

Editor,

RICHARD M. LUDWIG

ESSAYS *Today*

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A Glimpse of India

A Hundred Thousand Straightened Nails

The Wasteful Savers

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What "Population Explosion" Really Means

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The Private World of the Man With a Book

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and the Porpoise: Two Solitary Destinies

Goal for Americans

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WILLIAM SANSOM

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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Preface

The essays in this collection appeared in eleven different American periodicals between November 1959 and July 1961; the volume is the fifth in a series begun in 1955. Our intentions here are identical with those for earlier volumes: to assemble provocative writing on a variety of subjects, to demonstrate vigorous prose and contemporary points of view, to provide the college student—particularly freshmen and sophomores—with good reading as well as models for his own composition.

Autobiography, reminiscence, personal experience: the young student frequently begins his reading and writing with this genre. And so this collection opens with four brief sketches and one considerably longer reminiscence. Robin White and V. S. Pritchett write of India. "I set my suitcase down in front of a betel shop and ordered a wad," Mr. White begins. Mr. Pritchett tells us at once that "A little of India sinks in a long way. For fourteen days I think I was out of my mind." Both men give us graphic description of the Eastern world and their sometimes startled reactions to another country's mores. Curtis Harnack provides a corollary with his recollection of the provincial mountain city of Tabriz, in Iran, where he spent a year as a Fulbright teacher. In a brief sketch, William Sansom recalls the delights of a pony show in that "distinct part of Ireland called Connemara." Donald Hall employs a more leisurely prose to describe at length "the ingenious futility of Washington Woodward," a relative he came to know when he visited his grandfather's New Hampshire farm years ago. Each of these essays is full of sharp images, odors, and sounds, as good descriptive writing frequently is.

With Vance Packard's essay on "rampant slobbism" we move into exposition. Mr. Packard cites his five choices for the worst desecraters of the American landscape. Philip Hauser explains the term "population explosion" and its international political consequences in an essay that demonstrates the use of illustrative tables and explanatory footnotes. Mario Pei and David Bergamini, writing from vastly different backgrounds, discuss language changes. Dan Lacy attempts to answer his own question, on the subject of obscenity and censorship: "Is there a sudden new outpouring of material creating a moral crisis?" Sir Geoffrey Crowther raises the problem of depth versus breadth in English and American education.

Exposition need not be primarily explanatory writing. It can incorporate the informality of descriptive writing, particularly when its subjects are books, art, music, and theatre. Six essays demonstrate this mode.

Harold Taylor looks at contemporary education with the fear that we are losing the intellectual vitality that comes with discovering books for ourselves rather than relentlessly pursuing academic assignments. Wallace Stegner writes a letter to a young writer, full of carefully reasoned advice and encouragement, explaining why he likes "the sense of intimate knowing that your novel gives me." Edward Cone turns a review of two books into an essay on what television has done to the brilliant talents of Leonard Bernstein. Hubert Lamb feels that high fidelity recordings and the equipment we have invented to play them are doing something equally dire to all music and to our appreciation of the "live" performance. With tongue in cheek, Marya Mannes foresees the day when all American children are afflicted with *trigger mortis*, and she blames television. Walter Kerr, of the New York *Herald Tribune*, leaves his drama reviewing long enough to look at this same popular medium and to answer the commonly asked question: "What good is television?"

Expository writings also includes argument and persuasion. At a meeting of the National Press Club, Walter Lippmann addressed the assembled journalists on a subject he knows much about, "The Job of the Washington Correspondent." He wants to persuade us that the Washington correspondent has become not only "a recorder of facts" but also "a writer of notes and essays in contemporary history." John Fischer, editor of *Harper's*, writes "a plea for tolerance toward our most misunderstood minority: the professional politicians." Marion Sanders looks ahead to the day when we might be forced to pass a Universal Service Act in order to utilize fully the womanpower in the United States.

The volume concludes with five reflective essays that should require closer reading and provoke a more complex class discussion. Eric Larabee, editor of *American Heritage*, raises sociological questions that are incorporated into something resembling a dialogue between Scarcity and Abundance. The literary critic and poet, Kenneth Rexroth, reports on his visits to a variety of college campuses and attempts to analyze the "new revolt of youth." Joseph Wood Krutch regularly writes a column for the *American Scholar*, and we have retitled this one "The Importance of Private Ethics." In it he discusses beatniks, isolation, Henry David Thoreau, the medieval monk, and "social morality." The anthropologist, Loren Eiseley, takes the familiar subject of alienation and expands it into a perceptive essay on "perhaps the most intelligent form of life on our planet next to man," the porpoise or dolphin. Finally, Howard Mumford Jones urges us to face up to "the great existing discrepancy between theory and fact in the pursuit of knowledge in the United States."

The distance between the brief sketches by White, Pritchett, and Harnack and the disquisition on humanistic scholarship by Jones is not, perhaps, as great as it may seem at first glance. These twenty-five essays are exercises in perception and judgment. At the same time they are a delight to read.

R. M. L.

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ROBIN WHITE

A Ride in an Indian Ricksha

I set my suitcase down in front of a betel shop and ordered a wad. The shop was no more than a lean-to constructed of old weathered boards, the interior lined with neat rows of cigarettes, box matches, brightly colored bottled soda, and a multitude of things hanging from the ceiling. There was a board shelf across the front. The proprietor, a boy of about eighteen, sat cross-legged behind the shelf, looking out over a huge stack of betel leaf and an array of glass jars.

In response to my order he flicked two leaves from the stack, snapped the stems, rinsed each leaf in a clay pot of water, dabbed on white lime and pinches of stuff from the jars, rolled the whole mass together into a cone, and folded the top down and pinned it with a clove—all before I had time to dig the change from my pocket.

I paid for the wad and, much to the delight of the audience of small fry I had collected, proceeded to chew it. I have always enjoyed betel. It kills hunger, sweetens the breath, and prevents cavities and indigestion. In fact I didn't even know what tooth decay was until I went to America and had to substitute gum and soft drinks for betel. The children wagged their heads and grinned appreciatively: I was an odd one, all right. I grinned back, red juice dribbling from my mouth, and tried hailing a passing jutka. It went right by.

One of the boys stepped out into the street and whistled shrilly. In response, several jutkas now appeared—also a cycle ricksha. For a moment there was some confusion as to which vehicle I should accept. I put my suitcase into the cycle ricksha.

"286 Mandapam Road," I said. "How much? *Yenna villai?*"

The man promptly replied one rupee, but the children all yelled at him and the price was, after a great display of outraged resistance, reduced to four annas.

I nodded my approval, got in, and the cycle ricksha moved off. The children ran along beside and behind me, waving and calling, "Good evening, good night, good morning, good day."

I waved back, shouting "*Vanakkam, salaam, namaskaram, thothiram.*"

In a moment we turned a corner, picked up speed downhill, and the children were left behind.

Riding in horse-drawn vehicles has always made me uneasy, my sym-

pathies being with the beast that labored so I could relax. Riding in a cycle ricksha, with a human beast straining while I sat back in conspicuous comfort, I felt not only uneasy but ashamed. I could hardly bear to look about me, and after a moment I understood why: the thought would not leave me that I was participating in the degradation of another human being.

I slumped down in my seat. The city, it seemed to me, was overrun with people who labored heavily for little or no return: women carrying huge loads on their heads, moving with a frantic, bent-knee stride; lean black men—naked except for cloth twisted about their loins—struggling with heads lowered to pull carts so weighed down that the axles groaned; old men and women breaking rock; nursing mothers pounding grain, or spreading it to dry in the road; boys hauling kerosene tins of hot tar; somber, sore-eyed children picking over refuse; horribly mutilated beggars crawling from door to door. People paused as I rode by to stare at me with mute haggard expressions.

These were the images and expressions that memory had suppressed, that night had obscured, that the harsh light of day now revealed with agonizing clarity—a clarity that made me unpleasantly aware that I had in my wallet roughly five hundred dollars, or 2,500 rupees, in traveler's checks and cash, while the ricksha man who carried me was exhausting himself for four annas, a nickel, making of what I had in my pocket not just a certain sum of money but several years of a man's life. This disparity between us existed, I thought, not so much because of what man had been reduced to here in India but because of what he had risen to in America—risen to and taken for granted, risen to so thoroughly that his origin, this dust from which he came and to which he would return, had been forgotten, so that he lost all sight of what he really was: lucky. Lucky beyond historical comparison. Lucky to the point of physical and intellectual weakness, to the point where he abused himself with too much luxury, calling it necessity, and believed the outrageous fiction that anyone less well off must have something inherently wrong with him, some form of generic disease, some racial inferiority. He could not bear to look upon the reality of things outside his social island without posturing as a superior being or wilting, as was I, in a ricksha.

Gradually I found myself studying the ricksha man with a curious, sickening fascination—as if I watched an execution. I saw that he was not old but young, with dirty matted hair, his coarse skin deep-blackened, almost ash-blue, from exposure to the sun. Sweat ran down his lean, pinched back in great beads; his soiled dhoti and the hair behind his ears were soaked; dust adhered to the cracked leather of his legs. He smelled bad. I noticed with particular attention the prominence of his jawbones, the way they stuck out like gills, the depression of neck on either side jerking with each violent thump of his heart. I was aware that, like someone dying of old age, he was slowly wasting away, expending with every ride a little more than he received. The sight of him—the

sounds and odors of his exertion—both nauseated me and moved me to compassion; and when at length, breathing heavily, he pulled up along the curb, I felt somehow guilty and obliged to absolve myself by giving him first the four annas agreed upon and then the rupee he had initially demanded.

A wide variety of people are inclined to mistake generosity for stupidity. The ricksha man was one of these. He accepted the money without gratitude and promptly insisted on more. It was too late to remedy my mistake or indulge in the futility of argument. I took my suitcase from the ricksha and walked grimly away. To my consternation he hurried after me.

"Sar! Sar!" he called indignantly, palms extended.

When he saw that I was embarrassed, he interpreted this as a sign of weakness, threw the money at my feet, and began screaming that I had cheated him. Immediately a stocky, well-dressed man stopped me with the point of his umbrella and asked me in bad English, Had I no mercy for this poor man? Did I not have wealth enough without cheating Indians?

There is a vast difference between those who argue for a point and those who argue because they have nothing else to do. The stocky man appeared to belong to the latter category. He brandished his umbrella at me and carried on at great length, uninterested, as far as I could ascertain, either in my protestations or in the ricksha man. A crowd gathered.

I tried to explain what had happened but could not make myself understood. It seemed senseless to persist. I paid the ricksha man another rupee—to no avail: the stocky man continued his tirade uninterrupted.

At that point a Moslem storekeeper came down from his shop and intervened on my behalf. It took him a few minutes to calm the stocky man and restore order, and then in English he asked what my trouble was. I felt obliged for my own sanity to begin from the beginning. I told him that I had taken a ricksha from near the bus depot, that the ricksha man had agreed to a fare of four annas but that I had felt sorry for him and had added a rupee, that the ricksha man had then demanded more, and that the man with the umbrella had excited everyone to the point where I was forced to give the cheat another rupee. The Moslem relayed this information to the crowd, getting angry with the stocky man for not minding his own business. The stocky man began beating the ricksha man with his umbrella, and the ricksha man promptly departed with his take.

The stocky man became very emotional. "Please not to think unkindly of we Indians," he said. "We are a poor people, but we have our morals." And with that he hurried off, tears in his eyes.

"Best for you in the future," the Moslem advised me, "simply to pay the agreed price, no more. Foolish generosity cannot be really generosity but only foolishness, isn't it?"

When it is difficult to say what you think, I've always found it prudent to agree or say nothing at all. I agreed heartily with the Moslem and thanked him for his assistance.

"No mention," he said. "From what part of the States do you hail?"

"The east coast," I said.

"West coast is better, don't you think?" he said. "Myself, I trained at Cal." And with that he saluted and returned to his shop.

A few took his departure as a signal to leave. The rest crowded about me with undisguised curiosity, asking where I was from, how old was I, was I married, and what was I doing in the city. One man pointed to my trousers and rubbed his fingers together. I thought he wanted to know how much they cost and told him a fictitious price.

"No, sar," he said. "What cloth?" I thought twice about telling him Dan River Wrinkle-shed and finally settled on *puthu-tuni*—new cloth.

His face lit up. "Ah, du Pont weave," he said.

I saw that he wanted to touch the fabric and made the mistake of inviting him to do so. Immediately I felt myself being touched from all sides, some pinches being intended not to investigate the cloth at all but what the cloth concealed.

"*Potham*," I said, "enough," and picked up my suitcase.

With difficulty I made my way through the crowd. I was obliged to stop every few feet and nod and say "*vanakkam*" to the many people who salaamed to me. I was feeling rather grand and thinking I ought to run for vice-president or something, when I overheard someone ask in Tamil who I was and receive an answer: "USIA buffoon."

WILLIAM SANSOM

Pony Show in Connemara

Often when you are motoring across the broad bog of that distinct part of Ireland called Connemara, one of the final European fingers pointing to the long Atlantic miles Americaward, you see what look like horses standing about. These are not the kind of horses that poke their heads through the windows of your car. They keep themselves to themselves. Nor are they horses at all, but ponies, Connemara ponies, free but not wild, that live out on the lovely land of their birth. They are carefully bred and among ponymen have a rising international reputation.

PONY SHOW IN CONNEMARA From *The Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1960. Copyright © by *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1960. Reprinted by permission of Russell & Volkening, Inc.

Against the soggy green of the Irish west, they mark delicate colors: dark yellow, tweedy gray, burnt pink. There are occasional albinos, white with white-lashed pale eyes, like old ladies far gone in the drink. Color is, in any case, one of the Connemara particulars. This mountainous country, with its brilliant estuaries curling miles inland, has little of the brilliant emerald green of the east of Ireland. The green of the west is mistier, and it creeps everywhere, like baize cloth, right up to the tops of the mountains and even flatly down vertical cliff façades; you feel you are living on an old, torn, and humped billiard table, with a cloth that has been left to weather in the sun and the rain. Against such a soft green, whose quality changes with every magical slant and flash of Atlantic-borne light, all isolated colors stand out sharply. Golden-yellow stretches of seaweed line the Prussian-green waters of an estuary miles inland; the crimson bells of the tall wild fuchsia bush dangle everywhere, lining the lanes as though a giant and bloody hand had dripped a bright indication of the path; the mountains may lose their green and in certain lights haze to pale blue or violet, or flower at sunset to a deep blood-red—and all these colors have the inner brightness of plush. Then there is an abundance of black about: the boats are black; the women's shawls are black; and the mounds of black peat and the black rocks and the black cattle all spatter the country with charcoal emphasis. Even the ubiquitous drink, the porter, is black. If ever a martini drifted so far west, the olive would surely be a black one.

But back to the ponies and a black day in this writer's life, the day of the Connemara Pony Show. This is an annual event that takes place in the westerly small capital of Clifden, an up-and-down slip of a town with a half dozen streets and about a million bars. The purpose of the show is to bring together the best of the pony breed for prizes and for sale, together with other less important local produce, from sheep to sheep's-wool sweaters, from chickens to baked breads, from woven reed whips to the pointed toes of a Gaelic step-dance competition. But the ponies are the mainstay; it is the ponies, each with four hoofs and flying feet, that take up all the room on the muddy, sloping field where the great affair takes place.

Let me state now that I am neither a pony nor horse lover and know little about them, so the following few lines shall be free of words like "withers" and "gaskins," "hands" and "hackney" (from the French *haquenée*, an ambling horse, if this should maybe raise your spirits). The only kinds of things I do know about the horse are such as the length of its fearsome yellow teeth and the force behind the hoof and the mad roll—like that of a jazz drummer deep in the groove—of the eye.

So, on a morning of rain and shine, we bought our tickets and slid muddily into the show. Rain and shine are the normal weather: one minute the sun streams in magic rays from momentous Atlantic cloudscapes; the next, down come the momentous inescapable clouds themselves. The apocalyptic elemental feeling of such godlike weather must, I think,

have a large hand in the Gaelic belief in fairies. But there were no fairies at the bottom of our pony field—only mud, viscous gallons of it, down into which the pointed end of my shooting stick vanished at an alarming speed, leaving me seated two feet off the ground, like a cooperative but uncertain uncle in a kiddy car.

From this mildly unelevated position I was perhaps the better equipped to view the goings on and the goers. Previously, being blind to the complex virtues of the ponies themselves, I had been in a position to drink in more of the general atmosphere than others, with their eyes screwed on a fetlock here, a muzzle there; the blessed position of the man who writes of Salzburg without Mozart, or Rome without ruins; and now, here on my low stick, nature had blessed me with another new angle.

I could note the coarse and curiously shaped faces of the copers, the tremendous Irish life in them, cheeks as red as their own fuchsia hedges and eyes under black lashes shining with a Siamese sapphiric blue; and how a wildly handsome young man, strong and fresh and muscular, might open his mouth to show a sudden old row of brown and broken teeth; and his blue-eyed dreamy visionary princess of a colleen raise the red gnarled hand of an old woman to the milk skin of her face, for she has worked hard in a poor country, once sucked dry by my English compatriots and now, somehow, despite the vigilancies of other governments, caught in the habit of apathy. Not that these people today are too poorly off, but they are not by nature builders with an eye to the future; they live, rather, for the day and let tomorrow, and the old turf shed at the back of the house, go to rot. Yet is this really apathy? Is it perhaps not a dream way, near-Arabic, of valuing the moment for its worth? In dripping wet weather, you will be greeted by a local with "Lovely day now!" And this may not be so mad as it sounds; it may, instead, be a way of expressing simply a delight in life, in there being a day at all, whatever its superficial dressing. And on asking the way somewhere and the time it takes, you will be given the answer you *want*, a short way and a short time, in the Eastern manner of giving pleasure at all costs—the cost of mere material truth and shoe leather included. Thus, the most occidental of European peoples are the true orientals, if I might employ a kind of Irishism.

When an industrialist I know proved to an educated Irishman that, by doing this and that and enforcing this or that slightly unpleasant sacrifice, his country could be made as rich as Holland, the reply, wise with many a pint of porter, was both agreement and disavowal, with a final "Och, what do we want with wealth, anyhow?" A key phrase.

So there we were among the ponies. And I didn't stay on my shooting stick for long. To those not only content with living for the day but also surviving it, it was vital to keep on the move and away from the passing hoofs. Mares and their foals strode and staggered hither and thither all the time, arguing, whinnying, kicking, prancing. For the unvalorous discreet, the field was soon turned into a kind of mud lake for

an inelegant skater's waltz, as one skidded one's way around a back leg here, a long yellow tooth there, a mountainous muscular haunch to the left, or to the right a forehoof stamping like a bull's.

Not long, indeed, before the awful extent of a horrid truth was forced upon me. Here on this hill of a field, three or four acres bounded by a stream and a few houses and fences, there were enclosed what amounted to about a hundred naked mothers and their children, most of them as yet not properly introduced.

A hundred suspicious females corralled together in one small area! And their young with them! With their protective instincts raised to abnormal levels, and each battle-happy mother and neurotically thoroughbred infant equipped with four hefty hoofs and a score of lip-curling teeth!

By now the whinnying, a frightful sound in solo, had become, in unison, appalling. There was no band, and no wonder; no one could have heard it. Here and there, above the heaving sea of rumps and halters, rose a momentary equestrian statue, forefeet tapping the air and anything else about. As this fell back, so a hindquarter would flash up, fling out its shoes with a horrid whack onto a neighboring mother's glossy beige coat, and decline. The children were no better than the grown-ups. It says much for the phlegm of the excitable Irish that nobody seemed to be the least troubled by any of it. With elevated Hibernian calm, as if they themselves were not there at all, they led their snorting matrons to and from the judges, only pausing to exchange the time of day with a passing friend in a cluck of Gaelic or a brogue of English that sounded about the same.

Perhaps they were dreaming of big money. For it is true that, in three years, and largely owing to American buying, prices of the Connemara breed have risen from nearly nothing to a fairly sharp something. Or had they half their minds on seaweed? For fifty miles off, in Galway, a seaweed symposium was being held. International colloid experts were discussing how best to process the great seaweed crop of these coasts, and new money is in the offing here, too. Strange new prosperities loom over the forgotten land. Perhaps it is wealth they want, after all. But wealth the way they want it, if you see what I mean.

A sudden shower gleamed like a spider's-web curtain down over all: over tweedy gentry, fustian farmers, village youth in its blue Sunday suit; over matrons who still bake their own bread; over their daughters half in love with home, half with dreams of emigration; over ponies, chickens, judges, sheep. And no one turned a hair. No scuttling. It was Irish rain, as much to be expected as not, and was in a few minutes over. Everyone was wetter; no one had noticed. Except, it seemed, one old ram.

This old ram, a heavy, haughty beast, chose the moment to smash its pen. As the sun came out, so did the ram, a true battering ram, head down and flying into the ironshod feet of the horse life heaving above it. Never so many upset mothers, never so startled a pack of children! The

whinnying rose, the whole pony race began to undulate dangerously. Now, whole groups of equestrian statues reared high, as, like a cannon ball of wool and horn, the ram bashed its way through a startled forest of legs beneath and was, in turn, battered and flicked about like a woolly football, in the course of a new-found liberty. For a few seconds it looked as if the whole field might go mad and stampede. The ram would loose its grip on the mud and slither a few yards like a fleece-bound Eskimo on a banana skin, then gather its pin legs together and turn, and batter off head down at another fence of horn-shod footballers. You could mark its course from above by the undulation of brownish-colored flanks, as if a tidal wave ran erratically through a heaving brown sea. It looked like the end to me, but not to the phlegmatic excitable Irish. In a matter of a few minutes, cool hands had been laid on the ram, its horns held hard, a rope thrown around. And back, battered, the batterer was led to the safety of his old wood gaol.

After this, mouse-heart in mouth, I left. Anything, I fancied, could happen, including, perhaps, six weeks in hospital.

Out I walked into the gray stone town, deserted but for the bright, near-Mediterranean color washes—pink, blue, green—which occasional houses here wear. Past a humble chemist called a Medical Hall, past shops full of Aran sweaters of white bleached wool, past the groceries that are also bars. Deep below in a ravine lay the dark-green waters of the estuary; high above rolled Atlantic clouds arriving from the Americas.

Peace, peace—and blessed silence.

The danger past, courage returned, and with it a mite of objectivity. Possibly no one was kicked or bitten the whole day through, down there among the ponies and the brave Irish. Possibly my fears were only those of a decadent Saxon townsman. Possibly about it all, I should keep my pony trap shut.

V. S. PRITCHETT

A Glimpse of India

Unpacking my suitcase in London after a fortnight in India I noticed a violent smell of spice. It came from my socks. A little of India sinks in a long way. For fourteen days I think I was out of my mind. I was sane between Paris and Beirut, for the Air France Caravelle is the smoothest and quietest aircraft in the world, as soft and almost as silent as

A GLIMPSE OF INDIA From *Harper's Bazaar*, March, 1961. Copyright © 1961 by The Hearst Corporation. Reprinted by permission of Harold Matson Company.

a white owl in the air; but at Beirut disturbing influences appeared. The hotel seemed to be in a Montmartre beside the sea. There were thousands of new cars. The dance bands were going in dozens of cabarets. The air was warm and a strange, sweet, dusty smell of vanilla came out of the basements.

Walking under the moon I was soon set upon by a young man called "Jimmy the Freckless"—not "freckled" or "feckless," he insisted—who said he knew "all the possibilities for gentlemen" and mentioned that the famous British king called George Line Out had had a wonderful time in Lebanon. We eventually agreed that this was Richard the Lion Heart.

There followed a night of mosquitoes. Beirut is a rich, balmy, booming town of new buildings with an eye to becoming a Riviera and with a strong British undertone: HP sauce on all tables; Anzac Harry's Bar with Dinkum Drinks and Food as Mother Cooked It; Windsor soup. One sees in Beirut what a smooth, fat, eye-rolling thing, incessant and eager, the Levant trade is: traders must go on selling in their sleep; every doorway is a limited company; and the Arab shop signs look like the enormous lush eyebrows of winking salesmen.

We flew at night to Tehran. From 33,000 feet we looked down at Baghdad in its night solitude, like a ring at the bottom of a black well. It was not a vast pincushion of scattered lights, but a beautiful isolated circlet made of two gold snakes, broken at the clasp by a dark wrist of water—the Tigris. From the air Baghdad looked as if it could have been worn. Distantly and high in the sky were the red flares of the oil wells.

At midnight Tehran was freezing. Two rich British workmen were insulting the barman because he did not speak English and sold tinned beer. "Come off it, Ginger; bring out the bottles. We know you've got it"—real road to Mandalay stuff. And then eternity began; featureless and soundless. The trans-Asiatic jets flying between Tokyo and London are almost always late. Seven sleepless hours in the transit hall of an ultramodern airport are a foretaste of *Huis Clos*, the gleaming plastic contemporary hell. Impossible to sleep or read. Hours of air-conditioned silence among electrically lighted indoor plants, the eunuchs of botany; a monotony that drink or the waltzing of a jet from Bangkok, screaming like a dentist's drill, relieves only for a couple of crawling minutes.

At the height of this silence, after an hour or two my name was called on the loud-speaker. My name sounded beautiful. I rushed almost in tears to the deserted Customs Hall, to find a sad little imp who whispered to me, "Baksheesh." That was all *Huis Clos* wanted of me. Hours later I was woken up by a sharp pain in the forehead. I had somehow got into the plane for Delhi. A long burning red band of light seared my eyes. It was the vermilion band of sunrise in mid-air over the brown floor of India. From that moment, I time my total entry into unreality that was to last fourteen days.

"So this is your first visit to India. What is your impression please?"

One hears the brisk Welsh twitter of Indian English. Peter Sellers, the Kipling of *The Man Who Would Be King*, boys' books about Orientals and *New Yorker* jokes about turbans, first of all. E. M. Forster comes later, when someone says: "You must remember our self-pity." Asia and Europe are ridiculous in each other's eyes. Which are more farcical—my trousers or his bare arms or legs sticking out of a whirl of bedclothes?

"Good morning, father," a boy bows and says, playing a few notes. "You buy a flute?"

"Sahib, sahib," moans the stentorian beggar, jabbing his arm stump in your ribs.

"I am a fortunetelling palmist. I tell your mother's name. I tell you the name of the flower you are thinking about. God sees us. You break my heart," says the turbaned and bearded fortuneteller, belying forward. You write down the name of the flower. Independently, he writes down the name also. You compare the two. My God, he is right! What has happened? Have you been hypnotized? Is he in touch with Higher Powers? Then you remember you were writing on his wallet. Carbon paper—what a blessing to magicians.

Yet these encounters are not for tourists only. In Old Delhi the fortunetellers and astrologers sit on the pavement with their books, their spectacles down their noses, and the women sit on the ground with them listening to the future. "I've got a cobra," a man dressed in bedclothes screams at you. His friend has. He is charming it out against a fence by the Red Fort. And as you gape, the dead are borne, shoulder-high on their biers at a rush through the traffic to be burned, and the living dead lie in their rags by the hundred, skeletons whose very heels look ravenous, sleeping on the burned out grass.

One is torn between laughter at the splendid turbaned men with hot-house beards who, dressed in all their laundry, yet are able to ride bicycles. Their eagerness, their innocence, their wheel wobbles are transporting. Your chauffeur gives them a push if they come too near in the traffic jam of rickshas, tongas and buses. They buckle, they whirl, they curse—but they do not fall off.

Beautiful silver cows lie against garden walls and gaze at one with the self-possession of nudes by Botticelli. Literature, all you have read about India, is wiped out as you gape. You are elated because life is so expressively exposed—in Europe we are so used to squinting through our anxieties at what is before us—and by the frantic, eager, seeking, adhesive, blind-to-all-others concentration of each individual on the next half-minute of his life. It is desperately *his* life and nobody else's. These people are going to squeeze the last drop out of the last pip of the pomegranate.

After the flamingo sunset, when the dust hazes the evening air, the moon rises over the Red Fort and turns that rose-colored wall into a frightening and silent enormity. The tall sentries at the gate might have been out of *Hamlet* and expecting a ghost to walk. For that matter, all the

commissionaires of Delhi look like emperors. It is surprising that the nights of Old Delhi are soon dead. The population goes to bed very early. Many of their beds are in the street; there, on the pavements and doorways, the sleepers lie outside the closed shops. Only a few night birds crouch over their fires, or a few yellow lights shine through the sacking or the cracked boards of the shacks. The effect is sinister.

As we drove through one night from shadow to shadow, the ragged driver of our tonga looked filthy and savage and more like a vulture than a human being and quite beyond comprehension. We paid him twice his fare out of pity. He had the nerve to ask for baksheesh on top of it; and spat at us; I suppose, for his honor's sake. One has to extend one's notions of what a human being is.

And then one emerges from Old Delhi and the tourist traps to the Delhi of the university, that eager, excited, intelligent modern India which in thirteen years has given itself a powerful injection of Western civilization. One meets a generation of young builders and makers. One passes the evenings among the brilliant, the gracious and the sensitive; people awake to the modern world and able to use what has been given them. Delhi has a powerful concentration of sheer brain. The young are sharp in debate, they actively understand it is their task to bridge the gulf between the educated minority and the primitive mass; and they are not a sad or lonely minority, they are in high spirits. They are conscious that Delhi is a modern city which has gone far beyond its Lutyens period and is a serious place, in the most attractive meaning of the word.

Yet this seriousness does not destroy the traditional spells, indeed it preserves tradition intelligently. The traveler longs for conversation, but he always hopes also for moments of intimacy and revelation. On two evenings I was lucky enough to hear some rare and traditional music in private houses. We squatted one night almost knee to knee in a small room with the Dagar brothers, who have inherited an extraordinary and very sophisticated singing from the eleventh century. And on another night we listened in a little room to a famous drummer from Nepal. (Both perform on All-India Radio.)

I cannot describe this singing and this drumming. The voices began with the faintest vibrations of the vocal chord and as they slowly possessed every particle of air in the room, the sounds were inhuman, refined, subtle, but not primitive or outlandish. One was listening to court music. It was compelling and erotic. The gestures of hands, fingers and thumbs seemed to become part of this music. There was a willful play on the nerves and one felt what, one supposes, a teased tiger might feel in its spinal chord. The peculiar little whimpers and moans of this music and its sudden despotic angers and gestures are unforgettable.

So, in a different way, it was with the drummer and his droll, furious, wicked love affair with the zibar player—a long stringed instrument of great refinement and complexity. Here the pair went through a long, insinuating, fierce erotic-comedy. Again, the incomparable skill of artists