Flip

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Flip

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay’s first paragraph.

"The innocent, naive, child-like enthusiastic love play sounds of Charlie Hoxie’ s horn which, in the underplay of saying little, said so much, mingled with the four-to-a-bar, tinny piano sounds emanating from the catsup-red and egg stain-yellow frontage of a brick building, billeted, in purple letters, with the notice "Jesus Saves". The two sounds fled from opposite sides of Lenox Avenue and, in their mad anxiety to proclaim to the world their respective messages, met and destroyed each other, their energies dropping in a death heap on the scattered base markers, painted on the street for the Sunday game of stickball."

Cover Page Footnote
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"To dig" is to be in control of a situation because you have "swung" where the Square has not, or because you have allowed to come into consciousness a pain, a guilt, a shame or desire which the other has not had the courage to face. The antithesis of "to dig" is "to be beat", "to flip". This is the terror of the hipster because once he is flip, he still cannot give up the search. It is not granted to the hipster to grow old gracefully—he has been captured too early by the oldest dream of power.

NORMAN MAILER
THE WHITE NEGRO

The innocent, naive, child-like enthusiastic love play sounds of Charlie Hoxie's horn which, in the underplay of saying little, said so much, mingled with the four-to-a-bar, tinny piano sounds emanating from the catsup-red and egg stain-yellow frontage of a brick building, billeted, in purple letters, with the notice "Jesus Saves". The two sounds fled from opposite sides of Lenox Avenue and, in their mad anxiety to proclaim to the world their respective messages, met and destroyed each other, their energies dropping in a death heap on the scattered base markers, painted on the street for the Sunday game of stickball.

Guided by the overhead glimmering street light, in carefully placed steps, a frog had ascended a good distance up the slime-covered, slanting wall of one of Manhattan's garbage-strewn, condom-filled sewers.

Off of Lenox, on one of those fastidiously numerated side streets, the one tottering monument to Utopia the social planners can point to in the social chaos that is Harlem, his face and figure illuminated by a street light whose jagged outer shell reflected the vented frustrations of countless young intellects to whom ping-pong and Settlement basketball were just that—inferior outlets created by "that flip with the thick glasses from Columbia", a youth appeared.
He was tall and thin, with a face as colorless and expressionless as a death mask. Indeed, it was hardly a face at all—more like a chalk-white plaster mold with slits for eyes and mouth. It resembled the way in which the "human void" might perhaps be represented by an expressionist or, perhaps, the way in which the same expressionist might paint one of Eliot’s "Hollow Men". This, plus the other unmistakable sign—the little red, festering sores dominating his bare arm—confirmed a fact which would be obvious to even the most neophyte Bellevue orderly—he was a drug addict, a "junkie", an inmate of a self-imposed purgatory where the only goal is the next fix. And from the same blank expression it was apparent that this latter need had lately been sated.

The youth stopped in front of a vacated building whose whole and only reason for existence seemed to be to display a large, stark-white "for rent" sign on the front window. He tried to think. He did not try to order and organize his thought, to reason, as the square would have it. This was no longer within his power, he had sacrificed it long ago on the burning altar of his own dynamic being, along with the rest of the "hollow, meaningless rope of dung" which the square had been fashioning from the "faecal matter of repressed desire from the past" and by which rope he was now thoroughly hung up. He seemed lost in oblivion, unconscious of not only his immediate environs but of the very universe of which he sometimes heard he was a part. He wanted to run. But to where? Besides, he had neither the strength nor the ambition. He thought that he would "pad" it in the vacated building, but when the door would not yield to his weak attempt to force it, he merely sat, his body propped up against the door and his legs tucked under him like a Buddha or an Indian Yoga mystic.

Gaining a temporary foothold in the slime, his abnormally large undersize straining in rhythmic pants, the frog paused.

On Lenox, the strange syncopation occasioned by the two opposing harmonics was suddenly broken by the unmistakable sound of a police siren. The sound from the store-front ceased and several of its occupants rushed to the street to see the black car of the police department speed by. Hoxie and his votaries, perhaps through callousness, more likely because they were deaf to anything but the "searching, timeless, spacelessness of old daddy’s horn", were unconcerned.

The police car turned down 146th Street and pulled to the curb, its dying siren only a hollow echo of the screech which moments before had warned of the approach of a wild predator, screaming and searching out its prey in the black night. Seeing the approach of the "fuzz" the youth broke into a wild, disjointed run. After proceeding not more than half-a-dozen yards, however, he suddenly stopped and fell in a heap in a doorway.
The frog began to slip; first slowly and haltingly then smoothly, his
firm underside leaving an obvious trail in the slime.

"Here he is, Keckner."
"Get the hell up you stinkin' son of a bitch. You know ya killed that guy.
Tore him up like a paper doll. Shreds. Its lucky there's enough left for the
coroner."
"He's high, Keckner, he's soaring."
"They're all the same, the bastards."

They walked him to the car and the youth's face for the first time showed
something. Color had returned momentarily but only served to foil a rather
twisted aspect which was enveloping his features. A conclusive twitch had begun
along the entire left side of his face. His fingers, embedded in the flesh above
his cheek bone, slowly began to tear down the front of his face, leaving four
streams of blood behind them.

"I can't come on, man . . . I don't dig, I can't make it, can't make it,
can't make. . . .

The street light vanished as he slipped under the ooze. Several seconds
passed. He dragged himself to the wall of the sewer. This time the
light seemed infinitely farther away.