



ADVANCE SHEET – January 17, 2025

President's Letter

This issue commemorates the retirement from our Board of our ranking member, Howard Schulman, who joined it in 1990. Howard, an experienced litigator with a small firm, has read all these newsletters, carefully removing errors of grammar and syntax and relegating my occasional pronouncements on controversial political issues to a less significant organ, the *Baltimore Sun*. He will continue to serve in this way in the future (in an unofficial capacity); this publication gets little feedback and it is good to know that we will still have one faithful reader.

In his place, the Board has elected George Tankard, a manager of the Yost Legal Group's mass tort division and a graduate of William and Mary and the University of Virginia Law School. George has been a faithful patron of our film series and will help guide it. The first film under his regime will be the Humphrey Bogart classic film *In A Lonely Place* to be shown tonight at 5:30 p.m. We include in this issue an appreciation of Bogart from Alistair Cooke's *Six Men* (1977). Cooke's other five men include a villain (King Edward VIII) and four other heroes (Charles Chaplin, H.L. Mencken, Bertrand Russell, and Adlai Stevenson).

George W. Liebmann



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IN A LONELY PLACE

Screenwriter Dixon Steele (Humphrey Bogart), faced with the odious task of scripting a trashy bestseller, has hat-check girl Mildred Atkinson tell him the story in her own words. Later that night, Mildred is murdered and Steele is a prime suspect; his record of belligerence when angry and his macabre sense of humor tell against him. Fortunately, neighbor Laurel Gray (Gloria Grahame) gives him an alibi. Laurel proves to be just what Steele needed, and their friendship ripens into love. Will suspicion, doubt, and Steele's inner demons come between them?

In her essay "Humphrey and Bogey", Louise Brooks wrote that more than any other role that Humphrey Bogart played, it was the role of Dixon Steele in this movie that came closest to the real Bogart she knew.

WHEN: Friday, January 17, 2025 - 5:30 P.M

WHERE: The Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse (100 North Calvert Street) Main Reading Room of the Baltimore Bar Library (Room 618)

COST: Free – Soft Drinks & Snacks will be served.

RESERVATIONS: May be made at the Library, by telephone or e-mail. In order to keep track of attendance, **reservations are required**. For more information telephone 410-727-0280 or e-mail us at jwbennett@barlib.org.

THE AGE OF BIDEN by George

Liebmann (Advt.)

Published January 20, 2025

Amazon.com Paperback \$25.00; Kindle \$9.99

This is a collection of more than a hundred op-ed pieces and letters on public affairs written during the Biden administration, 2020-2024. It is followed by an appreciation of Jefferson's contribution to the American polity, unacknowledged in recent years. It is a sequel to a previous volume, *Vox Clamantis In Deserto* (2021) covering the four previous failed national administrations, those of Presidents Clinton, Bush (Jr.), Obama, and Trump. My political stance is not one that commends itself to either of today's contending factions, since I dislike bellicosity, plutocracy, and permissiveness. Foreign policies that generate millions of refugees are not to be excused on the basis of limited American casualties, nor can I overlook the proletarianization of the American work force, including the professions, or the diminution of personal character and insecurity resulting from extreme permissiveness in morals, ultimately affecting the quality of our national leadership.

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HUMPHREY
BOGART

Epitaph for a Tough Guy

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IN THE FALL OF 1952, WE WERE COMING TO THE END OF THE Eisenhower-Stevenson presidential campaign, and I joined the Stevenson train for its last lap through New England.

There comes a time in every campaign when the roving reporter, almost as much as the candidates, screams for surcease. He loses all sense of time, place, a daily pattern of life, or a routine of civility with his fellowmen. There had always been the clanking monotony of the campaign train, swaying through plains and mountains and deserts while hunched-over foursomes clutching poker hands peer between the slats of the club car and say, "Is this still Texas?" But in the 1950s there had been added the peculiar nightmare of the campaign *plane*, which robs the candidate of all excuses that he cannot get to Oklahoma City, say, for an early breakfast rally after a night speech in Miami. Even more than the train, the campaign plane obliterates any continental sense of the country whose variety you are supposed to be remarking and reporting on. The engines throb and writhe and fall. There is no light but darkness visible up front as two yellow blobs fall on the notebooks of the only two reporters who are awake and sentient. All the others are sprawled like drunken cattle rustlers in a B film. Whistles blow through yellow teeth; gargles trip over a uvula; baritone groans come lurching up from an esophagus. It would be a disgusting scene if it were not for its overwhelming pathos. Here are the Rover Boys, the unfooled agency men, and the crew of enforced

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buddies who have been assigned since the nomination to this candidate and no other. They have counted noses in Chicago, pondered the Polish vote in Pittsburgh, the old folks' vote in Florida; they have alerted their readers to watch for the swamping of the liberal vote in Northern California by the conservative vote of Los Angeles and San Diego counties. They have weighed trends everywhere. But the anxieties that nag them are the unreturned raincoat borrowed in Oregon, the plastic food at every rally, the shirt they've worn for four days, and the fact that the train or plane begins to smell of rotten apples. Most of all, they have come to look with glazed eyes on the candidates as the club bores. A presidential candidate may start out bristling with energy and exhaling idealism. But after the first forty stops he has to strain for sincerity and to pump up the indignation. Of all the politicians I have followed on the stump, only Lloyd George and Roosevelt could make speeches in the last weeks sound like rhetoric newly felt and believed in. (This does not mean they were finer men. They had more consummate techniques and could maintain outrageous promises without the flicker of an eyelid.) Even a campaign that begins as a crusade ends as a vaudeville act. The same rousing perorations in the same words, the identical jokes are trotted out five times a day till the reporters are bleary-eyed with cynicism.

WE WERE WELL INTO THIS STAGE by the time Stevenson had made his big speech in Boston and taken the train south to wind up the campaign at a night rally in Harlem. Very early on the first morning, when a white fog was barely moving from the valleys, and wisps of smoke were rising from little piles of burning leaves, we came to a halt at some village in Rhode Island. No more than a score of the locals shuffled up to the rear of the train. A few boys were larking around on a hillside. An urchin was settled like a frog on a telegraph pole. The local county chairman, or whoever, came out on the observation platform and bellowed into a microphone about the pride

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and pleasure of Rhode Islanders in welcoming "the next President of the United States." After a speech laden with clichés, he was very proud indeed to introduce two fine Americans who had come along to proclaim their faith in Adlai Stevenson. He announced them, and they weren't there. Minions ducked into the train, the chairman gave reassuring nods ("They're here all right"), and a few hearty claps from inside brought them on. They were Humphrey Bogart and his wife, Lauren Bacall. A small cheer went up from the villagers, and the boys on the hill hoisted invisible tommy guns and chattered "rat-a-tat-tat!"

Bacall flashed her engaging grin and waved, while Bogart had to be pushed into view. With his coffee-colored complexion and bloodshot eyes, he looked, as always, like the old crony roused from a heavy night, though in truth he had behaved impeccably, slept well, and kept to himself in his compartment. He gave a couple of nervous nods, waved once at the gang on the hill, and backed off to make way for the Governor. Stevenson, a little puffy himself, allowed it was kind of "you-all" to come out so early to greet a Democrat (they had probably done two hours of farm chores by that time) and went into what we called the "falling leaves" speech. It was Republican country and he knew it, but "let me say to the good Republicans of New England, there is always a light in the Democratic window and a warm welcome awaiting you in the Democratic Party. . . . And now I notice, in this beautiful fall, that Republican votes are falling like the autumn leaves."

I was standing on the track and caught Bogart's eye. The faintest shrug of the eyebrows and a lick of the upper lip seemed to say, "What d'you expect the poor bastard to say at seven in the morning?" This was my first contact, if that's what it could be called, with Bogart. Stevenson spread-eagled his arms and gave his golliwog grin, and we all bundled back aboard the train and were off.

I was pretty sure the Bogarts were not dedicated readers of the (then) *Manchester Guardian* and had never heard of me. But Bacall

stopped me, as I was going by their compartment, and wondered if I wasn't the guy who was going to emcee the first weekly ninety-minute television show, which indeed I was. They invited me to drop in later for a drink. I was very flattered. As a film critic long ago, I had been vaguely aware of Bogart in his earliest appearances as an uncomfortable leading man in such forgettable items as *A Devil with Women* and *Love Affair*, but I had followed him with relish, as something quite new, after *The Petrified Forest* and into his glory days in *Casablanca*, *To Have and Have Not*, *The Big Sleep*, and *Key Largo*. In the last three, he had had as his leading lady the girl with the honey-colored eyes and the baby-leopard slouch who was now his wife. So that to the curious animal magnetism of Bogart, as of an attractive armadillo, was now added the pleasure of beauty mating the beast.

The first impression was that of a subdued and friendly tough in his wrong element, like *The Streets of San Francisco's* Lieutenant Stone being asked to take a seat in the Morgan Library. It is a superficial impression, no doubt, but one that showed how hard it was to see Bogart, the man, through the glittering shell of his film character. Perhaps he was a little nervous about having yielded to his wife's insistence that they get out on the road and flaunt their allegiance to Stevenson. The Communist hunt was then in full cry. And five years before, when the McCarthy era was incubating in the congressional hearings on Communist subversion in the film industry, Bogart had flown to Washington to defend the right of ten "unfriendly" Hollywood witnesses to think and say "anything they damn please." (He was aghast to discover that several of them were down-the-line Communists coolly exploiting the protection of the First and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution. He had thought they were just freewheeling anarchists, like himself.) Now, in 1952, Richard Nixon, Eisenhower's running mate, was making very little distinction between liberal Democrats—from Secretary of State Acheson on down—and actual traitors. Most studio heads, however much they might deplore this scurrility in private, were publicly

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inclined to share the suspicions of their fellow Californian Nixon, and when it was murmured around the lots that an open embrace of Stevenson might possibly weaken the bonds of a film contract, there was a glad rush of stars all too eager to be seen liking Ike. Bogart and his wife packed their bags and went off with Stevenson.

I would learn later that Bogart's correctness and modesty aboard the train—appearing when he was told to, bowing briefly, and seeing that the limelight never veered from the candidate—had nothing whatever to do with fear or timidity. He was simply doing his bit in a strange milieu and minding his manners.

As the train ran through southern Massachusetts, I had wind of a story that promised a climax to the campaign as hair-raising as the disclosure, in 1884, that Grover Cleveland, the Democratic candidate, had an illegitimate son. It seemed that the Democratic National Committee had somehow secured a copy of a letter from General Marshall to Eisenhower, when he was supreme commander of NATO, more or less commanding him to stay with his command, and his wife, and forget a young Englishwoman, who had been his wartime chauffeuse and, apparently, his mistress. While we were aboard the Stevenson train, Senator Joseph McCarthy was to make a speech in Chicago of a virulence verging on libel. The Democrats had got an advance copy of the speech and secretly warned the Republican high command that if it were delivered in that form, they would publicize the Marshall letter.* When I told this story to the Bogarts, his eyes boggled in disbelief. I boggled back, for I guessed that to a character so marinated in corruption, adultery would be the most trivial sin in the decalogue. But Bogart was genuinely shocked.

That moment of shock on the train was the first hint I had that what we were dealing with here were two characters, one fictional, the other private, almost as sharply defined as Chaplin, the man, and Charlie, the tramp. There was the movie Bogart, a character at once

* McCarthy's actual speech was toned down almost to the point of refinement.

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repellent and fascinating; and the complex private man. I imagine I would have given no more thought to the puzzle had the Bogarts not asked me soon afterward to visit them in Hollywood and made clear, in the unspoken way of people warming to strangers, that we were to be friends from then on. From the afternoon of that first drink till the day of his death, I found him an original quite unlike any other human being I have known. And what remained engrossing about him was the duality of his character. Duality is perhaps a misleading word. It implies a split, or running conflict, between the movie character (the tough) and the private character. Whereas it is more likely that the movie character—and the reflection of it in Bogart's more raucous public behavior—sprang from a rebellion against the gentility of his parents and the life they had expected him to lead. For the first surprise to the film fan looking into his origins is the extreme contrast with what you had been led to expect. In a guessing game with people otherwise knowledgeable about the theater and the movies, I have often heard it suggested that Humphrey Bogart was probably a studio invention to obliterate some unpronounceable Polish or Russian name. But the reality is that he was christened Humphrey DeForest Bogart, that his mother was a fashionable portrait painter of socialite children, and that his father, a successful physician with the even more formidable Waspish name of Dr. Belmont DeForest Bogart, had an income from a family inheritance, a country house in the Finger Lakes, and a brownstone house on upper Riverside Drive, a New York address which—when Park Avenue had railroad tracks running up the middle of it—was the very seal of upper-middle-class respectability.

The young Bogart went for eight years to an Episcopal school with rituals leaning heavily toward Rome and a code of discipline leaning heavily toward Sparta. He then was sent to Andover, where the omens of his coming lapse from gentility were abundant. He kept mostly to himself; he was an obstinate nonstudent; he failed in everything and after a year was thrown out for "irreverence" and

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"uncontrollable high spirits." At this point, his father must have abandoned his wistful hope that the boy would go on to Yale. Instead, he enlisted in the Navy and was ready for ship duty two weeks after the First World War was over. After that, he was intended—but not by himself—for a business career and eventually drifted, through some actor neighbors, into the theater, where he started as a company manager, and in the usual way got to speak one-liners. That he would ever earn a living from acting is something that the critics, and I should guess most of his friends, would have betted heavily against. His appearances went usually unnoticed in a series of footling country-house comedies which kept up the pretense that the First World War had merely grazed the Edwardian era. When he had the misfortune to be mentioned, it was for "trenchant bad acting" or for a performance that Alexander Woollcott wrote "could be mercifully described as inadequate." Only the most addicted playgoers could have learned to recognize the dark-haired juvenile who loped through French windows wearing tails or a dinner jacket and seemed to be cast for life as a Riviera fixture. Once, it is said, he appeared in an ascot and a blue blazer and tossed off the invitation that was to become immortal: "Tennis, anyone?" Probably he did not coin the phrase, but he glorified the type that used it, if lithe young men with brown eyes and no discoverable talent can ever be said to go to glory, onstage or off.

And yet ten or more years later he gave currency to another phrase with which the small fry of the English-speaking world brought the neighborhood sneak to heel: "Drop the gun, Looey!" Could both these characters be Bogart, the cryptic Hemingway tough, the huddled man in the trench coat who singed the bad and the beautiful with the smoke he exhaled from his nostrils? Could any actor, no matter how lucky in his parts, how wide the gamut of his ambition, swing so successfully between the poles of make-believe represented by "Tennis, anyone?" and "Drop the gun, Looey!"? He could and did. It is time to try to explain the inexplicable.

It had to do, I think, with the lucky (for him) coincidence of the coming of the sound film and the collapse of a social structure whose romantic leads Bogart had so inadequately impersonated.

From the very creation of the movies, the directors exploited motion, the novelty that fetched the rubes, in train wrecks, Indian attacks, and the ultimate commotion of the chase. But whenever human emotions were involved, they acted on the error that they were photographing a stage play. "Acting," everybody knew, entailed the broad gesture, the lilting or trenchant cadence, the cameo stance, the human form seen as a cardboard cutout of certain elemental emotions—greed, shame, pride, penitence, humility, ardor—all filmed at the proper remove of the proscenium arch and composed within its frame. The invention of the medium shot and the close-up, far from challenging the actors to quiet down, made them all the more eager to demonstrate their ability to mime in silence the agonies and ecstasies of their trade. So the early producers, without a second thought, hired stage actors, and the biggest salaries went to the biggest stage names. By getting Sarah Bernhardt they thought they were getting the supreme feast of acting. But any year after the invention of sound, film audiences could see her only as a figure of fun, a dumb creature jerking her sawdust heart around in a puppet world.

The sound film, after succumbing for a couple of years or so to the old prejudice about what constituted acting, took the audience out of the theater and into a living room, in which the actors were more like us and moved at the distance of ordinary conversation. The point came up once when we took the Bogarts to a Broadway play, a modern adaptation of a Greek legend, in which the leading player was an English actor with distinguished stage credentials. Bogart was unimpressed by him mainly, I now think, because we were seated on the second row and could see not only the kohl-rimmed eyes, the suspended gestures, and an occasional spume of spittle, but also a sprinkle of little rhinestone stars sewn onto the actor's jockstrap, a detail that immoderately amused Bogart and

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brought withering frowns and shushes from his wife, who threatened after the first act to separate us, as you do with twins larking in church. Bogart, explaining his coolness toward the English star, recalled how, when sound came in, there was a panic search for "actors who could speak." To the producers, who were then either former stage impresarios or immigrants who had had their own troubles with the language, people who could speak meant Englishmen.

If this tradition had kept up, and the sound film gone undiscovered for another decade or so, I doubt that Bogart would ever have been heard of. For he was clearly uncomfortable "projecting" as a stage actor. He seemed to possess no vanity; he had a shrinking dislike of ostentation and a total absence of that narcissism that above anything else drives people into acting. It may well be why his first stay in Hollywood doomed him to small, asinine parts in trivial films and forced him to head back to New York and abandon a scene he was never going to make. But by now acting, for better or worse, was his only trade. It was the trough of the Depression, Dr. Bogart's fortunes had been badly hit, and Bogart was on Broadway again in two or three failing plays, in which, however, since the hair was thinner and the lisp thicker, he began to be cast—and recognized—as Broadway's automatic cad, wastrel, ne'er-do-well. He was just as old as the century, and by the mid-thirties he was getting to be a little too scarred for a juvenile. He was ready to fade into the kind of feature player who, because he has worked at his job to acquire a dependable technique, will never be out of a job but will never star in anything.

At this point, in 1934, he went at one bound into the crude prototype of the character for which he would become renowned. Robert Sherwood had written *The Petrified Forest*, a melodrama heavy-laden with moralizing, but with one character in it, a sad, forthright, listless killer, whose reality cut like a knife through the butter of the surrounding philosophy. Against the advice of his friends, who remembered Bogart from his tennis racketeering, Sher-

wood picked the aging juvenile with the scar, the odd lisp, and the look of implied derision. Bogart was an immediate success and was soon whipped out to Hollywood for the movie version. And that led to *Dead End* and the glory road of the gangster hero, or—as we should now say—antihero. Bogart put it all down to luck, which is a change from the actor's steady refusal to admit that the stars in their courses are nearly always set by the casting director. Spencer Tracy was dully cast as a bum, a doughboy, even a lover until somebody guessed that an affectionate Portuguese fisherman was closer to the raw material. Merle Oberon's battle with the adjective "sloe-eyed" was a stalemate until she was, surprisingly, glamorized into naturalness. A new view of an old face was all it took to change Wallace Beery from a slant-eyed villain into a lovable cuss, to turn Myrna Loy from an "inscrutable," as the word is understood in Oriental melodramas, into a chin-up wife for William Powell, himself transformed by the same insight from a gunman into a teasing combination of smooth operator and faithful spouse.

I have called the killer in *The Petrified Forest* a "crude" prototype of the essential Bogart soon to be distilled, because Sherwood was a stagy writer. (Graham Greene, reviewing the movie in England, chided Sherwood for his inability, in Henry James's prescriptive phrase, to "dramatize, dramatize," for his fatal inclination to see a play as "ideas being expressed, 'significant,' cosmic ideas" so that "everyone works hard to try to give the illusion that the Whole of Life is symbolized in the Arizona filling station. But life itself, which crept in during the opening scene, embarrassed perhaps at hearing itself so explicitly discussed, crept out again, leaving us only with the symbols, the pasteboard desert, the stunted cardboard studio trees.") Much of this wooden self-consciousness was built into the movie script—it is an appalling film to see today—and if Bogart had not had subtleties inside him itching to get out, he might have rocketed and faded, as a one-shot star. He was now cast as a box-office bad man, but within two or three years, by the time of *Black Legion* and *Kid Galabed*, Otis Ferguson—the most gifted film critic of my

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time—wrote that “you had the feeling that he was writing his own parts.” This is as handsome a compliment as you can pay to a movie actor, for it signifies that he is at one with the medium in a way that few distinguished stage actors ever manage to be: he had blossomed into something that, in the early thirties, was quite new in the world of make-believe—the actor who didn’t seem to act but *behave*d.

This professional maturity, his being suddenly and permanently at home with the trade in which he had for so long stumbled, coincided with the end of the postwar era (what Westbrook Pegler called the Era of Wonderful Nonsense) and the beginning of the prewar era of anxiety, one of those ideological wrenches which, in destroying a social structure, suddenly date more symbols of it than philandering socialites, “stout fellas,” and courtesans, not least the prevailing fashion in romantic actors. It is fair to guess that far back in the Coward-Lonsdale era, Bogart was always his own man. He no doubt stood in the wings in his blue blazer chuckling over the inanities onstage, and he would have been the first man to question that youth ever deposited its bloom on him. But for a long time, it obscured, in a sleek complexion, bold eyes, and a lid of black hair, his essential and very individual character and its marvelous adaptability to one of the more glamorous neuroses of the incoming day and age: that of the hard-bitten “private eye,” the neutral skeptic in a world exploding with crusades and the treachery they invite. He probably had no notion, in his endless strolls across the stage drawing rooms of the twenties, that he was being saved and soured by Time to become the romantic democratic answer to Hitler’s new order. Such calculations belong to social historians, not to their subject. Not, certainly, to an actor who had always pretended to no sort of evangelism, who had horsed around town and had his troubles with the bartender’s tab, and who had always been grateful to take any part for which his dark and glossy appearance qualified him. He made a boast of his willingness to nestle in the camouflage of any fictional type that came his way, provided the manager paid him and left him to himself.

He was never earnest about the choice of parts "worthy" of him, as most newly discovered stars tend to be. I doubt he would ever have joined group theaters or studios dedicated to the purifying or solemnizing of the mummer's art. He was temperamentally disinclined to identify the actor with a priest or a social reformer, at a time when Hollywood and New York were hoarse with actors asserting the need to synchronize an acting method with "a social conscience." Bogart spoke his mind very freely on this, as on most other subjects, and he was consequently not idolized by aesthetes or by the New Deal young as a serious actor. At least, not in his own country. Which, long before the Bogart cult, produced a comic irony. It is a hazard peculiar to cultists in the arts—that is to say, to avowed members of the intelligentsia—that unless they keep their transatlantic signals open and alert, they will tend to canonize foreign talents that are rejected on the home ground as commercial hacks. There was a delightful period in the late thirties and early forties when American intellectuals yearned for a native naturalistic actor as mighty as Jean Gabin. Their counterparts in Paris were meanwhile lamenting the early demise of Gabin as a "serious" talent and panting over Bogart for what the critic of *Le Monde* called his "vitalisme, tendre et profond."

I once mentioned this awesome Gallic reputation to Bogart, and he was greatly amused by it. Although he privately described himself as "Democrat in politics, Episcopalian by upbringing, dissenter by disposition," he looked on acting as a trade like any other, though one calling for some craft and considerable discipline. He was always touchy about his pride not in his artistry but in his competence, and competence was something he greatly admired in any field, from writing to seamanship, drinking to statesmanship. He measured all his fellow workers by the test of professionalism, and a professional was a man who can do his best work when he doesn't feel like it. Being also a clear-minded man of deep and quite stubborn convictions, he was something of a freak in the Hollywood factory in knowing where his craft ended and where his private life

or politics should take over without let or hindrance. His admiration of Roosevelt, his steady contempt for Senator Joseph McCarthy, his mulish determination to stay in a restaurant till dawn if a drinking fit was on him had no more to do with his acceptance or rejection of a part than a trucking company's contract with a newspaper publisher depends on the political stripe of the editorials.

In a fuzzier man, or a more cunning one, this separation of the citizen and the craftsman could have been a very handy sort of cowardice. Bogart was quite clear about the point where his conscience could not bow to his fame. He once sailed into the Newport, California, harbor and took his skipper along with him to the yacht club bar. An official beckoned him aside and intimated that a respectable yacht club was no place to bring his "paid hands." Bogart called for his bar check and on the back of it wrote out his resignation. The effect was hardly instantaneous on the board, which, for all I know, may never have changed a rule since the time of Canute. But it changed this one a month or two later by a majority vote.

The yacht club official was probably suffering from a delusion that most film fans would find hard to shake—namely, the assumption that the private Bogart was the same amiable, conscienceless tough as his movie self. On a nighttime stroll up Fifth Avenue, he was once complaining to me that he could not walk the streets of New York without having truck drivers and assorted brats spring their forefingers and give him the "ah-ah-ah-rat-a-tat-tat" tommy-gun treatment. Within minutes, a wholesome young cop testing store locks at two in the morning moved up from behind. "Everything all right, Mr. Bogart?" he said. Everything was fine, and Bogart sighed after his retreating bulk: "It does no good, I haven't played a gangster or a dick in nine years."

But this was his most famous self. The two-faced cynic who robbed the banker and the grafter with equal grace, who was sometimes a heel and sometimes a big-city stand-in for the United States cavalry, but who was always the derisive foe of the law in its official, pompous forms. The enjoyment of this character from Glasgow to

Singapore was assured by the supporting artistic fact that here was a universal type of our rebellious age but one that never appeared in life quite so perfect, never quite so detached in its malice, so inured to corruption, so self-assured in its social stance before the pretentious, the diffident, and the evil. It would be tempting—and the French have undoubtedly been tempted—to write of the Bogart character as the archetype of the Outsider, but he packed the more explosive social threat of the Insider gone sour, all the more convincing because the disillusion grew from his own background and the unknown cause of his protest against it.

Because Bogart was seen by more millions than had ever read Dickens or Poe or John Gay, it is tempting to say that he is a romantic hero inconceivable in any time but ours. But the previous paragraph, with few changes, would do as a description of Robin Hood and more accurately of Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*, which is indeed a terrifying celebration of the way the criminal hero is partner with the government itself in the exploitation of the law: an allegory of Watergate. Nearly thirty years ago, Jacob Bronowski wrote a play and a preface (*The Face of Violence*) which traces "the love of violence [as] the ancient and symbolic gesture of man against the constraints of society" and shows that what is permanently fascinating about detective thrillers is not, as academics like to declare, their intellectual puzzles but the crime itself, which we all secretly itch to perform.

But for our purpose we can say that the Bogart film character was the most developed popular expression of the tough guy who was equally fascinating whether the plot said he was the hero or the villain. This is a bold advance on the Victorian convention of the detective as a mind superior to that of the regular officer of the law and therefore the better able to uphold it. I would say that Bogart was simply the most vivid impersonation of the character invented by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, and that his immense popularity through the late 1930s and on into the forties, and his

emergence among the young in the fifties and sixties as a cult hero, were due in the main to the rise of Hitler.

The success of violence, in our politics and our cities, has forced historians to trace the crackup in bourgeois society to a time well before the world Depression that exacerbated it. In fact, to the Edwardians. A distinguished diplomatic historian has said that the merit of the popular British television series *Upstairs, Downstairs* was to confirm a wealth of late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century documents in showing that it was Upstairs, not Downstairs, that cracked. And if this is so, it is no accident that Bogart can now be seen as a direct descendant of Sherlock Holmes as are most fictional private detectives invented since Conan Doyle, in a moment of unconscious social perception, cast the original mold. Sherlock Holmes could not exist if his creator and his audience did not share the solid Dickensian premise that "the law is an ass." He was born fully grown as a metropolitan eccentric ("the detective," wrote Bronowski, "does not visit the suburbs, only the copper pounds his beat there, and every midnight reader knows that the copper is ridiculous"). He is the antithesis of the respectable families that gobbled him up: a depressed, eccentric bachelor of vast, odd knowledge, whose intelligence is poised over the plot like a dagger which, in the moment of resolution, plunges to the heart of it. This is the elementary recipe for all the moderns, from Peter Wimsey—the interesting variation of a manic rather than a depressed bachelor—through Perry Mason to Philip Marlowe. Where Holmes knew the soil classification of the Home Counties, Bogart—sharing an unfriendly drink with Sidney Greenstreet—sees a ship slink by on the horizon and calls off the full-load displacement, overall length, gun caliber, and muzzle velocity. Holmes possessed an uncanny sense of the whereabouts of distressed gentlewomen and had memorized the Paddington train timetable against the day of their rescue. Bogart knows all about hotels from Yokohama to New York: the tactical geography of suites, connecting doors, and fire escapes, how to con-

fuse the room clerk and evade the house dick, determine the clientele by a glance around the lobby, know who is up to no good and where she is likely to be.

The field maneuvers may be different from those in Holmes's day, and the villain is a little more socially mobile, but since then we have not changed the three essential ingredients of the private eye. He must be a bachelor, with the bachelor's harum-scarum availability at all hours (William Powell's marriage to Myrna "Nora" Loy, a wistful concession to the family trade, fooled nobody). He must have an inconspicuous fund of curious knowledge, which in the end is always crucially relevant. He must despise, pity at least, the official guardians of the law.

Of course, the twentieth century has grafted some interesting personality changes on the original. Holmes was an eccentric in the Victorian sense, a man with queer hobbies—cocaine was lamentable but pardonably bohemian—whose social code was essentially that of the ruling classes. He was, in a way, the avenging squire of the underworld ready to administer a horsewhipping to the outcasts who were never privileged by birth to receive it from their fathers. Bogart is a displaced person whose present respectability is uncertain, a classless but well-contained vagabond who is not going to be questioned about where he came from or where he is going. ("I came to Casablanca for the waters." "Mr. Rick, zere are no waters in Casablanca." "I was misinformed.")

As a Victorian bachelor-hero, Holmes must be presumed to be asexual. Bogart too is a lone wolf but with a new and equal stress on the noun. His general view of women implies that he was brought up, sexually speaking, no earlier than the twenties. Hence, he is unshockable and offhand, and, one gathers, a very devil with the women who is saved from absurdity by never having time to prove it. ("Sorry, angel, I have a pressing date with a fat man.") Unlike Holmes, he cannot claim even the castle of a carefully cluttered set of rooms. He is always on the move, and his only domestic base is a

fairly seedy hotel bedroom with an unmade bed (this is called audience identification, and to tell the truth is the sort of independent base of operations most college boys and many rueful husbands would like to have). Yet somehow, somewhere, in his baffling past he learned the habits of the *haut monde*. And his audience is quietly flattered by the revelation that a sudden call to dine at the Ritz will find him shaved and natty and handling the right knives with easy boredom.

It is a gorgeous fantasy, fulfilling more desires in the audience than a Freudian could shake a totem at, and it was given an entertaining dry run in the appearances of Warren William as Perry Mason. But it was always thought of as B-film material until Bogart turned it into box office, a change that can be simply attributed to what Peter Ustinov has called his "enormous presence," the simple, inexplicable characteristic of natural stars: you cannot take your eyes off them. (No one in the history of the movies has made smoking a cigarette a more deadly and fascinating thing to watch—and deadly, alas, in the end to him.) Why we couldn't take our eyes off Bogart had much to do, as I have suggested, with the coincidence of the fictional character with what was repressed or socially impermissible in his own. But, as an historical break, his great popularity blossomed after his graduation from gangster parts just when parliamentary Europe was caving in to gangsters on a grand scale. And with *Casablanca*, the legend flowered. Nathaniel Benchley has pointed out the god-sent luck of its timing. It had been made after Pearl Harbor but before American forces had played any independent part in the war. Then, "on November 8, 1942, Allied forces landed on the coast of French North Africa, specifically at Oran, Algiers, and Casablanca. It was as though Warner Brothers had planned the invasion; eighteen days later, on Thanksgiving Day, *Casablanca* opened in New York. As though that weren't enough, its general release came on January 23, 1943, in the middle of the conference between Roosevelt and Churchill at Casablanca. Because

of wartime security the conference couldn't be publicized at the time, but its subsequent news stories did nothing whatsoever to harm the picture."

There was nothing now to offend the most respectable suburban patriot in a hero who used the gangster's means to achieve our ends. And this character was suddenly very precious in the age of violence, for it satisfied a quiet, desperate need of the engulfed ordinary citizen. When Hitler was acting out scripts more brutal and obscene than anything dreamed of by Chicago's North Side or Warner Brothers, Bogart was the only possible antagonist likely to outwit him and survive. What was needed was no knight of the boudoir, no Ronald Colman or Leslie Howard (whose movie careers compensatingly slumped) but a conniver as subtle as Goebbels. Bogart was the very tough gent required, a murderously bland neutral who we knew, if the Germans didn't, would in the end be on our side.

More than any other character he was to play, this one fitted Bogart's own like a glove. His subsequent portrayals of straightforward heroes, or even of straightforward psychopaths (*The Caine Mutiny*, *In a Lonely Place*), show the strain of deliberate "acting" and can be mercifully overlooked. It was in the character of Rick, the nightclub owner in *Casablanca*, that the audience saw once for all Bogart behaving as a decent approximation to the melancholy man whose wryness was the mask of an incorruptibility he mocked. And it brings us back to Humphrey Bogart, the son of Dr. Bogart, who was thrown out of school, did a stint in the Navy, fumbled around the theater, and eventually became the big Hollywood star.

It was inevitable that the press should create its own saleable brand of the Bogart "personality." He did drink a good deal and get into occasional restaurant fights. He tolerated, even fattened, the newspaper myth of a locker-room tough guy. When his marriage to a redoubtable blonde, Mayo Methot, was failing, the press spread the word that he was living out his screen character in a running series of marital brawls. "Battling Bogart," the columnists called

him. "Battling Bogart!" groaned Clifton Webb, one of his oldest friends. "Why, any woman could walk all over him. The man's a softie and—I might add—a very gallant one."

In most of us, the contradictions of character settle down among friends into a general atmosphere of tolerance and shared fun, with the lamentations over our irritant traits mentioned in private when the party's over. In Bogart, the contradictions were evidently so gross that people who loathed him could never credit how anyone could love him. And vice versa. Some people saw nothing but a moody drunk, a barfly given to random practical jokes and spasms of sadism, a cynic with more than a touch of paranoia leading to tasteless verbal assaults on anyone who conveyed a hint of pomp or authority or the lazier attributes of homosexuality. Others, who knew him well, found him gentle, gallant, modest, full of an indulgent or rueful humor, courteous with strangers, quietly and acutely sensitive to the plight of guests who were shy or being left out.

Quite apart from noticing his behavior on the Stevenson train, I was prejudiced in his favor by one or two young actors who had been hustled out to Hollywood on the strength of a Broadway success. They had gone to Bogart, as to their resident consul general, to learn how to domesticate themselves in the Hollywood jungle. He gave them two excellent bits of advice (which they did not act upon): "Take the big part, but hold off the big house and the Cadillac, or you'll be in hock to the studio for the rest of your life"; and "The only point in making money is so you can tell some big producer to go screw himself." If these fledgling stars checked these maxims with old inhabitants, they were usually told that Bogart was an incurable scoffer, a bred-in-the-bone iconoclast.

His iconoclasm was, I believe, the rather gaudy mask of a conservatism that embarrassed him. Any rebel, said Bernard Shaw, has an obligation to replace the conventions he destroys with better ones. It doesn't take a hellion more than a few years to discover that this is not going to happen. A mark of many successful revolutionaries is their distaste for construction projects once the smoke has

cleared. Lesser rebels—as we have seen in the settling wake of the storms of the late 1960s—tend to fall back with sheepish respect on the code of their elders and mentors, the first code they learned before they learned to ridicule it. We have all seen a parody of this mechanism in the moralizing of aging rakes, whose later puritanism takes on the bigotry of conversion. I don't think Bogart had the temperament of a rake, but he had some nagging compulsion to put up a show of masculinity. He was the last man you'd expect, from his outward manner, to have the pedestrian old-school virtues: loyalty to friends, respect for the old, a distaste for conspicuous wealth, for gossip, for boasting—to name no others. Yet he had them, knew them to be old-fashioned, and kept up his prestige among the young Turks by cockily asserting their opposite. Hollywood's "progress" over twenty years, he once remarked, could be measured by the fact that "I came out here with one suit and everybody thought I was a bum; when Brando came out with one sweat shirt, the town drooled over him." He was very vocal about the pretentiousness of the new school of realistic actors who must "feel" a character before they start to play it. "Acting," Bogart insisted, "is a job like any other. It takes practice to be good at it. After that, you learn your lines, concentrate on nothing else, get dressed and go home." However, I think his real complaint about the "method" actors was that they wore blue jeans and windbreakers.

I'm afraid he would take it with a snort if he could hear me saying it, though it is nothing but the truth, that he had the impulses of a gentleman but was born late enough to squirm over the vocabulary that normally expresses them. I can hardly hear him saying that marriage is a firm contract and that fidelity is no more than a married man's duty. But there seems no doubt that he acted on the principle. When, in his last year, he had been confined to his house for many months, people used to urge his wife, Lauren Bacall, to get out in the evenings once he was tucked away. He urged her himself, in an offhand way. But he was secretly proud that she didn't. And, just before he died, not so secret about it. A friend remarked, not

really knowing what answer to expect, that Betty had been out only half a dozen evenings in ten months. He said, almost casually, "She's my wife and my nurse. So she stays home. Maybe that's the way you tell the ladies from the broads in this town."

One is always reading, in obituaries, of some bold good man who could not abide cant and fearlessly denounced it. Bogart never bothered to denounce it since, no matter how meek its disguise, it was as plainly offensive to him as a bad smell. And his hypersensitiveness to the faintest aura of pomp made him an impossible man to make up to, to cozen or impress. Many first acquaintances were dropped at once when, out of shyness probably, they tried to adopt some of the Bogart bluster in the hope of showing right away that they were his sort. One of his own sort was enough for him. He took to many unlikely types and immediately tended to admire people who, however quaint, were nobody but themselves. He did not require a woman to appear knowing, an Englishman to rough up his accent, or anyone to buddy up to him by telling a so-called dirty story. This last gesture was a fatal mistake: Bogart detested dirty stories and shut up like a clam. You could say also that he was socially difficult in that he was impatient of compliments and perfunctory praise. He had the deadly insight that one meets with in some drunks (and that one hopes not to meet with in most schizophrenics) who are beginning to get troublesome and whom you hope to appease with cordial approaches. Such psychics pause long enough in their garrulousness to say firmly, "You don't like me, do you?" So Bogart was not a man ever to flatter or—what was harder in his last year—to sympathize with.

Before I saw him for the last time, in the late spring of 1956, I had had from a surgeon friend the dimmest prognosis of his condition, which was that of a man still receiving massive doses of X-ray treatment after an operation for cancer of the esophagus. "Cancer of the esophagus," my friend told me, "has a mortality rate of 100 percent." I was sorry to have heard this, for it was going to be hard to keep up the usual banter. But it turned out that there was no

strain of any kind because, I believe, he knew the worst and had months before resolved to rouse himself for two hours a day to relax with a few intimate friends before the end came. Most of us never knew for sure that he had been for many months in abominable pain. Another of his triumphant deceptions was that he managed to convince everybody that he was only intermittently uncomfortable. Throughout the spring, he remained a genial skeleton, and when I went up there the last time, at the beginning of June, his wife was off talking to a journalist friend, and a lawyer was leaving Bogart, who had just finished his will. Whether his wife knew about this I am unsure, but he spoke of it to me, and of his illness, and the sudden uselessness of money, with an entirely unforced humor and an equally unforced seriousness; neither with complaint nor with a brave absence of complaint.

Two of his oldest friends came in, Nunnally Johnson and David Niven, and we talked about the coming California primary election, which pitted Senator Estes Kefauver against Adlai Stevenson in the knockout bout for the 1956 Democratic presidential nomination. The popular reputation of the Senator—especially among Stevenson supporters—was that of an earnest, wily, strait-laced, and rather sanctimonious Southern preacher. It seemed a good time to enlighten the assembled company to Kefauver's quite different reputation in the exclusive club of the United States Senate. "True or not," I said, "he has a terrific reputation as a lecher." Bogart nodded as if to say it was no more than you'd expect. Nunnally Johnson was a little more alert and suspected he'd misheard: "Did you say lecturer?" No, I said, "lecher." My God, Bogart cried, "Lecher! I wish to God we could spread the same word about Adlai."

It was, if not a happy occasion, at least a serene and cheerful one. And I was aware of no strain on the part of the company. It is difficult for actors to avoid the dramatizing of their emotional life, whether grossly by "living the part" or subtly by sentimental deprecation. Bogart, it was a vast relief to discover, was merely himself, a

Epitaph for a Tough Guy

brave man who had come to terms, as we all may pray to do, with the certain approach of death.

In short, a much more intelligent man than most of his trade, or several others, a touchy man who found the world more corrupt than he had hoped; a man with a tough shell hiding a fine core. He had transmuted his own character into a film persona and imposed it on a world impatient of men more obviously good. By showily neglecting the outward forms of grace, he kept inferior men at a distance. For he lived in a town crowded with malign flatterers, hypocrites and poseurs, fake ascetics, studio panders, and the pimps of the press. From all of them he was determined to keep his secret: the rather shameful secret in the realistic world we inhabit, of being an incurable puritan, gentle at bottom and afraid to say so.

I'm Not Greta

First and foremost, I am not Greta Thunberg nor do I have aspirations to be. I have no special scientific knowledge of anything, so, I am probably someone you shouldn't be listening to with regard to anything falling within the realm of the scientific. At Archbishop Curley I squeaked by biology, chemistry and physics and at Loyola College I fulfilled the science requirements taking those courses that are offered for people such as myself. Unlike two of my daughters it was always fairly obvious that I would not be going to medical school.


Now that I have established the foundation let me convey my observation. Returning home from a quick weekend getaway last Sunday with my wife, primarily on I-70 then I-95, I could not help but notice how drenched in soot the snow piled along the sides of the road were. I wondered how much of that which did not end up in the snow ended up in me. My first instinct was to hold my breath, but when my grasp on consciousness began to wane and my wife expressed her concern at my drifting haphazardly back and forth, I reevaluated my course of action. (No I am not really that imbecilic, close perhaps, but...)

I have no idea what if any solution there might be. As I mentioned before my one thought is that the conversation should not be driven by those who are in no position to drive. What if anything that should or could be done should come from a scientist in the field not a celebrity from the “Real Housewives of Modesto.” (Could someone explain to me how merely being on television makes you an expert on anything?)

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I look forward to seeing you soon.

Joe Bennett



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