

THROUGH THE QUINTESSENTIAL DIVIDE: MAILER'S RESPONSE TO RACE THEORY

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AS I EXPLORED THE ENTHRALLING COLLECTION OF NOTES, unpublished drafts, and commentary in the Norman Mailer collection at the HRC, I had questions about how race theory related to the controversial and literary progenitor stance of Norman Mailer. I understood that the foil of the Beat Generation begged many key questions, especially since the latter's perspective was meant to be colonial leaning, and that later works recalled innocence and aesthetic thoughtfulness about a rapidly developing political axis in the reticent Beat notation of essentially Jim Crow paraphrases of non-white identity. Should Mailer fall into this gap as he covered the minority activism of the 1960s, he would behoove an American tradition of underscoring what was special, different, unique, and unintellectual as the substance of minority voice and agency.

What I found was that the instance of Mailer's narrative voice brought together the two moments, both borrowing from a long-honored tradition of locating special moments of agency and query in the white-dominated scene, while guardedly and in some cases scornfully appraising the political Left as a maker of generative social change. Mailer's writing takes chances that writers such as Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jack Kerouac, and William Faulkner were somehow reluctant to grapple with, while preserving

the special integrity of the Other's body, consciousness, and community, looking perhaps askance at the growing foil of alterity as what would initiate the postmodern dialogues of writers such as Gloria Naylor, Amy Tan, and Salman Rushdie. Mailer, unlike Jack Kerouac, is willing to state Oriental and Otherist knowledge in terms of its pragmatic effect upon the mainstream: his notation of political developments carries with it the traditional experimental sense that essential Being would be permanently and thoughtlessly violated in the pursuit of economic and social inclusion in the American experience. Yet Mailer's war narratives could target the humanity and the regressing step of jingoistic racialism. He clearly took on challenges that Kerouac and Ginsberg were reluctant to deal with. Mailer's drafts and notes, dating back to 1952, inherited a moment of self-criticism for the emerging "Yankee imperialist," and that the rhetoric and corporeal Selves meant to capture a solstitial development that coincided with James Baldwin's often brutal criticisms of racism and its collective human cost. Hence, a tentative step towards the re-examination of social being through both humanity and knowledge. Norman Mailer was ambitious and relied upon sensitivity rather than memory. Therefore, his discussion of nonwhite identity was the first challenge that operated within the academy, and was a counter step to socialist-minted ideologies that grafted purely economic and rhetorical critique onto the minority mind and body. Mailer attacks graphic instances of racism and its deliberations to suggest a moral critique that his otherwise paragon status occludes in the popular imagination permanently. At one time I had unfairly targeted Mailer as a racist simply because he was White; however, there is more to this cross-examination than the narration of White world power and its depressive metaphysics.

Lindon Barrett sets the tone for the intellectual's examination of racial and cross-racial social context: "If routine critical protocols elicit a greater fidelity to the ideological systems of institutional sites and archives inherently hostile to constituencies of cultural studies, then, in curious ways these protocols fail to negotiate as adeptly as they might the cultural inequities and disturbances they seek to expose" (Barrett 317). In simpler terms, the *aegis* of late modernism had failed to answer key questions of the minority subject's growing ascription towards social being in a diverse world—keeping the "beauty" and "tenacity" of the nonwhite Self meant trampling upon a great part of its more thoughtful content and thus the implications of a dynamic world that was interdependent. Notwithstanding the severely graphic

content of the 1952 draft of Mailer's "The Dead Gook", it was clear that he took risks that authors such as William Faulkner, Joseph Conrad, and Mark Twain had rhetorically confined to the peculiar, the suppressed, the subject. He did so well before movies such as *Platoon*, *The Killing Fields*, and *Casualties of War* had opened our eyes to war's special traumas, a depiction of the dual navigation of twin imperialisms and the human reduction of white American soldiers born of a destiny to rule and to trounce what was primitive, silent, and therefore inferior in nature. Yet "The Dead Gook" traverses ground that Mark Twain had written into the character of Jim in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*—ignorance and silence masked a co-authorship of experience and its perils. Historically speaking, American literature had painted the minority subject to be believable, and a sometimes agent in the making of American consciousness, but certainly not a meditative or thinking force that could weld together disparate moments of the modern experience. His was an experience of mental and psychic confinement, wholly separate from the dynamic of a modern community. "The Dead Gook" allows us to identify with movement between and because of the clash of American and Japanese imperialisms. What is clear is that the Filipinos assemble their own thoughtful and pained moment of reflection, an internal compromise between the twin forces of destruction that govern them. The portraits are ironic and no attempt is made to forecast the caricatures of stereotype in the true narrative sense, thereby stripping the Orient of its necessary submission to the much greater forces of industrialism-imperialism in the middle of the twentieth century. From the perspective of conversation and perception, "The Dead Gook" contrasts the portrait of the Filipino as despicable caricature of Orient agent and maker of dangerous, fascistic Orient imperialism:

Brody tripped in the hole of the hoof of a carabac and jarred his ankle. "I hate gooks," he said with exasperation. "The sons-of-bitches are always laughing at us. It was one of his favorite subjects. "Did you ever see those photographs of how they looked at us when the Japanese came to Manila? They were all cheering. How do you like that? They cheer for the Japs, and then they cheer for us. They're dirty, you see, they're two-faced." (*Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2)

The sense derangement of the “dead gook” himself poses a challenge to the caricature, as if to blind the senses with a hallucinatory and horrifying disintegration of the illusion of one’s humanity:

There was the smell of Japanese fish-oil, and the smell of Luis who had acquired the gun, a smell of Filipino peasant which to Brody meant carabao flop and Filipino dust and Filipino food, an amalgam which was not unlike rancid soya sauce. Worst of all, there was the odor of Luis’ blood, a particularly sweet and intimate smell, fetid and suggesting to his nostrils that it was not completely dry. It was the smell of a man who had died, and it mingled with the fish oil and the soya sauce and the considerable stench of Brody’s own body and Brody’s own work-sweated clothes, until he thought he would gag. The odor was everywhere; it seemed to stick in his nose and eddy in his nostrils. As he perspired, his sweat touched the gun, seemed to dissolve from it still newer, more unpleasant odors. Brody travelled on in his anger. It was his luck, he thought incoherently, to have a man like Lucas for his sergeant; it was his luck to be in a squad so stupid that the stupidest Filipinos and the most cunning could take them in, or more properly, take them anywhere. . . . (*Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2)

Metaphors of the corporeal human as “sweat” and “smell” build the natural attunement of sensualism that would be a key hint to understanding Mailerian drawings of the Orient in his geographic domain. They provide a navigation that overtakes and absorbs the *aegis* of military leadership and guidance. But Brody’s pathetic isolation and self-reduction takes place amidst the roguish and deterministic power and rightness of American imperialism. He finds himself alone with the “incoherence” of his self-appraisal of camaraderie and leadership at the solstitial moment of American conquest of the world. The self as military subject allows his emotions and his sense-impressions to unseat confidence and purpose—the familiar portrait of an individual’s internal rage marks the alienation of the American man from his country, his command, and his peculiar concept of democratic power and leadership. Very unlike Marlow’s portrait of complete separation, alienation, and dehumanization in *The Heart of Darkness*, democracy fails to

maintain its acumen where capitalism and exploitation could do so only two generations before. The dramatic irony shadows and conquers the pretext of domainhood. At the end of the story, a dejected Brody weeps in isolation: as with Quentin when told the story of his elders in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the emotional self has attached racial metaphors to the technique of self-disintegration in a universe where the anchors of power and dominance are seemingly sufficient to maintain one's racist separation. Thus, Mailer was adept at professing the Orient's agonizing humanity where Kerouac and Burroughs had considerably romanticized it. In short, colonial texts are disintegrative and fragmentary in the vast sweep of Orient communities, challenging and forcing forward the realism of a densely populated and intermediary nationhood that could project itself without voice, culture, or organized government that was satisfactory to the daunting task of building democracy. It is Mailer's concession at this moment in American history that a greater unveiling of the Orient necessitated its less than casual reconsideration. The parenthetical "fear of failure" marks Brody, as it did American soldiers in countless films about the Vietnam War. Dislocation is the substance of something other than White fulfillment and rediscovery, and thus the assemblage of minority universes remains unpenetrated and nebulously strong versus American military and economic power. I emphasize this point against the relatively easy transitions to Otherness in Kerouac's novels. There is no intellection from the brain that can match the complete picture of dislocation, and hence Mailer's portrait is more soberly realistic about the true spectacle of colonizing the Orient at midcentury.

Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans and Chinese had, of course, encountered and internalized considerable racism as American immigrants. Laws had restricted their movement and civil rights from the 1880s onward. Kerouac, in particular, had enjoyed and narrated from the easygoing standpoint of a White man's separate, literate, democratic, and experimental consciousness from those of brown skin color. He was free to enjoy Orient domains while ably maintaining his White intellectual and semantic control of the content. Mailer, in contrast, approached the dislocative and challenging moment of a dual axis of experiential being through a challenging concept—death. Without institutions, leadership, or faith to guide him, Brody falls into the ever-lengthening domains of human suffering, and is unable to maintain his deliberations to the tune of his own world-visions. In this manner, Mailer was very precocious in his race-determinations, supplanting magic realism

with a cerebrally painful gothic that slowly outstrips those deliberations. John Carlos Rowe may indeed have set the tone for our re-evaluation of race: “the contact zone is a semiotic site where exchanges may occur from both (or more) sides, even when the configurations of power are inequitable” (Rowe 173), yet the didactic for understanding racialism was reflective and so supposed the white American’s corporeal estimation of Self, a mirroring of one-self that built itself with and without rational consciousness that could underscore the “rightness” of racism when confronted with a dangerous Other that had incompletely welded together political ideologies borrowed from the West. Then, to state that Asia itself represented a “challenge” was unconvincingly muted in the American imagination well into the 1970s—Mailer counterstrokes this tendency to identify “gooks” with a comic derivation that was purportedly inferior to the necessary and saving Pax Americana. It is, of course, interesting to note that Mailer assumes that Americans could not and would not assume the “white man’s burden” in his prose: it is more likely that Mailer retracts the safety of doctrines of power, leaving open the story of the Orient from several radii of personal perceptions and dimensions of reality.

As an Indian-American, I have often struggled to assess the true or derivable imagination of the Beats in assembling knowledge, aesthetics, and social “perspective” when colonizing and narrating Hindu and Buddhist dimensions of the beatnik “ecstasy.” These pieces have focused on travel and intellection, but in my estimation they often miss the mark because of the tendency toward comedic exaggerations or relocations friendly with the archetypal philosophy of “Beat.” Comic exaggeration limits the true exercise of Eastern religions and mysticism. They narrow Ralph Waldo Emerson’s more legitimate inquiry at the crux of phenomenology’s development in the 1840s, advocating free translations friendly with the themes of pleasure, discovery, and authorial control of critical content. While this isn’t to say that Kerouac and Ginsberg weren’t serious about learning, “Indian Journals and Allen Ginsberg’s Revival” is directed more at poetry and collective resistance of imperialism, and thus is more narrowly focused. This appeared three years after Deborah Baker published her watershed book, *A Blue Hand: The Beats in India*, which shadowed the narcotic and parapsychological discoveries against an undiscovered depression in the seemingly overconfident and self-promoting Ginsberg. The legend of Eastern discoveries has followed me to

the present. I remember an Indian subconscious that existed without American liberals to translate its essential content.

Hence, I was very interested in the first draft of Mailer's 1956 piece, "The Man Who Studied Yoga," and I found myself refreshed from its essentially pragmatic content. Whereas Kerouac was poeticizing and pontificating about the ecstasies of travel, phrased by quests for Hershey bars, Buddhas, and conga-players that could catch a familiar comedic moment, Mailer examines the practical dimensions of learning Hindu ascetic practice from the standpoint of community and its education, shedding indoctrination that again limits our understanding. The opening portrait of Sam Slobova binarizes a location of ecstasy and *dharma* that the beatniks had seemingly indiscriminately joined to the technique of beatnik occultist glory, amassing the spirit as one painfully reflected on its depression instead of its whirlwind of discovery:

Hangovers, Sam thought, were the sediment of rather impossible emotions aroused the night before, the lust for life—or it was only an itch which drink generated through the flabby tissues of middle-age. He had turned forty a few weeks ago, and to celebrate he had acquired a headache and foul stomach, deposits left by anger, by frustration, by the promise of things which drink suggested—that one had the capacity for the sensuous life, for the life of power—the attractive woman he had flirted last night and found equally attractive. So much was dropped into the pot to simmer through sleep, so much to cook forever and be done.
(*The Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2)

I understood that the key question to unpacking the meaning of this work is: "why should we choose a mainstream American subject"? It would seem that the Beats had operated on a much more convincing set of rhetorical rambles: political power, critique, comic exaggeration, drugs, and relentless semiotic bridges of discovery as the axes of ideological power. Ginsberg in particular raises and re-raises this counter-lens although he loathes his weight and baldness and lethargy, he quickly reassembles *samkhya* (doctrine) as the collective antidote to the evils of the West. My growing sense, however, was that Mailer's iconic portrait raises to the specter the pragmatic dimensions of a mainstream addict who avoids political pre-

tensions and lives within the communitarian dynamic of the moment. Americans would learn the Hindu arts and doctrines without the benefit of the pretense toward social revolution. At forty-four, I was very interested in this process because I remembered what *samkhyā* meant as a child listening to the elders, whom would disparage any political endeavor on the news while they drank whiskey and lambasted as many politicians as they could. Submission and sublimation are key tenets of a true Hindu faith, and thus Mailer had adopted the form closer to what it really foretold. As Sam peruses women whom he can cheat with, he feels the guilt over his long relationship with Eleanor, who lives with him. Mailer grafts social politics onto the examination of both social being and intellectual pretensions towards psychoanalysis:

‘You’ve got to distinguish,’ he had said, ‘between anti-Fascism as a loose and general term involving agreement of the widest sort, and real socialism which is expressed in the Soviet Union.’ He had gone on, it did not matter exactly how any more and she had said with annoyance, ‘You don’t have to spell it out for me.’ It developed that they had marched together in the May Day Parade, indeed almost in the same section—she with the artists, he with the writers. A middle-class romance, he thought wryly. (*Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2)

Mailer continues: “each had not been displeased with his own sacrifice, and each had been confident of the other’s ability” (*Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2). Liberal tendency and its self-criticism is thus ironized through the portrait of the socialist ethnic living in America—where Ginsberg endlessly romanticized the domain of homosexual love with Peter Orlovsky, and Kerouac gloated over his girlfriends while neglecting his wife and daughter, true ascription to *samkhyā* spells out the continuity and self-sacrifices of relationship—their vocation, self-philosophy, and shared community are a fulfillment that integrates them with democracy and (re)educations guaranteed by democratic America. In short, Mailer moves closer to James Baldwin in abandoning “hippie pretensions” to unintellectual knowledge and debauchery—the beatnik “challenge” is to be seen as a sidestep based on middle age and the potent non-recognition of ethnic inclusions in the American experience.

There is no synopsis of Indian mysticism and spiritual practice in the story other than the following statement of man's essential nature: "ambivalence over possessions was what it was, pure and simple. To be never happy where one found himself, to be always thinking of the past or anticipating the future, to wish oneself where one had been or wait impatiently for where one was to be, but never to accept the present" (*Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2). Mailer thus strips the twin disciplines of "knowledge" and "enlightenment" of all of their romantic trappings and goes for the evocation of depressed spirit, a move counter to Kerouac, Ginsberg, and John Lennon, who demanded stasis as the essential enlivening component of Hindu spiritual being. We are led to the concept of meditation as that which amalgamates our realistic passions and pretensions in a modern world, building the sense that reflection is far from idealistic and composed, and that "the past" represents our generation of selfhood and its ascription to "true" community in the form of love, academic knowledge, and artistry. I will say that after studying the Beats for over a decade, none of their authors even got close to this potent reflection on the human experience.

Naturally, we must remember the true context of Hindu activism, borne from the speeches of Swami Vivekananda who visited and spoke at the Chicago Art Fair in 1893—classless consciousness was a powerful theme that energized the Indian's self-discovery, and so its ironic descent and decline meant to capture the socioeconomic development of artistic and analytic ideas. Replacing selfhood with knowledge and discovery bore the cost of an ethnic community's reflection on what had been "learned"—content that is completely doctored out of the beatniks and only grudgingly given to Sonny in "Sonny's Blues." You can almost hear Sonny's brother whistling, as he sheds tears upon leaving Sonny's Greenwich Village apartment—"you gonna need me baby/one of these cold, rainy days" (Baldwin 571). A key counterthrust to beatnik glory was to present the drama of the ethnic, who had developed within the foci of modern political ideologies and derived truth from them, and equated them with the joys of youthfulness. Mailer thus crosses anti-ethnic racism with their systemic building of agency in White America, suggesting that knowledge bears the true history of humans who had learned it, adopted it, used it to pay rent and bills, and found love within it that was mainstream—and not exotic or contrived. Again, many of my recent essays attempt to underscore how Mailer had shadowed the Beats—as if to say, that there was more, and much more, than "what meets the eye." As

the day goes on, Slobova looks at his Kandinsky painting, and muses about his coffee table, “poised like a spider on wire legs” (*Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2). There is no miscegenation or explosion of consciousness through humor or hallucination or eroticism—there is the plain subject musing the importance of what was experienced and learned.

Mailer’s estimation of modern Black consciousness was perhaps more ambitious, and sought to answer and discuss the explosive tide of Black nationalism in the 1960s. It is relatively easy to see how Mailer saw himself crossing two ethnographic worlds between Kerouac and Imamu Amiri Baraka. I find it interesting that Mailer put it upon himself to do this work, where Kerouac had repeatedly lambasted it and adamantly refused to put anything “modern” into his development of Blackness during the 1960s. Crossing the material and social divide between Jim Crow premodern and Black modern wasn’t a task that many writers had found sustainable. Kerouac panned both the hippie generation and the rise of soul and R&B when it replaced jazz as the popular music vehicle; even more narrow was his appraisal of post-Civil Rights Era jazz, which he himself did not study and in fact had completely ignored in terms of its significance (*Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1957–1969*). More thoughtful was perhaps Ginsberg, who sought out white rock stars to foment the colossus of hippie rebellions, while acting as a defense witness for Black Panther Bobby Seale in the “Chicago Seven” trial of 1969. Still, Ginsberg’s defense was steeped in the language of white “hippie revolution,” expressing perhaps his reluctance to pen avenues of the sweaty, funky rise of “new” Black music forms such as Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, Sly and the Family Stone, and an endless outpouring of Black artists who were adept at manifesting the physical, sexual, and violent power of Blackness in a Modern Age stripped of its machinations of traditional White-Black relationality.

I have talked about themes of the body, primitivity, and the spirit in the estimation of Mailer’s endorsement of Imamu Amiri Baraka. What is more true is that the professed sensuality asks us to evince Mailer against the special moment of political prophecy, so as to prescribe meaningful limitations to the emerging sociopolitics that promised true societal change. The ultimate statement of Black “power” was easy enough to locate. The Panthers had crashed a California House meeting in 1967, guns in their hands. “Looking For Meat and Potatoes” perhaps explores the divide, or rather fission, between the legend of racism and the piecemeal political endeavors of the

Black Panthers to achieve democratic and economic parity. One of the more delicious amalgams is that Mailer explodes the beatnik mystique from the very beginning:

We have not had our education for nothing—all those sanitized aisles of orientation via high school, commercials, corporations, and mass media have given us one expectation: no matter how beautiful, insane, dangerous, sacreligious, explosive, holy, or damned a new venture may be, count on it, fellow American, the language will be familiar. (“Looking For Meat and Potatoes,” *Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2)

While staging the impact of the media and education institutions so as to sanitize the American consciousness of its primal and essential content, a key metaphor begs the question of racial fact: what is Blackness, when impaled with the thrust of modern intellectual experience? True, Mailer is willing to get his hands dirty whereas Kerouac isn't. The romantic portrait collapses in the hands of a faceless and meaningless sameness, divorcing true agency of its authorial racial content. This is not to say that Mailer could not see the instance of “change,” but rather that he, as many Black theorists have, certainly did not trust the media of equality and democracy to erase racial difference overnight or even in due course of time. Assembling a “modern” Black agency meant underscoring the sociopolitics of difference with intellectual and political direction. Mailer, like Kerouac in *Desolation Angels*, explores the divide between anti-racial critique and modern edification of individuals and community casually, so as to exploit the widely divergent political agendas of the American counterculture. He screens the content easily, almost mockingly, with a certain sense that the Black Panthers and other purported radicals lacked the true substance of any modern political activism that could build profiles and pocketbooks, at one point exclaiming that the agenda of the Panthers was close enough to that of the NAACP (“Looking For Meat and Potatoes,” *Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2, 14). More succinct are his Jim Crow-leaning estimations that pair socialism and radicalism with an aberration that could only wreck the ebullient engine of democracy at its supposed peak: “The American Negro is of course not synonymous with Black Power. For every militant there are ten Negroes who live beside him in the slums, resigned for the most part to the lessons, the ac-

tion, and the treadmill of the slums” (“Looking For Meat and Potatoes,” *Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2, 14). Restated in context, radicalism meant a pretentious and false gangsterism that subjugated the African-American to the machinations of a false and misdirecting anger. Mailer, by occupying the position of centrism and continuing Kerouac’s moment of deeply contemplated piety, sustains the survival and persistence of repressed communities, perhaps ushering in a greater moment of communitarian poesy that maintains the distinctness and robustness of poor communities overlooked by capitalism and technological achievement.

Still, it must be said that Norman Mailer, by ignoring the rise of mainstream arts, music, and literature such as that of Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Maya Angelou misses many moments of inception that could muster the toughness and resilience of Black communities. What resonates is the separateness and distinct *oeuvre* of the African-American, his doctrine of a separate democratic spirit and method of social critique that cross-examines American democracy from without, and without the standard of materialistic and technological supersession of folk realism. He writes:

Primitive people don’t forget. If they do, they turn out better than the civilized and the sick. Who are you, Whitey, to tell me to drop my curse and join your line of traffic going to work? I’d rather keep myself in shape and work out the curse natural style. There’s always white women, shew! Unless we decide they’re too full of your devil’s disease, hypocritical pus-filled old white blood, and so we stay black and repay the curse by drawing blood. That’s the life-giving way to repay a curse. (“Looking For Meat and Potatoes,” *Norman Mailer Collection*, Box 2, 9)

The assessment accomplishes the archetypal reproach of poor people within a reverse caricature while foreshadowing the modern poetics of rebellion, that could as easily been drawn by Miles Davis in the 1970s, or hip-hop stars in the 90s and beyond. Building upon the beatnik metaphor for using caricature as the restatement of the relative weakness and ineptness of modern *bourgeoisie*, Mailer nicely enhances traditional racist parables of terror and savagery to profess the ancient retraction of civilization and its wealth, and perhaps its ascription to community and social being. A mobile and tractable nemesis depends upon memory and the legend of racism. This shadowing

was perhaps more pleasant than the concept of a “black middle class” that had built thrift and hard work into an economic inclusion in white America. Writing after the riots of the mid-1960s allowed Mailer a degree of narrative freedom that Kerouac had neglected to put into words, or was perhaps too paralyzed to pull out of the shape of his special, nuanced dream. For Mailer, Blacks would vaunt modernity within the axis of a contemplative shadowing of white social dominance. They would read and underscore modernity with a different living sense, a moment of self-generation that was both phantomic and wise. He is adept in doing what Kerouac was more reluctant to do—give narrative voice to the coming tide of blackness in a changing world, a legend that is both historical and lost in the translations of the Beats. “Moving forward” by replacing aesthetics with social politics meant personifications that could haunt us, from birth to death. It also meant giving voice to comedic and satirical portraits that Kerouac had managed with some difficulty. This movement was the positive irony of American social growth. Black America, elastic and thoughtful, marked the streets and the body with special motifs of control that could maintain and praise their communities.

Narratively speaking, it was a last gasp. The rise of matriarchy and women writers in the African-American literary scene meant to pronounce males as misfits and deadbeats with no ostensible purpose in life. Yet Mailer matches the apex of social revolutions with a convincing portrait that would follow blackness for generations. The colonial frame-tale, then, was hardly dormant and to the likings of whites who enjoyed power and fulfillment. Intellectually speaking, “Looking For Meat and Potatoes” is cogent enough to suggest the dynamism of forms and to defy postmodernity, something that the Beats fell victim to and were ultimately ruined by.

Mailer’s unpublished form, or rather the continuity of spirit found in moments where he is largely putting his thoughts down, is in my opinion more complete and cogent than anything to be found in the letters and drafts of the Beat Generation or other leftist American writers during this Era. The contemplations account for a welding together of dream and intellection. The moment was precise enough to spur on a growing angle of ethnic and minority writing contexts that could change hearts and minds about democracy’s “true” purpose in a materialistic and technologized world. Sustaining this moment may as easily set up the making of new literatures that relocate the social imaginations of nonwhite thinkers, writers, and artists. Where Kerouac had abandoned modernity, Mailer engaged it. Where Octavio Paz had ad-

mitted the dysfunction of his people, Mailer had situated several instances where nonwhite consciousness was indeed growing and developing its axis of multiplicity. It is also clear that the Mailer archives showcase unrecognized authorial talent that published works such as *An American Dream* had masked or suppressed, and that Mailer himself was an able thinker unafraid of the pen and unhinged from the very different art of publishing his primary work. Minority narratives and social development, then, get a nod from him, while postmodernity was busy eating away at the roots of a primordial moment of otherness that was rarely and sporadically captured during mid-century.

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