

A

1/3
ELE 318



The sinking of *The Arden Craig*, Scilly isl. 1911

Photographer : Francis James MORTIMER (GB, 1874-1944)

B

2/3
ELE 11B

After the Titanic

They said I got away in a boat
And humbled me at the inquiry. I tell you
I sank as far that night as any
Hero. As I sat shivering on the dark water
I turned to ice to hear my costly
5 Life go thundering down in a pandemonium of
Prams, pianos, sideboards, winches,
Boilers bursting and shredded ragtime. Now I hide
In a lonely house behind the sea
10 Where the tide leaves broken toys and hat-boxes
Silently at my door. The showers of
April, flowers of May mean nothing to me, nor the
Late light of June, when my gardener
Describes to strangers how the old man stays in bed
15 On seaward mornings after nights of
Wind, takes his cocaine and will see no-one. Then it is
I drown again with all those dim
Lost faces I never understood. My poor soul
Screams out in the starlight, heart
20 Breaks loose and rolls down like a stone.
Include me in your lamentations.

3/3
ELE 11B

C

Only Super Heroes Need Apply

I

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During the 1960's the planet earth passed through a cosmical convulsion in science, super-politics, war and peace, and social upheaval. The most costly and miserable undeclared war in modern history in Southeast Asia touched in some way every living soul in every corner of the globe, and ground relentlessly and frustratingly upon their hopes, aspirations, goals, and personal liberties.

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The news media, now augmented by omnipotent television, brought instant crises into every home equipped with electric power (even if only batteries and transistors), until viewers and listeners were surfeited with the extraordinary and the unbelievable. Even when Neil Armstrong stepped out of the lunar module Eagle on July 20, 1969, and announced to an audience 96 million miles away, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," effete network commentators remarked sneeringly that Armstrong's epigram writer was slightly cornball.

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People everywhere desperately needed something personal to believe in, and they did not even trust themselves. Then, in the middle of this decade, appeared the ultimate diversion, the epitome of useless and unproductive effort: the single-handed around-the-world race in a wind-driven yacht. Because it was so expensive, so exquisitely unnecessary, it appealed to the perverse side of human instinct, not because of the competitive aspects (Damon Runyon once described a yacht race as being as exciting as watching the grass grow), but perhaps because it was merely one man doing his thing and accepting a challenge he did not have to.

II

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But almost no one was prepared for what happened when an ageing stunter named Francis Chichester arrived back home at Plymouth, England, after having sailed alone around the world on the old clipper route via the three capes Good Hope, Leeuwin, and Horn in his 54-foot, specially-designed *Gipsy Moth IV*. It was estimated that a quarter of a million cheering people were present to watch him finish, including the Queen and her court, there to dub him Sir Francis on the spot. No one was more astonished at the reception than old Chichester himself. In a lifetime of attempting spectacular achievements mostly in the ancient and lovable old airplane known as the *Gipsy Moth* no one had taken him very seriously.

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This time, there was even less reason for all the fuss. After all, his trip around the world, even with just one stop, was nothing new. Hundreds of yachts had sailed around the world, most of them anonymously, in the three-quarters of a century since Captain Joshua Slocum showed them how. It had been proved time and again that any well-founded small boat could do it safely. Not that there was not a precedent for the super-hero response to this episode. Down through history,

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people have (for reasons behaviorists have not yet discovered) inexplicably, spontaneously, and convulsively seized upon the individual of the hour and elevated him to a pedestal of adoration. Charles Lindbergh was one of these, Wrong-Way Corrigan was another, and Sir Edmund Hillary still another of recent times. Of Chichester's feat, London Times staffers Ron Hall and Nicholas Tomalin wrote: "American news magazine essayists, puzzled as always by British reflexes, attempted lengthy explanations of the phenomenon: with the Empire gone and no money to send men to the moon, British reverted to the nobler, uncomplicated heroism of conquering the elements . . . (but) the public's response was scarcely as simple as that."

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I have attempted, unsuccessfully, to find the sources of such references in American news magazines. Indeed, Time magazine's comment was entirely different: "Sir Francis Chichester has managed to reawaken the world to one man's capacity to seek and to endure. He has served men by living their dreams of acting with tenacity and courage under pressure. And in this he has become a genuine hero, perhaps the greatest of the adventurers of his time." Although Time's summary of Chichester was more accurate than the gratuitous reference to American essayists made by Hall and Tomalin, there is much evidence that the spontaneous British response was, in fact, psychologically rooted in rebellion to Great Britain's lesser role in the post-World War II world, a fact which Hall and Tomalin tried hard not to recognize.

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III

In any case, Chichester's voyage not only renewed the secret dreams of thousands of people who led lives of quiet desperation, but inspired hundreds to duplicate or surpass his feat; and not only people in England, but in every part of the world, including behind the Iron Curtain.

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Donald HOLM, *The Circumnavigators, Small Boat Voyagers of Modern Times*, Part V: 'The Golden Globes', chapter 26, Prentice Hall, New York, 1974

IV. Cause Without a Rebel

A QUESTION THAT HAS PLAGUED FEMINISTS like myself is the nature of male resistance to female change. Why are so many men so disturbed by the prospect of women's independence? Why do so many men seem to begrudge it, resent it, fear it, fight it with an unholy passion? The question launched my inquiry. But in the end, much to my surprise, it was not the question that most compelled me. It is not the question, finally, that drives this book. Because the more I explored the predicament of postwar men, the more familiar it seemed to me. The more I consider what men have lost—a useful role in public life, a way of earning a decent and reliable living, appreciation in the home, respectful treatment in the culture—the more it seems that men of the late twentieth century are falling into a status oddly similar to that of women at mid-century. The fifties housewife, stripped of her connections to a wider world and invited to fill the void with shopping and the ornamental display of her ultrafemininity, could be said to have morphed into the nineties man, stripped of his connections to a wider world and invited to fill the void with consumption and a gym-bred display of his ultra-masculinity. The empty compensations of a "feminine mystique" are transforming into the empty compensations of a masculine mystique, with a gentlemen's cigar club no more satisfying than a ladies' bake-off, the Nike Air Jordan no more meaningful than the Dior New Look.

And so my question changed. Instead of wondering why men resist women's struggle for a freer and healthier life, I began to wonder why men refrain from engaging in their own struggle. Why, despite a crescendo of random tantrums, have they offered no methodical, reasoned response to their predicament? Given the untenable and insulting nature of the demands placed on men to prove themselves in our culture, why don't men revolt?

Like many women, I was drawn to feminism out of a desire to challenge the silence of my sex. It has come to seem to me that, under all the rantings of men seeking to drown out the female voice, theirs is a resounding silence. Why haven't men responded to the series of betrayals in their own lives—to the failures of their fathers to make good on their promises—with something coequal to feminism? When the frontier that their fathers offered them proved to be a wasteland, when the enemy their fathers sent them to crush turned out often to be

women and children trembling in thatched huts, when the institutions their fathers claimed would buoy them downsized them, when the women their fathers said wanted their support got their own jobs, when the whole deal turned out to be a crock and it was clear that they had been thoroughly stiffed, why did the sons do nothing?

The feminine mystique's collapse a generation earlier was not just a crisis but a historic opportunity for women. Women responded to their "problem with no name" by naming it and founding a political movement, by beginning the process of freeing themselves. Why haven't men done the same? This seems to me to be the real question that lurks behind the "masculinity crisis" facing American society: not that men are fighting against women's liberation, but that they have refused to mobilize for their own—or their society's—liberation. Not that traditional male roles are endangered, but that men themselves are in danger of not acting.

Many in the women's movement and in the mass media complain that men just "don't want to give up the reins of power." But that would seem to have little applicability to the situations of most men, who individually feel not the reins of power in their hands but its bit in their mouths. What's more likely is that they are clinging to a phantom status. A number of men I interviewed, as they argued for the importance of having a male head of the household, tellingly demoted that to an honorary post: it's important, they would say, that every home have a "figurehead." But even the natural reluctance to give up a position of putative superiority, no matter how compromised, is not enough to explain a deeper male silence.

To understand why men are so reluctant to break with the codes of manhood sanctioned in their childhood, perhaps we need to understand how strong the social constraints on them are. It's not just women who are bombarded by cultural messages about appropriate gender behavior. In the past half century, Madison Avenue, Hollywood, and the mass media have operated relentlessly on men, too. The level of mockery, suspicion, and animosity directed at men who step out of line is profound, and men respond profoundly—with acquiescence. But that is not a wholly satisfying explanation either, for haven't women, the object of such commercial and political manipulation, kicked over these traces successfully?

If men do not respond, then maybe it is because their society has proposed no route for them to venture down. Surely the culture has not offered an alternative vision of manhood. No one has.

B

2/3
ELE 12B



Lewis Hiss, *Empire State Building*, New York City, 1930/1931

Business Meeting

C
Jean, my secretary who is in love with me, walks into my office without buzzing, announcing that I have a very important company meeting to attend at eleven. I'm sitting at the Palazzetti glass-top desk, staring into my monitor with my Ray-Bans on, chewing Nuprin, hung over from a coke binge that started innocently enough last night at Shout! with Charles Hamilton, Andrew Spencer and Chris Stafford and then moved on to the Princeton Club, progressed to Barcadia and ended at Nell's around three-thirty, and though earlier this morning, while soaking in a bath, sipping a Stoli Bloody Mary after maybe four hours of sweaty, dreamless sleep, I realized that there *was* a meeting, I seemed to have forgotten about it on the cab ride downtown. Jean is wearing a red stretch-silk jacket, a crocheted rayon-ribbon skirt, red suede pumps with satin bows by Susan Bennis Warren Edwards and gold-plated earrings by Robert Lee Morris. She stands there, in front of me, oblivious to my pain, a file in her hand.

After pretending to ignore her for close to a minute, I finally lower my sunglasses and clear my throat. "Yes? Something else? I Jean?"

"Mr. Crouchy today." She smiles, placing the file timidly on my desk, and stands there expecting me to . . . what, amuse her with vignettes from last night?

"Yes, you *simpleton*. I am Mr. Crouchy today," I hiss, grabbing the file and shoving it in the top desk drawer.

She stares at me, uncomprehending, then, actually looking crestfallen, says, "Ted Madison called and so did James Baker. They want to meet you at Fluties at six."

I sigh, glaring at her. "Well, what should you do?"

She laughs nervously, standing there, her eyes wide. "I'm not sure."

"Jean." I stand up to lead her out of the office. "What . . . do . . . you . . . say?"

It takes her a little while but finally, frightened, she guesses,

"Just . . . say . . . no?"

"Just . . . say . . . no." I nod, pushing her out and slamming the door.

3/3
ELE 12 B
Before leaving my office for the meeting I take two Valium, wash them down with a Perrier and then use a scruffing cleanser on my face with premoistened cotton balls, afterwards applying a moisturizer. I'm wearing a wool tweed suit and a striped cotton shirt, both by Yves Saint Laurent, and a silk tie by Armani and new black cap-toed shoes by Ferragamo. I Plax then brush my teeth and when I blow my nose, thick, ropy strings of blood and snot stain a forty-five-dollar handkerchief from Hermès that, unfortunately, wasn't a gift. But I've been drinking close to twenty liters of Evian water a day and going to the tanning salon regularly and one night of binging hasn't affected my skin's smoothness or color tone. My complexion is still excellent. Three drops of Visine clear the eyes. An ice pack tightens the skin. All it comes down to is: I feel like shit but look great.

I'm also the first to make it to the boardroom. Luis Carruthers follows like a puppy dog at my heels, a close second, and takes the seat next to mine which means I'm supposed to take off my Walkman. He's wearing a wool plaid sports jacket, wool slacks, a Hugo Boss cotton shirt and paisley tie—slacks, I'm guessing, from Brooks Brothers. He starts rattling on about a restaurant in Phoenix, Propheteers, that I'm actually interested in hearing about but not from Luis Carruthers, yet I'm on ten milligrams of Valium and for that reason I can manage. On *The Patty Winters Show* this morning were descendants of members of the Donner Party. . . .

Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho*, London: Picador, 1991, pp.105-7