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AÉROGRAMME • PAR AVION

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May 3, 1966

Dear Professor Curley:

Now on Rogers' desk.

Greetings from the land of the culturally revived. Just after I put my last letter in the mail to you I learned what you would have been interested to know, that Leonard Dean has resigned as head of the English department, effective a year from now. I suppose you've already gotten this information from someone else by now. The English department remains in an uproar. I expect you will get an inside report from Neil Kleinman, who is leaving in a week or ten days for Europe and says he intends to look you up in London. I don't know if he's going directly to London or not, but I think so. He's Dean's assistant, as you know, and has just finished a fairly lengthy prospectus for a U of I literary-cum-art and graphic design magazine. Kleinman apparently intends to stay here two or three years anyway. He is one of the rewards of the Dean era, I guess: intelligent, funny, enthusiastic. There was, mirabile dictu, a party for graduate students and good guy professors (Paul, Wasson, Kleinman, etc) last weekend and the feeling seemed to be that you couldn't blame Dean for not sticking it out. I still don't understand all the politics of the thing but apparently not many people do.

I was accepted by the University of Chicago and will be there in September, I guess. Your kind letter, whatever you said, must have helped. For which many thanks. However, I suppose you realize you're under some sort of obligation in this matter of recommendations. After all, if you hadn't given me 21 hours of A I would have never gotten into graduate school and wouldn't need any recommendations. So it's your fault. Two or three people tell me Saul Bellow is still at Chicagoo but my impression is he's back in Canada. I'm intimidated and confused by his stuff. I've read Augie March and Henderson and the Rain King and, frankly, nothing much happened.

Now about your Black Period. It seems to me you have deserved it after the awesome production of these last months. But you should not feel that you should be an "engaged" writer--take it from me (laughter). Surely what this world needs is less ideology and more people with a l(lower case)iberal, humanistic, forgiving attitude. So what we need are writers who can nurture such an attitude by nonideological, human perspectives. That was the kind of story Saccovanzetti was. There was a sense of moral obligation in it, as you say, but the very context of the Sacco-Vanzetti Case assured that it would be not so much a formal political attitude as a basic human protest against the kind of system that frustrates human effort. (I'm not sure what I meant in that last sentence and, rather than tell the Author what he was Really Doing, I will cease.)

About Wesker. I saw "Chips with Everything" once in London and once in New York, and I read "Chicken Soup with Barley," which was in the same volume of Penguin Plays as Doris Lessing's "Each His Own Wilderness."

FOLD SIDES OVER AND THEN FOLD BOTTOM UP
MOISTEN FLAP WELL AND APPLY PRESSURE TO SEAL

2 / I'm not sure what I think about Wesker, but I liked Chips very much and the other play came at the right time for me, just as I was reading Lessing a lot and getting involved in her hang-up with the communist party. Lessing and Wesker are a lot the same kind of writers, searching, as you say, for the ideal that keeps getting lost in compromises. A lot of onetime communist intellectuals must have been like that, because communism offered at the same time two unreconcilable realities: the all-encompassing marxist system of ideas, which like Catholicism accounted for everything, and the problem of day-to-day practical politics, directed at political success in the real world. You can't have a mind that works in both of those gears. I often wonder if the members of the Vatican Secretariat say their morning office . . .

(Wesker's other play is about two generations of a leftwing family and how capitalism and disillusionment set in.)

FIRST FOLD

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SECOND FOLD

3 / I don't know how I'm going to make ends join in Chicago. I don't have any financial aid from the University (I didn't ask for any because it was past the deadline for that). I'll be going to work Monday for The News-Gazette, which has raised me all the way to \$2 an hour, and while taking two units in summer school I hope to put some money in the bank. I've applied for a job at the Chicago Daily News and been offered a (copy desk!) job at the Sun-Times, but the problem is going to be working and at the same time making something of graduate school. I'll probably get some financial aid from Chicago in a semester or two. It will be nice, in the meantime, going back to the unambiguous and absolutely within-the-sphere-of-my-competence work for a newspaper. Trust you're still having spring there.

Roger