a quiet life and a meatless diet were apparently not as abnormal as the London doctor tried to make out. But I kept quiet, knowing that the current terminology had the ticket-classification, 'vegetarian', ready for talk like that. It

seemed that on every bit of clear knowledge and information we had in life a name was fixed to denote its social group. But what had social groups to do with finding out about the body?

On the other hand, the man in Bavaria wasn't a vegetarian. He advised meat for working people, even every day. But for people who sat on their fannies most of the year, who enjoyed themselves on their fannies, who travelled to and fro on their fannies---the bulk of the middle class---he advised a good bit less. About three times a week, he said. But you had to fill in with other things. You couldn't just knock off the meat. You had to know what you were doing. You had to do something positive---not just cut something out. And for the London doctor it seemed to mean depriving, and nothing else. ^{On the contrary,} ~~It meant~~ adding ~~in fact~~ to the diet, not taking away. It meant paying a close and thorough attention to what you ate, not carelessly abandoning an essential element out of a kind of mystical obstinacy. On that subject, I found you came up against a dense fog of prejudice and superstition, more in England than anywhere else. The word 'diet'---which was practised as treatment by poor and rich alike in Italy and Germany---meant only one thing in England: slimming. It was connected with temperance and a pinched and cold attitude to life. It meant puritanism. But, as I came to realise (because I shared those fears), it only meant a way of eating. You could have a meat diet, for instance. Or a wine diet. You could ^{have} fattening diets. But in England it was only another dream-word, drifting in the fog of shoddy ideas from the nineteenth century.

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Nobody spoke up for the doctor in Bavaria---even those who know that he had saved Melli's life, even people who had benefited from his treatment themselves. In Germany he was more or less alone. His clinic wasn't even granted official recognition, though local doctors all over Germany sent him their patients---when all else had failed. One thing I never heard anyone deny---even other doctors, even Anglo-Saxon doctors: that he was a fine doctor himself.

We paid our first long visit to the clinic one summer. I'd been there twice before but only as a visitor, staying in a near by pension. This time I stayed in the clinic itself, in a room next to Melli's. Life is a number of well-constructed accidents--- there was no room at the local inn, and the clinic offered me room and board without medical treatment. I said to myself that I didn't need a cure, even if I had the money for it; I was too healthy. It was true I was wasn't on my back. I was even robust. But it wasn't what I would call health now.

Next to Melli's room on the other side there was a young man with cancer. Sometimes we heard him crying at night with the pain, and later he died. I suppose he wasn't more than twenty.

The clinic was in the mountains and there was clear, cool sunlight over massive valleys, with pine woods and sudden green slopes; and an enormous number of squirrels---they came to our French windows to eat nuts in the morning, mostly grey, but sometimes you saw a fox-squirrel, too, with his wonderful russet coat. The clinic was a wooden chelet on a slope, looking down into trees, with a road running close by. Its atmosphere was astonishingly light and cheerful. There was all the special vigorous intimacy and simplicity that the Germans have, and which is really a pagan quality, as if

their whole world was a mysterious and grand forest, and they were the gnomes.

It has always struck me--this utter simplicity of the Germans. If they're bad---they're bad from simplicity. There isn't the abstract badness of our world. There are more bad effects than in our world, because the badness has no form, it springs from single people, from caprice and lonely machination, and so tends to chaos. There isn't any society, there isn't real communion at all. People are alone, with this enormous untouched intimacy and simple vigour. It makes them perhaps the most dangerous people in the world. They never know a limit to their dreams, and in the lack of society they try to bring their dreams to fruition. But it always comes from their simplicity. Behind everything in their world there is the basic simple approach of the single human creature. There is no discussion. If you address them collectively you address them like children. And they follow with incomparable simplicity and good will, if they follow at all.

Nothing could be more wrong than the publicity that has gone out since the war, indicting them as murderous, with a kind of abstract and collective evil. They have little that is collective at all. There is no conversation in our sense---that lubricant of real society. People talk and they listen, but ~~there~~ isn't the give and take, the development by enquiry, of real conversation.

When something collective does happen it is nearly always

a disaster. This is because it must be a dream, and not an inherited safe form. Like Italy, the German world has grown out of independent duchies which were always a law to themselves---not from an integral monarchy, radiating a single authority through its noblemen, as in France and England. There is no communion of ideas, no collective genius of thought, in Germany, just as there isn't in Italy. This is why you see people's faces changing so much, especially if they have great gifts.

The doctor who saved Melli's life, for instance---he had been one of Hitler's dieticians. And I always had to look at him twice, to recognise him. But this isn't a sign of inner vacillation. It simply meant the absence of any inherited communal form.

The German peasants have an inherited physical form of life, as in Italy, but as soon as the break is made with peasant-life the search for form has to begin. In the Anglo-Saxon world character develops in each creature as a collective force, whether he likes it or not. But in Germany it develops by individual crisis and effort; the encrusted lines of age in the German are the lines of an isolated development, and the being of this isolated creature has been so variously interpreted and misinterpreted in its life by other people, it has been seen in so many false lights (other people have no collective criterion in their judgements) that it tends to change according to the light it is seen in.

This is another great danger of the German: he has little sense of other people; little psychological insight---as a natural

gift. This is why, while there is strong theatre in Germany, there is no great human drama as in England and America and France: again, it is like Italy in this. 'Other people' in the German world obstruct one or help one, and you tend to approve or disapprove of them according to which they do. It is the opposite of our metropolitan world where people have their own moral integrity which you don't necessarily call into question if they happen to go against you. Here again is the lack of anything collective in Germany.

There is enormous pride, the pagan accompaniment of ^s simplicity. This is the first and longest battle of the gifted German---to defeat his own pride. In our world pride is ridiculed away early in life as a backwardness of character, a failure of the spirit. ^{It} ~~this~~ is the ^{opposite} ~~opposite~~ in Germany---pride is an assertion of the spirit. The modesty in our world which is cultivated early as a mark of development and maturity gets no encouragement in the German world. And modesty, as Stendhal ^{said,} ~~is~~ is the key to tenderness. The child in Germany learns early that he is alone. Round him a certain tone is established---among the other children---of irony and a certain hurtful disparaging doubt, against which the child cultivates a protective irony and a protective disposition to disparage in his turn. The indignation of our world is unknown---the righteous indignation which the society round you tacitly encourages: because righteous indignation must always be on behalf of something other than self-interest. The struggle of the gifted man or woman in Germany is a struggle to achieve a steady moral character. If you read books on war from Germany---any book on war, from the first or second war---you will always find them lacking in real decided moral verdict. There is always something uncomfortable and ambiguous about them.

Our books on war are exercises in pity, on the whole---horror, some kind of recoil, some collective indignation on behalf of other people's lives, on behalf of the collective health and goodness that is being put at stake in war. But this isn't so with the German book. Invariably if it tries pity for other people it is only insipid. Usually it is just a stark account of horror. But the horror is peculiarly insentient. You have the feeling that these people belong to chill rainy nights where the bullets are flying and men are screaming.

That was how Germans seemed to me in the last war. They invariably put in a stiff attack on a rainy night. And they didn't seem to feel the exposure, not like our men. They belonged to nature more. But they weren't bad men. I was always struck by their simplicity and natural goodness when they came in as prisoners. You might say that their officers were bad. But not abstractly so. They weren't visibly cruel ^emen. Even the SS officers I didn't find cruel men. But they were men who might be present at some fearful brutality without feeling; ^{it;} after all, it would be somebody else' suffering. In our world that could only be a bad person. But in the

German world this doesn't follow: and knowing this is the first step to understanding the German.

I've never met one German young or old who seemed to feel the slightest genuine horror at the concentration camps. Such horror would have to be a collective emotion---proper to a collective massacre. It would belong to our world, but not to the German. There is just perplexity in them---'What did I do? All I did was join the army, then all this comes out afterwards!' Only those Germans who suffered in the camps themselves, or lost a relative in them, have the real horror: because it springs from self-interest. The basic communion of pity and fellowship---all abstract or collective sympathy---is lacking in Germany. This is what the rest of the Christian world doesn't understand, in not understanding the German. You will get a German saying regretfully of himself, 'Now look at how I behaved in the first world war, prancing about on a horse, with a spiked helmet, anxious to fight it out with England---what an ideal!' But there it will stop: going further---changing himself---requires the self-examination which is just not part of the German upbringing, as it is a necessary and unavoidable part of ours.

The German isn't taught as a child to compare his actions inwardly with an imagined collectivity---he isn't made aware of a collective verdict operating on him invisibly all the time. Instead he learns how to protect himself against others. He learns how to survive. And more often than not, as he takes some knocks, a certain cynicism develops: all the world is self-interest, he says. This makes the impact of America since the war an enormous one for the German, whether he likes America or not: for the first time it presents him with a world where pride has been conquered, in intimate and daily dealings, where there is a collective pity and self-identification with others, yet combined with the great power which he has^s been taught only comes from self-assertion.

All the publicity designed to ^{show} know that he has a bad character---which has left the German ashamed and perplexed---misses the fact that he has no character at all in our sense, ~~there is no subjective character.~~ People, to prove their existence and certainly their power in his eyes, have to assert themselves all the time. If you're silent you can't expect him to divine you---divine what you are, where you stand. Equally with the Italian he doesn't see the 'invisible man' inside. There has to be something seen. In his world giving way to someone else is a sign of weakness---or rather, he is aware that it will probably be ~~mis~~construed as weakness. So his tendency is always to try ^{to} ~~and~~ show himself in strength, in case other people take advantage of him. The exterior man is of tremendous importance in Germany. This is the meaning of the firm chins you frequently see---the haughty, opinionated air ~~of~~ many people have when they talk, their eyes lifted and rather narrowed: this is the creature in doubt, thoroughly alone, showing his exterior of

power. He can't afford to look hesitant because this is what he is so much. And it accounts for the strange combination you get in so many German men---external courage with moral weakness. They will fight to the last ditch with no self-commitment morally whatsoever. The courage is dazzling in Germany. People are rocks of courage. But it has nothing to do with moral choice or responsibility.

There are two forces in the world for the German, psychologically---self and power. Self is inside, power is outside. Therefore you get the amazing discrepancy in Germany between the power held by certain men and the power they actually have in themselves (the responsibility). If a man with power helps you he expects no criticism from you. Your right to criticise goes strictly according to your power, not, as in our world, according to the truth of what you say. The ring of discussion---especially hot moral indignation---is at best personal insult in his world. As to the morality of the power he is exercising, and the state of his own soul---that is nobody's business but his own. He may go to the devil if he wants to---and take you with him. This is 'freedom'. In the most apparently responsible men, who conduct themselves in society with careful and punctilious respectability, you will get sudden shows of brutal power, when they are crossed. There is little chance of a man with power showing justice, except to advance his reputation for justice. It is best for the underling in Germany, if he wants a quiet life,

above all if he wants to get on, to make a show of acquiescence and silently wish his boss to the devil. This accounts for the hypocrisy you often get in German relations.

Sometimes a thin pale film seems to cover the faces of the young, from never having burst out in moral indignation and been encouraged for it (basically, by the father): from never having inherited the power of righteousness. A few great creatures have this power---of pure indignation without violent undertones. Hölderlin had it. Naturally he was driven mad. No artist can survive in Germany without going mad.

This is because anger is dangerous in Germany. It is best for a man not to give way to anger. In our world anger has a public and inherited safe form, which we call indignation. But in Germany there is no such thing: there is only the lonely flush of anger, a man fighting obstacles for his own self-interest; threatening to break things up. The lively indignation behind all art is in Germany construed as badness (the artist is a 'devil', that is, lit by selfish and destructive anger), and so pushed easily to madness.

One of the most distressing sights I know is that of two Germans linking arms and drinking Brüderschaft together. Perhaps you can see clearly, while they're doing it, what enemies they will be one day; you may see where their point of incompatibility lies. You won't speak---you would shock their simplicity: as you would shock them both a few years later if you mentioned the Brüderschaft.

What this Brüderschaft means is a kind of eleventh-hour attempt to make society, on the part of people who are alone and divided. It is sentiment and hysteria---the only real collective emotion in Germany. In our empirical society we would no

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more think of drinking brüderschaft than saying spells and charms. There is something horrifying and disturbing about it: perhaps because the sentiment shows the violent chaos underneath.

The German soul is never at rest in a known and safe relation with other people. There are dangers whenever a German tries to make society. He can only do it with a dream; it has to be deliberate. A blindness comes into the German eye, the mistiness of a dream; and the best thing is to gather up your loins in double quick time and push off, before the explosion.

I was once in a car in Berlin, being driven by a chauffeur, when he had this misty look. He didn't see the other car coming at high speed from the right, towards the same intersection, but I did. I could hardly jump out. I poised myself as best I could and when the crash came, full-on, I got away with a cut head and a pocket-full of glass from the window. The driver of the other car was unconscious for two days. The engine was buckled and useless. But the chauffeur seemed as sanguine afterwards as before. With one poor devil^l lying unconscious in the middle of the road, waiting for a doctor, and me with blood streaming down my face, he said over the phone to his master, 'Ah, it's nothing!' After all, he wasn't hurt.

Germans use modern power with the old individual vigour, like men on a farm, which is disastrous. This is why their collective dreams, when they start, are collectively disastrous. The beginning of the end for the German is when he feels he is right, and feels morally supported by others; when he feels moral power. There is no empirical warning from his past, 'All power corrupts'. He simply can't follow the ebb and flow of other people's feelings, and thus the ebb and flow of fate.

In the German world power is like nature. It takes on the permanent and overshadowing forms of nature: the status quo is always there for good, like waterfalls and mountains---until it disappears. Hitler, the American occupation, industrial prosperity---they are each there for good, as long as they last. In the German world power is as little fluid as nature, in the sense that mountains and streams don't walk away overnight. But if they do walk the German adjusts himself at once---they were only scenery. It was never really part of him. Nothing collective ever is.

There is this vigorous and primitive belief all the time, which is both healthy and dangerous. The background is pagan as it is in the Italian world, too. But the Italian world has been softened by the leaven of the church. There hasn't been any such thing in Germany. I shall never forget seeing, in a pleasant little village near Hamburg, a Lutheran priest stroll out of his house in knickerbockers---it was hot---with that self-celebrating swagger of the German official. It isn't a swanking walk so much as a primitive and pagan exercise in self-satisfaction, like an inner dance. The forthright chin was there: the man with no doubts. Power---status quo---stuck out of his body. It was in his walk. He had God up his sleeve. And it was the God of power, that is, a pagan god.

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That clinic in Germany was like a faery castle for us. The pine forests were very close by, and we could see the stark brown mountains that were called the 'mother' and the 'father'.

Their faces had been developed by strange primitive forces.

The German is rearing to go---to be led, to believe and lapse into a state of believing self-immolation, where the individual responsibility is vested in someone else. One man, given the right preparation, can change the German scene overnight. Belief gathers like a storm, a marvellous primitive dream, an ache for glory and splendour. The dream grows until it seems to concern the whole of humanity, then it reaches politics, then it explodes.

Germany is much further from us all than most of us can imagine. The German kings of England, for instance, were never understood by their countrymen. When the young Prince of Wales, the son of George II, dragged his wife out of Hampton Court screaming with a baby half hanging from her and raced her in a carriage to St. James's Court so that his heir shouldn't be born under the same roof as his own father, whom he detested and abhorred, nobody understood at all. Lord Hervey's memoirs from that time---the work of a subtle, scathing, astute courtier---are one long list of staggered, frightened, indignant attempts to piece the king's character together into a consistent whole. Most of the misunderstandings came from the fact that the Germans had no idea what all this English freedom was about. They couldn't see why a man with such enormous power like the king should be unable to exercise it according to his wishes and convenience, but have to consult interests and parties and an undefined entity called public opinion. They couldn't understand a people who asked to be defended against its enemies but hated the sight of a military red coat. They couldn't understand a people who spat on the royal carriage and yet were decidedly not

republicans. They couldn't understand why an apparently absolute power should be given to a king and then limited and curtailed and ridiculed by the fact that parliament and parliament alone had the power of the purse. In the German world a man with power does not beg and he does not discuss.

To the outsider this is incomprehensible and outrageous. But it is the German world. It is all the original vigour and rude health of our civilisation.

This is why it saved Melli when our own world had nothing to offer. It all depended on one man. When I met him for the first time I was standing by Melli's bed at the clinic, talking. She had just had a special bath, and the routine was to spend an hour in bed afterwards, well covered-up. There was a quiet knock on the door and at once I felt, with this man's presence as he came into the room, the most extraordinary sense of peace, like an invisible wave that washed slowly over me. It felt as if he'd gone alone all through life's battles.

In that moment I knew more about him and his clinic, and about what he'd done for Melli, than I ever knew before from hearsay or ever learned afterwards. I knew it depended on how this doctor struck me in my animal feeling. It depended on the man. Everything follows from that, even medical doctrine.

And this doctor who stood before us now, in white, had gone the road alone. He'd done the self-change. That peace isn't possible short of a terrific and completely unsparing act of self-examination. All knowledge has to be dreamed first, and be yielded up from intimate life painfully and slowly. Then it is given to other people, to become their certainty.

There were pleasant walks near the clinic which Melli knew from her other stays. The paths weaved in and out of woods, by the side of hills, over quick, clear streams hardly a metre wide and tiny waterfalls, with tall firs everywhere, and wooden crucifixes at the roadside, and here and there those wide massive green Bavarian valleys that look like the last plateau of earth, the beginning of heaven. Sometimes the mountains had an awful and splendid closeness, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ like sharp stones you could grasp, with every subtle colour, brown and green and purple and white, absolutely fixed against the sky, so still that they seemed to deny that there had ever been movement in the universe since the beginning. And then on other days they would stand misty and remote, like the edge of a vast, mysterious landscape you had never seen, which lay on the other side, colouring the sky behind them. The mist would make them look soft and mild. It was like a country I'd dreamed about, as ^{my} home. There were the magnificent wooden houses with long roofs that sloped down far beyond the walls and formed a shade round the balconies and windows, and there were the cobbled yards behind with chickens and ducks and geese, and tall carts and threshing machines, all without the abstract touch of our epoch; a first stark necessity was still alive in them, as it was in the hard, lined, gnomish and genial faces of the people there. A fine old man with a flushed, healthy face and bright eyes would always give us 'Grüss Gott!' when we passed in the morning along one of the paths.

And it was marvellous being in Melli's country with her, really for the first time. The cities didn't count---we'd stayed in Frankfurt; but it wasn't like Germany. Here you saw why nature had such a hold on Germans. That was its power---the mountains and the massive grass slopes and valleys: you

were alone inside it, nearly lost; it rose like a terrific and ~~absolutely~~ ^{monstrously} independent dumb world, with something reckless in it, all the time stating the splendid and huge, the beyond, where you were so tiny, where you belonged to the dark, sheltering spaces in the woods. It lay there more ~~extraordinarily~~ untouched than any other countryside I'd ever seen. Italy wasn't untouched like that. England had been worked over and over, like a million lovely gardens. Only France had a ~~touch~~ ^{face} of that enormous implacable spread. But not quite that combination of stark mountains and firs and pastures: the French country had a wonderful sweetness, and it embraced the human creature, especially in the Isle de France, where the sky has a limpidness and intimacy which is like a sweet private message to each creature. But the German country, whether you are in the heath outside Hamburg, with its immense, dark stretches of pine-forest, or at the edge of the Salzkammergut, isn't intimate. It stands outside you like a massive and stirring statement you can't avoid. German country is spectacle. It doesn't include you. You have to be rapt--you watch and gasp all the time. You're overshadowed. You feel in Germany that the development of the German people couldn't have been anything else. Their voices have been lost in the vastness. There wasn't the natural opportunity to create society. There was only the dumb and endlessly primitive community of nature. That can never be altered, however many cities go up. German country turns you into a lonely spectator of eternity, it makes you giddy, you know less what is right and what is wrong than you do outside the country, you get a sudden nameless energy like a wind that starts up without warning in the trees at night, and you don't know what to do

with this energy; you tend to rapture and to heady, nebulous dreams, you get a bit of mountain madness in your innermost self, your nightmares are sickly and menaced, with strange vengeful and spiteful creatures from the dark woods, unsparing in their venom, nudging and sneering and pinching.

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I went through my own therapy at the clinic, picking up what information I could from the little books written by the doctor in charge. I wanted to find out for myself. I didn't want a doctor doing it for me; I wouldn't have learned anything. Which can be dangerous if you're as ignorant as I am. Because of that, it was months and even years before I found out that the body ~~isn't~~^{wasn't} just an inanimate lump but works^{ed} and complains^{ed} in all sorts of ways which until then I'd known nothing about. I began to understand what this man meant when he talked about the 'inner doctor'.

The clinic was quite¹ and soothing. Everybody was in bed by nine. I could read with my bedside light on until nearly midnight. But I tried to sleep early. I wanted to get the maximum benefit out of the stay, to share Melli's state as much as possible.

One evening she happened to go to one of the clinic-lectures about sleep. Apparently, it wasn't only that you needed enough sleep: the hours in which it took place were important, too. There were certain hours of darkness in which it should take place. The intestines, for instance, had ceased their work by a certain hour, and after that hour, the food tended to turn rotten inside, and go to fat, namely, dead cells. So sleep and eating were linked. I remembered that my mother

and father, and all the people in the district where we lived, ate early in the evening, and only had a bite of something towards bed-time. 'Dinner', the big meal of the day, was around noon. The bulk of the people had always known how to live properly, it seemed. They followed a definite and unchanging rhythm every day. But we had broken the rhythm. And we were paying the price in a thousand different ways, mostly in nervous diseases.

Melli was now pronounced strong enough for the juice-cure, in which she would have nothing solid for a fortnight. Before, she hadn't had the stamina---the doctor's problem had been to build her up, after her weakness from daily meals of undigested food, during the crisis some years before which had first taken her to him, when no other doctor in Germany had anything to suggest for her, including the foremost specialists, ^{who had} ~~and~~ offered no hope for her life.

She began the cure, with fear and trembling in both of us, because we were both victims of the superstition that if you don't get solid food down you every day you are going to conk out.

She didn't conk out. And when it was finished a further remarkable change for the better took place in her body. The tests showed all her organs working more or less perfectly now.

And the eye-doctor ~~---(~~ more than any other specialist the eye-doctor has a total view through his lens of the medical history of the patient, ~~before him~~, like a miniature of the whole marvel of the body, set out behind the eye ~~---(~~ said after he'd examined her this time that he'd never seen anything so miraculous in his career; her sight had made a complete recovery, and the scars from the time of her crisis were nearly healed.

Unawares to ourselves, we were finding that there was a definite natural rhythm in life---a way of eating, a way of sleeping, a way of working. Without this total change there could be no health, no cure.

It's all broken rhythm nowadays. The middle class is the exploring class---it breaks up the traditions and habits of the old life and examines them, to see if they ought to be jettisoned or not. It has the late nights and rich food and heavy drinking of the old nobility, but it hasn't the compensating violent sports, and the basic calm of the nerves. It has the lack of splendour and the workaday approach of the old peasantry, but not the life in the fields. The middle class has created bohemians, but the whole class is really bohemian and always has been. Its habits and regularity are at best a thought-out system, to make character where there is none.

What's going to happen in the future? What about the children being brought up in a broken rhythm? What will happen to the vast and increasing populations of people who spend their lives in a chair but don't revise their habits accordingly? Will there be sterility? unknown diseases, terrible like plagues? cancer? (These are only questions, from an ignorant man). Will it get worse as sophistication spreads? What about the fact that most of the American school-children who die, die of cancer now? The answers aren't known, apparently. Nothing can be predicted because there are no precedents. Never before on this earth have people lived so confidently with so many unknowns. Just as the nineteenth century handed down to us dirty cities, and a population of near-cripples, are we handing down problems that can't be solved, because they're

already there in the bones and blood and organs of the young, as disease? Again, only questions; from an ignorant person.

We were brought up on the last vestiges of the old life, when the basic things---the food and soil and air---hadn't been tampered with. But what about the future? What's happening inside us? What influences the child in the womb, unknown to us? Are all the tiny, invisible processes of the body known? If incubation periods are anything from ten to twenty years, how do we know what is happening to our children? Can anyone tell us, for certain?

What hope has a man who spent all his formative years in a laboratory, learning formulae, of answering questions like these? Yet he has control of our lives, and those of our children. He has no real voice, his mind invariably hasn't had a real training, except in other people's formulae. How far---outside the formulae---does he go along on superstitions, more untested than my superstitions because he feels he has the support of his formulae? How far are we in the hands of functionaries none of whom could take responsibility for the power he uses? How far are the doctors just functionaries of medicine, although given the power to heal? How far are we being led into darkness, by people who prefer the darkness?

In the last hundred and fifty years life everywhere has been put under new principles, and no one has bothered to examine these principles to see if they are all right for the world or not. They've come into being at an alarming rate, they belong to us and they stem from us, yet we're their servants---slaves. They form a prison-house round us. And partly this is why life seems to become unreal---because prisoners are notoriously daydreamers.

Nearly everything robust and genuine from two centuries ago has been taken in hand and overhauled, and a vast prison based on the principles of production has been put in its place. It is rather like living in a factory where the only important thing is what's produced, and yet we're not like that---we need intimacy, we dwell on the little follies of life for our pleasure, we take notice of each other not for what is useful in each other, not for what goes towards producing things, but for the way we turn our heads, and our smiles, and that peculiar deep magnetism that pulls us to this person rather than that. These are the real important things of life, and yet that is hidden in our world.

What intimacy can we hand down, as the old generations handed down intimacy to us? All we inherit is a repertoire of principles---rules and principles! Where is the intimacy, unless it is what each of us desperately manufactures out of the broken sticks of our lives, in the ruins? Nearly everything we have, even now, has come out of an intimate act---everything from theatres to horse-racing. We ^{have} lost touch with their background. Yet we still

live on their intimacy. The theatres still have their galleries and stalls and boxes, which came from the way people watched the pageants and shows in the streets, centuries ago--the nobles on horseback in the street, the well-to-do looking from windows on either side, the populace on the roof-tops. And this is the case with every form we have---everything from the way we eat with knives and forks, to the way we take our pleasures in the evening. It all came out of the flurry and bustle of human life. But what comes out of the factory? What comes out of the newspaper-sheet? the dead voice in the microphones? Yet we cling to intimacy just the same. Its tiny seed is there.

There is no villain of the piece. That, again, is an old-fashioned concept, bequeathed from the epochs of intimacy. There is no one man who sits down and thinks up a poison that will ^kkill off all the insects in a given area and incidentally all the salmon and game as well. There is only the principle, and by the time a poison---a bomb---a bad habit---is in practice it has become a universal principle not only a few men but millions live by whether they like it or not, and a principle they dare not let go. It isn't that he's to blame, or them. There's nothing intimate---not even enough for personal blame. He or they contributed their last remaining intimacy to the problem and received their Nobel prize, and then their work was swallowed up in a principle that affected every child born from that time on, or affected the soil in a hundred mysterious and unpredicted ways---affected people and things thousands of miles away, in languages and scenes unknown. This is the strength of a principle. It has no face, no blame, there is nothing even to arouse the indignation. The middle-class spurious indignation about policies and villains and the magnates and power-moguls is just old-fashioned

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stuff from the jolly pre-nineteenth-century epochs where what single people did had effects. Principles spread like ghosts. They are ghosts. Yet they're real in that they control us. Nothing could be less real to me than the physicist's calculations on a piece of paper, but they're real enough if they affect the bones of any child of mine. That man isn't real to me, I haven't seen him and I don't know his name, I may not have been within a thousand miles of him, but he enters my private life, he gets into bed with me, for all I know he is taking the power of my balls away, he may be rendering me sterile. Some people say he is. Some people say he isn't. But that he affects me no one denies.

So he is real all right. But only a principle. A principle is immovable like a god, as totally not-there and yet very-much-there as a god is; as present and as absent.

It isn't a matter of countries any more, of course. There is just the one reality, the whole world over. And at present power lies with those countries where principles have swept everything else aside and plundered life most successfully, to the exclusion of all else. But those principles are the life-determinants for us all, wherever we are. In that way we're all Americans---everyone in the world. We lost our nationality, our class, our family, our church, not after the last war but a hundred and fifty years ago when modern America started (in England). In America the principles began to stalk over a whole continent, cutting vast roads and fertilising deserts, all the more sweeping because they were unaccompanied by any of ^{the} illusory reminders, or warnings, of the past. Publicity has tried to turn America into a new experience but it is the name of an experience we've been going through for nearly two

centuries, in a process that has suddenly come to a full stop, now.

For now the consoling nineteenth-century chant that In The Middle Ages the mortality-rate was over fifty percent, and there were fearful plagues and people died early, is not enough. To avoid the past, why should we savage the present?

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Our bodies began to feel rested as they'd never done before. There was a terrific increase of stamina. My work was quieter and more sustained. My nerves were ~~completely~~ different. I had the strange sensation that they were being renewed inside me, but in a very fleshly way, like new skin growing.

Sleep was easier. Above all, work was clearer: there was no sense, when I worked now, of leaning on my nerves, and ending with exhausted nerves. I was never suddenly tired or suddenly hungry now. And I had to learn a new kind of balance, in all my habits. Gradually it became a style of life which I guarded jealously against the outside world. My body told me quickly, and unerringly, what it wanted---especially if there was a forced return to the old life for a few days. I enjoyed food more than I'd ever done, and wine. The simplest things were much more of a treat and privilege for me than ever before. Yet I wasn't eating different things. All I'd done, basically, was to change my timetable. I had learned to follow the rules of my body, not my will or desires, or even senses. I became aware of things I'd hardly noticed before. Even the countryside was new to me---the flowers and smells. It wasn't that I saw things differently

but that I belonged to them more; the rising and falling of the light each day seemed inside me, not just a spectacle outside. I wasn't just senses now, but a creature.

I realised that health wasn't just being well, or not being ill, or living a long time, but having a nervous system that was in a proper ^{the} ~~rhythm~~ ^{rhythm}. I found there was only one rhythm, and that you either have it or you don't. And with all the strength and robustness in the world there is no real health if you fall short of it. And I believe a man always knows if he has this or not. But perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps I would have claimed it before. I can't remember.

And it seemed that health was an obligation to other people. It was an obligation to sanity---to our whole future. When a people loses the seed of health as its guiding rule, when this is no longer the fount of all its thoughts, there is darkness, as now.

We were both more sensitive to broken-rhythm, but to real challenges more robust. There was a wonderful sense of the dawn, not just as the physical reality every day, but as the moment that preceded our waking, ^{our own bodies;} inside ~~the~~, not just light but a movement inside, a waking inside, deep in the organs and tissues. Life showed us the proper things to do, more than it had before. It seemed to pick out the dark and unnatural more easily.

And there was a cumulative effect, springing from this important change, which further changed our life in a basic way: we were no longer any good for what passes for society nowadays---we were no good for invitations. Those endless sitting and talking sessions were over. Our social life---for want of a better expression for the collective misery nowadays---was over. And that was perhaps the most marvellous thing that had ever

happened to us. We'd tried for 'solitude' before, and we both tended to reclusive habits, because of the horror of middle-class amusements generally. But the ⁵solitude we'd had was bloodless. It didn't warm us at all. It was just an absence of people. But real solitude is the security of your nervous system, essentially. And you can't get that just by absenting yourself from other people. The peasant who worked with others in the fields all day, and ate with them at night, and slept in the same room, still had an actual aloneness that was unfathomable and real like the wind at night. He could never be plumbed. And our horror is that we can be plumbed so easily, we can be torn and divided and made bare by the slightest incursion from the outside, by the smallest chance encounter in the street, unless we deliberately set ourselves the task of wholeness.

And this can't be an attitude. It can't be a thought, or a facet of personality. It has to pervade the whole of life. The whole body and mind has to be made over again. This is the final---life-saving---exploration of the middle class. It has to be done in terms of the tiniest and most intimate habits. It means overhauling bit by bit all the forces at work on our lives, from outside. It means challenging them. It is the work of years. It means questioning the truth of everything that gets public support. It means taking public support as the stamp of falsity wherever it lies---wherever a principle begins to stalk across life. And this is something for which there is no middle-class discipline. In the working class, in the old peasantry as in the old noble classes, it is, or was, a discipline. You grew up in an atmosphere of benevolent cynicism towards public power: dominated finally by the example

of one man who had stood absolutely alone and was nailed to a cross for it. But in the middle class you grow up with a superstitious sense that somewhere you have to join it, if you don't want to miss the bus. Finally, the verdict of the group is the real one. And that has to change. The old authority, of the single creature, has to come back.

Most doctors can never be real doctors because they haven't changed their own lives. Even when they've had the inclination they haven't had the time. You can only heal if you've healed yourself. Most of the doctors I know are unhealthy people. Sometimes they're hard drinkers, as if they're scared of something. They haven't grown used to nature. They don't love it. They're scared of seeing the disease in people because they're so powerless against it. I've talked to doctors in hospitals who seemed as scared as I was when I looked at my first medical encyclopedia in that village library. This is because their own nerves aren't right. And if your own nerves aren't right you can't have an appreciation of your own body, and therefore a power to heal and predict. Half the power of diagnosis is a sense of your own body. But if your intuitions are panic-stricken and continually disordered by the wrong life you can't lean on them, even to perform the purely functionary forms that most doctors are asked to perform. To be a real doctor you have to have overhauled your life, and this is lonely work. If you have swallowed the nineteenth-century fiction that your body is a machine which your mind is in some strange way in charge of, you can never begin.

We realised we would have to live with our eye on Melli's disorder all the time, every day, realistically. No nineteenth-

century pill could help us, by fixing the clock-reading. But we weren't sure. There was this doubt all the time. We were ignorant. Sometimes there would be a mutual terror, that we were doing the wrong thing. Then it would subside. There would always be this thing, the invisible worm that flies in the night, in the howling storm, ~~and finds out the bed of crimson~~ ~~joy~~, to bring us to the reality again. But it helped our vigilance---this terror that no one else on the earth could see, except perhaps the doctor who knew just how quickly he'd snatched her from the valley of the shadow. But the body kept reality before us. If something was wrong, it reminded us. That was the new life we had. The body spoke. A late night, a meal that was wrong, a little drink we thought was harmless---the body spoke immediately. There were these reminders nearly every week, then less and less as we came to know how to deal with them, and how to avoid them. There would be crises of terror, in which we were completely and absolutely alone; then we would rise from it again and go back to the world. We knew that the world has to be humoured. Tell it a comfortable story.

We got nothing buckshee any more. We paid for everything---in the flesh. Nothing could be left to crossed fingers any more. All of God's apparatus---the whole tattoo of objects and desires---had to come under careful review. We could afford to be grateful for nothing. We had to know where we stood, in everything. We had to live counter to the lives of everyone around us.

Then real sex came---as opposed to pleasure. It wasn't until we descended voluntarily and sacrificially into the depth of the night and were without self or interest or presence, but were

creatures of the silence that lies inside the core of the universe, that sex was given to us. It wasn't until we'd laid down our selves. We burned them---at the altar of pleasure---willingly. It took a long time. But in the end we had no self. The whole of our insides, our organs and tissues and intimate erotic secretions, weren't us at all but a world with its own rhythm and ebb and flow and thoroughly outward reality as much as trees and waterfalls and hills, which 'we' followed. It means the recognition---in this case not like a revelation, but a slow dawning---of God. A pagan can't love. The naked spectacle of the night has to be there all the time, and observed all the time, ^{for love:} not thrown away for a little bit of pride in daylight, or for a little bit of appetite. Only the religious love. Animals and pagans have intimacy and vigorous affection and loyalty, they have pleasure and warmth. But the love which is the most perfect respect, founded ~~on reality~~ on reality and knowledge and the laying-bare of the heart, is religion. This is so because the only heart that can lay itself bare is the one that appreciates how little people's words and sins and actions and power are, ^{compared with} ~~before~~ the spectacle of the real, eternal world outside. To lay yourself bare, and have no fear of words, or fear of any verdicts on your dirtiness, or fear of anything but the simple truth of your being, means knowing your delightful smallness before God. In this happy and marvellous discovery, which at one stroke clears up all the silly struggles of life with other people, and puts the vanity and pride at rest at last, in their empty search for significance where no significance exists, in their endless smarting under verdicts that could never belittle what didn't think itself big, brings the creature to the station of all peace, where real action begins.

This went hand in hand with the discovery of our bodies, it was one and the same journey, and at the end the sense of health was total: it meant not just better nerves but the mystery of created life.

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When you arrive in England after years away^d you feel a cosy thrill and excitement, provided you've got enough money in your pocket. Everything from the tiny houses to the lights in the train-compartments seem made with devotion; the safety of the island is what strikes you most. It feels like going deeper and deeper into a glowing, warm hall. You can settle down. Let the mind wander. You're free.

There is an underlying safe zone in which everybody is joined together, in England; rather sleepy, never reaching words. You see it in people's faces. Everybody belongs to the same world, but this is never spoken. Really it is the underlying collective silence of the family: centuries of organic development are behind that. The society is a vast, complicated family, even to the point of destroying the actual family-unit. Two Englishmen saying hullo after ten years away from each other may only shake hands and give each other a glance which to the foreigner conveys no intimacy at all. But there's terrific historical development behind that. The most infinitesimally subtle glance is understood. This is what makes it so difficult for the Englishman abroad with his glances, grunts, nods, yawns and smiles that means absolutely nothing to the foreigner except perhaps that he's gone cuckoo.

You see it in the tiny houses with their neat curtains and orderly back gardens. As you go by in your snug train-compartment you're sucked into a quiet, intimate life that lies all round you like the countryside even when you're in a huge city. If you don't recognise that intimate silence---the lack of any need for gestures---England's beyond you. Some people thrill to it at once. Others don't---they see nothing in it, there's no 'life'. But the thrill is there. A certain intimate thrill at the centre of life.

But then there is the other thing: a kind of frightening threat to tear away the life-possibilities from defenceless people, without warning. You feel it in the buildings and the chill streets. Here are the Anglo-Saxon rules and principles stalking through life. A great ravage has gone on. It makes you feel an outcast if you have no money in your pocket---in Paris, in London, New York. Having no money means having none of the coin of ravage. Money is the crisp, squalid passport to intimacy, from the land of chill. This is the coin of the great Anglo-Saxon ^charnel house of the soul, on either side of the Atlantic. France is torn in between this and the provincial world on the other side---it partakes of both, the powers and horror of both. These are the east and west of our civilisation. The west means freedom, basically; the east, nature. America was kept alive by the influx of Europeans, making their intimate villages which would last for a generation or so before rules and principles claimed their children and put the film of abstraction on their faces. England was kept alive by its proximity to the continent, just.

Now you get the basic contradiction of the middle class,

which will destroy---heal---it; ^{self} that it has had to follow the principle of inheritance, but has only rules and principles to offer as heritage. It has set out historically to break the old society, all the mystical and religious and superstitious forms of authority that held it together; all had to go so that people could be free---^{from} of blind authority. Everyone had to be clear. Everyone must be given the power of sight---every slave and subject. It was done. He stood alone. His habits and intimacies and dreams were gone. The intimate inheritance had been cut off. But he was free. He inherited, not the lovely repertoire of tales at night, from his mother and father, but the rules and principles of how to work and how to think and how to compete and how to keep fit.

That was one thing ^{the middle class} they couldn't do away with---the old noble habit of passing on property to the son. You've got to have some continuity. You can't make life afresh with each generation. And that was its weakness. It produces^d a sort of massive degeneration much worse than the old noble classes risked, because they intermarried with the lower classes and kept their blood strong. At least, in the old nobility the heir of the property or title was brought up with an image of how to govern, and with a full sense of his own powers, and of his role. It didn't matter much what his mind was like. He was authority in his whole person. But now the middle-class child inherits a definite position with neither the training nor invariably the mind for leadership: yet he is a leader. He ^{achieves} ~~gets~~ power without any reference at all to his abilities, so you get, at one and the same ^{time}, the most perverse system of privilege and inheritance, coupled with an attack on privilege

wherever it is. You find this contradiction in classically middle-class people: they attack privilege and style and its airs and graces, yet they are privileged people. This is the key to the peculiar middle-class conscience that seems to attack what it feels most guilty of.

Guilt is the key-feeling of the class for that reason. The son or daughter who inherits all the rights of education and sometimes money as well has no image put before him, at least not one that is going to serve him publicly. He may like his dad, or have a happy home, but ~~this~~^{these} are private fortunes. At best money has to be his guide. But money can't guide. So nothing is inherited that fits him for life. Anything like the style of the old noble classes, the thoroughbred quality, has passed away. There is only a system of training millions of people for the leadership they have no gift for. And you can't lead with nothing in your mind. You must have a great warmth behind you, which can only be taught in infancy, before even language is there, and then this warmth must be seen to pervade the outside physical world^{for you}, its guarantee and mark; the first without the second is nothing.

So the son with no aptitude for thinking is educated right up to the university. But his real inheritance was just dust and ashes. He wasn't given an idea of what the human creature is, but only what the human creature can produce. So as fast as the class spreads and gets richer, and enrolls new members every day from other classes, it becomes more degenerate. As fast as a man sets up in a new home and heaps bounty on his children, from the sweat of his brow, or the sweat of other people's, his children become delinquents. An outer life you've

been brought up to think of as dead---the sky just gasses, and other people fellow-units of work---isn't going to command your respect.

Even personal inheritance goes by the board gradually, and you're left with the social inheritance of schools and jobs. There are quarrels between father and son: the father no longer has the old mark of authority---he was never allowed to develop any airs and graces himself; so he isn't so different from a boy, something isn't quite developed, ^{in Lim} he was never given a real position in life, for himself alone, only for himself as a facet of the general social inheritance. He has curbed himself dangerously in the interests of the general weal.

And out of this total death of everything intimate and binding (the intimate areas become the least binding) there has to be a desperate effort that can only be described as religious: the laws that exist outside men have to be learned again, by learning where they are inside, in the self, so that power once more becomes a human faculty and not a deadly abstract instrument by which people are estranged from intimate life.

You won't starve without money in your pocket, in the charnel house, the social rules being what they are, but you'll be starved in the most terrible sense of all. The whole of life can suddenly drop dead for you. This is what the middle-class child learns early in life, that he should expect nothing. This is the classical condition of hypertension. It is the state of permanent shock: you would expect to find that hypertension is almost a new disorder, and that it flourishes in the charnel house more than anywhere else; and, in fact, it might be called the American disorder. The whole nervous system is in a state of alarm.

This isn't fear or discomfort. The nervous system would probably thrive better under brutality. ^{It} ~~This~~ is alarm from the unspoken. A most terrible intimate alarm, in the organs and secreting glands, a fear that the very nipple that feeds you might be snatched away. It never will be, you 'know' that. But the organs and secreting glands aren't so sure. They can't feel safe. They know the truth underneath: that nothing intimate is binding, in that world. Contracts are binding.

Among working people that threat would be absolutely impossible. ^{Itals} There would be much greater real danger of the nipple being snatched away---through hardship---but the threat isn't felt. My own life was perfectly safe in childhood, I was rocked in a calm to which I didn't know any exception, while my parents were barely clinging to life and my father was out of work, in the General Slump. The streets outside were chill, there was the blank stare of the city all round, but inside there was always this dazzling business, like being in a palace. I was among the richest children on the earth. My father left for the docks at five in the morning and got back around seven in the evening, but he was a rich man, too. We had a marvellous blazing fire in the hearth, a tiny square of it that glowed white and heated the whole room. The tiny room where the five of us lived nearly all the time was the most wonderful palace of colours and lights and charms and grace and splendour I have ever been into. I was brought up on the philosophy that the people in the other class were more fortunate, but when I joined them later, after I had graduated through their terrible universities of the soul to their world, I began to see what glory I had come from, and what pity and understanding and patience I owed to the outcast

children of men with money in their pockets.

From what I have learned in the middle class you have relations with people you like and the people you do business with. The people you like are the people you approve of and who presumably approve of you: the approval is handed back and forth on the principle of the market-place. If you hate somebody you turn your back on them. The breaking-off of relations is on a massive scale in the middle class, a deadly ritual that stops the blood. There is nothing binding. Nothing you can absolutely take for granted. So no arguments can be carried through. Nothing can be inherited. We offer our children dust and ashes, and there's no way of getting round it.

There is the complete collapse of human authenticity. The thrill and mystery of the human presence is gone. It is leaving the human face---the cracks and lines of real experience and single human power are going. He has no power. But some he must wield. You can't get round it. You can't get round the single human creature as the basis of all thought. In the end even the rules and principles wear down because the sphere

intuition underneath is lacking. The single creature has to be flattered again, for himself alone. The child is groomed early not to trust his lonely powers, but to learn, and learn.

Short of giving his whole life to the challenging of all the noisy reality round him---from a tenacious instinct that something is wrong---a man is bound to be the child of rules and principles, and these will walk all over his face and make their deadly abstract mark, so that he loses himself and can never achieve any intimate end that he might set himself. The intimate life always ^{evades} ~~thwarts~~ him, without that battle. Most people in the world are passive. They inherit their reality and try to be good members of it. They believe true what most people in the world say is true. Now when people were governed by the seasons, and knew the rhythm of their own desires and whims, this was all right. In being passive, they still had their own field of authority, through yielding to the great natural authority outside them. But now their authority is based on a false premise. They don't want to murder millions of their own kind, they don't even want to murder one, but they may be doing so without knowing it. Just in keeping the world going they may be destroying it. Their basic premise is a basic contradiction. It wasn't, before the era of rules and principles. Life wasn't based on a thought-out premise at all: it started and ended consciously in nature. Without this norm you lose the power of predicting what nature will do. You have no precedents. But nature is still there. Even if you want to get to the moon you have to use it. You have to surrender to it even to conquer it, as the current phrase is. There are rules outside and inside. Once these rules were acknowledged and known. They are no longer.

Even the so-called countryman doesn't know them.

We can't grasp all these principles at work on us, we are each of us ignorant, we're each of us speechless before formulae we could never hope to unravel alone in twenty lives, let alone in one. We have no voice and yet we have to speak. We have to consult something in ourselves for which there is no rule or principle. We have to use our judgement, after nearly two centuries in which the single and fallible human judgement has been undermined and finally ^{de}unthroned. Someone has to stand alone. Someone has to take the risk of speaking from himself. He has to put his doubts and fears.

There's a terrible stillness, like after a bomb. Then people come together for an evening, a couple of hours, and smiles are exchanged. We huddle round on a market-basis of fair exchange. But I had to give even that up. I found I could never hold myself. I was always wanting to talk---as I'd been taught to talk as a child, in a natural and unfrightened flow, letting the indignation or passions come and go, without afterthought. But nearly always there was a disaster if I did so. Apparently, this was offensive talk. It had a peculiar contradictory effect on me. It made me stop my natural speech, as an increasing habit. In that world you got off most lightly, it seemed, if you withheld yourself, rendered yourself incognite. And this is what I learned to do. This is how the middle-class reticence grows: the hypertension may strike us late (when it can't affect the organs seriously) or it may strike us early.

When Melli and I met we had no relations, except in the middle-class barren sense. There were no passions. Nothing that had to be observed, nothing binding. Like so many people

who are lost in that world we ached for duty and self-sacrifice. If you don't ~~break~~^{break} through middle-class life you can't get to the fount. You have to live selfishly, with dreams of unknown guilt at night and hates that are hardly specified and a mounting irritation against the rest of mankind. I know men who are nearly suffocated by the hate and irritation they feel against mankind, and they have the reputation for being quiet and decent, and even jolly. And you seem to have a jolly time with them: but then, when you've gone, those poor children of ashes seemed to have plented a kiss of death on your cheek; only your insides told you what their insides were like---externally there was no sign at all, only smiles and agreements; their real presence only came on you afterwards, the presence of anguish and dearth and helplessness.

If a child is taught that the world may be snatched away, that even mother and father are finally merchants grubbing for money on his behalf, not moved by a love that is so beyond them that they can't give it a name, the two chronic habits of the middle-class civilisation ~~lay~~^{lie} in wait like a snare: constipation and self-abuse. Both are an act of withholding, in shock. They are two aspects of an act that wants to keep and preserve what little mite of power there is, since only rules and principles stalk about outside, and have no face for you. And the history of individual development in the middle class is right at the bottom, the history of the struggle to get free of those habits, towards the original native self-expression, such as aristocracies, peasantries and working classes have had.

The life I had as a child, while a glowing refuge from all this, was by no means immune to it, and was in fact a part of it.

It had been produced---manufactured---by the middle class. Without them we wouldn't have been there. We did nothing to bring those streets into existence, nor did our ancestors. There was just the labour market, which we filled, in our millions. And the middle class brought the labour market into existence.

And while they couldn't bring the dead philosophy of the market into our lives, we were still in a way their children. While we were rocked in a calm and wonderfully safe lap, we still knew there was something strange outside. Something was wrong. The streets had a dismaying look---rows upon rows ~~up~~of them, without a tree. That didn't seem right, natural. The factory hooters sounded weird. The light was weird, from the smoke. The creak of the trams was somehow not right. So it wasn't cosy all the way through. You knew it was only cosy at the very centre. But outside was the terrible world of rent collectors, unemployment, disease. The rat-tat-tat of the rent man was the most frightening sound of my childhood. I could feel it from my mother---she froze with horror. Yet she hadn't horror in her, as a condition, when she nursed me; I was one of her solaces from horror. The rat-tat-tat was like hell knocking. Suddenly my father went sick: for two years or so he spewed his food up, he would spew walking along the street, spew up the food he'd eaten only a few minutes before. The doctor told him not to worry---stomach cramps, nerves, something he'd eaten. Then my father went to hospital on his own initiative, for an examination, by blind instinct, and they pushed him into a bed right away: duodenal ulcer which had to be operated urgently. A week longer and he would have been dead, they told him. The home was really smashed by that. There was just the sick-benefit: a pittance

on which to keep three children. There was always a crisis of this kind. So the threat of the middle-class world was operating on us all the time. In the heyday of science we were more wretched than we ever would have been before. We belonged to nothing, no one. Each working-class district was a settlement cut off from the rest of the world. It had to be, to keep this intimate life going, intact from an outside world which asked for one criterion to be observed and one criterion only, that you sold yourself on the market, and produced another man's goods for him. I've never been able to do that. In fact, I've always refused to do it, apart from a six-weeks relapse. I've lived, and still to this day live, by what in the middle class is called sponging and getting something for nothing.

This inheritance we all get of dust and ashes is so deep that it freezes the source of the soul itself; even the breathing may be affected, quickened by panic, unconsciously.

That private process took place in me the moment I took my first step into the middle class. By the end of ^{my} fourteenth year I had learned the two great private cornerstones of the middle class civilisation---self-abuse and constipation. I don't remember that I actually couldn't go to the lavatory. I remember that one of my brothers had trouble that way. It wasn't physical in me. It was more all-pervasive. I just couldn't go. I couldn't go at all, in anything. I was just stopped up, and that went on for five years or more. I couldn't think, I couldn't smile, I couldn't read, I couldn't play, I couldn't wake up in the mornings. What I could do without any trouble was toss myself off. I suspect that the two things are intimately connected, and that the one encourages the other. The orgasm is the body

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insisting on going in some way or other.

It seems that everything has to be re-learned in our world, beginning with sex. This is the basic distorted thing. There can be no more talk now of natural behaviour. We've forgotten how to do the most intimate and natural services to our own bodies. We have to learn life all over again. We have to learn slowly how to love, how to eat. Actual cohabitation is almost unknown in our world until it is learned in the trials and errors of marriage. We have even forgotten---our bodies have forgotten--- how to have a good shit. You get doctors concentrating on this one problem, the principle of evacuation, and writing books about it, too. You mustn't strain on the pain, ^{they say.} Not more than the natural slight pressure necessary. It must come naturally, of its own accord, with a slight natural help. There it is again, the principle of surrender. You have to learn to surrender to the wisdom of your own body. The anus must open and close as if for a birth, the doctors say; the closure at the end of the evacuation must be complete and natural; there must be no straining afterwards even if there is the mental conviction of having more to give; that way lies disorder---diarrhea, unsteady bowles. Just the opening and closing, which aftervit has been done once or twice will show the way for the future, by habit, and the body will be seen to have a life of its own in that respect, which you can follow.

Unthinkable wreckage is being done to life. Cities are canyons of noise and fumes and broken intimacy. And to feed an enormous/^{idle} population millions and millions of beasts are trapped and tortured ~~xxxxx~~^{year} by year, and even bred outside the natural light of day, in a stupendous violation of the rights of the earth which will wreak ^a natural vengeance on the criminal

breed responsible for it. And millions and millions of creatures big and small are used by firms and laboratories all over the world to carry out hideous and viciously cruel tests, to establish the origin of the middle-class diseases that are spreading everywhere. Far from having achieved a civilisation through the nineteenth century we haven't yet taken the first step towards making this earth ^a ~~and~~ marvellous and clement place to live on. We have so far done nothing but torture and maim and massacre its creatures, and even to condemn our own children to death, though by a slow torture that may take a generation or two to show itself.

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Those first visits to England, after four or five years together in Rome, were thrilling and fascinating for us. It was the end of our first chapter in the Italian world, the first course in understanding, when all the previous life we had had was regurgitated and disturbed. Melli came back to the world of the living in Rome; it was her dawn; she woke slowly to this dawn when not only her body but her whole created self was healed of the northern society. And our friendship with Angelo and Francine formed invisibly. We seemed to have a destiny together, between the four of us. But at this moment the destiny seems finished. I wonder if we shall ever know the real explanation---if real explanations are ever vouchsafed to us in life. Perhaps the destiny is developing in silence now, as it did in the first days in Rome, when we ^r hardly saw each other. Perhaps fate only guides and divides and sorts out, without an explanation at the cross-roads. In some way the four of us worked for each other, we developed by

means of each other, and perhaps ^{we} brought a world into being which is inside us now without us knowing it.

In those three winters in England, in the dark, flat, icy countryside with the shrieking of foxes at night, and the sound of the first cock long before dawn, we got a peculiar sense of home. There was even something mediaeval, a touch, intact from the past. It was in people. There was a certain glowing character in them. We were strangers. We read ravenously, books from two and three hundred years ago. And the past still seemed to be there. We seemed to touch it, like actually walking through history. I began to find the Englishness in myself, really for the first time. There was the thrill of being a stranger, yet knowing the intimacy. You could feel the past in the house we lived in; there were dark, heavy beams, that creaked in the night.

It was there that I got the first great warning about Melli, and we began to mend our lives slowly, matching it to the rhythms outside us and the unfolding of every day, from dawn to dusk. And there was this sure sense of the natural that the Italians had given us. We knew what was false in people, what was a wrong trail. We could see the wrong dreams and principles at work in people like furnaces without warmth. We knew what was dead stuff, because of Italy.

We watched the outer life together. We noted its little habits. We watched the birds. We saw how the sun went down, and darkness gave way to the light. And we let the quiet get into us, through our habits. We did what that doctor had advised: 'Be an artist in the quiet life.' He could as well have said 'Be an artist' and left it at that. The process is one and the

same.

We got out of England in a panic rush, after the third winter. There was no money, the violence had caught up with us. Here was a country where a kind of psychic violence had taken place. A shock right at the centre of life. So much violence had been done, England wasn't big enough to contain it all, so it spilled over on to the continent of America. We couldn't hide it any longer---the charnel house. The countryside was there: it lay there like a reminder, a great waste camp for food-production.

Angelo and Francine were like a fire waiting for us---when we got out. The moment I saw Angelo walking along the Rue de Seine arm-in-arm with Melli, who'd gone on before, I knew a fresh life was about to open. But we only get signs in this world, not the actual message.
