"A novelist's characters must be with him as he lies down to sleep, and as he wakes from his dreams. He must learn to hate them and to love them."—TROLLOPE

"The less one feels a thing, the more likely one is to express it as it really is."—FLAUBERT

"An ecstatically happy prose writer ... can't be moderate or temperate or brief. ... He can't be detached. ... In the wake of anything as large and consuming as happiness, he necessarily forfeits the much smaller but, for a writer, always rather exquisite pleasure of appearing on the page serenely sitting on a fence."—The narrator of J. D. Salinger's "Seymour: An Introduction"

"M. de Maupassant is remarkably objective and impersonal, but he would go too far if he were to entertain the belief that he has kept himself out of his books. They speak of him eloquently, even if it only be to tell us how easy ... he has found this impersonality."—HENRY JAMES

"Now you are, through Maury, expressing your views, of course; but you would do so differently if you were deliberately stating them as your views."—MAXWELL PERKINS, in a letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald

CHAPTER THREE

General Rules, II:
"All Authors Should Be Objective"

A second type of general criterion common to many of the founders of modern fiction deals with the author's state of mind or soul. A surprising number of writers, even those who have thought of their writing as "self-expression," have sought a freedom from the tyranny of subjectivity, echoing Goethe's claim that "Every healthy effort ... is directed from the inward to the outward world."1 From time to time others have risen to defend commitment, engagement, involvement. But, at least until recently, the predominant demand in this century has been for some sort of objectivity.

Like all such terms, however, objectivity is many things. Underlying it and its many synonyms—impersonality, detachment, disinterestedness, neutrality, etc.—we can distinguish at least three separate qualities: neutrality, impartiality, and impassibilité.

Neutrality and the Author's "Second Self"
Objectivity in the author can mean, first, an attitude of neutrality toward all values, an attempt at disinterested reporting of all things

good and evil. Like many literary enthusiasms, the passion for neutrality was imported into fiction from the other arts relatively late. Keats was saying in 1818 the kind of thing that novelists began to say only with Flaubert. "The poetical character . . . has no character . . . It lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does not harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation." Three decades later Flaubert recommended a similar neutrality to the novelist who would be a poet. For him the model is the attitude of the scientist. Once we have spent enough time, he says, in "treating the human soul with the impartiality which physical scientists show in studying matter, we will have taken an immense step forward." Art must achieve "by a pitiless method, the precision of the physical sciences."

It should be unnecessary here to show that no author can ever attain to this kind of objectivity. Most of us today would, like Sartre, renounce the analogy with science even if we could admit that science is objective in this sense. What is more, we all know by now that a careful reading of any statement in defense of the artist's neutrality will reveal commitment; there is always some deeper value in relation to which neutrality is taken to be good. Chekhov, for example, begins bravely enough in defense of neutrality, but he cannot write three sentences without committing himself. "I am afraid of those who look for a tendency between the lines, and who are determined to regard me either as a liberal or as a conservative. I am not a liberal, not a conservative, not a believer in gradual progress, not a monk, not an indifferentist. I should like to be a free artist and nothing more . . . I have no preference either . . ."

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3 Correspondence (October 12, 1853) (Paris, 1926-33), III, 367-68. For some of the citations from Flaubert in what follows I am indebted to the excellent monograph by Marianne Bonwit, Gustave Flaubert et le principe d'impassibilité (Berkeley, Calif., 1950). My distinction among the three forms of objectivity in the author is derived in part from her discussion.

4 Ibid. (December 12, 1857), IV, 243.

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for gendarmes, or for butchers, or for scientists, or for writers, or for the younger generation. I regard trade-marks and labels as a superstition." Freedom and art are good, then, and superstition bad? Soon he is carried away to a direct repudiation of the plea for "indifference" with which he began. "My holy holies is the human body, health, intelligence, talent, inspiration, love, and the most absolute freedom—freedom from violence and lying, whatever forms they may take" (p. 63). Again and again he betrays in this way the most passionate kind of commitment to what he often calls objectivity.

The artist should be, not the judge of his characters and their conversations, but only an unbiased witness. I once overheard a desultory conversation about pessimism between two Russians; nothing was solved,—and my business is to report the conversation exactly as I heard it, and let the jury,—that is, the readers, estimate its value. My business is merely to be talented, i.e., to be able . . . to illumine the characters and speak their language [pp. 58-59].

But "illuminate" according to what lights? "A writer must be as objective as a chemist; he must abandon the subjective line; he must know that dung-heaps play a very respectable part in a landscape, and that evil passions are as inherent in life as good ones" (pp. 275-76). We have learned by now to ask of such statements: Is it good to be faithful to what is "inherent"? Is it good to include every part of the "landscape"? If so, why? According to what scale of values? To repudiate one scale is necessarily to imply another.

It would be a serious mistake, however, to dismiss talk about the author's neutrality simply because of this elementary and understandable confusion between neutrality toward some values and neutrality toward all. Cleansed of the polemical excesses, the attack on subjectivity can be seen to rest on several important insights.

To succeed in writing some kinds of works, some novelists find it necessary to repudiate all intellectual or political causes. Chekhov does not want himself, as artist, to be either liberal or conservative. Flaubert, writing in 1853, claims that even the artist who recognizes
the demand to be a "triple-thinker," even the artist who recognizes
the need for ideas in abundance, "must have neither religion, nor
country, nor social conviction." 8

Unlike the claim to complete neutrality, this claim will never be
refuted, and it will not suffer from shifts in literary theory or phi-
losophical fashion. Like its opposite, the existentialist claim of Sartre
and others that the artist should be totally engagé, its validity de-
PENDS on the kind of novel the author is writing. Some great artists
have been committed to the causes of their times, and some have
not. Some works seem to be harmed by their burden of commit-
ment (many of Sartre's own works, for example, in spite of their
freedom from authorial comment) and some seem to be able to
absorb a great deal of commitment (The Divine Comedy, Four
Quartets, Gulliver's Travels, Darkness at Noon, Bread and Wine).
One can always find examples to prove either side of the case; the
test is whether the particular ends of the artist enable him to do
something with his commitment, not whether he has it or not.

Everyone is against everyone else's prejudices and in favor of his
own commitment to the truth. All of us would like the novelist
somehow to operate on the level of our own passion for truth and
right, a passion which by definition is not in the least prejudiced.
The argument in favor of neutrality is thus useful in so far as it
warns the novelist that he can seldom afford to pour his untrans-
formed biases into his work. The deeper he sees into permanency,
the more likely he is to earn the discerning reader's concurrence.
The author as he writes should be like the ideal reader described
by Hume in "The Standard of Taste," who, in order to reduce the
distortions produced by prejudice, considers himself as "man in
general" and forgets, if possible, his "individual being" and his
"peculiar circumstances."

To put it in this way, however, is to understate the importance
of the author's individuality. As he writes, he creates not simply an
ideal, impersonal "man in general" but an implied version of "him-
self" that is different from the implied authors we meet in other

mêlne aucune conviction sociale..."
work; no single version of Fielding emerges from reading the satirical Jonathan Wild, the two great "comic epics in prose," Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, and that troublesome hybrid, Amelia. There are many similarities among them, of course; all of the implied authors value benevolence and generosity; all of them deplore self-seeking brutality. In these and many other respects they are indistinguishable from most implied authors of most significant works until our own century. But when we descend from this level of generality to look at the particular ordering of values in each novel, we find great variety. The author of Jonathan Wild is by implication very much concerned with public affairs and with the effects of unchecked ambition on the "great men" who attain to power in the world. If we had only this novel by Fielding, we would infer from it that in his real life he was much more single-mindedly engrossed in his role as magistrate and reformer of public manners than is suggested by the implied author of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones—to say nothing of Shamela (what would we infer about Fielding if he had never written anything but Shamela?). On the other hand, the author who greets us on page one of Amelia has none of that air of facetiousness combined with grand insouciance that we meet from the beginning in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. Suppose that Fielding had never written anything but Amelia, filled as it is with the kind of commentary we find at the beginning:

The various accidents which befel a very worthy couple after their uniting in the state of matrimony will be the subject of the following history. The distresses which they waded through were some of them so exquisite, and the incidents which produced these so extraordinary, that they seemed to require not only the utmost malice, but the utmost invention, which superstition hath ever attributed to Fortune: though whether any such being interfered in the case, or, indeed, whether there be any such being in the universe, is a matter which I by no means presume to determine in the affirmative.

Could we ever infer from this the Fielding of the earlier works? Though the author of Amelia can still indulge in occasional jests and ironies, his general air of sententious solemnity is strictly in keeping with the very special effects proper to the work as a whole. Our picture of him is built, of course, only partly by the narrator's explicit commentary; it is even more derived from the kind of tale he chooses to tell. But the commentary makes explicit for us a relationship which is present in all fiction, even though it may be overlooked in fiction without commentary.

It is a curious fact that we have no terms either for this created "second self" or for our relationship with him. None of our terms for various aspects of the narrator is quite accurate. "Persona," "mask," and "narrator" are sometimes used, but they more commonly refer to the speaker in the work who is after all only one of the elements created by the implied author and who may be separated from him by large ironies. "Narrator" is usually taken to mean the "I" of a work, but the "I" is seldom if ever identical with the implied image of the artist.

"Theme," "meaning," "symbolic significance," "theology," or even "ontology"—all these have been used to describe the norms which the reader must apprehend in each work if he is to grasp it adequately. Such terms are useful for some purposes, but they can be misleading because they almost inevitably come to seem like purposes for which the works exist. Though the old-style effort to find the theme or moral has been generally repudiated, the new-style search for the "meaning" which the work "communicates" or "symbolizes" can yield the same kinds of misreading. It is true that both types of search, however clumsily pursued, express a basic need: the reader's need to know where, in the world of values, he stands—that is, to know where the author wants him to stand. But most works worth reading have so many possible "themes," so many possible mythological or metaphorical or symbolic analogues, that to find any one of them, and to announce it as what the work is for, is to do at best a very small part of the critical task. Our sense of the implied author includes not only the extractable meanings but also the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and suffering of all of the characters. It includes, in short, the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole; the chief value to which this implied author is committed, regardless of what party
his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form.

Three other terms are sometimes used to name the core of norms and choices which I am calling the implied author. "Style" is sometimes broadly used to cover whatever it is that gives us a sense, from word to word and line to line, that the author sees more deeply and judges more profoundly than his presented characters. But, though style is one of our main sources of insight into the author's norms, in carrying such strong overtones of the merely verbal the word style excludes our sense of the author's skill in his choice of character and episode and scene and idea. "Tone" is similarly used to refer to the implicit evaluation which the author manages to convey behind his explicit presentation, but it almost inevitably suggests again something limited to the merely verbal; some aspects of the implied author may be inferred through tonal variations, but his major qualities will depend also on the hard facts of action and character in the tale that is told.

Similarly, "technique" has at times been expanded to cover all discernible signs of the author's artistry. If everyone used "technique" as Mark Schorer does, covering with it almost the entire range of choices made by the author, then it might very well serve our purposes. But it is usually taken for a much narrower matter, and consequently it will not do. We can be satisfied only with a term that is as broad as the work itself but still capable of calling attention to that work as the product of a choosing, evaluating person rather than as a self-existing thing. The "implied author" chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him

9 E.g., Fred B. Millett, Reading Fiction (New York, 1950): "This tone, the general feeling which suffuses and surrounds the work, arises ultimately out of the writer's attitude toward his subject. . . . The subject derives its meaning from the view of life which the author has taken" (p. 11).

10 "When we speak of technique, then, we speak of nearly everything. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and finally of evaluating it. . . . Technique in fiction is, of course, all those obvious forms of it which are usually taken to be the whole of it, and many others" ("Technique as Discovery," Hudson Review, I [Spring, 1948], 67-87, as reprinted in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. Wm. Van O'Connor [Minneapolis, Minn., 1948], pp. 9-29; see esp. pp. 9-11).

11 The English Novel (London, 1930), p. 58. See Geoffrey Tillotson, Thackeray the Novelist (Cambridge, 1954), esp. chap. iv, "The Content of the Authorial 'I'" (pp. 55-70), for a convincing argument that the "I" of Thackeray's works should be carefully distinguished from Thackeray himself.
Nabokov may here have purged his narrator’s voice of all commitments save one, but that one is all-powerful: he believes in the ironic interest—and as it later turns out, the poignancy—of a man’s fated self-destruction. Maintaining the same detached tone, this author can intrude whenever he pleases without violating our conviction that he is as objective as it is humanly possible to be. Describing the villain, he can call him both a “dangerous man” and “a very fine artist indeed” without reducing our confidence in his open-mindedness. But he is not neutral toward all values, and he does not pretend to be.

**Impartiality and “Unfair” Emphasis**

The author’s objectivity has also sometimes meant an attitude of impartiality toward his characters. Much of what Flaubert and Chekhov wrote about objectivity is really a plea to the artist not to load the dice, not to take sides unjustly against or for particular characters. Chekhov wires to a friend, "I do not venture to ask you to love the gynecologist and the professor, but I venture to remind you of the justice which for an objective writer is more precious than the air he breathes" (Letters on the Short Story, p. 78). Sometimes this impartiality is made to sound like universal love or pity or toleration: "There is no one to blame, and should the guilt be traceable, that is the affair of the health officers and not of the artist... She [your character] may act in any way she pleases, but the author should be kindly to the fingertips" (pp. 81, 82). Indeed, a very great deal of modern fiction has been written on the assumption, itself a basic commitment to a value, that to understand all is to forgive all. But this assumption is very different from the neutrality described in the first section. Writers who are successful in getting their readers to reserve judgment are not impartial about whether judgment should be reserved. As H. W. Leggett said, almost three decades ago, in a forgotten little classic on the role of what he calls the author's and reader's "code," modern fiction often presents occasions to the reader to "observe and refrain from judging... and a part at least of the reader’s satisfaction is due to his consciousness of his own broadmindedness."

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12 Qu’est qui me dira, en effet ce que Shakespeare a aimé, ce qu’il a hait, ce qu’il a senti" (Carr., I, 386).


but been astonished Portrait is this ter how hard the desirability equal in Venice.16 But Shakespeare never pretends that Goneril and Regan stand equal with Cordelia before the bar of justice, even though they are judged by the same standard. And in The Merchant of Venice he is so far from impartiality that he can really be accused of employing a double standard at Shylock’s expense, at least in the latter part of the play. Certainly he does not work according to any abstract notion of impartial treatment for all characters. Similarly, the Greek dramatists never pretended that there was no basic distinction between men like Oedipus and Orestes on the one hand, and the fools and knaves on the other. Though they did not deal in “blacks and whites,” as the popular attack on melodrama goes, they did not reduce all human worth to a gray blur.

Even among characters of equal moral, intellectual, or aesthetic worth, all authors inevitably take sides. A given work will be “about” a character or set of characters. It cannot possibly give equal emphasis to all, regardless of what its author believes about the desirability of fairness. Hamlet is not fair to Claudius. No matter how hard G. Wilson Knight labors to convince us that we have misjudged Claudius,16 and no matter how willing we are to admit that Claudius’ story is potentially as interesting as Hamlet’s, this is Hamlet’s story, and it cannot do justice to the king. Othello is not fair to Cassio; King Lear is not just to the Duke of Cornwall; Madame Bovary is unfair to almost everyone but Emma; and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man positively maligns everyone but Stephen.

But who cares? The novelist who chooses to tell this story cannot at the same time tell that story; in centering our interest, sympathy,
Critics who think the thesis exaggerated or false may admit to Lawrence's gift but deplore the injustices he commits in defense of his lovers. But everyone seems to deal with the book in terms of its thesis. Even the critics who feel, with Mark Schorer, that Lawrence managed to make "the preacher" and "the poet" coincide "formally" cannot discuss the book without spending most of their energies on the prechments.

Significantly enough the question of Lawrence's impartiality seems completely unrelated to his choice of technical devices. Whether we accept or reject Lawrence's vision of a new salvation, our decision is not based on whether he uses this or that form of authorial preachment; objections against Lawrence's bias have more often dealt with his portrayal of Mellors, the gamekeeper, than with the fact that he allows authorial commentary of various kinds. When Mellors presents at great length his belief that "if men could fuck with warm hearts, and the women take it warm-heartedly everything would come all right" (chap. xiv), the panacea may strike us as inadequate to the point of comedy or as an inspiring portrait of a brave new world acomin', but we will receive little help in our choice by asking whether the beliefs are given in dramatic form. Those of us who reject this side of the book do so finally on the grounds that what Mellors says implies for us a version of D. H. Lawrence that we cannot admire; there is an unbridgeable disparity between the implied author's proffered salvation and our own views.

19 Stanley Kauffman, "'Lady Chatterley' at Last," The New Republic, May 25, 1959, p. 16; Paul Lauter, "Lady C. with Love and Money," The New Leader, September 21, 1959: "Lawrence refines the gamekeeper with each revision of the novel, perhaps to make him more acceptable to Connie (and to the reader) as a lover. His finish in the final version, however, is partly a concession to the very society to which he stands opposed. . . . What does make Mellors eligible for salvation? Why cannot Michaelis or Tommy Dukes then enter?" (p. 24).


21 See, for example, Colin Welch's attack on the book in "Black Magic, White Lies," Encounter, XVI (February, 1961), 75-79: "What it preaches is this: that mankind can only be regenerated by freeing itself from the tyranny of the intellect and the soul, from the tyranny of Jesus Christ, and by prostrating itself before its own phallos . . ." (p. 79). Whether one accepts Welch's charges or the defense of Lawrence by Rebecca West and Richard Hoggart in the following issue of Encounter, it is clear that what is in dispute is Lawrence's success in winning us to accept his basic vision; no tinkering with the proportions of telling and showing will make much difference here.

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What we object to, then, is the Lawrence implied by some of the drama, not necessarily the Lawrence given in the commentary. The little disquisition in chapter nine on the powers and limitations of fiction, which a critic has deplored as evidence of "unsteadiness of control in points of view," really shows Lawrence in very attractive form. Since we recognize the validity of the author's attack on the conventional fiction that appeals only to the vices of the public, the fiction that is humiliating because it glorifies the most corrupt feelings under the guise of "purity," we grant to the author the superiority of his effort to use the novel to "reveal the most secret places of life." Lawrence's essential integrity seems to us beyond question after such a passage—at least until we encounter another long-winded outburst by Mellors.

In short, whatever unfairness there is in this book lies at the core of the novel; so long as Lawrence is determined to damn everyone who does not follow Mellors' way, to labor for surface impartiality would be pointless. If we finish the book with a sense of embarrassment at its special pleading, if we read Mellors' pseudobiblical talk of "the peace that comes of fucking" and of his "Pentecost, the forked flame between me and you," with regrets rather than conviction, it is ultimately because no literary technique can conceal from us the confused and pretentious little author who is implied in too many parts of the book. Even our memory of the very different author implied by the better novels—Women in Love, say—is not enough to redeem the bad portions of this one.

"IMPASSIBILITÉ"

The author's objectivity can mean, finally, what Flaubert called impassibilité, an unmoved or unimpeached feeling toward the characters and events of one's story. Although Flaubert did not maintain the distinction clearly, this quality is distinct from neutrality of judgment about values; an author could be committed to one or another value and still not feel with or against any of his
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characters. At the same time, it is clearly distinct from impartiality, since the artist could feel a lively hate or love or pity for all of his characters impartially. There seems to be a genuine temperamental difference among authors in the amount of detachment of this kind they find congenial—somewhat like the difference between actors who “feel” their roles and actors like the heroine of Somerset Maugham’s Theatre, who finds that as soon as she feels a role her power to perform effectively is destroyed. Trollope in his Autobiography describes himself as wandering alone in the woods, crying at the grief of his characters and “laughing at their absurdities, and thoroughly enjoying their joy.” It was perhaps natural that authors like Flaubert should have reacted to a similarly impassioned approach in some of the French romantics by pretending to an equally impassioned rejection of passion.

But this hardly suggests that there is any natural connection between the author’s impassibilité and any one kind of rhetoric or any particular level of achievement. Authors at either extreme of the scale of emotional involvement might write works which were full of highly personal commentary, stories that were altogether “told,” or works that were strictly dramatic, strictly “shown.”

One sign that there is no connection between the author’s feelings and any necessary technique or achieved quality of his work is the fact that we can never securely infer, without external evidence, whether an author has felt his work or written with cold detachment. Did Fielding hate Jonathan Wild or weep for Amelia? Was he personally amused when Parson Adams, on his way to London to sell sermons which Fielding and the reader know to be unmarketable, discovers that he has left them at home?

Saintsbury praised Fielding for his “detachment” in Jonathan Wild, presumably because the narrator is maintained throughout as a character who differs obviously and markedly from any real Fielding we could possibly imagine. But is there any reason to suppose that Fielding was less detached from his materials when dealing with the lovable fool Adams than when portraying Wild? We too easily fall into the habit of talking as if the narrator who

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says, “O my good readers!” were Fielding, forgetting that for all we know he may have worked as deliberately and with as much detachment in creating the wise, urbane narrator of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones as he did in creating the cynical narrator of Jonathan Wild. What was said above about the relation between the author’s own values and the values supported by his second self applies here in precisely the same sense. A great artist can create an implied author who is either detached or involved, depending on the needs of the work in hand.

We see, then, that none of the three major claims to objectivity in the author has any necessary bearing on technical decisions. Though it may be important at a given moment in the history of an art or in the development of a writer to stress the dangers of a misguided commitment, partiality, or emotional involvement, the tendency to connect the author’s objectivity with a required impersonality of technique is quite indefensible.

**Subjectivism Encouraged by Impersonal Techniques**

Impersonal narration may, in fact, encourage the very subjectivism that it is supposed to cure. The effort to avoid signs of explicit evaluation can be peculiarly dangerous for the author who is fighting to keep himself out of his works. Although it is true that commentary can be a medium for meretricious subjective outpourings, the effort to construct such commentary can, in some authors, create precisely the right kind of wall between the author’s weaker self and the self he must create if his book is to succeed. The art of constructing reliable narrators is largely that of mastering all of oneself in order to project the persona, the second self, that really belongs in the book. And, in laying his cards on the table, an author can discover in himself, and at least then find some chance of combating, the two extremes of subjectivism that have marred some impersonal fiction.

**Indiscriminate sympathy or compassion.**—By giving the impression that judgment is withheld, an author can hide from himself that he is sentimentally involved with his characters, and that he

is asking for his reader's sympathies without providing adequate reasons. The older technique of reliable narration, as Q. D. Leavis says, forced the author and reader to remain somewhat distant from even the most sympathetic character. But she finds that often in the modern best seller "the author has poured his own day-dreams, hot and hot, into dramatic form, without bringing them to any such touchstone as the 'good sense, but not common-sense' of a cultivated society: the author is himself—or more usually herself—identified with the leading character, and the reader is invited to share the debauch."24

Such sentimentality was of course possible in older forms of fiction. "Our hero" could often get away with murder, while his enemies were condemned for minor infractions of the moral code. But the modern author can reject the charge of sentimentality by saying, in effect, "Who, me? Not at all. It is the reader's fault if he feels any excessive or unjustified compassion. I didn't say a word. I'm as tight-lipped and unemotional as the next man." Such effects are most evident, perhaps, in the worst of the tough-guy school of detective fiction. Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer can, in effect, do no wrong—for those who can stomach him at all. But many of Spillane's readers would drop him immediately if he intruded to make explicit the vicious morality on which enjoyment of the books is based: "You may notice, reader, that when Mike Hammer beats up an Anglo-Saxon American he is less brutal than when he beats up a Jew, and that when he beats up a Negro he is most brutal of all. In this way our hero discriminates his punishment according to the racial worth of his victims." It is wise of Spillane to avoid making such things explicit.

If, as Chekhov said, "Subjectivity is an awful thing—even for the reason that it betrays the poor writer hand over fist," we can now see that the kind of subjectivity he deplored is not by any means

24 Fiction and the Reading Public (London, 1932), p. 236. See also Roger Vailland, "La Loi du Romancier," L'Express (Paris), July 12, 1957, pp. 13, 15. Vailland found that he was ready to write "de vrais romans" only when he had ceased to be the hero of his own daydreams. "J'en étais complètement absent; je m'en suis brusquement aperçu; preuve était donc faite que mon rêve ne constituait pas un moyen détourné de me rapprocher de la bergère [the heroine of the daydream]" (p. 14).

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prevented by the standard devices of so-called objectivity. In what is perhaps a different sense of the word, we can see that even the most rigorously impersonal techniques can betray the poor writer hand over fist. Betrayal for betrayal, there is probably less danger for author and reader in a literature that lays its cards on the table, in a literature that betrays to the poor writer just how poor a thing he has created.

Indiscriminate irony.—We have no word like sentimentality to cover the opposite fault of the author who allows an all-pervasive, "un-earned" irony to substitute for an honest discrimination among his materials. The fault is always hard to prove, but most of us have, I suspect, encountered novelists who people their novels with very short heroes because they themselves want to appear tall. The author who maintains his invulnerability by suggesting irony at all points but never holding himself responsible for definition of its limits can be as irresponsible as the writer of best sellers based on naïve identification.25

Henry James talks of Flaubert's "two refuges" from the need to look at humanity squarely. One was the exotic, as in Salammbô and The Temptation of Saint Anthony, the "getting away from the human" altogether. The other was irony, which enabled him to deal with the human without having to commit himself about it directly. But, James asks, "when all was said and done was he absolutely and exclusively condemned to irony?" Might he "not after all have fought out his case a little more on the spot?" Coming from James, this is a powerful question. One cannot help feeling, as one reads many of the "objective" yet corrosive portraits that have been given us since James, that the author is using irony to protect himself rather than to reveal his subject. If the author's characters reveal themselves as fools and knaves when we cast a cold eye upon them, how about the author himself? How would he look if his true opinions were served up cold? Or does he have no opinions?

Like the female novelist satirized by Randall Jarrell, these novelists can show us "the price of every sin and the value of none."

Her books were a systematic, detailed, and conclusive condemnation of mankind for being stupid and bad; yet if mankind had been clever and good, what would have become of Gertrude? . . . When she met someone who was either good or clever, she looked at him in uneasy antagonism. Yet she need not have been afraid. Clever people always came to seem to her, after a time, bad; good people always came to seem to her, after a time, stupid. She was always able to fail the clever for being bad, the good for being stupid; and if somebody was both clever and good, Gertrude stopped grading. If a voice had said to her, "Hast thou considered my servant Gottfried Rosenbaum, that there is none like him in Benton, a kind and clever man," she would have answered: "I can't stand that Gottfried Rosenbaum."  

Subjectivism of these two kinds can ruin a novel; the weaker the novel, on the whole, the more likely we are to be able to make simple and accurate inferences about the real author's problems based on our experience of the implied author. There is this much truth to the demand for objectivity in the author: signs of the real author's untransformed loves and hates are almost always fatal. But clear recognition of this truth cannot lead us to doctrines about technique, and it should not lead us to demand of the author that he eliminate love and hate, and the judgments on which they are based, from his novels. The emotions and judgments of the implied author are, as I hope to show, the very stuff out of which great fiction is made.  

26 Mauriac discusses this complex problem brilliantly in Le romancier et ses personnages (Paris, 1933), esp. pp. 142-43: "Derrière le roman le plus objectif, s'il s'agit d'une belle œuvre, d'une grande œuvre, se dissimule toujours ce drame vécu du romancier, cette lutte individuelle avec ses démons et avec ses sphinx. Mais peut-être est-ce précisément la réussite du génie que rien de ce drame personnel ne se trahisse au dehors. Le mot fameux de Flaubert: 'Mme Bovary, c'est moi-meme,' est très compréhensible,—il faut seulement prendre le temps d'y réfléchir, tant à première vue l'auteur d'un pareil livre y paraît être peu mélé. C'est que Madame Bovary est un chef-d'œuvre, c'est-à-dire une œuvre qui forme bloc et qui s'impose comme un tout, comme un monde séparé de celui qui l'a créé. C'est dans la mesure où notre œuvre est imparfaite qu'à travers les fissures se trahit l'âme tourmentée de son misérable auteur."