

April 1963

Dear Stuart

I am sitting in one of my favorite places in the world. It's a coffee house on Bleeker Street that always plays tunes in gorgeous classical mood-drenched music on their FM radio; I am very tranquil, relaxed, at peace with the world in my sweatshirt, sneakers and blue jeans (I've got a good pair, very old, with tapered legs) - I think I probably have a cherubic, glassy-eyed expression on my face - at least that's the expression I get from the people I occasionally stare at, and the people here are prone to return the same expression they receive - Unlike most places, you can look at someone intently here and the party of the second part will not turn away the eyes or give a dirty look; sounds like inconsequential trivia, but you'll find that this situation exists in few places. I am thinner now, I don't have the desire to eat that was, at one time, an almost compulsive urge - I suppose I can attribute this to my basically contented nature, which in turn may be the result of my finally finding a happy medium between the need to go to school and my own need to assert my individuality.

In regard to your last letter - I've been disturbed about what you said about your stories "writing themselves." I've been doing a lot of reading lately; I find that many of the traditional "Greats" always express their views on the nature of the artist, and his product. Thomas Mann especially (also Joyce, Flaubert, Zola and Dostoyevsky also) seems to think that all worthwhile art must be an intense intellectual creation - that in order to convey the emotion and feeling that is so essential to good literature, we need take an objective, cold viewpoint, we must channel all feeling thru the intellect. He says that the artist has to be apart from humanity in general, that this is a painful separation, but necessary - When we read an emotionally moving literary work it is not, as he says the reading public thinks, the mere outpouring of the artist's soul, but instead it is the result of the artist's ~~so~~ emotional disinvolvement with the rest - He is not the one who is "living," he is the one who is observing life, he cannot be a part of it. I know from my own experience that it is all too easy to write down "the feeling felt" and I also know that this will result in an increase of bathos, melodramatic creeping, readers digestion (not to mention the Saturday Eve Post.

All This is also relevant to what you used to say about your writing being "overly rhetorical" - Read the most intensely moving parts of Faulkner again Str - If you had written ~~them~~ you'd also think you were being too rhetorical - Simple words do not ~~create~~ create the impression you'd or I, would like to think they do; take a page in Faulkner and count the words that you are not immediately familiar with (you may know, or be able to gather their meaning from context, but there are many that would not come into your mind while writing) - You'll find that there are quite a few - You'll also notice that in the course of normal reading you don't hang on these words, but they become a cogent part of an impression - If you had written them, due to the fact that you ~~have~~ have your not completely familiar with them, you'd tend to think them unnecessary, over rhetorical.

Anyway, I am anxious to read your stories - I also may be able to get them published for you (altho by an "unprofessional" publication) I'm sure this won't bother you.

The newest, "avant-garde" literary current now, both foreign and domestic, seems to be a tendency away from realism to surrealism, Kafkaesque word imagery and the like - I've been experimenting a little and the results are interesting if nothing more.

I'm glad to hear about your father's stroke of benevolence, & it seems that there is a pretty good possibility of our getting together this summer, since too have been "altruistically blessed" by Abe with the Triumph - New York, Mexico, what's the d.f.

OH - You won't believe this, in fact I was going to tell you about it first thing in this letter but I forgot - I was in New Orleans two weeks ago; Amazing? On my Easter Vacation, on a Monday, I was sitting on my lawn with a Girl from here who goes to Art School in Philadelphia (not the Institute, but Tyler School of Fine Arts) We decided to jump into the Triumph and go somewhere, and we left 10 minutes later after, sake a toothbrush and bathing suite.

She has an aunt in New Orleans, so we stopped in for a free meal - We drove all night, had plenty of Dexamils and Cigarettes - The trip was cheap, she contributing the majority of gas funds. I stopped by Tulane, saw Burman, but most of the others had left - We went to La Casa, it was great! - Then we headed East and just stopped and swam when we got the urge - we slept on beaches, it was tremendous, probably owing partly to the spontaneity of the whole thing.

Well I'm getting writers cramp now - I don't own a fancy imported script typewriter - so I will end my say - I try ~~not~~ to respond a little more quickly if you can; last time I thought you'd died, or something catastrophic like that.

See you soon (with luck)

Peter

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