

M.B.:

Luxury of Circumstance

He began to believe he might not have been present when the revolutionary army came down from the mountains to occupy the island capital, since the age of naiveté was by now so far past that his saying he knew nothing of the situation when he went there for the erotic exoticism for which youth pines now seemed like fictive music for an imagined life. In those times, a revolution lived in difficult terrain, launching forays into the cities only to confirm the desperation of the populace. Victorious rebellions, whether velvet or sandpaper in character, were but seeds in the soil of mass graves of dissenters. The arts were a lilt and a laugh, government by catharsis. Thus he was at hand when the army was ordered into the streets, and, when the tenant across the hall was dragged off by soldiers, he caught the last plane out. How could he, of all people, have been in Cuba, in Serbia, in Nicaragua when the earth shook? He seemed always to be appearing at the edge of some precipice. As when, in a seaside village of southern Spain, the members of the Guardia Civil, posted at the corner with Uzis, ran their fingers through his son's hair in delight while the landlady asserted that Franco was already dead but didn't know it. One must acknowledge that native revolutionaries do not commit suicide. It is the soldiers of the invading armies who take their own lives. How had he been an army officer during an improvident war, and the soldiers volunteering for a lost cause? He thinks he betrayed his mind by trying to make other people's sense. Comparisons are odious, and ignorance is bliss.