

31

ALL THE PLEASURES PROVE:
TWO CHAPTERS OF A NOVEL ALONG WITH A CRITICAL AFTERWORD

by

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Contents

Chapter One.	1
Chapter Two.	30
Critical Afterword	65
Bibliography	97
Abstract	

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove . . .

--Christopher Marlowe

All the Pleasures Prove

Chapter 1

He sat in a booth in Auntie Mae's Parlor, with one eye on the past and the other on the future. He and Nikki had spent some good times here, and he hoped that things would go even better now with Anne, who sat across the table from him. He had known Anne Nickerson for three weeks, since coming back to Manhattan and Kansas State University from summer vacation, and, so far, things were still a little awkward between them. Part of this was because they were still patching up their own private wounds--she a divorce, and he the breakup with Nikki. But he was in no hurry for something to happen, for he had come to understand his need to be patient. He wanted Anne, wanted her very much. But they would have to go slowly, because he was determined to let nothing go wrong this time. There was, he believed, a lot at stake.

Though he and Anne came here in the afternoon to Auntie Mae's once or twice a week to drink and talk, he still knew very little about her, except, besides being divorced, she was thirty-three and going back to school. The disillusioned-but-I-still-have-a-dream type, his father, Champ Spinner, would

say of her. But he hadn't told his father about Anne yet, and he didn't intend to until he had to. It was time, he decided, to stop letting Champ interfere with his life.

Looking down at the table, he watched Anne's right thumb and forefinger pluck the slice of lime from her gin and tonic and squeeze the juice onto the ice cubes. Dropping the lime back into the glass, she stirred the drink with the swizzel stick, then reached for a cigarette. He liked watching her hands, especially her fingers. They were long, slender, and tan, with unpainted nails--beautiful, restless fingers that always seemed to need something to touch or hold on to.

"Wake up, Paul," she said, tapping the swizzel stick against the rim of her glass like an orchestra conductor tapping a podium.

Paul smiled at the natural urgency in her voice, but did not look up--at least not immediately. He had grown into the habit of following a certain route to her face, and now he took it, looking swiftly so he would not draw attention to the procedure. It did not occur to him that she might be aware of his habit, and willing to let him indulge in it. Starting with the tips of her left fingers, which lightly touched her glass, he moved his gaze up her skinny, angular arm to her sun-freckled shoulder, across the strap of her yellow summer dress, and inward to the slight hollow where her collarbone and throat connected. Without stopping, he eased his gaze up to her face, bringing into view her sharp chin, thin lips, thin nose, and the flattened triangles of her green cat's eyes with the wrinkles

at their corners. He concluded the route by glancing at her blonde hair, cut as short as his own black hair, and parted down the middle and blown back across the tops of her ears. The style of her hair made her look a little like a boy, but in so doing it distinguished her from most other women. He started to look away, to pick up his bottle of beer, but glanced back at her. She was staring at him with narrowed eyes.

"You're twenty-one, right?" she said.

"Yes." He had wondered when she would bring up the difference in their ages.

She closed her eyes for a moment, then opened them and smiled. "When I was on my honeymoon, you barely knew how to read."

He hadn't expected her to look at it that way, and he was thrown off guard. Suddenly, he felt insignificant compared to her.

"Does that bother you?" he asked.

"No," she said, looking pleased. "It makes things interesting."

Before he could reply, she stood up from the booth and said, "Let's get out of here."

Outside, they joined the crowd of students walking the sidewalks of Aggieville, the two blocks of bars, shops, restaurants, and movie theaters just south of the campus. It was Friday afternoon, the tenth of September, with the temperature in the upper nineties, but no one seemed to mind the heat--the weekend had begun, and there was too much to do to stay indoors.

In the parking lot at the south edge of Aggieville, Anne gazed admiringly at Paul's car, a white MG that Champ had given him for his eighteenth birthday.

"I'm in love with your car," she said, but he didn't hear her. He was staring across Laramie Street, at the spot where two old houses had just been demolished to make room for a new office building. A third house was in the process of being torn down--it was the house where Nikki had lived with her crazy theater friends. They had called it the Laramie House, short for the Laramie House for Wayward Theater Types. It was a silly name, but he had come to regard it and the house itself with affection.

"Something wrong?" asked Anne.

Shaking his head, he turned to her and saw the way she stared lovingly at the MG. He asked her if she wanted to drive it.

She looked up at him. "Sure."

He tossed her the keys, which she caught easily with one hand, and watched her walk around to the driver's side, tall, tan, and skinny in her yellow summer dress. He didn't mind that she was skinny--at the moment he was thinking more about how cool and crisp she looked beneath the sweltering Kansas sun.

But the moment they got into the car, he found himself glancing again at the Laramie House. He did not want to see the house destroyed, because he needed it as concrete proof that the times he had spent there with Nikki weren't part of

some elaborate, wishful dream he had created. He still found it hard at times to believe he had been lucky enough to meet Nikki in the first place.

"Why do you keep looking across the street?" Anne asked.

"I used to know the people who lived in that house that's being torn down. It's no big deal."

He hadn't told Anne about Nikki, and he wasn't going to. To reveal why Nikki had been so important to him would mean bringing up some ugly facts about his past, and Champ. Champ was an outcast, and had made him one, too, so it would be the two of them against the world. He had never fully understood it until he fell in love with Nikki. But Nikki was gone, and he had himself and his father to blame.

But now with Anne, his hopes had risen, and he realized the need to be discreet. All he had told her about him and Champ was that they were the owners of the Championship Motor Inn outside Junction City, sixteen miles away, and that Champ was a widower and a former basketball coach. As such, it sounded respectable enough.

They left Aggieville, going toward the city park. While Anne drove, Paul watched her out of the corner of his eye, thinking that she was not really a pretty woman--or if she were, then in an unusual way. Everything about her body and face, and even the short, chopped look of her hair, suggested a series of definite lines, sharp angles, hard edges. Even her thoughts sometimes seemed to run in zigzag fashion, like the

way she was driving, cutting sharply around corners to go up one street and down another, and then back across them, stopping and starting suddenly at stop signs. But she was a good driver; she handled the MG as if she had been driving it as long as he, shifting the gears smoothly and showing no fear of the gas pedal.

They drove through the city park and then back through Aggieville, turning onto Manhattan Avenue which ran parallel to the east side of the campus. Anne pushed the speedometer to forty-five, fifteen miles above the limit, then slowed just enough to send the car screeching around a corner and onto a side street in one of the older residential areas of town. She picked up speed again, and started to light a cigarette, when a dog suddenly darted into the street in front of the car. She did not hit the brakes or let up on the gas, and the dog, yipping, barely managed to scamper out of the way. Seeing that the dog was all right, Paul looked sharply at Anne, who was staring straight ahead.

"Just a dog, she said.

He stared at her, amazed. But he saw that her knuckles were white as she gripped the steering wheel, and her cigarette, still unlit, had fallen into her lap. Watching her toss it into the street, he began to worry about her driving, and was about to suggest they stop when she pulled up along the side of a shaded, red brick house at one of the intersections.

"The upstairs apartment's mine," she said.

She gave him back the car keys, and they walked up the

steps at the rear of the house to the balcony outside her door. As they stepped inside, they were greeted by a burst of air so hot that Paul felt like he had walked into a giant oven.

"Shit," Anne muttered as she hurried over to the air conditioner in the window. "Don't tell me it's on the blink again."

"Let me have a look."

"No, no," she said, standing between him and the machine. "There's nothing you can do. It's almost shot." She looked at him resignedly. "I guess I'll just have to put up with the heat."

"Call your landlord."

"She's not at home. I know because she lives below me. She has some women's club meeting every Friday."

Paul watched her, half smiling. She was trying awfully hard to be innocent about something.

Then, suddenly, he understood what it was all about. But he kept up the act by pretending to think for a moment, and saying slowly, "Well, you could stay at my place until you get it fixed."

"Ye-es," she began, mulling it over as she ran her hand along the air conditioner. "Maybe that's the thing to do. Let me think about it while I change out of this dress. There's beer in the fridge."

Watching her disappear through the kitchen, Paul went to the air conditioner and was not surprised to find that the switch had been turned off. He flipped it on and the machine began to hum. Smiling, he immediately turned it off. For a

moment he stared across the room, wondering why she was going to all this trouble just to be asked to go home with him. Was she really that nervous? It was such a dumb thing, this lie about the air conditioner. So obvious.

He went into the kitchen and looked down the short, narrow hall to the closed door of her bedroom. Everything was quiet. He wondered if he should knock on the door and demand to know what she was up to. Maybe that was what she wanted. Standing there, he began to think what Champ would do, what his advice to him would be in a situation like this. Then he shook his head, angry at himself. He was not going to let Champ tell him what to do. Champ had done too much already.

Taking two beers from the refrigerator, he went back to the air conditioner and turned it on. Then he sat down on the sofa and waited.

When Anne came into the room a few minutes later, she was barefooted and wearing pink jogging shorts and a white sleeveless shirt against which Paul could see the points of her nipples. She stopped short of the sofa, staring at the air conditioner that was sighing cold air into the room.

Looking down at her feet, she said solemnly, "I've got a confession to make."

She took the beer that Paul held out to her, and sat down close beside him, stretching out her long brown legs.

"My legs're too skinny, don't you think?" she said.

"If you didn't want to stay here, why didn't you just tell

me?"

She paid too much attention to opening her can of beer. "I didn't want to sound like I was coming on to you. I'm not even sure if you like me."

He watched her finger trace the rim of her beer can, not sure if she were really that insecure, or just being coy. It made him feel off-balance, unsure of what she was going to do next, and he didn't know whether to be charmed or exasperated.

"I like you," he said, sliding his arm around her back.

"Don't," she said quietly, shrugging away. "I mean, it's not that I don't want you to, but I feel a little guilty. I'm not being honest with you." She took a long drink of beer, whether to give her courage or time to think what she was going to say, he didn't know.

"I don't want to stay here," she finally said, "because Tony's been bothering me. I told you he's still stationed over at Fort Riley, didn't I?"

"Yes," he replied. Tony Nickerson was her ex-husband, and a sergeant in the army. He and Anne had gotten divorced in June, after fifteen years of marriage. That was all Paul knew.

"What makes it worse," Anne went on, "is he's got an apartment here in town. He's supposed to be transferred, but his orders haven't come through yet. I wish to hell they would."

"Why's he bothering you?"

She stared across the room and said, "He wants me back."

"Why?"

"He's selfish."

"But he divorced you."

"I divorced him," Anne corrected.

"So," Paul began slowly, "you want me to protect you from him."

"I didn't mean it that way."

"But that's what you want, isn't it?"

She went over to the air conditioner and stood with her back to him, letting the cold air blow over her arms and shirt.

"I want to start over."

"With me?"

"I'm not used to living alone."

He sat up slightly. Living together was in his plans, but he hadn't thought it would happen this soon.

"You want to move in with me right away?" he asked.

"I don't know. Right now I just want to get out of here for a few days."

"Why exactly are you so afraid of Tony?" he asked. "What's he done to you?"

"I'll tell you--but not now. I want to leave here as soon as possible."

"All right," he said, "we'll go to my place."

On the way to his house, they stopped by Schmidt's liquor store to get beer and gin. Leaving Anne to wait in the car, he went inside, stopping short of the register when the girl behind it looked up at him.

She was the last person he wanted to see. The night he broke up with Nikki, in June, he had called Champ. It had been against his better judgment, but he wanted a pep talk, and there wasn't anybody who gave a better one than Champ. But Champ hadn't given him a talk. He had only said, "Staying home alone is the worst thing you can do." And so Paul had gone to Aggieville and found this girl, and taken her back to his place for the night.

But her name. Something glittery, Hollywood. Jalaine-- that was it. She was a pretty girl, even prettier now at the end of the summer with her deep tan and her sun-bleached hair pulled back in a ponytail. With her khaki shorts and pink Polo shirt, she looked the sorority type, though he couldn't remember her telling him she belonged to a house.

"How long've you been working here?" he asked, smiling politely. He hoped there would be no trouble--he remembered he had all but kicked her out of his house the following morning, he had been in such a rotten mood.

"One week today," she answered. She smiled back--a smile as polite as his, he thought.

"What do you need?" she asked.

"Gin and beer. I'll get it."

There was no one else in the store, and he could feel her eyes--accusing, no doubt--following him as he walked over to one of the shelves and took down a quart of Gilby's. He grew angry at her, though he wasn't sure why, except for the high-minded look he was sure she was giving him behind his back. Well, she

had no reason to look at him that way. He hadn't forced her to do anything.

He grabbed a six-pack of Molson from the cooler and went to the front of the store, prepared for a confrontation. He fully expected one--it had happened to him before. To get her pride and dignity back, she would blow up at him, go into a rage. There would be insults, accusations, maybe threats.

There was nothing. Jalaine rang up the prices, gave him his change, put the liquor in a sack.

"See you later," she said. She smiled politely at him again, and turned to the bottles of wine she had been pricing.

As he stepped outside into the sunshine, he was surprised to find he was disappointed. He had gotten off too easily, and it bothered him. He felt that until Jalaine confronted him, he would never quite be free of her. Uneasy, he took a few steps along the sidewalk. The heat was unbearable, making him feel light-headed. He stopped walking, momentarily disoriented. He looked all about him, and it was only when he saw Anne smiling at him from the car that his shoulders slumped with relief. Sitting there in the little white car with the sun shining down upon her, she was the prettiest woman he had ever seen, his saving grace.

At his house that evening, after he and Anne had eaten pizza and cleared away the table, Anne made a fresh drink and he opened another beer, and they went outside to the porch and

sat in lawn chairs. He lived alone in the small house, the last one on Houston Street, eight blocks south of the campus. It stood along the sharply inclining street that abruptly ended before a steep, wooded hill behind which the sun had now set, throwing a blue twilight over his yard, also at an incline, and the series of rickety wood steps that cut through it to the porch. The house was old and shaded by trees, and seemed to have been built as an afterthought, scrunched into the small space between the neighboring house and the hill. Paul liked living here in Manhattan because it was such a contrast to living over in Junction City. Despite some of the disruptions caused by the students, Manhattan had a certain dignity to it because of the university, while Junction City, a military town with all its used car lots, cheap bars, hookers, and drug busts, suffered the reputation of being the armpit of the Midwest. Paul also liked being away from Champ, though he had mixed feelings about leaving his father to run the motel over in Junction City. He knew he could depend on Marjorie Wood, the head receptionist who kept things running smoothly, especially during the times when Champ would disappear for a few days after he broke up with the latest woman he had been seeing. But sometimes he felt he was deserting his father by living away from him. If he stayed with Champ to be around when Champ needed him, then maybe Champ wouldn't run off from the motel. He was Champ's best friend, and his father never failed to remind him of this.

"This is a nice place," Anne said, clinking ice cubes

in her glass. "Quiet and out-of-the-way, and pretty with all the trees around."

He agreed, though he didn't think it was as fun as sitting on the porch at the Laramie House, like he and Nikki had done when the weather had turned warm last spring. In the evenings, they would haul out the lawn chairs and a six-pack of beer, and sit and talk for hours. But what made it special, different from sitting here on the porch at his house, was that they had been just across the street from Aggieville. They were right on the edge of one giant, continuous party, and all they had to do was take a few steps to be part of it. But what made it even better was that they never felt they had to go. Unlike so many of the people who went to Aggieville, they were not in search of anybody. This became especially clear to him whenever he saw a lone man or woman pass by the house, and he was glad that he had found Nikki. During these moments, he would look gratefully at her, taking in her Indian features: the long black hair, reddish-brown skin, aquiline nose. He would grow sentimental, but he didn't care. It was nice to imagine them spending hundreds of nights together in the warm, fresh air of the porch, to believe that the coming summer would never end.

And now they were tearing the Laramie House down. It was still hard to believe.

"I'm going to like staying here," he heard Anne say. It reminded him that they had some unpleasant things to discuss, and he decided they might as well get started.

"Now's a good time to tell me what the trouble's about," he said.

"What trouble?"

"With Tony."

"It's nothing, really," she said, lighting a cigarette.

He didn't say anything, but watched her smoke. He knew she was lying--he could tell simply because she wouldn't look at him. She acted too casual, leaning back in her chair and propping her feet on the porch rail, as if all were well. Remembering her little stunt with the air conditioner, he thought what a poor liar she was.

"I'd like to know why I'm hiding you here," he said.

"He didn't do anything to me," she answered. "I made it all up so I could stay with you."

He would have believed her if not for the fear he could sense in her. It was not in her voice or in any of gestures, but he could feel it nevertheless--it seemed to make the porch air thick and oppressive, like the clouds of smoke she exhaled.

"I'm starting to get drunk," Anne said. She smiled. "I'm not used to drinking so much, but I guess that's one of the things you do in college, so I'd better learn how."

"What did Tony do to you?" he asked.

Her shoulders slumping, she held out her right arm to him as if she expected him to put something in her hand. He looked down at it, and up along her arm, not sure what he was supposed to do. And then, despite the growing darkness, he saw the

ugly black bruise, made by a finger or a thumb, on the underside of her bicep. He saw it more clearly than he wanted to, and he almost winced when he imagined how much it must have hurt her, especially being on the tender underside of her arm.

He looked up at her as she withdrew her arm, but she didn't say anything, didn't seem to think she needed to. She was right, he thought. He wasn't sure he wanted to know anything more about the bruise. But one thing was clear to him now: part of her fear was that he would not want to have anything more to do with her--that the bruise would stand between them, symbolizing things he wanted no part of. He could see the look of resignation in her face by the way she stared straight ahead, her lips pressed together, jaw rigid. He wanted to reassure her, but he wasn't sure how. He was not used to comforting women, not even Nikki, who had been too strong and independent to need his support.

"You might as well know something else," she abruptly said. "I think Tony's following me. And I think he's got some of his friends watching me, too."

"Then maybe we shouldn't be sitting outside," he replied, trying to joke.

Anne gazed down the quiet, tree-lined street. "You're right. It'd be better if we went inside."

"You can't be serious. How's he going to find us here?"

"Okay, okay, so I'm a little paranoid. But sometimes at night there's this car parked across the street from my apartment. I don't know. Maybe it's the neighbor's."

"Of course it's the neighbor's," he said for his own benefit as well as hers. The way she spoke in hushed undertones was beginning to make him a little jumpy. But it was silly to be afraid, and he said firmly, "There's nothing to worry about. No one's going to bother you as long as you're with me."

She glanced at him, and he thought he saw a look of relief upon her face.

"Maybe you should call the cops," he suggested.

"No," she murmured, staring for a moment at her bruise. "Tony's supposed to be transferred any day now. I don't want to stir up trouble."

"Sounds like you're already in trouble," he gently said.

"I might call his c.o.," she said. "That'd throw a scare into him."

"His what?"

"Commanding officer. He knows what Tony's capable of doing. He was there when I drug it all out in court, even though I couldn't prove most of it."

"Drug what out?" Paul demanded. He was sitting almost motionless; it seemed the longer they talked, the harder it was for him to move.

"Then again," Anne went on, as if she hadn't heard him, "if I call his c.o., it might just make Tony madder."

"Drug what out?" he persisted.

She looked up at him. "You're not going to make me go through it all tonight, are you?"

"No," he said after a moment. "But you've got to at least tell me how you got the bruise. I've got to know what's going on."

She sighed. "He came over the other night. Said he needed to talk to me about the alimony payments. We got into an argument."

"And?" he prodded.

"He slapped me. Grabbed me and threw me on the sofa. I knew what was going to happen, so I started screaming and he ran off."

Paul could feel the anger welling up in him. He felt it start at the very core of him, and flood outward in all directions until it turned his skin hot, prickly.

"You've got to do something," he said softly. "You can't let that son-of-a-bitch get away with it."

Getting up from his chair, he went over to the rail and looked out over the yard. He wanted to do something, but he didn't know what. He felt indignant, on the defensive, as if Tony were attacking him through Anne.

"I'm used to it, Paul," she said, coming over to stand behind him. She put her arms around him. "What he did wasn't any different than the way he treated me when we were married. But now," her voice grew softer, "now I want things to be different."

He wished she would let go, but she only pressed tighter against him. He felt trapped, totally responsible for her, and

for one brief moment he wished he had never met her. But he immediately felt guilty for having this thought, so he turned to her, not saying anything, but trying to show an expression of understanding, sympathy.

They kissed, then stood looking at each other, and, in the darkness, he thought that her face looked like a cat's-- expressionless, with green, staring eyes that seemed to see everything but reveal nothing.

She smiled. "Let's go inside."

He paused, making sure he understood her meaning, then leaned back against the porch rail. "There's something I don't understand. How can you want to be with a man after what Tony did to you?"

"I told you--I'm used to it."

"You were lucky he didn't hurt you worse." He shook his head, smiling in disbelief. "You're scared as hell of him, but you won't do anything about it."

She shut her eyes, as if making a desperate wish. "Can we please stop arguing?"

He sighed. "All right. We'll let it go for now."

"Good." She smiled, looked as if she were going to say something more, but didn't. Instead she crossed the porch to the door, and paused to look questioningly at him.

"In a minute," he told her.

Watching her stop inside the dark house, he began to feel disillusioned. It seemed to fall over him like the darkness

that grew in the yard and the street beyond, making things more difficult to see. There no longer seemed to be a purpose for being with Anne, no clear goal. Why had he wanted to be with her in the first place?

He drank his beer, gulping it thirstily, as if drunkenness might provide him with an answer. In being with Anne, he wanted to pick up where he had left off with Nikki--a lot of things had been left unfinished when she broke up with him. The three months he had spent with Nikki were months of self-discovery for him. He had found in himself feelings he had thought he didn't have, like the time, a few weeks after they had met, she called to tell him she couldn't keep their date because she had to work late in the scenery shop for a musical that was about to be put on. He had hung up the phone and slumped into a chair, at a complete loss what to do. It wasn't just a matter of his plans being changed--without Nikki, nothing seemed worth doing. Except for Champ, he had never relied upon anyone before, and the feeling baffled him until he suddenly realized he was in love with her. He had never been in love before, and he had thought he never could be. But once he realized he was, he felt as if he were on some sort of adventure, and from that night on, he paid close attention to everything he felt, said, and did. At times he felt like he were his own psychologist, making a series of small but important discoveries about himself. He began to analyze everything: himself, Nikki, and their relationship. His analysis bugged Nikki, but it was hard for

him to stop, because he thought he was coming to know himself better than at any other time in his life. But then Nikki had left him.

And now, as he stood on the porch looking up at the sky, he wondered if he could continue that process of self-discovery by being with Anne. He needed to be with someone so he could demonstrate to himself that he was capable of loving a woman other than Nikki. But Anne seemed to want only two things from him: protection and love-making. At one time in his life, this would have been fine; in fact, he would have given her little else than love-making because he had believed there was nothing more, like Champ had always told him. But he had learned otherwise from Nikki, and he didn't think he was ready to make love to Anne. He had to be sure of his feelings for her before he did anything. If he weren't, then love-making would be meaningless, like it had been in the past.

He went inside to the bedroom where he found Anne lying naked on his waterbed. Moonlight shone through the windows, making her skin look pale.

"Put on your clothes," he said bluntly.

She didn't move. "What's wrong?"

It occurred to him that he should tell her everything he had just been thinking. Then maybe she would understand. But he couldn't see himself doing it. It would be like making a confession, and the idea of confessing anything to anyone scared him, put him on the defensive.

"I'm not ready yet," he said.

"You're afraid, aren't you. Sorry you ever got involved with me."

"No," he replied, sitting down on the edge of the bed, the water shifting beneath him. He started to look at her body, but forced himself to keep his eyes on her face. "I need more time."

"Time for what?"

"Just time."

She gave him a long, hard stare that made him feel she was trying to read his mind. Then she sat up and kissed him, pressing against him with enough force that he was pushed backwards. But he did not respond. Her tongue was an intrusion, her breath bitter with nicotine.

Drawing away, she looked at him for a moment, as if sizing him up. Finally she said, "Okay, we'll wait."

He watched her lie down again, growing frustrated with himself because he knew he was disappointing her. And he realized, as he gazed down over her body, that he wanted very much to make love with her. Her legs were too skinny, her hips almost bony, but her skin looked soft and smooth, and he felt himself being drawn down to her--it was as if his reaction to her kiss had only been delayed. Suddenly, his decision didn't seem to make any sense. How long were they supposed to wait before he felt the time was right?

He reached out to take her hand, but stopped when he saw the scar. It was a vertical line that started just below her

navel and disappeared into her pubic hair. Caught in the moonlight, it stood out silvery against her skin, and he was surprised he had missed seeing it earlier.

"The scar from my C-Section," Anne told him. She was staring at him again, waiting for his reaction.

He tried not to show his surprise. "I didn't know you had any kids."

"The baby died," she said.

"What happened?"

"I'd rather not talk about it."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry."

She smiled. "It's okay."

He looked away toward the windows, feeling sorry for her. He wondered when it had happened, and if it still affected her. He felt he should do something for her, provide her with some word or gesture of reassurance. But he wasn't sure what to do or say.

He watched Anne get out of bed and take a bottle of pills from her suitcase. He asked her what kind they were.

"Sleeping pills," she answered, shaking one from the bottle.

"It's still early," he objected.

"What do you want to do?"

It was a good question.

"We could talk some more," he finally suggested. "Or go to Aggieville."

"I'm all talked out, and I've had enough to drink."

She popped the pill into her mouth, got back into bed and pulled the covers over her.

"Take one if you want," she said. "It'll knock you out in less than a minute."

She fell asleep quickly, and he thought how she hadn't been kidding about the pill's effect. She was out like a light.

He felt wide awake, so he went out to the porch and drank another beer. He was a little angry with Anne for going to sleep on him, but he couldn't blame her too much. It seemed he was trying to make an issue out of nothing, and he felt foolish for it. But she could have been more understanding.

By the time he finished his beer, he felt restless, rebellious. There was no reason for him to stay here and do nothing while Anne slept, so he locked the door and went to his car.

He drove to Aggieville, and, after parking, he walked up and down Moro Street, the main drag. It wasn't quite ten--still early in Aggieville--and the bars and streets were crowded. He stopped at a few of the bars to take a look inside, saying hi to some acquaintances from classes last year. He had many acquaintances but no close friends. The theater students who had lived at the Laramie House had been his friends, but when he and Nikki had split up, the bond between him and the rest of the group had been broken, too. Everything had suddenly come to an end. The lease on the house had expired, and everyone moved out. Lori the director and Delores the actress had graduated, and Virgil Pickett, nicknamed Striker for his love

of striking the sets he helped to build, had talked about laying out a year to work in Kansas City. And Nikki had gone on to Arizona to work on her MFA, deaf to all his pleadings.

Thinking about Nikki and the Laramie House group made him feel lonely, and when he looked at the people around him, he felt even lonelier because they all seemed to be either in pairs or groups. Even the drivers tied up in Aggieville's perpetual traffic jam were not alone--always there seemed to be at least one other passenger. And so much noise: music and screeching tires, laughter and the babble of voices.

He continued to walk. He thought about having a drink somewhere. It would be nice to drink a beer on the patio at the Last Chance Saloon, and enjoy the warm night air. He could watch the people walk by, and listen to conversations at other tables. Or he could go to Auntie Mae's and be swallowed up by the crowd, the smoke, the darkness.

Instead he found himself standing across the street from the Laramie House. In the darkness it looked haunted, its walls filled with black empty eyes where the windows had been torn out. It had been a shabby house to begin with, with its chipped paint, rotting shingles, and the tangled mass of bushes growing up around it, and now it looked like it might collapse at any moment. The wire fence that enclosed the yard had been pulled up, and in its place was a rope cordon. He swung his legs over it with ease.

Hands in pockets, he stood on the porch amid scraps of

wood, brick, and plaster, and gazed across the street toward Aggieville. He thought some sort of feeling would come to him, but all he felt was conspicuous, so he went inside.

His steps sounded loud on the hardwood floor of the living room--he was used to walking on the carpet that had always been littered with books, magazines, newspapers. Light shone in from the streetlights and the Mini Mart down the block, and he was surprised to find that the room looked the same as he remembered it. It was empty except for the dirt and rubble on the floor, but he did not feel that he had entered a strange, new house. He could easily visualize where everything had been placed: the table back by the kitchen entrance, the brick shelves and stereo along the west wall, the sofa cutting the room in half. He could still see Nikki stretched out on the sofa, her long, jean-clad legs hanging over the end. Her legs were so long that they were the first thing he had noticed about her. Then, after the legs, there were the stern Indian features, the dark eyes, the long hair black as India ink.

He went up the stairs to Nikki's room at the back of the house. The room being empty, he thought it would look larger, like the living room had. But it seemed smaller, and he wondered how it could have held all her stuff. It was a small room to begin with. But Nikki was a good organizer--everything had its place. Lori and Delores and Striker could make the living room and the kitchen a shambles, but nothing was to be disrupted in Nikki's room. Her guitar case belonged in the southeast

corner of the room, and only in that corner. Her shoes had been laid neatly in a row on the floor of her closet, starting at one end with her worn brown sandals and ending at the other with her one pair of high heels. Her books were not only placed alphabetically on the shelves, but categorized as well. And the thing of it was, it had all made perfect sense. Being in Nikki's room was being in a logical, ordered world.

He sat down against the wall and stared at the spot, next to the closet, where her bed had been. It was the only place in the room where confusion had been allowed, the confusion of pillows and sheets, arms and legs, whispers and giggles. In bed, Nikki was a different person. When her clothes were off, she relaxed. Her body seemed to unwind--it was as if her legs grew even longer. She looked beyond the contents of her little self-contained sphere to see him standing just outside. And she drew him in. She put him next to her, made him the center of her focus by gazing intently at him with her dark eyes, sometimes not looking away for an hour, it seemed to him.

Initially, it had been a case of lust on his part, like with the other women he had been with. He had first seen Nikki Wingfoot back in March, sitting alone at the bar in Auntie Mae's, and he was attracted to her long legs and stiff black hair. She looked a few years older than he, and her stern features made her appear sophisticated, and he figured she would do just fine, know all the right moves. He was right. She played the game well, so well that she always seemed one jump ahead of him.

They went back to the Laramie House and up to her room, but, when they sat down on the bed and he leaned toward her, she said in that bored voice of hers that could sting so sharply, "You seem like you could really be a nice guy--if you'd stop being such an asshole." He thought he hadn't heard her right. But when he realized he had, he said a few words in reply--words he didn't care to remember later on--and sauntered out to the porch. But he didn't make it down the steps. Something in him broke. He felt as cold and empty as the bitter March wind, as used up as the scraps of snow lying in the grass. He could not leave the porch--he could not go home and be alone with himself. And so he had gone back inside and up to Nikki's room, prepared to take any insults she threw at him. There were none. He didn't know what kind of look he had on his face, but it must have been one she understood. Picking up her guitar, she had smiled at him and said, "Sit down. I'll play some music."

Later, he had come to understand why he had been unable to leave her house. He had reached the point of desperation. He had needed to see himself better, to have himself stripped clean of his past, of all the convictions and attitudes that had been preached to him by Champ. And Nikki, he knew, was the one to help him. And she had, without even knowing it. She had taken from his head the curse that had been placed there when he was sixteen, the night of his birthday and the end of his virginity. He had spent part of that night with Rita, the whore Champ had bought him, in one of the rooms at the Champion-

ship Motor Inn. He had done it because Champ convinced him it was the right thing. That was what made it so terrible. Champ had truly believed he was doing him a favor, helping him to get over his shyness with girls, to become stronger, wiser. But when it was all over and he went back to his and Champ's house next door, he believed there was no hope for him. He was ruined, marked. He could feel the brand burning on his forehead--it was there for all to see.

Now, Paul stood up and took a last look at the empty room. In a few days it would be gone, like Nikki. She had left too soon, before he could put all the pieces of himself together.

Shortly after he got home and checked on Anne, who was still sleeping, the phone rang. It was Marjorie Wood, calling from the motel to tell him that Champ had disappeared again. He did not ask for the particulars, but promised to drive over in the morning. Then he hung up the phone and sat down. There was something wrong about Champ's disappearing this time, but he dropped the subject from his mind. He was not going to lose any sleep over Champ.

All the Pleasures Prove

Chapter 2

Driving with Anne to the motel late the next morning, he was both curious and angry with Champ. The thing that was wrong about Champ's disappearing this time had become clear to him earlier that morning when he had stopped to consider it: Champ had broken the pattern. Always in the past, when he got tired of a woman after a few months, he'd break things off with her, immediately leave the motel for a few days, and return acting as if nothing had happened, and refusing to discuss the matter. Paul had no idea where he went, or what he did, though he was sure, from seeing Champ's bloodshot eyes, that he did a lot of drinking. But the twist to Champ's disappearing act this time was that he had not been with anyone lately, and it irritated Paul to think that Champ might now start running off more often.

To make matters worse, Anne was in a bad mood--she didn't like this interruption in her weekend. He hadn't told her about Champ's disappearing, only that he had some motel business to take care of. He had said she could go swimming at the pool while he worked, but she still hadn't been happy. Spending a Saturday afternoon alone at some strange place was not her idea of a good

time, she had said.

"Look," he said to her, raising his voice above the wind whipping about them, "I'll work as fast as I can. So stop pouting."

"I'm not pouting."

"Well, then stop being selfish."

"I'm just disappointed," she said. "I don't like sudden changes in plans."

"You didn't have anything planned for today."

"Least of all watching you work. You won't even tell me why. What's the big deal?"

"There's no big deal. I've just got to check on some things."

"Can't it wait?"

He abruptly took his foot off the gas pedal and pulled off to the side of the interstate. They were halfway down the hill that overlooked Marshall Field, Fort Riley's airfield, and still a few miles from the motel. Barely noon, the temperature had already climbed into the nineties again, and the hot dry breeze only made him lose his temper quicker.

"I've told you a dozen times it can't wait," he said when the car was stopped. He turned in his seat so he could face her squarely. "So will you stop griping? I've had it up to here."

"My, this business has really got you upset--whatever it is."

"Goddamn it, Anne--"

She smirked at him. "Do you always run when Daddy calls?"

He grabbed her arm and gave her such a hard shake that she cried out in pain. He immediately let go, jerking his hand back as if he had been burned. He felt sick at the thought that she might now have a bruise on her other arm.

Anne bit her lip and hunched over in the seat, her left arm lying limp in her lap. Then she looked away, out over the brown pasture to the concrete runways gleaming in the sun. He saw her shoulders convulse once, but she didn't make a sound.

"I'm sorry," he murmured. He licked his lips, feeling beads of sweat break out on his forehead and torso. He tried to add to the apology, but he could only stare at the dashboard.

"It's okay," she answered, her voice low but clear. "It's all my fault. I've got to stop being such a bitch."

He reached out and gently hugged her. She felt so thin, frail. It was a wonder he hadn't snapped her arm.

"It's not your fault," he said. "I shouldn't have lost my temper. Forgive me?"

"There's nothing to forgive."

"Say it anyway."

"Yes. I forgive you."

He drew her away slightly, and took off her sunglasses to see if she had cried any. Her eyes were surprisingly calm and clear, and he felt relieved. They kissed, softly at first, and then harder until he felt his lips being painfully flattened back against his teeth. He heard her breath come in quick little gasps, and felt her breasts squash against him, and he had to

readjust the way he was sitting. He felt his own breath grow quick, his spine seeming to crackle. Abruptly he pulled away, afraid he wouldn't be able to stop if they went on any longer.

She looked intently at him for a moment, and he thought how he could almost feel her eyes sweeping down over his face, as if they each shined a beam of warm light. Then she kissed him again, a quick smack on the lips, and relaxed back into her seat.

He watched her, still feeling hard and tense. She was wearing loose white beach pants, and a bright red and white striped shirt with ties at the shoulders. With two or three tugs, she would be undressed.

He glanced at the cars rushing by. At the exact moment they passed, they made the same breathy hiss he had heard Anne make, only louder. He felt momentarily bewildered at how swiftly the moods had changed, and at how erotic he felt. He began to have a new respect for Anne--he couldn't remember a woman having ever affected him quite this way.

He offered her a smile and said, "Maybe it won't take too long at the motel. Do you know how to ski?"

"Sure."

"We've got a boat. What do you say?"

"I'd love to." She reached for the bag she had brought, pulling a blue swim suit from it. "I'm glad I decided to bring it along after all. I look pretty good in it, even if I am too skinny."

"You look fine to me," he said, driving back onto the interstate.

Three miles later, they took the exit into Grandview Plaza, which, Paul had always thought, was not so much a town as it was a scattering of houses, trailers, restaurants, and gas stations located on a hill on the north side of I-70. Though incorporated, it was considered to be part of Junction City, which sat less than a mile away to the west, on the other side of a wheat field.

He drove to the west end of Grandview Plaza, where the Championship Motor Inn sat at the edge of the hill that dropped sharply down into the Smoky Hill River. Turning into the parking lot, he stopped beneath the carport which connected the restaurant and the motel rooms.

They went into the restaurant, in the lobby of which was the reception desk. Marjorie Wood, the head receptionist, was working--as usual, Paul thought. She was almost fifty, a quiet, petite woman who had known Paul and Champ for fifteen years, since the days when Champ had coached at Dwight, the small farming community fifteen miles south of Junction City. There, she had taken care of Paul while his mother was in the hospital with cancer, and Champ never forgot her help. Six years later, after he had coached at Junction City and been forced to resign, he asked her to come work for him at the motel he had just bought. He had told her she would be doing him a favor, though it was really the other way around--Marjorie's husband had died,

leaving her without a cent. Grateful, she had worked hard, making her life her job, and she had come to be, both Paul and Champ readily admitted, the real manager of the motel. Without her there to run things, the business would fall into confusion.

"Hello, boss-lady," Paul greeted her affectionately. "How're you holding out?"

"Just fine." She smiled at him and then Anne, acting as if she had seen the two of them together many times before. Any thoughts she had about the women he and Champ dated, she kept to herself, and Paul appreciated it.

He introduced the women to each other, then told Anne to take a look around while he checked on some things in the office. Marjorie went with him, and, when they were seated at the desk, he leaned back in the swivel chair and asked, "When did he leave?"

"Yesterday morning. I checked the house and his motorcycle's gone."

"Why do you think he left?"

"I don't know," Marjorie said. "Maybe he was seeing someone we didn't know about."

"No, he would've told me. He always does."

"Then I don't know."

"How did he act when you last saw him?" he asked.

She shrugged. "No different than usual. We came in at the same time yesterday morning, and an hour later I saw him walk over to the house. I haven't seen him since."

Paul watched her run a hand across her skirt, as if she were smoothing out imaginary wrinkles in it. Something was up--it was in the air. Like the fear he had felt in Anne on the porch the evening before, he could sense a tension in Marjorie, though she did a better job of hiding it. She sat calmly facing him, waiting for him to speak.

"Is Champ giving you trouble?" he asked. Marjorie was one of the few women Champ had never made a pass at, and though Paul would have been surprised to learn that he had, he didn't rule it out.

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean," he said, suddenly not quite able to meet her eyes.

"No, he's not bothering me."

"Did you or someone else do something to make him mad?"

"Not that I know of."

"What the hell's going on, Marjorie? You've got something on your mind and I want you to tell me."

She looked startled for a moment, but firmly said, "I don't know why he left."

He didn't believe her, but he knew from experience not to press her. Once she had made up her mind to keep quiet, it was impossible to get anything out of her.

"Well," he sighed, "we're going to have to make Champ stop this crap. I know, I know--I've said it a dozen times. But it's got to stop."

"What're you going to do?"

"I don't know. I'll have to figure something out." He knew it was a weak answer, but it was all he had. "How're things going?"

"Fine," Marjorie answered, her voice turning business-like. "I'm going to pull Dave out of the restaurant and have Martha take his place while he runs the desk. That'll give me a chance to do the work Champ left."

"I'll do it."

She smiled at him. "You have other plans, it looks like. I'll take care of it."

"It's not fair to make you do it."

"I don't mind," she said as she went to the door. "You go on and have a good time."

"I was hoping you'd let me off the hook," he admitted. "But now I feel guilty."

"Will you get out of here?" she said bluntly. "You'd only be in my way."

She abruptly left the room, and, more worried than surprised, he followed her out to the front desk, ready to demand some answers from her. But before he could speak, she waved him toward the door and said, "You and Anne go on. I'll handle things."

He started to argue, but saw Anne come out of the restaurant.

"All right," he said, "we'll let it go for now. But later I'm going to want some answers."

"How much work do you have to do?" Anne asked him as they went outside.

"It's finished."

She looked curiously at him, then asked where Champ was.

"He had to go out of town on business," Paul replied.

They got into the car, and, as he was about to turn the key, she pulled his hand away.

"I don't like being lied to," she said.

"You should talk," he retorted. He jerked his hand away and started the engine.

"I was afraid to tell you the truth about Tony," she said.

"What makes you think I'm lying?"

"Something's going on. I can tell."

"Women's intuition," he snorted.

"If there's a problem, I want to help you."

Something in her voice sounded false, but he was tired of lying, so he said impatiently, "Champ's gone. Disappeared. He's done it before, and he'll do it again unless I can find a way to to talk some sense into him."

Interested, Anne said, "Where's he go?"

"If we knew that, we wouldn't be sitting here wondering about it, would we?"

Ignoring his sarcasm, she looked around the motel as if she thought she might spy Champ hiding behind a car or a bush.

"Why does he do it?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered truthfully. "He won't talk

to me about it."

"Some father he is, not even telling his own son--"

"Stop it."

"I'm sorry. I'm on your side, you know."

"I don't want you to take sides."

"What do you want me to do?" she asked. "I'm trying to help."

He looked at her, thinking that she seemed almost pleased to have found out about his trouble with Champ. But he decided he was wrong--Champ was making him feel at odds with everybody.

"I want us both to forget it," he said as he pulled away from the curb. "We're not going to let Champ ruin the day."

They drove to his and Champ's house next door to the motel, and went to the basement to get a pair of skis, a ski belt, charcoal, a cooler--everything they thought they would need for a day at the lake.

"Somehow, I expected all this," Anne said, looking around.

Paul understood what she meant. The basement was filled with sports equipment, and had a bar and a mirror and, in the center of the room, a pool table with a Budweiser light hanging over it.

"What sports did you play in high school?" she asked.

"Only golf. I took second in the state my senior year." He picked up a basketball from a shelf and bounced it a few times. "It used to bother me, not being more of an athlete when Champ was the basketball coach. I felt I was letting him down. But

when I was fifteen or so, he sat me down and told me it didn't matter what I did or didn't do--that I'd never disappoint him. After that, we did a lot of stuff together--hunted and fished, played golf and tennis, and we went skiing in Colorado a few times. We played a lot of pool, too."

He walked over to the pool table and switched on the light, remembering all the nights in high school he and Champ had drunk beer and played pool. He remembered how he would step into the arc of light shining down on the table, and aim his cue stick, while Champ stood in the shadows beyond the light, leaning on his stick and silently watching. His father liked the darkness and the night, so sometimes, when they finished playing, they would go out through the sliding glass doors to the patio or the balcony overhead, and look at the lights of Junction City shining through the trees to the west. The lights at the north end of town would always remind Paul of the hookers who walked the streets there, and he could not help but think of Rita, his birthday present. Sometimes he would wonder if she were still in town, and when he imagined the life she led, and the way she had seemed to enjoy teaching him about sex, he would shut his eyes and concentrate on the day he would move to Manhattan and start college, and put Junction City behind him. He would resent Champ for having bought Rita for him, but he tried not to dwell upon it. Instead, he would mention some event from his father's coaching days, and Champ, who loved to talk about those times, would pick up the story. Some nights they would reminisce

for hours, and the memories, along with all the beer he drank, would make Paul feel close to his father, and proud of him for all the winning seasons he had had.

Out in the driveway, Paul loaded the skis into the back of Champ's Cherokee jeep. It was parked alongside Champ's Mercedes, which Anne was admiring.

"You'd think Champ would run off in this instead of a motorcycle," she said.

"One thing you learn is not to guess ahead what he'll do," he told her. "He'll surprise you nearly every time. Like he did for my tenth birthday. He said he was going into town to get me something, and I was sure it was going to be a bike. He came back with it, all right--and a boat, too. Said he thought it was time I learned to ski."

"Where's the boat?"

"Out at the marina."

Anne shook her head, looking envious. "You've got everything."

"Just about."

"Hey, I just thought of something. Maybe Champ's out in the boat."

Paul shook his head. "He never goes to the marina--I've checked. My guess is he goes someplace where nobody knows him." Finished loading the jeep, he slammed the back end shut and added, "And anyway, we want the boat for ourselves."

During the drive to Milford Lake Reservoir, three miles northwest of Junction City, he realized he had been out in the boat only twice all summer. The first time was with Nikki, on Memorial Day, just a few days before they broke up. He thought the change of scenery would do them good, and he hoped that by taking her to the lake and telling her of all the things he had done there in high school, she would come to know him better. It was a weak plan, but he was desperate. Nikki had already told him she was leaving for Arizona the first of June, and that he wasn't in her plans. She had wanted to break up earlier--staying together until the last moment would only make things harder on both of them, she had said. But he had argued her out of it. He had believed there was still a chance of working things out--it was a matter of him finding the right combination of things to say and do. But when they were out in the boat, he realized he had nothing to say. What could he tell her of the times he had spent here with boys who were never quite his buddies because he wouldn't let them be? He had gone drinking and skiing and fishing with them, and listened to their talk about girls, but he made little contribution because he knew he was different. Those boys were only being nice to him. They knew as well as he that his father was the town outcast who had been banished to the motel at the top of the hill overlooking the town--and that made the son an outcast, too. He could not tell them of the things Champ did with women, and he could not mention

the "present" Champ had given him for his sixteenth birthday. The guys did a lot of big talking about girls, but he knew that if he told them about spending the night with Rita, and Champ's getting her for him, they would look upon him and his father as being downright strange. Even worse, they might pity him, and he wanted none of that.

So what could he tell Nikki about his past? He was afraid even to tell her of Champ's coaching glories, because then she would want to know why he no longer coached. He had been sorry he brought her out in the boat. She had been nice to him, but looked like she wanted to be somewhere else, alone. The only good part of the day had been when she skied. His driving the boat had been the one time he had ever felt in control of her.

His second outing had been with Champ, on the Fourth of July. Champ had not had a girlfriend all summer, and Paul found it strange that they would spend the holiday without anyone else along. He asked his father about it, expecting him to toss it off with a joke. But Champ looked across the water and said, "Age is catching up with your old man."

"You're only forty-six."

"After you're forty, sport, every year seems like three."

Paul gazed suspiciously at him, knowing what a good actor Champ was. Champ could be intimidating, or shy and gentle, or aloof or sad or mysterious . . . the list went on and on--there was a pose for every occasion. That July 4th, he appeared old and pathetic. And Paul wasn't buying it. Since his break-up

with Nikki and then the night he had spent with Jalaine, he had begun to build a wall between himself and Champ, and now he could see his father trying to tear it down. But he believed he could build it faster than Champ could destroy it, and, to escape further conversation, he dove into the water to take his turn skiing. He had told Champ little about his relationship and break-up with Nikki, but Champ knew damn well what he stood accused of, so there was no need to explain.

Now, Anne asked him how far it was to the marina.

"A mile to the turnoff, then another mile to the cove," he answered.

He looked out the window at the dry brown pastures. They had just passed the dam at the south end of the lake, and were getting close to Rolling Hills, the picnic grounds where the Thunderbird Marina sprawled out into the water. In the distance, everything, even the farmhouses, looked ready to collapse from the heat.

"It's been a while since I've skied," Anne said. "I'm a little nervous."

"We'll take it slow at first, and you'll do fine," he replied, glancing at her. She had changed into her blue one-piece swim suit, and wore over it a white terry-cloth robe. He was glad her suit covered her scar. He didn't like thinking about the scar, but seeing it was even worse. It reminded him too much of the pain she must have gone through, pain she still might feel. He hoped it didn't bother her too much, for her

sake as well as his. He felt helpless when he was with someone experiencing some sort of physical or emotional pain. It had been that way when his mother died of cancer when he was ten, and then when Champ lost his coaching job six years later. After those two grueling experiences, he had come to realize that, in the end, no amount of prayer or love or anything else was going to help them. His mother was dead, and Champ, no longer a coach, would never be quite the same.

At the marina, crowded with boaters who were taking advantage of the last hot days of summer, he and Anne carried everything to the boat, an eighteen-foot Mark Twain secured in one of the stalls. He untied the straps and pulled the cover off the boat, folding it up and placing it in one of the compartments beneath the seats. Anne handed him the skis and the cooler, and, when everything was loaded, he helped her aboard, untied the ropes, and started the engine. He was glad to be back in the boat. It felt good to listen to the inboard motor sputter and then begin to drone--good to smell the water and the initial spurts of exhaust, and feel the unsteadiness of the boat beneath him.

When the engine had warmed, he guided the boat backwards out of its stall and over to the far end of the marina, where Doc Kitchell was working the gas pumps.

Waving at him, Paul shouted, "Fill 'er up, Doc!"

Doc, a wiry little man in jeans, a tank-top, and a Royals cap, handed down the hose to Paul. He had owned the marina for

close to twenty years, and had been one of the basketball team's biggest supporters when Champ was the coach.

"Tell Champ to get rid of the motel and get back into coaching," Doc said, squatting down at the end of the dock.

Paul laughed--it was Doc's standard greeting.

"You haven't seen him, have you?" Paul asked.

Doc shook his head. "Not in a coupla weeks."

"Well, if you do, tell him to get his ass back to the motel. He ran out on everybody yesterday, and no one knows where he is."

"I'll tell him to get his ass back on the basketball court's what I'll tell him. They could use him over at K-State."

Paul saw that Doc was looking at Anne, so he introduced them.

"You watch out for him," Doc told her, shaking a finger at Paul. "He's no good like his dad."

"If we're not back by sundown," Anne said, "you'd better come look for us." She had taken off her robe, and was smiling up at Doc.

"Damn right I will," he grinned, showing the bits of Skoal caught in the cracks between his teeth.

The gas tanks full, Paul handed the hose back to Doc and said, "Do me a favor, Doc. Charge it to Champ."

"Damn right I will. And one of these days I'm gonna start charging him rent for the stall."

"I'll warn him," Paul said, waving.

Guiding the boat toward the mouth of the cove, he looked

all around him. To the east, the mile-long dam running north and south rose up into the air like a giant battlement, its white and gray rock flashing silver and gold in the sun. To the north, pine trees guarded the opposite shore, which rose gently up into one of the grassy hills that was part of the lake's state park. And, to the northwest, there was nothing but blue water flecked with yellow and white from the sun, behind which, in the distance, the outline of more trees and gently rolling hills stood a faded, late-summer green against the water. Milford Lake was the biggest in Kansas, stretching on up to Wakefield eleven miles away, and Paul had always liked not being able to see the lake's end, but imagining that it ran on for miles and miles that he had yet to explore.

"What's the deal about your father coaching?" Anne asked as he brought the boat to a stop. They were out in the main body of the lake now, the breeze urging up small waves that gently rocked the boat.

"Just bullshit," he replied. "Champ'll never coach again."

"Why not?"

"He's got the motel now."

"Why'd he quit?"

"The school board made him," he said. "Conflict of interests."

Anne was quiet for a moment, then said, "Well, it sounds like he must've been a good coach."

"He was. But no one understood him."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

Wanting to change the subject, he said, "Jump in and I'll hand you the skis."

She paused, wanting, he knew, to find out more about Champ. But she said, "You go first."

"Can you handle the boat okay?"

"Sure."

He put on the ski belt, unwrapped the ski rope, and jumped into the water. Despite the long hot summer, the water was cool, refreshing, and he shivered with pleasure. Pushing his hair back off his forehead, he reached up and said, "Give me the slalom ski. I'll signal you if I want to go faster."

She gave him the ski, and he slipped it onto his feet as she started the boat slowly forward. He grabbed hold of the rope handles, and waited for the line to grow taut. When it did, he shouted for her to start, and the boat shot forward faster than he wanted. But he held his balance as he stood up from his squatting position, and within moments he was leaning backwards on the ski, his arms fully extended as he let the boat do all the work for him.

He liked to ski because it involved enough of his attention to keep his thoughts from straying to other matters. His senses sharpened--nothing else mattered except for the feel of the cool wind against his rigid muscles, the smell of the water as it sprayed against him, and the slight blur of his vision that his speed created. It was good when the sights around him

blurred into colors and vague shapes, because his memory became blurred, too. He could concentrate more on sound, on the skit-skit-skit of the ski as it skimmed across the water, his only vision being that of the sun burning gold against blue.

When finally he grew tired, he jerked his arm downward, and, as Anne slowed the boat, he let go of the rope and sank straight down into the water.

"I've had enough," he told her as she pulled the boat up beside him. "Get out the ladder."

She turned off the engine and hooked the ladder over the side of the boat. Handing her the ski, he climbed aboard, surprised at how exhausted he was.

"Damn, I can hardly stand."

"You were out there a long time," Anne said, handing him a towel.

He gazed about him, momentarily disoriented. The cove they had come out of was gone from sight, as was the dam, and the pines along the east shore looked like scrub brushes. He could see, after a moment, that they were drifting out in the very middle of the reservoir, with no other boats anywhere near, and he felt removed from everything that was happening on the land. It was a nice feeling, cozy and intimate. There was beer in the cooler, the radio resting beside it, the sun beating down on them. The smell of Coppertone wafting through the air.

He looked at Anne. Bent over the back of the boat, she was pulling in the ski rope, her thin biceps flexing slightly.

Lotion glistened on her skin, and her hair shone in the sun. A long brown figure rising up to end in a shock of startling yellow.

Sitting down, he closed his eyes as he scrunched the towel against his face. She looked beautiful, he thought. Warm and soft and beautiful.

"You okay?" she asked, finished with the rope. He had taken the towel away from his face and was watching her again. "You look kind of funny."

"Just tired," he said.

She sat beside him and gently dried his shoulders and arms. He could feel a rhythm to it, a sensual push and pull of the cloth across his skin. It felt as if she were tugging at him, trying to get something from him.

She smiled. "You were looking at me like you had something on your mind."

"I was thinking how pretty you look."

He kissed her, then told her to take off her sunglasses. She did, giving him an exaggerated squint.

"Come on--open them." He watched her eyes grow full, and said, "You've got pretty eyes. I wish you wouldn't hide them."

Still smiling, she tossed the sunglasses into the water. Laughing, he watched them sink.

"Jesus, you didn't have to do that."

"I'll do whatever you want me to," she said. She pulled the left strap of her swim suit down over her shoulder.

"Don't," he said. He felt disappointed, angry.

"It's all right. I don't mind."

"I don't want you to."

"Why not?"

He didn't answer, but watched her stand up and pull the suit down over her legs and then step out of it. She sat back down, stretching out her legs, and he looked at the white scar on her stomach.

"Mmm," she murmured, shutting her eyes, "it feels good when the sun hits all of you."

He was still staring at her scar. She acted as if she were proud of it, showing it off, the way she leaned back against the side of the boat, the scar standing out against her flat hard stomach muscles.

"How'd you lose your baby?"

She stared bewilderedly at him. "What kind of question is that?"

"Just wondering," he said, pleased that he had put her on the defensive, made her angry.

"You like to see me like this, don't you," she said. "You tell me to stop, but really you want to see me undress, do anything I can to get your attention."

A thin smile crossed his lips. "You had it before you took your suit off."

"It's not enough. You want me to disgrace myself."

He felt the skin prickle on the back of his neck. "You're

crazy."

"You're no different than Tony," she goaded. "Or any other man."

"Shut up!" he shouted.

He leaned toward her, not quite sure what to do. But he was afraid that if she said anything more, he would lose control of himself.

Anne started to speak, but caught herself. She seemed to be aware of the tightrope he was suddenly walking, and she held off from saying anything. She sat motionless, staring at him until the tension between them passed, so swiftly that they both looked a little surprised. She looked down at herself, then awkwardly picked up her swim suit and put it on. He watched her, unable to think, only feel. The sun stung his skin, and he felt a cramp forming in his neck from the way he sat rigidly hunched toward her. The smell of Coppertone was so sickly sweet and overpowering now that he thought he could taste it, and, shaking himself out of his trance, he reached for the cooler.

Anne went to the back of the boat, as if she wanted as much distance from him as possible before she spoke.

"Don't ever talk about my baby," she said, and though her voice was soft, it carried a warning that made him uneasy. Something, in the way she had spoken, made him think that he was, for the first time, getting a true picture of her. He could not tell anything different about her by looking at her. But her tone of voice did more than tell him not to mention her

baby--it suggested to him that he was getting close to some truths that Anne wanted left alone. But he grew more intrigued than uneasy, and ^{he} wasn't going to back away from her.

"Then don't you ever come on to me like that," he said.

"You want to know how cheap you looked?"

"Your view's all mixed up," she said so matter-of-factly that for a moment he didn't doubt her. "And I know what your problem is. You want some sort of glorified, holy relationship. You've got your head stuck way up in the clouds, and whenever I bring you down to earth you get mad. You can't cope with me, just like I'll bet you can't cope with anybody. The situation with your father showed me that."

Paul stood up and grabbed the ski.

"Maybe if I leave you alone for a while, you'll get some sense back in your head," he said.

"Maybe you should just take me home."

He had started to strap on his ski belt, but he stopped and looked up at her.

"Obviously," she said, "this isn't going to work out. We might as well quit before we're too far behind."

He sat back down, still staring at her. Despite their problems, he had attached himself to Anne so firmly that the thought of them splitting up was nonsense.

"You're going to give up just like that," he said.

"I don't know what else to do. I look at you and think, 'what the hell am I supposed to do?'"

He continued to look at her, until he suddenly went and started the engine.

"What're you doing?" she asked, surprised.

"Taking you home like you said. You're right."

Neither of them said anything as he swung the boat around and started for the marina. It was going to be a game to see who could hold out the longest, and he was determined to keep quiet all the way back to Manhattan if he had to.

They had gone almost a mile when Anne told him to stop. Shutting off the engine, he turned around in the driver's seat and looked expectantly at her, feeling victorious.

"All right," she said. "You win."

She didn't seem angry or hurt, only resigned that her gambit hadn't succeeded. But hearing her concede didn't make him feel as good as he had thought it would. In fact, he began to think how ridiculous the whole thing was. It was all nothing more than one big mind game, and he knew it was mostly his own doing. Anne was right: he had his head in the clouds. What was so difficult about relaxing and having a few laughs with her?

Anne seemed to take his silence as a signal that she hadn't made enough of a concession, for she said, "You win, okay? I want to stay with you. Do I have to beg?"

He looked toward Crystal Cove, one of the lake's large coves, outside of which was a ramp for skiers to make jumps from. He smiled. "See that ramp? Want me to give it a try?"

After a moment, she smiled, too. "I'd love to watch you."

It had been a few years since he had used the ramp, and at first he used two skis. It was not a hard feat for him to perform, but he knew he had to be prepared for two things, the first being the initial jolt he would feel when his skis slid from the water and onto the ramp. Then, as he went up the ramp and over the side into the air, he would have to squat slightly to help him keep his balance when he hit the water--being in a squatting position would also allow his legs and body to act as a spring against the water's impact. Other than that, he needed only concentration and confidence, and he felt he had enough of both.

But he failed in his first attempt, hitting the water off-balance. The second time he lost hold of the ski rope. But the third time he succeeded, and, to prove it wasn't a fluke, he tried a fourth time and made it again. He skied away from the ramp a ways, then let go of the rope and sank into the water. Anne clapped and yelled her congratulations as she swung the boat by him, and he repaid the compliment by telling her he had a good driver. Shutting off the engine, she leaned over the side of the boat and said, "You look like one of those gorgeous bronze hunks in the Olympics."

It was the kind of gushy flattery he wanted to hear at that moment, and he said, "So that's why you like me."

She smiled slyly. "Uh-huh."

They gazed at each other, and he felt something pass between them, something sexual which he did not try to fight off.

Growing even more confident, he said, "I'm going to try it with the slalom ski, and I want you to go fast--faster than you've been going."

She said nothing, but her eyes seemed to grow bright, her expression intense, and he felt urged on even further.

But, as he skied toward the ramp minutes later, his confidence beat him. He was thinking about how good he felt, and how great he must look to anyone watching. He was also considering what his reward might be for making the jump. Thus, with his mind preoccupied, and the boat pulling him faster this time, he hit the ramp before he had hardly any time to realize what was happening. The jolt knocked him off-balance, but the boat was pulling him so fast that he didn't have time to fall until he had cleared the ramp. Then, in mid air, he let go of the rope as he somersaulted into the water, landing face first. The next thing he knew, Anne was pulling him over to the boat.

It took him three tries to climb the ladder, but once he was in the boat, and his senses had returned to him, he felt humiliated, and unable to look at Anne. She, however, crooned over him with what he thought was almost a motherly affection. It was a side of her he had never seen, and thought she didn't have. At first he resented it, but, remembering that he needed to stop fighting against her, he relaxed and quickly came to enjoy her attention.

"I should've never made you do it," she said soothingly as she draped a towel around his shoulders.

"You didn't," he said, looking at her. "I did it on my own."

"But you did it for me," she replied, getting him a beer from the cooler.

He waved the beer away, a little irritated by her smugness. She made it seem as if he had just jumped off a cliff on her behalf.

Anne sat down beside him and asked him how he felt.

"Embarrassed," he answered. "It was a stupid stunt."

"Do you want to go back to the marina?"

He gazed up at the sun and saw that it was beginning to fall into the western sky. But there was still plenty of daylight left, and he wasn't ready to go home yet. Looking around, he saw they had drifted in close to the shore just outside of Crystal Cove. Ahead of them was a strip of sand, behind which rose a cliff twenty feet high. He recognized the place because of the lone oak which stood atop the cliff, shading part of the sand. Some of its roots had grown out of the side of the cliff, and trailed down toward the sand like long hairy tendrils. He remembered climbing the cliff once by hanging on to the roots. It had been during the crazy summer before his senior year, when he had been drunk a lot of the time and going with Traci Thompson. She had been there to watch him scale the cliff--she and all of her friends she had invited to share the keg Champ had bought him. Later, after everyone had gone home, he and Traci went skinny-dipping, and then made love on the blanket. It had

been her first time, and his second, and it led to more love-making over the summer until finally the trouble started in the fall. But he had been able to get out of the mess. He had Champ to thank; Champ had paid Traci's father, made the arrangements with Dr. Cooley, and kept the whole thing hushed up.

Paul drove the boat over to the small beach, then shut off the engine and jumped into the shallow water. He told Anne to get out and help him, and they pulled the boat in to the shore until it was firmly lodged in the sand. He moored it to one of the roots sticking out of the cliff, and went to help Anne unload the cooler.

They said little while they drank beer and roasted weiners over the fire Paul built, using the radio for company instead. But after they had eaten, and were sitting together on the blanket, Anne said, "You really did look good skiing."

He nodded, looking up at the sky. The sun was almost touching the line of trees on the other side of the lake, and he watched its rays turn the water gold and orange and, in the growing shadows along the opposite shore, purple.

"The breeze feels good," said Anne.

"Smells good, too," he added, listening for a moment as the breeze rustled the leaves of the oak above them. He felt more relaxed than he had all day, and he took another beer from the cooler.

"Why'd you marry Tony?" he asked.

"I wanted to get away from home," she answered. "I had

three brothers and three sisters, and my parents worked in a jeans factory, and there wasn't much money. Tony was going through basic training at Fort Bliss, and I'd just graduated, and he told me I'd get to see the world if I married him. I was glad to--anything was better than staying in El Paso the rest of my life."

He watched as she drew her knees up to her chin and looked out across the water. She suddenly seemed a thousand miles away--back in El Paso, he thought.

"You're lucky," she said. "You've got it made with your boat and fancy cars and motel."

"They don't mean much after a while."

"Rich people always say things like that," she said, sounding envious but not bitter.

He smiled for the first time. "We're not rich."

"You don't have to worry about money, do you?"

"No, but--"

"I do. You think I like getting alimony from Tony?"

"Then stop."

"How would I live?"

"I could get you a job at the motel."

"No way," she said, laughing. "I want to be the boss--like you. I want to be able to sit back and relax and watch the money roll in."

"It's not that easy."

"Maybe not. But I can think of things that're a lot worse."

Paul leaned back on his elbows and sighed. "Sometimes I think I'm ready to give it all up. Just go somewhere else and leave it all behind. The motel, Champ, everything."

Anne looked at him. "Why?"

"To get out of Champ's shadow. He dominates me. I'm even dominated by things he did a long time ago--like when he got caught messing around with one of his students. That's why he got fired. I've never been able to forget that."

"It's not that big a deal," she said gently. "It happens all the time."

"Not around here it doesn't," he muttered. "They tried to keep it hushed up, but word got around. It was like everyone suddenly turned Puritan. They were all against me and Champ."

"What did they do?"

He paused, then said, "Well, they didn't do anything, really. But that's just it. They left us alone, made us feel like outsiders--except for a few people like Doc."

"I think you're making too much of it."

"It's not me," he insisted, "it's Champ. He's the one who's alienated himself, and he's dragging me with him. He thinks it's me and him against the world."

"Then you should talk to him," said Anne. "Tell him what you're telling me."

He shook his head. "It's not that easy. It's hard not to believe in him, to sort of give yourself up to him. That's why he was such a good coach, why everybody used to like him."

Hell, they worshipped him."

"He really was as good as Doc said?"

"Yes, he was," Paul said. "We came to Junction right after Mom died, the summer before I started fourth grade. They hired Champ to turn around the basketball program, and it was the best thing that ever happened to him, going from the smallest to the largest class school in the state. He'd been coaching all the sports at Dwight, a little farm community twenty miles south of here. He was a good coach, but he wasn't really going anywhere--until he got to J.C. It took the team just two years to win the state championship with him as coach. And then they went on to win two more. But it was that first championship that really counted, because that's when the town fell in love with him. They had a Champ Spinner Day. They held it in the gym one night in March, and the place was packed. They'd built a platform at one end of the court, and Champ and I sat up there with the mayor and the principal and some members of the school board. The mayor and the principal gave speeches, and then I got to present Champ with the plaque."

Pausing, Paul looked at the sky. It burned red and orange for as far as he could see--it seemed to have been set on fire by the sun that was quickly sinking behind the trees. He took a drink of beer, but found it hard to swallow.

"I'll never forget it," he went on. "Giving Champ the plaque, and him squeezing the daylights out of my hand when he shook it, and the whole place rocking with noise. And Champ's

speech. He talked about winning and starting a new tradition, and about how a town showed its class through its support of a team. Jesus, everybody was cheering so hard the roof almost caved in. I could almost feel the platform shaking."

Finished, he looked down at his arms and saw they had goosebumps.

"Is that when they started calling him Champ?" Anne asked.

He smiled, remembering. "It was in the locker room after we won that first championship down at Wichita. I was standing right next to Champ when all the reporters started asking him questions. One of them asked me what I thought, and I said, 'You can start calling him Champ now.' The reporters ate it up, and so did the team, and word got around."

"What's his real name?"

"Champ is his real name now," he said. "He had it changed."

She stared at him. "You're kidding."

"No. His driver's license reads Champ Spinner."

"What was his name before?"

"Doesn't matter," he said. "It never really did matter."

"It must be a terrible name if you won't tell me."

"No, it's just that it never really existed. He was always Champ--it just took something to make it official."

They were quiet for a moment, and then Anne said, "You're right, Paul. You do need to get away from him."

"Those were good times," he said. "I won't forget them."

He looked up at the sky again, whose bright, intense colors

already seemed to be fading. Its fire was almost out now, with the sun's last rays falling dully upon the water, and he began to feel a sense of anti-climax.

He turned to Anne, who was gazing back at him with one of those mask-like expressions he couldn't read. He suddenly hated her for it--after all he had just said, she still wouldn't respond with any kind of emotion, not even a look. Her mouth was a straight line, her eyes like chips of jade. He remembered how only yesterday he had been fascinated by her eyes and the way they seemed to see all yet reveal nothing, but now he could only feel resentment.

"So what're you going to do about Champ?" she asked.

"I don't know. I've thought about giving him my share of the motel and taking off for some place, but I'm afraid to. Champ needs me."

"For what?"

"I'm his best friend. He counts on me being around."

"Maybe he doesn't need you as much as you think," Anne said. "He keeps disappearing on you, doesn't he? He runs off and leaves you responsible for the motel, and he won't even tell you why. How much do you owe him?"

Paul didn't reply, and she added, "I think you should leave, if that's what you want. And I'll go with you."

He could see a look of anticipation in her face now, and, though she sat unmoving, she seemed poised to jump if he gave the word.

"Where would we go--and when?" he said. It was more of a demand than question.

"That's up to you."

He stood up from the blanket. He had to. The abrupt sense of upheaval he felt seemed to demand that he start moving about, if only in circles. He tried to think where they might go, and how soon, but the more he thought about it, the more he saw its complexity. It would mean quitting school, finding a job. But he wouldn't have to work right away. Now that he was twenty-one, he could start spending the money his mother had left for him in a trust fund. But leaving Marjorie. And battling it out with Champ. But Champ was gone. Paul almost smiled. As much as he loved his father, he couldn't help but think how fitting it would be if Champ returned to find that his son had disappeared.

All the Pleasures Prove:

A Critical Afterword

Like many 20th-Century American novels, All the Pleasures Prove draws upon an amalgamation of literary traditions. Those writers who have influenced my work, and whose novels I find similar to mine, will play an important part in my discussion. But in order to undertake this examination, I must first look at my novel as a whole, making clear to the reader how the first two chapters of All the Pleasures Prove relate to the rest of the book.

As the first two chapters indicate, All the Pleasures Prove concerns Paul Spinner's need to demonstrate to himself his capability of having a relationship with a woman that is based upon love, compassion, and respect. His problem is one of sexual identity, and a distorted view of himself. Because of the dominance of sex in his past relationships, he believes he is corrupt and incapable of loving a woman, like his father Champ. Champ is the cause of his identity problem, and one of the major obstacles he must overcome. Paul understands, as he tells Anne Nickerson at the end of Chapter Two, that Champ dominates him, and has encouraged him to rebel against the society that has treated his father unfairly. But Paul is unsure of the way in which

he should deal with him. He loves Champ because Champ is his father, and he idolizes him for the coaching glories he garnered. In his eyes, Champ is a fallen hero. He also feels he owes an allegiance to him--Champ has told him many times that Paul is his best friend. But at the same time, Paul hates Champ for the promiscuous lifestyle he has encouraged them both to live, and, more specifically, for Champ's convincing him to spend the night with the hooker on his sixteenth birthday. This was one of the key events in Paul's life, and one that backfired, for it led him to believe that he was "ruined." Thus, all of his subsequent relationships with women have been defeated from the start, for he accepts the idea that there can be nothing more for him in a relationship than sex, as Champ tells him.

It is not until Paul meets Nikki Wingfoot that he realizes, out of desperation, that he is capable of loving a woman. His desperation produces both a positive and a negative effect: it forces him to seek changes in his life, to try to become the kind of "moral" man he wants to be. But it also clouds his judgment. Once he realizes he is capable of loving someone, he becomes obsessed with proving his love. He sees his relationship with Nikki as an "adventure" in which he is discovering more about himself. But his motives are ironic, for, while they are well-meaning, they are also self-serving.

Once Nikki leaves him, and he spends the night with Jaine, he turns again in desperation to Anne Nickerson, with

whom he gets more than he bargained for. He has to contend with her lying, her desire for a sexual relationship from the start, and her ability to move him to violence. He also finds that he now has a responsibility for her that he is not sure he wants: he must protect her from her ex-husband Tony, who, she says, is threatening to do her physical harm. And, most importantly, he must come to understand why he is involved with Anne in the first place, and decide whether or not to continue their relationship.

In the first two chapters, I have tried to establish a pattern of revelation for both Paul and the reader, which will continue throughout the novel. Paul is the initiator of this pattern. His reflecting upon his past, and his gradually discovering the truths about Anne's past and her motives for being with him, help him gain a better understanding of himself and the nature of his relationship with Anne. And in doing so, he answers the reader's questions about the characters. Paul's relationships with Champ, Nikki, and past women are gradually made clearer. The details of Anne's marriage to Tony are also revealed, and the mystery concerning Champ's disappearing from the motel, and Marjorie's involvement in it, is answered.

In order to describe more specifically what happens in All the Pleasures Prove beyond Chapter Two, I would like to briefly discuss the development of Paul's relationships with Champ and Anne.

In Chapter Three, while Paul is secretly preparing with

Anne to move to a secluded cabin at Milford Lake, he meets with his father in Aggieville and learns that Champ disappeared from the motel in response to Marjorie's turning in her two weeks' notice. Her reason for quitting is the series of passes Champ has recently begun to make at her. But she misunderstands the meaning of his advances, for Champ has fallen in love with her, but is unsure of how to conduct himself. Even Champ does not fully realize he loves her, until he has his conversation with Paul. As he discusses with Paul his feelings about losing Marjorie, Champ comes to fully understand how much he has taken her for granted, and how much he loves her. This is the starting point for the understanding that gradually develops between the two men. Paul immediately makes an attempt to get Marjorie to stay, but, when he fails, he washes his hands of the matter and moves with Anne to the cabin. But he cannot forget his father, and, three weeks later, he returns to the motel and finds Champ failing to cope with the business responsibilities that Marjorie has left him. Paul does not tell Champ where he is living, and at first he provides him with only a few vague details about his relationship with Anne. But he agrees to spend some time at the motel to help Champ get it running smoothly again. Over the next month, they become increasingly dependent upon each other, and they realize their need to resolve their differences. They achieve an honesty and an intimacy in their relationship that was not present before, much of which is due to Paul's telling Champ more and more details about his relation-

ship with Anne. Anne serves to bring father and son together, for Paul turns to Champ for advice, and Champ realizes that the advice he gives must contradict much of the advice he has given Paul in the past. From what Paul has said about Anne, Champ knows what kind of a woman she is, and he is afraid of his son's being with her. Thus Champ understands the role he must play if he is not only to help his son, but to keep from losing him also: he must adapt himself to be the kind of father Paul thinks he should be. He must provide the love and guidance that Paul is seeking through Anne. And, though he does not realize it, Paul serves as a model for his father in that Champ comes to respect his devotion toward making his relationship with Anne succeed--misdirected as it is. That the relationship finally fails is, in one sense, not important, for Paul and Champ arrive at a better understanding and respect for each other.

While Nikki Wingfoot served as the catalyst in Paul's life, it is Anne who brings about his catharsis. She helps to purge him of his guilt and distorted views about being a corrupt man. However, there is an irony to the "help" she gives him. As the novel progresses, Paul comes to realize that his corruptness pales in comparison to Anne's. He learns that she is using him as she has used many men, and he discovers Tony not to be the dangerous man Anne says he is. From Tony, and from his own experiences with Anne, Paul becomes aware of her fear and hatred of men. She sees herself as living in a world dominated by men who are out to persecute her. And, in order to prove herself

right, she acts as their antagonist, instigating them to violent acts. To a degree she is masochistic, allowing herself to be abused so that she can then use that abuse as a means to control men. She begins this process with Paul in the car scene at the beginning of Chapter Two, and, later in the boat scene, provokes him almost to the point that he loses control of himself. Paul also learns from Tony the extent to which she once hurt herself in order to hurt her husband: she purposely miscarried. Tony's information is reliable; however, like Paul, his actions are not, at least not when he is dealing with Anne. For example, he did give her the bruise, as she tells Paul in Chapter One, but only after she baited him as she does Paul in Chapter Two.

But, unlike Tony, who is never quite able to free himself from Anne's influence, Paul leaves her at the end of the novel. However, he is only able to do this once he has experienced the major crisis in his life: his raping Anne. I realize the danger of having my point-of-view character commit such a violent act, but I can only leave it to the reader to decide the degree to which Paul is guilty, and whether or not he deserves a loss of sympathy. At the risk of sounding sexist, I believe the reader will have to consider the circumstances of Paul and Anne's relationship, and the extent to which Anne instigates her own rape. The reader may ultimately decide that she "seduces" Paul into committing the rape so that his subsequent guilt will be a means for her to control him.

Once the act has occurred, the realizations that have been

slowly forming in Paul's mind become fully clear. First, he understands that for Anne--and their relationship--sex is substituted for love, and that they are only using each other for their own purposes. He discovers that he is practicing the values that he is trying to escape. He is able to see, then, how his obsession with proving his love for a woman has distorted his judgment. But despite his failings, he sees that his intentions have been good, and that he has always had the capability to love. His willingness to cope with the increasing tension between himself and Anne, and to try to resolve their conflicts, is proof to him of his ability to make a commitment. However, the reader may find another motive for his committing himself to Anne: his subconscious need to punish himself for his past sins.

And so, finally, Paul arrives at a better understanding of himself and his relationship with the people who are important in his life. Not only does he achieve a close friendship with Champ, but he also accepts the fact that Nikki never loved him, and that his intentions regarding their relationship were self-serving. Moreover, he is able to conquer the failings he has in the early part of the novel: his refusal to be fully honest, to cope with someone else's pain, and to look deeply into his heart and into the hearts of the people he loves.

Writing the remainder of this afterword has been a process of discovery for me. I have always known that certain writers

have influenced me, but I was not aware of the extent of their influence until I learned how my novel owes its existence to three literary traditions of the novel: the realistic novel, the romance, and the novel of manners. Then I was able to see how three writers' combining the same traditions in their novels encouraged me to do the same. The writers I speak of here are F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and a more contemporary American writer, Scott Spencer. This afterword is, then, structured according to the sequence of discoveries I have made. I will begin by first discussing the basic influences that Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Spencer have had upon my writing--influences that I was conscious of while writing All the Pleasures Prove, including its earlier drafts. Following this will be a brief discussion of the development of American realism, which helped to influence writers like Fitzgerald and Hemingway, who, in turn, influenced me. Then, in the major portion of the afterword, I will show how my novel contains elements of the three traditions I have already referred to, and how it bears similarities to Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, and Spencer's Preservation Hall and Endless Love.

To discuss certain writers' influences upon me, I must speak of the degree of their influences. Every novel and story I read instructs or encourages me in some way. The degree of influence might be that I learn, for example, more about the uses of description, as I have from Flannery O'Connor's stories.

Concerning description, O'Connor says: "The beginning of human knowledge is through the senses, and the fiction writer begins where human perception begins. He appeals through the senses "1 Or the influence might be extreme, as it was two years ago, when Walker Percy's The Moviegoer impressed me enough that I tried to base my novel upon the premise of a young man living his life as if it were a movie. Or, I might be influenced by certain characters. For example, Dashiell Hammett's Brigid O'Shaughnessy, in The Maltese Falcon, helped me to shape Anne Nickerson's characteristic elusiveness in responding to Paul Spinner's questions in Chapter One.

But the influence of Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Spencer has been more pervasive, ranging from matters of technique to thematic concerns. Their fiction has, in fact, impressed me to such an extreme degree that, with the exception of Spencer's, I tried at various times to imitate their styles.

Of the three, Fitzgerald was the first to influence me, and, for a while, about three years ago, he hindered my development as a writer. I was searching for subjects to write about, and ways to tell them, and I turned to Fitzgerald, whose fiction had achieved for me a romanticism that I subsequently found hard to escape. I tried to adopt his characters and themes and, on one occasion, the narrative persona in "The Rich Boy." Even today, so great is the power of Nick Carraway as the narrator

1 Flannery O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, p. 67.

of The Great Gatsby, that I find it hard not to write in the first-person without thinking of Nick's voice and sensibilities. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but I found that, in most respects, it did me little good. My imitation of Fitzgerald's fiction was poor, and I was often writing about subjects that I knew little about. All in all, I was detoured for a time from developing my own voice and style, and from finding subjects that were closer to my heart.

But I believe the detour was ultimately worthwhile, for Fitzgerald helped me in two respects when I began to write All the Pleasures Prove. First, his focus upon characters who fail in some way because of the illusions they have created for themselves helped me to shape the character of Paul Spinner. Paul, like Jay Gatsby, creates an illusion of a woman upon which he places his dreams, his future, in fact his salvation. Ultimately, the illusion is shattered, though Paul, unlike Gatsby, is able to benefit from the experience. Second, Fitzgerald influenced my use of description. When I described the water and the sky in the lake scene at the end of Chapter Two, I was reminded of the significance of colors in Fitzgerald's fiction, particularly in The Great Gatsby and "Winter Dreams." The beauty that Paul sees in this setting, specifically in the way the sun's red and orange colors make the sky seem on fire, gives him a false sense of fulfillment. Nature seems to be in accord with him as he recalls the glories he once shared with Champ-- but only for a moment.

Hemingway was my second major influence, and, like Fitzgerald, he has been a help and a hindrance. When I realized my need to stop imitating Fitzgerald, I began to imitate Hemingway's lean, terse style and impersonal voice, hoping I could somehow achieve a balance between the two writers. As a result, I swung too far toward Hemingway, writing a few short stories, and part of an earlier draft of my novel, which failed to prove Hemingway's "iceberg theory": what little meaning my fiction had was entirely above water. But I learned from Hemingway to pare sentences and paragraphs, to cut away some of the expository fat that had been accumulating while I was imitating Fitzgerald. Today, he still reminds me of the importance of every word and sentence that make up a piece of fiction. Hemingway also influenced me in regard to subject matter. His first novel, The Sun Also Rises, helped me to solidify some of my ideas about All the Pleasures Prove. I saw that, like Jake Barnes, Paul was in search of a code by which he could live. And his major obstacle in finding this code involved his sexual and psychological confrontation with a woman.

Two years ago, on the heels of Fitzgerald and Hemingway, I became influenced by a third, more contemporary writer, Scott Spencer, the author of Preservation Hall (1976) and Endless Love (1979). Technically, Spencer continues to influence me with his superb use of similes--I have come to see how they can vividly describe a character, a feeling, or a setting. Spencer is a great stylist, though he did not influence me to

the degree that I tried to imitate him, because I saw how difficult it would be, and because I had come to realize the importance of developing my own style. He impressed me nevertheless, because he helped me to learn--even more than Hemingway--how effectively style can establish tone, character, and theme. As an example of Spencer's style, I include here the opening paragraph of Endless Love:

When I was seventeen and in full obedience to my heart's most urgent commands, I stepped far from the pathway of normal life and in a moment's time ruined everything I loved--I loved so deeply, and when the love shrank back in terror and my own body was locked away, it was hard for others to believe that a life so new could suffer so irrevocably. But now, years have passed and the night of August 12, 1967, still divides my life.²

The voice is compelling, intense, lyrical, and not fully reliable, and thus it helps to reveal the novel's subject: a young man's obsession with a girl.

But Spencer's focus upon the oppressive aspects of love--selfishness, obsession, alienation, and self-destruction--

² Scott Spencer, Endless Love, p. 3.

influenced me the most when I began to write All the Pleasures Prove. I was concerned with these aspects also, and Spencer showed me how they can be given substance in the form of a novel. Both of his novels made me more aware of the radical extent to which a man's need for love--and his belief that love can only be found in one person--will guide his actions and affect his life. In this respect, Virgil Morgan and David Axelrod, the narrators of Preservation Hall and Endless Love, respectively, are similar to Jay Gatsby--and Paul Spinner. Many of the darker aspects of my novel, such as Paul's obsession and vulnerability in regard to Anne, and his frustrating sexual relationship with her later in the novel, have in large part been influenced by Spencer's fiction.

And yet, despite being influenced by these three writers, I did not see how their drawing upon literary traditions in their novels led me to incorporate elements of the same traditions in All the Pleasures Prove. It was not until I read Maxwell Geismar's American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity and Richard Chase's The American Novel and Its Tradition that I began to recognize my novel's literary sources, and how it is what Chase calls an "amalgamation" of traditions.

Geismar has helped me to decide that I am one of those post World War II writers who has his " . . . spiritual roots in the literary efflorescence of the Twenties."³ (I must

³ Maxwell Geismar, American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity, p. 15.

exclude here for the moment my debt to Spencer.) In regard to the literature of the 1920's, Geismar says:

But that period was not the start of a literary renaissance, as everybody then thought, but rather the culmination of a movement that began with Stephen Crane and Jack London. By the 1920's the main force of this development in American fiction had already moved into the areas of technique and of individual sensibility⁴

Thus, while my "spiritual roots" are located in the 1920's, I must look further back to find the roots of such writers as Fitzgerald and Hemingway in order to discover the traditions to which my novel belongs. And once again I have found Geismar's comments helpful. In one of his essays, he briefly discusses the origins of naturalism, and how its relationship to American realism at the beginning of the 20th Century began " . . . a great liberating movement in our letters"⁵ He says that "European naturalism attempted to dispel the superstitions and prejudices of its own period; to see human character

⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

⁵ Ibid, p. 22.

as it actually existed."⁶ He goes on to list the first group of 20th-Century American realists, including Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, Ellen Glasgow, and Theodore Dreiser, and says that their use of naturalism was a " . . . struggle against the shallow and trivial literary climate of the 1900's " ⁷ He then states:

This was the "coming of age" . . . of the modern movement. For what has been called the "Sexual Revolution" in our native letters was actually, during this period, the freedom to discuss human character and human relationships in terms of those primary needs and drives which actually do determine our success or failure in life, which create our happiness and follies. The next group of American writers to appear on the literary scene is more familiar today. It included Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and William Faulkner. But to a certain degree the famous figures of the 1920's merely developed and consolidated the literary rights and privileges which had

⁶ Ibid, p. 22.

⁷ Ibid, p. 23.

been earned for them during the grim struggle of their ancestors.⁸

It is at this point that I turn to Richard Chase's The American Novel and Its Tradition, to discuss my novel's amalgamation of literary traditions. Chase discusses, in much greater depth than Geismar, the American realistic novel, and he also points out the amalgamation of realism and romance in American novels:

. . . the fact seems to be that the history of the American novel is not only the history of the rise of realism but also of the repeated rediscovery of the uses of romance, and that this will continue to be so. In view of this fact about American literature, it becomes of some interest to describe how, in certain instances, this process of the amalgamation of realism and romance has been going on.⁹

But I have found that this "amalgamation" must include, in my novel's case, a third tradition: the novel of manners.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

⁹ Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition, p. xii.

And it is the combination of elements of these three traditions that I would like to focus upon in showing how my novel bears similarities to novels by Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Spencer. But first I will discuss my novel's relationship to the traditions in the following order: the realistic novel, the romance, and the novel of manners. Included in this discussion will be a number of Chase's references to Henry James who, I have discovered, has been an indirect but important influence upon my development as a writer.

Above all, All the Pleasures Prove strives to be realistic, to be a "novel" according to Chase's definition of the word:

The novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. It takes a group of people and sets them going about the business of life. We come to see these people in their real complexity of temperament and motive. They are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past. Character is more important than action and plot, and probably the tragic or comic actions of the narrative will have the primary purpose of enhancing our knowledge of and feeling for an important character, a group of characters, or a way of life. The events that occur will usually be plausible, given the

circumstances, and if the novelist includes a violent or sensational occurrence in his plot, he will introduce it only into such scenes as have been (in the words of Percy Lubbock) "already prepared to vouch for it."¹⁰

While I have included only the first two chapters of All the Pleasures Prove in this report, they should serve to show these realistic, or "novel" elements. I have tried to make my novel as realistic as possible by first providing it with clear, factual settings. Moreover, I have given the main characters in the first two chapters--Paul and Anne--realistic "businesses of life." Paul is a college student and responsible for some of the business matters at the motel, of which he is co-owner. Anne is also a student, and, while her business in the first two chapters seems mostly to cause trouble, she is a woman who must come to terms with Paul, her ex-husband Tony--and herself. She faces the decision that many people face: the direction in life she must take now that she is divorced. As of yet the reader has not seen their full "complexity of temperament and motive," and their full relation to each other. What makes their story worth telling is that they have created for themselves a situation that demands to be resolved. And because their situation, their world, and they as people are "real,"

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 12.

the reader will, I hope, find an immediacy to their story, and come to care about what befalls them. Thus characterization becomes important, for, in order for the story to be real, it is Paul and Anne who must initiate the action of the plot, instead of being forced by the plot (the author) to perform deeds which may strike the reader as being artificial. And when these characters are shown in action, and have real motives for the things they say and do, they continue to grow more real, "enhancing our knowledge of and feeling for [them]." They also contribute to Henry James's view of the "moral significance of the novel":

As for the moral significance of the novel, James sees a "perfect dependence of the 'moral' sense of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it." We must ask, he says, "is it valid, in a word, is it genuine, is it sincere, the result of some direct impression of perception of life."¹¹

But, while All the Pleasures Prove is a realistic novel, it also has " . . . a tendency towards melodrama and idyl . . . a tendency to plunge into the underside of consciousness . . . "¹²,

¹¹ Ibid, p. 24.

¹² Ibid, p. ix.

which, according to Chase, are some of the elements that make up a romance. The element of idyl begins later in the novel, in Chapter Four, when Paul and Anne move into the secluded cabin at Milford Lake in an attempt to escape the realities they must sooner or later face. They are surrounded by the beauty of the lake, yet their seclusion only leads them to continue the series of confrontations, often violent, that began in the first two chapters. This, along with the threat of violence that Anne says her ex-husband poses, constitutes the melodrama. But I hope that the violence or "danger" in my novel will go " . . . beyond the escapism . . . often associated with [romance]"¹³ to constitute the kind of "common and covert" dangers that James speaks of:

. . . [James] decides that the common element in sensational tales is "the facing of danger" and . . . that for most of us the danger represented by caravans and forgers is certainly benign or impotent compared with the "common and covert" dangers we face in our everyday existence, which may "involve the sharpest hazards to life and honor and the highest instant decisions and intrepidities of action."¹⁴

¹³ Ibid, p. x.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 26.

The violence in my novel serves as a means for making Paul confront some important issues. He must probe into the darker side of his consciousness to find the reasons for his violent behavior toward Anne, and for his being involved with her in the first place.

The third tradition to which All the Pleasures Prove owes itself is the novel of manners. I consider my novel to be a part of this tradition almost as much as it is to the realistic novel--and it is, in fact, the elements of realism which help to give my novel the characteristics of the novel of manners:

. . . all novels, committed as they are to "render reality closely and in comprehensive detail," must report the manners of the characters, must report, that is, all the special attitudes, gestures, and conventional responses people make because they belong to a certain class, a certain time, or a certain school of thought or conduct. This will always be a large part of the reality the novelist renders 15

The distinction between these traditions is that the novel of manners concentrates specifically on manners and on a particular social class, and has " . . . an affinity in tone and

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 157.

method with the high comedy of the stage."¹⁶ While my novel does not contain these elements, it does focus greatly upon the moral conduct of the characters, and again I believe it valuable to use, as a reference point, part of Chase's definition of the novel of manners:

Most important of all, such moral standards as are advanced by the author are those of society . . . or have, at least, a concrete social sanction and utility. According to these standards, aberrations and distortions of conduct in individuals will be corrected . . . or if these aberrations are incorrigible in any individual, he may be destroyed or expelled by society. And very often, of course, the standard of judgment invoked will not be any particular social convention but the socially shared sagacity known as "common sense." Very often too we find common sense being brought into play to correct ideals which are fanatical or absurdly impractical and are at odds, therefore, with the necessary compromises and imperfections of any social order.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 158.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 158.

The key to Paul's solving his problems in All the Pleasures Prove is his gaining the common sense of which Chase speaks. And this is what my novel is about: his being able to use his experiences with Anne and Champ as a means for gaining that common sense. This of course involves his learning how to be objective and perceptive enough to understand the significance of his experiences, though it is not until he rapes Anne that he is fully able to realize the destructive nature of his relationship with her. But there is a sense of progression to his "education," which is shown particularly in his relationship with Champ. In a general sense, what he learns is his need to "get along" with his father. He comes to recognize the mutual advantages of having a good relationship with Champ--it is better to face problems with someone than by oneself. Champ also understands this, and thus the two men are able to resolve their differences. Paul is also able to overcome two problems he has in Chapters One and Two: his fear of revealing the truth about himself to people, and his reluctance to be sympathetic with someone who has gone through a crisis, like Anne has with her baby. Ultimately, he must be honest and sympathetic in order to form a bond with Champ. Moreover, his honesty and sympathy are going to show him the contrast between himself and Anne, who possesses neither. When he sees himself beginning to grow as a person, he will be able to view Anne's lack of maturity more clearly.

What Paul is searching for is a code of living which is

first of all " ; . . . personal, intuitive, and stoic "18
 He must be able to resolve the conflicts he has within himself, and with the people who are closest to him. And, very importantly, he must realize that if he is indeed an outcast from society, it is only because he--and not Champ or society itself--has made himself so. Once he has put his life into order, he will then be able to live comfortably within the society from which he once felt himself alienated.

I am now brought back to the influence that Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Spencer have had upon my writing. Their great degree of influence is clearer to me, for I am able to see that certain elements of the literary traditions in my novel bear similarities to elements in theirs.

Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby has influenced me to a large extent in the way it combines realism and romance. It provides us with the realistic settings of East Egg and West Egg, but, like in a romance, these places are partially removed from the rest of the world's "business of life." They comprise the "idyl" that Chase speaks of, places that, while not rustic or rural, nevertheless are meant to provide a haven for the people who inhabit them. There is also a mixture of realism and romance in the characters. They are realistic in their temperaments and motives, and are in a clear relation to each other and their social class. But, like the places in which they live, they

18 Ibid, p. 160.

seem to neither have nor want any connections with the "outside world." In one sense, Paul and Champ Spinner are like these people in that they have exiled themselves from the rest of society on the pretext that they are "different."

When I began to write my novel, this combination of realism and romance encouraged me to try to place Paul and Champ, and their world of the Championship Motor Inn, at a distance from the obligations and compromises demanded by society. But the tradition of the novel of manners suggests that a character's "abberations and distortions of conduct" will be corrected, or that at least the attempt will be made. In this regard, Paul is similar to Gatsby in that they are alienated figures who must come to terms with society. However, their views of society differ. As Chase says of Gatsby, " . . . society and its ways, so far as the hero knows them, are not ends but means to a transcendent ideal."¹⁹ But for Paul, being able to live in accord with society is his final goal. The two men are also in contrast in that Paul is able to achieve his goal, while Gatsby, unable to change his attitudes, is destroyed.

The mixture of realism and romance in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises has similarly influenced me. Like The Great Gatsby, it focuses upon a group of people who have exiled themselves to a romantic setting. Critic Paul West reacts unfavorably to Hemingway, calling him " . . . a son of one half of the native

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 165.

tradition which . . . splits into realistic documentary and romantic escapism," and adding that Hemingway " . . . prolongs, idiosyncratically, the romance tradition: a sympathetic imaginativeness remote from the everyday life of the nation . . . "20 My intention here is not to argue for or against West's assertions, but to call attention to Hemingway's working within these traditions, and to show how it influenced, in a constructive way, I believe, my writing All the Pleasures Prove. Obviously, Paul and Champ are not as removed from the mainstream of American life as are Jake Barnes and his friends. But their rebellious nature, and their creation of their own private society, results in part from the example set by Hemingway's characters. Jake and company escape to Spain, while Paul and Champ escape to their motel domain, and then Paul further flees to the seclusion of the lakeside cabin. And yet they are still confronted by the uncertainty of how to conduct themselves with each other. Like Jake, Paul is searching for a code by which to live. However, Paul hopes that such a code will ultimately help him find his place within society, while Jake seeks a code that does not seem to be concerned as much with meeting the demands of society, nor, for that matter, those of his friends. As a consequence, many of Jake's conflicts are left unresolved.

But in establishing their codes, Jake and Paul are similarly confronted by what critic Leslie Fiedler quite enthusias-

20 Paul West, The Modern Novel, p. 221.

tically calls "the bitch-goddess," the woman whose sole purpose, it seems, is to destroy the hero. I will not debate whether or not Fiedler is correct in saying that American writers " . . . shy away from permitting in their fictions the presence of any full-fledged, mature women, giving us instead monsters of virtue or bitchery, symbols of the rejection or fear of sexuality."²¹ But I think there is some value in using Fiedler's label of "the bitch-goddess," if only as a means to recognize the extreme degree of antagonism provided by a particular group of characters in literature. Brett Ashley in The Sun Also Rises and Anne Nickerson in All the Pleasures Prove fall into this group. They are, for Jake and Paul, "monsters" because they represent the fears and frustrations of sex. Jake cannot have sex, and Brett only increases his frustration by being his psychological temptress. She serves as a constant reminder to him of the way things could have been. Even at the end of The Sun Also Rises, she says to Jake: "' . . . we could have had such a damned good time together.'"²² However, in All the Pleasures Prove, Paul does not want to have a physical relationship with Anne because one of the rules of the code he is trying to establish will not allow him such a relationship until he is sure of his feelings for her. Anne disputes this rule, thereby challenging not only his ability to carry it out, but his belief in it as

²¹ Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, p. xix.

²² Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises, p. 247.

well. Toward the end of the bedroom scene in Chapter One, Paul thinks that his decision not to make love to her doesn't seem to make any sense. Then, after Anne goes to sleep, he further thinks that he might be "trying to make an issue out of nothing." But even if Brett and Anne are "monsters of bitchery," they are not unrealistic characters. They possess the qualities that Chase says characters in a realistic novel should have. Their motives and temperaments might not gain much respect, and their "business of life" at times seems to involve going about finding a legitimate business. But in the eyes of Jake and Paul, they are women who call into question some very important issues concerning the conduct that should be established between a man and a woman.

In Preservation Hall and Endless Love, Scott Spencer carries on the "tradition" of combining literary traditions. His concern is with men who, through their obsessive love of a woman, have alienated themselves not only from society, but from the woman herself. Accordingly, then, his novels contain elements of the novel of manners. The alienation of these young men--Virgil Morgan in Preservation Hall and David Axelrod in Endless Love--begins at home: Virgil is ashamed of his father, whom he sees as an oddball and a failure, and David can feel neither respect nor closeness for his parents, whose membership in the Communist party has made them the outcasts of the neighborhood--especially in David's eyes. Thus, both men feel a sense of relief and belonging when they fall in love, Virgil with Tracy Keating, who becomes his wife, and David with Jade

Butterfield. But both men's need for the love of these women becomes so obsessive that they seek no social intercourse. Centering his life upon Tracy, Virgil looks upon his few friends as intruders who must be dutifully tended to for the sake of propriety. And David, who has been told by Jade's parents that he cannot see her for a few weeks, becomes so desperate that he sets fire to the Butterfield house, in the living room of which are gathered the only friends he has, " . . . the people I adored more than anyone else in the world, and whose home I valued more than the home of my parents."²³

These aspects of alienation and obsession have influenced All the Pleasures Prove, helping to give it elements of the novel of manners. Paul is ashamed of his father, and believes he is responsible for his inability to create meaningful friendships with men and women. And so he turns to Anne, viewing her as his means of salvation. But, like Virgil and David, he becomes so obsessed with the relationship that he removes himself even further from the society he is already at odds with. As a college student, Paul has open to him a number of ways to meet people, to make friends. Instead, he places all his expectations upon one woman who has shown to him her inclination for violence and lying. Paul, like Virgil and David, lacks the common sense that he must finally gain in order to be in harmony with himself, his father, and the world. All three men share the aberration of

²³ Scott Spencer, Endless Love, p. 3.

having a distorted viewpoint: they believe their families have made them outcasts, and they perpetuate their sense of alienation by attaching themselves to a woman in hopes of creating their own private world and set of standards. Finally, Paul is able to change his viewpoint, while Virgil and David are, to use Chase's words, "expelled by society."

Spencer's novels are also realistic in their careful attention to detailed, factual settings, and to the characters' temperaments, motives, and relationships to each other. And it is this sense of actuality and inevitability that gives so much power to Preservation Hall and Endless Love, and makes the reader feel a deep concern for the events that befall the characters. But part of these novels' power must be attributed to Spencer's being a good story-teller. He has a good sense of plot, and uses elements of the romance to carry it out. Endless Love begins on a melodramatic note--David Axelrod sets fire to the Butterfield's house. And in Preservation Hall, there is the romantic element of the idyl. Virgil and Tracy Morgan buy the isolated country house in Maine, but instead of its being the retreat they hoped, it becomes the place wherein violence and alienation occur. In this respect, Preservation Hall has directly influenced All the Pleasures Prove. Just as Virgil and Tracy seek escape from the world in their house, which they name Preservation Hall, so do Paul and Anne seek refuge in the secluded, lakeside cabin. But the sense of the idyl quickly vanishes for both couples, being replaced by tension, confron-

tations, and finally violence. Though the novels have different specific causes for, and acts of, violence, their characters share the same general concern of discovering new truths about themselves and each other, and learning to cope with those truths.

* * * * *

As a writer whose "spiritual roots" are to a great extent located with some writers of the 1920's, I am, according to Maxwell Geismar, in a "difficult spot": "By now the literary power of the Twenties is becoming increasingly attenuated. The . . . writers of today can hardly derive much real sustenance from it."²⁴ Considering the fact that Geismar made this comment in 1953, my position might seem especially precarious. Concerning this problem, Geismar goes on to raise a question and then attempt to briefly answer it:

Where can a writer turn who still wants to root his work in the reality of his own time?

. . . The retreat either to the modes of personal sensibility or those of religious and social authoritarianism may be a refuge for him. But it is rarely the source of great

²⁴ Maxwell Geismar, American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity, p. 15.

art. The real drama and content of his period lie directly at the center of the chaos that surrounds him. It is there he must turn to come close to the spirit of the age, if he can only catch it.²⁵

That "chaos" for me is the subject of my novel: a man's need to find a way to live in accord with himself, his friends, and the world-at-large. To do this, he must establish some sort of code, or have at least a clear set of standards, which he will feel secure in obeying, especially in regard to the sexual relationships he forms. We are supposedly living now in a time of "sexual freedom," but if anything, that freedom has only raised more questions and problems concerning the ways in which we behave toward one another. In addressing these issues in my novel, I have found it difficult not to resort to the "personal sensibilities" of which Geismar speaks. But I have been lucky to have at hand the works of many writers, to which I can go for help. And I believe that writers like Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Spencer have helped me greatly, not only in showing me the ways in which a novel can be written, but in reminding me that in many respects they share the same concerns as I. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my teachers, and to the literary critics I have often referred to in this afterword, for helping me to recognize the techniques of great writers in the first place.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

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ALL THE PLEASURES PROVE:
TWO CHAPTERS OF A NOVEL ALONG WITH A CRITICAL AFTERWORD

by

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Abstract. The first two chapters of All the Pleasures Prove begin the story of Paul Spinner's search for a code of conduct which will allow him to live in accord with himself, his father Champ, and society. His problem is one of sexual identity, and a distorted view of himself, created in large part by Champ, who has encouraged them both to live a promiscuous lifestyle. Feeling alienated from society, and having long believed that he is incapable of loving a woman, Paul sets out to prove to himself that he is indeed capable of having a relationship that is based upon love, compassion, and respect. He attempts such a relationship with Anne Nickerson, recently divorced and, at thirty-three, twelve years older than he. But Anne provides more conflict for Paul in her desire to have a sexual relationship from the start. She also wants him for protection against her ex-husband Tony, who, she says, is a dangerous man. Ultimately, Paul must determine the value of his relationship with her, and whether or not to continue it.

In the critical afterword, I begin by briefly showing how the first two chapters of All the Pleasures Prove relate to the rest of the novel. I then discuss the three writers who most influenced my writing All the Pleasures Prove: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Scott Spencer. Using Maxwell Geismar's American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity and Richard Chase's The American Novel and Its Tradition as my major references, I show how my novel draws upon an amalgamation of

three literary traditions: the realistic novel, the romance, and the novel of manners. I then show how certain elements of these traditions in All the Pleasures Prove bear similarities to elements in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, and Spencer's Preservation Hall and Endless Love.