A Writing Life
Weintraub, Stanley

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Chapter 7
Beginning Again
1956–1965

Starting off as a lowly Penn State instructor with a salary that barely covered living expenses was a handicap and an embarrassment. At the time, one picked up monthly checks at the pay desk in Willard Building, near my shared office. At the end of September, 1956, I announced my surname and was handed a large check clearly remote from my expectations. Looking at the name prefixed to Weintraub I found that an associate professor of meteorology, Charles Weintraub, whom I would never meet, was also at Penn State. (He would soon move on.) Reluctantly I returned the bounty and was given another check for much less. His name came up only once more. A quartet of dinner guests carrying expensive wine rang our doorbell at 128 E. Hamilton Avenue. They had located the wrong Weintraub in the faculty directory.

When Pennsylvania legislated a small bonus for Korean War veterans, we were enriched by a few hundred unanticipated dollars. Charles Weintraub was ineligible. No problem.

Although students erroneously called me “Professor,” we lived only a marginally professorial lifestyle. I had not received a contract—only a form letter announcing my appointment and measly initial salary. Greeting me also was an unwelcome state loyalty oath to sign. Many states in the malign sweep of McCarthyism had made a signed attestation of loyalty a requirement to receive or retain a position paid by public funds. That I had been an Army officer in the war against Communism serving honorably in a land far away from our shores was insufficient evidence that I was not dedicated to the overthrow of the United States. Holding my nose, I signed.
During the reign of McCarthyism, a lawyer from Bellefonte, the county seat, would regularly make the eleven-mile drive to campus to perch in the back row of classes, listening for the faintest signs of supposed anti-Americanism from professors, and report his suspicions to a McCarthy toady in Washington. The intimidation led to the departure of a friend, no radical, with whom I had regularly lunched during my first year at Penn State. Leon left the politically risky teaching of economics for a more lucrative alternative on Wall Street. The alcoholic demise of Joe McCarthy in 1957, discredited by his Senate censure in 1954, did not end McCarthyism as partisan abuse, but the loyalty oaths would fade away, some quashed by federal courts.1

After three months in a small furnished house only available into early December, Rodelle and I located an apartment building grandly named Riviera that was near completion but not quite ready for occupancy. Given our desperate circumstances we were permitted to move in anyway, treading carefully over unfinished floors. Our ground-level space proved always too warm as we were just above the poorly insulated heating system in the basement. We began looking for an inexpensive house. Late the next year we found a rather cheap brick dwelling attached to a twin, which was in its interior a twenty-four foot square with two floors and a damp basement.

We had no funds for the small down payment. Help came from an unlikely godfather—Bill Werner, my current office mate and senior American literature professor. He overheard my dilemma when I described our meager finances to a young colleague in the next office. “How much do you need?” Bill asked.

Once we moved in on the last morning in December 1957, Rodelle set to work with her sewing machine in the small spare bedroom upstairs to make curtains for the windows. Reaching an electrical outlet required an extension cord. A spark at the joint set fire to the bunched fabric. As the house filled with smoke we telephoned the town volunteer fire department. On our first evening in the first house we (and the bank) owned, we were homeless—and it was New Year’s Eve. We saw 1958 in at a nearby hotel while the firemen’s
strong fans cleared the house of smoke on New Year’s Day. Even with open windows in winter the atmosphere remained smoky for a week. Further, we had no curtains and no resources to replace the singed and burned fabric which firemen had heaved out. We lived with tacked-up sheets. The walls and stairwell below were not visibly blackened by smoke because they were painted a very dark green. (The previous owner had peculiar ideas about interior decoration.) Rodelle called upon her Uncle Harry, an occasional house painter in Philadelphia who lived precariously, as he preferred unemployment checks when his veteran’s eligibility for them regularly renewed. He stayed with us briefly until the walls were refinished, and left with our sliding closet doors re-hung askew.

We also lived at the start with balky wires hanging from the dining room ceiling, as the last occupant had taken the light fixture. I tried installing a replacement, but the lights would only go on if I activated the switch in the kitchen. For weeks, nearly everyone who visited in our early days at 1100 S. Atherton Street volunteered to fix the problem, resulting in blown fuses, outages, minor electric shocks and alternative switching failures. The Marx Brothers could have scripted the attempts and the outcomes. Finally, Rodelle resorted to someone without a Ph.D.—a local electrician. He arrived, laughed at the jumble of wiring, and in about ninety seconds had the dining room properly lit. “I’m embarrassed to charge you,” he said, “but how about two dollars?”

It came as a surprise that the property was threatened by construction of an intersecting street, Westerly Parkway. We had overlooked its paper future on a yet nonexistent corner, but soon a bulldozer extracted protective and unreimbursed yards of our lawn. Then a sewer easement came, representing both Atherton Street and the new road. We appealed, and lost. In dubious gain we had a traffic light flickering in our windows after dark, and screeching brakes whenever it turned red.

By then the ravenous coal furnace, which required constant replenishing, had become an exhausting incubus. We resorted desperately to an expensive transition to oil. Fortunately, that came with an unforeseen bonus. The abandoned coal bin had sturdy walls and a small, high window through which coal had been chuted in. Although it took months of drudgery during which I could do little professional work, I cleaned up the emptied but filthy coal bin, tiled the concrete floor,
built bookshelves on the bin walls, and attached lights—this time, ade-
quately. To keep basement dampness at bay I painted the cement block
walls with a thick moisture resistant substance, but blundered by ham-
ering a nail into a block to hang a corkboard. During the first big
rainstorm afterward I learned the power of flowing water. Downhill
drainage turned the nail hole into a spigot. With Rodelle’s help, I had
to plug the opening with concrete, clean up the mess, and restore with
a water retardant tar mixture.

I had constructed the least exotic library in Pennsylvania, no candi-
date for a feature in *House and Garden*. Yet for me the former coalbin
became a writer’s paradise—except when melting snow or flooding
rain seeped into the basement. We were at the bottom of a hill. Retar-
dants had their limits. It took digging a crude culvert, with Rodelle at a
second shovel, to divert further trouble.

Upstairs, the third and smallest bedroom was soon occupied by Da-
vid, our second son, born late in June 1958. Mark was then two. On
campus, via minor publications, I was becoming a very small profes-
sional success by Penn State standards, then, of marginal achievement.
I had become editor of a minor quarterly on Bernard Shaw, having
been discovered by the New York-based Shaw Society of America,
which had lost its editor to debilitating illness. However small its audi-
ence, including an assistant professor at a prestigious university who
urged me to publish an article he submitted, as his tenure decision
depended upon it, it was the first journal in the Humanities edited by
a Penn Stater. Although President Walker made a small fuss over the
news, I could not be promoted from lowly instructor to assistant pro-
fessor because the vice president for academic affairs—Penn State now
had several vice presidents in its bureaucracy and would eventually
and expensively have eleven—refused to approve my rise in rank unless
an unproductive crony of his, another instructor, was also promoted.
The stand-off, and my limbo, continued. When the petty bureaucrat
received, elsewhere, the gift of an honorary doctorate—he did not have
an earned one—and soon translated his unearned rank and degree into
a college presidency elsewhere, I regretted the expensive expedient, a
failed bribe, of presenting him with a copy of my first book, an edition
from manuscript of Shaw’s sixth and unfinished novel.
Inevitably my early writing efforts exploited my Ph.D. work—articles, a Shaw playlet in French translated (much too literally) for *Esquire*, and an edition of Shaw’s fiction fragment of 1887–1888. *An Unfinished Novel by Bernard Shaw* (1958) trapped me in the copyright binds of the Shaw Estate. I had written a chapter about the manuscript in my doctoral dissertation, pages which I adapted for the book into a preface. GBS, childless, had willed his literary estate to the Society of Authors in London. In turn, the estate’s representative mandated first publication (or its refusal) by Shaw’s last publishers, Constable in the U.K. and Dodd, Mead in the U.S. Jointly they opted for a limited edition of a small run, assuming that a fragment of fiction would have a minuscule market. As it was a take-it-or-leave-it proposition, I took it. The influential *Times Literary Supplement* in London reviewed it, giving me useful visibility. Over here, *Newsweek* noticed it favorably. Publication did not lift me into a higher income tax bracket. For the edition I received, not even covering such expenses as overseas postage, a lump sum payment of $84.

My university salary was so low that we were exploiting what became known as payday loans. Often they were extortionate, although not at our small-town bank. To borrow one hundred dollars each mid-month on my signature cost an interest fee of fifty cents. Rodelle could then pre-pay, at a small discount, the electric bill and anything else due before my check was deposited. The savings of a few dollars for a fifty-cent payback seemed enormous. As we could now afford a loaf of bread the week before payday, this ploy became routine.

Although I was acquiring a small reputation via journal publications prepared in my converted coalbin, another book remained far off. External grants were few and frustrating to try for. One needed boldface names for recommendations, and I did not yet know such people. Internal grants beyond a ridiculously token fifty dollars were still nonexistent in the Humanities. Research rather than textual criticism required expensive travel to archives; photocopy costs prior to Xerox were high, and permissions to quote copyrighted work had to be negotiated. Books unavailable to me on campus had to be acquired by purchase or by slow interlibrary loan, if at all; and I had courses to prepare and teach, and a growing family at home. Still, I was visible enough that I began hearing from other scholars and even helpful col-
lectors of Shaviana, and received invitations, with small fees, as a lecturer. One came from Edgar Johnson, biographer of Charles Dickens and the English chair at—then—City College of New York.

I realized that it was a look-me-over situation. I proposed to talk on Shaw’s sweeping indebtedness to Dickens, and Rodelle and I took the boys to stay with her parents in Philadelphia while we drove to and from Manhattan. By the time I parked the car and walked through the CCNY campus I knew that Happy Valley, whatever it lacked in academic clout and salary, was infinitely better for us, especially for bringing up our children, than life in New York. Johnson said he understood.

As the Shaw Society was based in Manhattan, and its treasurer was David Marshall Holtzmann, partner to Shaw’s New York lawyer and agent, we had occasional access to “house” theater tickets. Travel from State College to the Big Apple by rail (via Philadelphia) was expensive and required a thirty-mile drive to Lewistown, the nearest station, for the rare, two-a-day trains which, arriving from St. Louis via Pittsburgh, were often hours late. Rather, we drove the 240 miles through hills, poor roads, and often fog or worse—even longer when we left the children with their grandparents. On one return drive the snowfall in the Seven Mountains area between Lewistown and home was so blinding that I was relieved to see just ahead the red tail lights of the bus heading in our direction from the railway station we passed. I followed the lights all the way.

Despite travel struggles and hazards, thanks to Dave Holtzmann we saw the premiere of My Fair Lady in 1956, and other memorable Broadway productions. The Shaw Society moneybags who underwrote a new typewriter for me to produce its burgeoning journal was another lawyer, Maxwell Steinhardt, whose father had been a prime financial backer of Woodrow Wilson. A collector of Shaviana, Max was a member of the Grolier Club, where, at his quiet expense, Shaw Society meetings were held, including some unusual stage productions. One was an excised scene from Shaw’s lengthy Back to Methuselah (1921), which caricatured the excessively adipose G. K. Chesterton. “Immenso
“Champernoon” was played by the wheelchair-bound comic Michael Flanders, with Celeste Holm as his co-star. It was a grind to drive to New York, and expensive to stay, but while David and Max flourished, so did the Shaw Society. We stretched our resources to enjoy the opportunities, often driving back, sleepless and in darkness, through the Pennsylvania hills.

A letter in shaky handwriting arrived from LaFayette Butler, a resident of Hazelton, Pennsylvania, about a hundred miles to the northeast of Penn State. He knew about me from a bookseller in New York who had acquired a hard-to-get copy of An Unfinished Novel. Butler collected rare books and manuscripts. He had lots of Shaw and his contemporaries. “Come and see,” he urged on a postcard. For many years we made regular visits. Frail, with thinning white hair and thick glasses, Butler was nearly sightless, but he continued to fill his three-story, rambling frame house with new acquisitions he could no longer read. Years before inheriting a coal-mining fortune he had been, with a Princeton M.A., an English instructor at the University of Utah. Butler employed kids for after-school reading to him, which meant that his collection of pornography, including books with raunchy, fore-edge paintings, had to be locked away and could no longer be augmented. He still smoked, and watching him light a cigarette, which he insisted on doing himself, meant witnessing a venture in trembling triangulation that left him with singed fingers already gnarled and his witnesses unnerved.

When we visited, Tolly—his son Charles—would drive over in an ancient Oldsmobile and take us with LaFayette to a fine lunch or dinner. Otherwise a lonely widower at his home on Laurel Street, Butler wanted to talk about books and authors, while I wanted to scan the collections and take notes. Rodelle took a lot of notes, and now and then with Tolly’s permission I would borrow from the collection until a return visit. Later, when our daughter, Erica, born in 1961, grew into a charming young girl, we would bring her with us to play tunes for Butler on his Steinway, affording Rodelle and me more note-taking time.

I was working on two books in the later 1950s. Butler’s collections prompted several additional projects. It was not an academic matter of “publish or perish.” I was indulging my curiosity as a fledgling writer, and I was intent on publishing books that might supplement my meager professorial salary. Promotion to assistant professor finally came in
February 1960, and in 1962 I was raised to associate professor. Working on Shaw, I had become curious about a young Shavian namesake, T. E. Lawrence “of Arabia.” Why, in 1926, had he legally changed his name to Shaw? The answer would emerge in a book I was working on, which, in 1963, reached print in London and New York more easily than I expected. (My lack of publishing sophistication was enormous.) I had also become interested in novelist C. P. Snow’s influential *The Two Cultures* (1956), and with his permission by post—I would first meet him in 1961—I was working on an anthology of his uncollected (and related) writings.

In Hazelton, LaFayette Butler had the complete original series printings of the iconic mid-1890s journals *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*, as well as other books and manuscripts by Aubrey Beardsley, the striking young genius who had died at twenty-five in 1898. He knew Shaw and Oscar Wilde, and Shaw had opened the first volume of *The Savoy* (Beardsley was art editor of both journals) with his classic “On Going to Church.” I was quickly drawn to the elusive Beardsley. No biography of him had appeared in decades. I put him prominently on my to-do schedule.

Further, in Butler’s vast collection of novelist Arnold Bennett, early on a contributor to *The Yellow Book*, was a postcard he had written to someone about whom I had never heard until discovering him also in the contents pages of *The Yellow Book*—the obscure Reginald Turner. Dorothy has had a daughter, Bennett wrote to “Reggie” in April 1926. They were naming her Virginia. Unable to divorce Marguerite, his French-Catholic wife, Bennett was living with actress Dorothy Cheston, whom he would adopt as his daughter for inheritance legalities. Virginia, his child with Dorothy, would technically become his granddaughter. Several years later I would publish *Reggie. A Portrait of Reginald Turner* (1965), my entrée into the Oscar Wilde circle, in which Reggie flourished until scandal plunged Wilde into prison. Far more visibly, Beardsley would follow.

Recalling my successful author’s query in *The New York Times Book Review*, in which I had sought information about Bernard Shaw’s early novels, I now placed a similar note in the London *Times Literary Supplement* on Shaw and T. E. Lawrence. To my surprise, since I had yet to write a page of the book I was researching, I received two
letters from publishers in England, where “Lawrence of Arabia” apparently remained a hot topic. A handwritten copperplate letter from Chapman & Hall, suggesting traditional 1860s practice, offered a contract. A more official-looking typewritten letter from Jonathan Cape, Ltd. informed me not only of its interest but that the firm was the late T. E. Lawrence’s publisher. By authority of his surviving brother, Arnold, Cape had exclusive rights to books substantially quoting from Lawrence’s writings, published and unpublished. In other words, I had a London publisher foisted upon me. A contract for an unwritten book, with a modest cash advance on signing? It seemed too unrealistic to be true, but there it was.

A further offer came from the small boutique firm of George Braziller in New York. As enticement, Edwin Seaver, the editor-in-chief and its only editor other than Braziller himself, enclosed, to display their credentials, a current catalog and an invitation to pick a few titles. I had in hand commercial publishers on both sides of the pond, and all I needed to do was write the book. The small advances on signing would help pay my expenses. In effect my innocent author’s query had metamorphosed into research grants.

Although the advances were welcome, authentic manna from heaven also arrived from another source. At the Hanleys in Bradford long before, in Ph.D. days, I had discovered a playlet that Shaw had written as a French-language exercise in the early 1880s—Un Petit Drame. It dealt with a drunk, who I assumed erroneously was Shaw’s tippling father, abandoned by GBS in Dublin when he at twenty left for London. (His mother and sisters had already decamped.) In lieu of photocopy equipment, Tullah scrawled and posted a text to me and I laboriously attempted a translation. Rather than offer it to an academic journal, which paid nothing, and would subject me to expensive publication rights from the Shaw Estate, I offered it to Esquire, which published sophisticated oddments in its overstuffed annual Christmas issues. It had already taken tedious months, stretching into years, to achieve permission from the Shaw Trustees in return for half the proceeds, if any.

One afternoon when Rodelle picked me up to drive me home she slid over to the passenger side to let me drive, and reported that I had mail from Esquire. “Open it,” I said, expecting a rejection letter. It was an advance check for two thousand dollars, with an equal amount noted
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to go the Shaw Estate. In purchasing power it was then enormous. Rodelle was in tears. The playlet would not appear until the December (1959) issue, but we would no longer need the fifty-cent payday loan to get us to the end of the month. And we could repay Bill Werner.

When the holiday issue was about to appear, *Esquire* invited contributors to a Christmas party, at their expense. It was a bibulous event, with an amiable cartoonist who drew guests willing to chance the outcome. Ours is still on my study wall. I remain unembarrassed that the playlet turned out to be written for Ida Beatty, who was teaching Shaw beginning French. The dipsomaniac was not George Carr Shaw, but Ida’s useless husband, GBS’s friend and one-time boxing sparring partner, Pakenham Beatty. It was also not Shaw’s first play, as *Esquire* advertised—and I learned. He had begun, even earlier, a satiric “Passion Play” about Jesus and Judas, but had left it unfinished. Years later I discovered that and would write about it in the *Times Literary Supplement* and put it in a book.


From Aldington during 1959 and 1960, eager for validation of Lawrence’s mythologizing, came a plethora of letters urging me to follow up juicy allegations about Lawrence which he had been unable to verify, but which had little or nothing to do with the Shaw—“Shaw” rela-

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Fig. 19 Party sketch of Stan and Rodelle, drawn by an *Esquire* house artist at Christmas, 1959
tionship. “I think your greatest difficulty would be,” Aldington wrote about eliciting information from Lawrence’s surviving contemporaries, “that unless you approach them as an avowed worshiper at the hero’s shrine, you will get no help....” One charge had T.E. receiving a tip from his friend and alleged protector Winston Churchill that Scotland Yard would be picking Lawrence up on accusations of illicit sex with servicemen, and that his pre-emptive recourse was to exit the country forthwith. The possible scandal explained to Aldington the reason for Lawrence’s fatal motorcycle accident in 1935—perhaps a suicide appearing to be an accident.

Conspiracy theories resonate with readers, but I was not going to speculate in print about the unprovable. Much later, on a long visit to South Africa, we met the husband of a librarian in the town of Knysna, a retired sergeant in the Tank Corps who had served at Bovington Camp, close to which Lawrence had crashed. The rutted road, he claimed from later hearsay, had been treacherous because of oil spills from vintage tanks lumbering in and out. Lawrence may have braked to avoid a collision, but had skidded out of control. That was too late by twenty-five years for a book published in 1963, and may not have been a factor any more than Winston Churchill’s unverifiable warning from the Yard.

Another early contact was Archibald Henderson, eighty-two in 1959. Although in 1904 only a young assistant professor of mathematics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he had persuaded Shaw, whose plays he had encountered in Chicago, to permit a biography. Very likely GBS realized that an eager novice out of his field would be malleable and that the playwright could, in effect, write an autobiography indirectly by overwhelming Henderson with material. Shaw added him to a card file of “Disciples” and soon furnished him with a fifty-four-page letter, much of which Henderson would exploit. Surfeited by further Shaviana, it would take Henderson until 1911 to publish his life of Shaw, which appeared in the same year as Henderson’s fulsome biography of Mark Twain, whom he had known, and whose style he had cultivated. When Rodelle and I met him in the summer of 1959 after some years of correspondence, Henderson greeted us at his rambling frame house in a facsimile of a Mark Twain vanilla ice cream linen suit.
Henderson would write three bulky biographies of Shaw, the last a centenary life published in 1956. On completing the second, in mid-Depression, and feeling pinched, he sold his vast collection at auction, but immediately, spurred by continuing correspondence from Shaw, then seventy-five, began collecting again. Decades later, Lucile Kelling, who became the Dean of Library Science at UNC in 1954, was so determined to keep the new holdings on campus that she married the elderly, widowed Henderson. When I asked Archibald, as he had become to us, about Shaw’s correspondence with Constable, his long-time British publisher, which I knew Henderson had acquired, he asked Lucile to hunt it down. “I keep it under my bed,” she said.

Much of the collection was already sequestered in the Rare Books domain at UNC. With his assistant, Lawrence London, the curator, took us through the Shaw files. London used a white cane to get about. He was blind. Yet he knew precisely where everything was. Henderson died in 1963. His—and Lucile’s—archive remains at Chapel Hill.

Rodelle and I stayed for our visit in a nearby motel. When we arrived in what seemed tropical heat and humidity, we found a new swimming pool on the premises which had not yet been advertised. Unprepared, we had no swimwear with us, and no funds to buy Rodelle a suit she would not need again. I could borrow a left-behind pair of swim trunks. Rodelle thought about alternatives to remaining out of the pool, and borrowed another pair of swim trunks and daringly donned a T-shirt.

Unable to afford a motel stay en route to Philadelphia to fetch our boys, we drove through the night, arriving at Spring Garden Street in early morning. When we arrived home, I discovered that I had not entered the deposit of my summer school check. Exasperated, Rodelle took over what little remained of my financial irresponsibilities. We also secured something new on the economic scene—an American Express credit card.

With still no expectation of local research funding, I applied for a Guggenheim Fellowship to pursue my Lawrence of Arabia sleuthing in England. The correspondence of Bernard and Charlotte Shaw with T.E. was in the British Museum (now in the relocated British Library) along with a huge GBS archive gifted by Shaw’s will. Naively I assumed, given the significance of the subjects, my increasing visibility, and guaranteed publication, that the fellowship would be a sure thing.
I was turned down. Reporting that disconsolately to my seven required recommenders, I received a response from Harry T. Moore, a leading scholar of the other Lawrence—D. H. My strategic error, he explained, was failing to recognize the cachet to “the Guggs” of the Old School Tie. For another application, I needed, so Moore claimed, to be recommended solely by former Guggenheim Fellows.

That seemed like overkill but I remembered that suggestion while looking for alternative funding beyond the small book advances. One possibility emerged when my ambitious new department head, Henry W. Sams of the University of Chicago, arrived. For quick visibility, he proposed, Penn State needed to mount a summer writers’ conference with study seminars the very next year, in 1961. A low-key event had been hosted at Millersville State Teachers College, near Lancaster, by Sam Lingenfelter, its English chair. Henry commissioned “Lingy” to undertake the logistics, and put me on full summer salary to manage the three-week session academically and secure “name” authors to lure student-writer participants. I invited veteran critic Malcolm Cowley (who would become a warm and valued friend); John Ciardi, poetry editor of *The Saturday Review*; and novelist Mildred Savage, who wrote best-sellers I had never read, including *Parrish* (1958), which had just emerged as a film, starring Troy Donahue, then big at the box office. Several other writers who accepted were not boldface names, but could mentor participants and critique their papers.

The dramatic surprise of the conference came when on July 2, 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho, Malcolm’s pal from postwar Paris days, Ernest Hemingway, then ailing and despondent, cleared his head with a shotgun. Cowley’s edition of the *Portable Hemingway* had helped revive the writer’s reputation, as would his *Portable Faulkner* for William Faulkner. His good friend Hemingway, he once had said, “could be as mean as cat’s piss.” However shocked, two evenings later Cowley delivered a standing-room-only eulogy, so heartfelt that a listener, deeply moved, asked afterward whether Cowley would publish his reminiscence. “Publish?” scoffed the old pro. “Then I couldn’t keep delivering it for a fee.”

Cowley would remain on the edge of my life until nearly the close of his own. Toward the end, in 1986, I arranged a videotaped conversation at Penn State (still available) between him and his venerable boy-
hood Pittsburgh friend the literary philosopher Kenneth Burke. Cowley was eighty-seven; Burke was eighty-eight, and slowed by a stroke. They had known each other for more than seventy years. Monitoring the exchange, I had them talk about their lives, times and colleagues. It recorded what was likely the longest literary friendship in history.

Before the writers’ conference opened, I bought a ticket on a Pan Am 707 to London, borrowing nine hundred dollars from our local bank, the maximum permitted without security, payable when my summer check arrived. It was my personal Guggenheim grant to myself. Rodelle had my automatically deposited monthly paycheck for expenses, and three small children on her hands. (Erica had been born on May 4, 1961.) While I was away, Rodelle employed a high school girl, Betsy Stout, for baby-sitting and odd household jobs, and managed efficiently.

In London I lived at 12 Gower Street in a bed-and-breakfast walk-up near the British Museum. However urgent the stay was for my professional future, it was also a guilt trip. I had abandoned the family. I had recently been away briefly at the University of Texas in Austin. In its manuscript and rare books holdings was a considerable Shaw collection, soon to be vastly enhanced by the purchase of T. E. Hanley’s papers in Bradford. To me the most intriguing prize, antedating Hanley, was a copy of *Saint Joan* inscribed to another T.E. Having already legally changed his name, Lawrence had confessed to GBS that a copy of the play inscribed to “Shaw” had somehow vanished from his RAF barracks shelf. And then another, replacing it. The third—the Texas copy—was inscribed, in July 1934,

to Shaw from Shaw

to replace many stolen copies until

this, too, is stolen

T.E. then added to the flyleaf,

G.B.S. gave me first a copy of the acting version of St. Joan. It was borrowed from me by an R[oyal] T[ank] C[orps] reader, who lent it to another, and he to a third.

So it disappeared.
Then G.B.S. sent me another Joan, like this, inscribed “To Priva[te. Shaw from Public Shaw.” This was one of my chief joys at Clouds Hill. But in 1932 it also vanished.

Hence this third copy, with its pessimistic inscription.

TES

I hadn’t yet written the dual biography, but I had my title. The book would appear as *Private Shaw and Public Shaw*.

Ben Rosset, a Shavian friend from Manhattan who had moved to Ireland, picked me up in Dublin in his elderly Austin. Cloughernal House, even more venerable, was on the edge of historic Glasnevin Cemetery. Several bleating sheep were busily mowing his lawn. Ben had relocated from a Manhattan flat to explore Shaw’s Dublin years, for atmosphere renting a room at 33 Synge Street, where GBS was born. Since then he had the good fortune of marrying a secretary at Trinity College, and with Ida settled into the gloomy stone cottage where they lived on his savings and her salary, and I learned to retire for the night with a brick Ida had heated for the foot of my bed.

During my days in Dublin, Ben took me about to see places of Shavian interest and then drove north toward Drogheda. Braking as he saw a country boy on a bicycle, he rolled down his window to ask about the site of the historic Battle of the Boyne. The cyclist duly chirped out directions and Ben, after thanking him, said to me: “I know the way, but I wanted you to listen to the language as it was spoken in the days of Jonathan Swift.” In 1964, Rosset’s *Shaw of Dublin: the formative years* would be published with a brief foreword by me. Later biographers would mine it greedily, often with insufficient credit, if any at all, to Ben.

Although he was single-minded in determination to plumb Shaw’s Irish years, which would take GBS to twenty, when he escaped to London, Ben’s dealing with Penn State Press nearly did him in. The press was new and its staff on a learning curve, which seemed in his case
headed nearly straight down. His copy, edited in Happy Valley, was routed to Cloughernal House, Granard, Éire, and returned. “Insufficient postage.” A secretary tried again, and it was returned again, stamped “INSUFFICIENT ADDRESS.” There was no such place in Erie, Pennsylvania. Ben blamed “a clod” in the Penn State postal office who had never studied geography. Someone must have understood, finally, as Ben agonized over his missing manuscript, still in limbo, that Éire was the formal name for Ireland, and sent it out once more. It came back once again, this time for insufficient overseas postage. Restamped, it went out again, as surface mail postage was insufficient for a packet now labeled “AIR.” Finally, Ben got it. “They say that the Irish are backward,” Ben wrote to me in exasperation. By that time, I was long since back home.

In England, fatty, cold, underdone bacon at my bed-and-breakfast had proved my worst culinary trial. As I abandoned the greasy stuff on my plate, the serving girl would pluck and swallow the tasty, cold morsels in one motion as she reclaimed my tray. For dinner—I skipped lunch to work every minute that the British Museum manuscript room was open—I patronized cheap Italian restaurants in nearby Soho. Every day but Sunday, with a few exceptions for research elsewhere, I pored through the Bernard Shaw papers, especially the correspondence between Lawrence and the childless Shaws, who considered T.E. as another of their surrogate sons.

Sundays were for walkabouts in London and for the theater. One weekday took me to see elderly Dorothy Walker at 7 Hammersmith Terrace. Her father, Sir Emery Walker, was a colleague of Shaw’s revered William Morris, who had lived, when in London, in the adjoining house overlooking from the rear garden the broad, busy Thames. “Dolly” had been a Slade School of Art classmate of Augustus John, one of whose splendid portraits of Shaw would grace the pages of my Private Shaw and Public Shaw. Once T.E. had adopted the Shaw surname, John wrote a sardonic letter to him, “I hear a report that you are the son of G.B.S. If so, he should have repeated the effort. (I mean this kindly.)” Dorothy, now wheelchair-bound and with a plump Dutchwoman caretaker, sat me down to chat in an armchair Morris had made, under John’s pen portrait of Lawrence when he was in the Tank Corps as Private Shaw. “I would love to have a copy of that,” I ventured, “for the
frontispiece of my book.” It was asking much of someone I had known for less than an hour.

“Borrow it,” Dorothy offered, “and bring it back.” I did, and posted a copy to John for permission to reproduce it. He scrawled back that he was happy to see it again, and had “pinned it” on his wall. I did not know that he was bedridden, and dying. He would never see that his drawing preceded my title page. Years later Rodelle and I suspected that John, slyly, had inserted GBS’s face in the uniform folds of Lawrence’s left knee. Once one perceives it, the resemblance, perhaps imaginative, remains unforgettable.

In my month in England I researched not only Lawrence and Shaw, but also Reggie, about the forgotten Edwardian novelist and Wilde intimate Reginald Turner. For some income from Scribner’s I collected material for an anthology of C. P. Snow’s uncollected writings, which would appear as C. P. Snow: A Spectrum. The book was to juxtapose his non-fiction with related examples from his closely autobiographical novels. Sir Charles and his wife, novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson, then lived on the noisy and decidedly un-posh Cromwell Road, crowded by noisy airport buses to Heathrow. (By our later visits, with Rodelle accompanying me, Charles had become Lord Snow and resided in upscale Eaton Place.)

When I emerged from the South Kensington Underground station, heavy rain assaulted me—and I had no umbrella. I arrived soggily at Cromwell Road and ascended to their cluttered flat on a frighteningly obsolescent elevator. Warmed up with Snow’s copiously offered whisky, I suppressed asphyxiation while he and Pamela chain-smoked. Although my shoes squished, the Snows politely took no notice.

When I asked Charles (as he became to me) about copies of his anonymous reviewing for the Sunday Times—he had been a leading contributor—he confessed that he kept no cuttings of such trivia. He also had no copy of his early, anonymously published, Wellsian novel New Lives for Old. “My brother has one, I’m sure,” he said. It was, he dismissed, only “money-spinning stuff,” written before he began his Strangers and Brothers series of novels. (I would read a copy of the spurned fantasy in the British Museum.) My sole pair of shoes were still damp when, the next day, I visited the Sunday Times on Gray’s Inn Road (then a separate entity from the daily Times and with its own
staff) and identified Snow’s articles and reviews through file records of payments for his pieces, ordering photostats which would be posted to me at home.

Snow was then known for his controversial Rede Lecture at Cambridge, *The Two Cultures* (1956), as well as for his novel cycle, which would run to eleven volumes dealing with the inter-war years and into the atomic bomb era, in which, as a physicist, he had been involved as recruiter of scientific expertise. When his culminating *Last Things* was about to be released in 1970, I was asked by the *New York Times Book Review* to write, so I was assured, a lengthy front-page assessment of the series. It appeared in New York as I arrived on another trip to London. I hadn’t known that until I telephoned Charles from a hotel in Russell Square. The *Book Review* was always available to the press, and publishers, on the Monday afternoon prior to Sunday release. Clearly distraught, Charles answered: “Burroughs Mitchell, my editor, has just rung me from New York. Stan, your review begins on page four. The front page has been given to the diaries of that Nazi, Albert Speer. I spent the war trying to defeat him. Now he’s defeated me.” A convicted war criminal completing a twenty-year sentence, Speer had been released from Spandau Prison in Berlin, now free to cash in on his notoriety. He had been Hitler’s architect and armaments chief.

Charles’s *alter ego*, Lewis Eliot, in the final novel had undergone failed surgery for a detached retina and needed heart massage, as his pulse failed. It would actually occur to his author, who was convinced that he had died and was returned to life. “There was no hereafter,” he told me on a later visit—“only nothingness.” The episode would confirm for him his religious skepticism.

At the Jewish Museum in London I found records of Reggie Turner’s mysterious Victorian forbears. On his father’s side he was Jewish in origin although nothing whatever in practice—and either the son of Lionel Levy-Lawson or his nephew Edward, proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* and, courtesy of Edward VII, the future Lord Burnham. Reggie never knew who his mother was. Farmed out by the Lawsons all his young life, eventually earning a B.A. at Merton College, Oxford, he became a crony of caricaturist and critic Max Beerbohm. (I visited Merton, to catch its ambience, and what little data I could find.)
For a time before the Wilde scandal and his flight to Italy, Reggie was the gossip columnist for the *Telegraph*—anonymous, as was the contemporary custom. Among the living, I interviewed Vyvyan Holland, Oscar Wilde’s surviving son. Reggie was at Vyvyan’s twenty-first birthday party, but young Wilde—he had taken his mother’s name—remembered little about Turner. Another interviewee was Jean Douglas Fowles, who worked at the Marlborough Gallery in Manhattan, and was the widow, in a May-December marriage, of Langton Douglas, Reggie’s tutor at Oxford. Curiously, I was touching the present as well as the past. Jean Fowles was also the former mother-in-law of *Catcher in the Rye* novelist J. D. Salinger.

Max Beerbohm’s literary executor was the tall, angular publisher Rupert Hart-Davis. I visited him at his office in Bedford Square, aware that he was editing a volume of Max’s letters to Reggie. Hart-Davis promised me proofs and an early copy—which indeed came the next year. (Also, Wesson Bull, an elderly scion of the Smith & Wesson firearms company, who as a young man sampling Europe knew Turner, found out about my quest and from Connecticut posted copies of all his letters from Reggie.) Leaving Hart-Davis late in the evening, I trudged cautiously through dense fog, following the dim lights of a crawling cab to Gower Street.

Returning to the British Museum most weekdays I paged through the files of the Shaw Archive, permitted only one box at a time. I copied assiduously from Lawrence’s confessional letters to Charlotte Shaw and his worshipful yet more businesslike letters to GBS. Lawrence owed much to Shaw for his editorial scrutiny of the epic *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*—responsible especially, T.E. would write sardonically, for all the semi-colons. More of a problem would be another literary executor, T.E.’s youngest (and, then, sole surviving) brother, Arnold, who now spent most of his time excavating medieval ruins in Ghana. I needed his approval to use any copyright Lawrence language, printed or manuscript. My biography as it developed required approval from the estates of both Shaw and “Shaw.”

After I met the crusty executrix of the GBS estate, M. Elisabeth Barber of the Society of Authors in London, I was assured that for a scholarly book I would be assessed only a token fee. Arnold Lawrence, however, wrote from Africa, once I was able to locate him, that he
wanted to examine my completed typescript, and that he would charge, for the Lawrence Estate, a fee based upon the percentage of copyright words I actually used. He would expunge some quotes which suggested Lawrence’s compulsive masochism. Others somehow remained, such as T.E.’s helping, in March 1926, an elderly man to re-start his stalled car. Caught on the wrist by the spinning crankhandle, “Shaw” gritted his teeth about the likely fracture and left-handedly cycled back to Bovington Camp. Back on duty using his good hand, he never acknowledged the pain.

Arnold Lawrence presented a formidable risk, but I had no publishable book without his imprimatur. He had no personal interest in profit, he assured me. All fees would go to the RAF Benevolent Fund. If I thought that was all, I would be mistaken. When he received my hundreds of pages of onion-skin carbon paper copy, A.W. slashed here and there to protect his brother’s posthumous reputation from such embarrassing charges as Richard Aldington had made, largely (and safely) via paraphrase, most of which I had cautiously evaded. Later writers, realizing that Arnold Lawrence could not challenge them on testimony from other contemporaries, or from “fair usage” doctrine, went ahead, and the ageing A.W., who died at ninety only in 1991, eventually gave in and collected his fees. Counting my copyright use at eleven percent, he extracted that by contract with my publishers. I was new at the game and contested nothing. I wanted to be published.

Years later, when I was in Jerusalem and waiting in pre-dawn darkness for a shared taxi to Ben Gurion Airport, another passenger huddled nearby in the morning chill climbed aboard with me. He proved to be a talkative Church of England priest who on retirement had been given a purse by his parishioners to make a trip to the Holy Land. As we passed through the Old City while the sky lightened, he pointed out to me enthusiastically details of sites I had already seen on my own. “You may wonder,” he said, “how I know all this. When I was a student at Cambridge, my professor of archeology, then a young scholar, was A. W. Lawrence—you know, the brother of the famous Lawrence of Arabia. A splendid man.” “Yes,” I agreed.

Further pursuing Lawrence, I visited Basil Liddell Hart at States House in Medmenham, near Oxford. Sir Basil—a casualty as a wartime captain—had known the postwar T.E. and regaled me at luncheon
with memories of the most fascinating figure, he said, he had ever encountered. He had dozens of letters from Lawrence, and hundreds of photos T.E. had given to him. I would get to see him again on a later visit to England. The formal luncheon, at which Lady Liddell Hart joined us, was a rare culinary occasion for me during my menu-cheap weeks of research.

With little funds to spare, and knowing almost no one, I put my spare pounds into theater tickets for the empty evenings, and saw plays by Harold Pinter, John Whiting, Arnold Wesker and John Osborne—*The Caretaker, Sergeant Musgrave’s Dance, The Kitchen, and The Entertainer* (with Laurence Olivier)—and a play by Jean Anouilh, *The Rehearsal*, with a striking ingénue little known until then, Maggie Smith. All that was icing on the cake. In a month away, I had accumulated the wherewithal for three books. Now I had to create them.

Home again in early September 1961, I caught up with the family, returned to the classroom, and continued my one-finger typing in the converted coalbin. The former coal-chute window, only about twenty-four inches across and ten inches high, was an unusual sight to passers-by, usually walking dogs. As coalbins were never lighted, people sidled by curiously and peered in, surprised at what they saw—shelving, and books, and often someone pecking at a typewriter. The arrangement would have been no surprise in London, where furnished basement living quarters, especially kitchens and dining areas, were common.

Even before flying to England I had drafted chapter two of *Private Shaw and Public Shaw* in the coalbin, initiating a practice of beginning a book anywhere in the narrative that got me going. From the start my opening chapters were designed to spur readers into turning the pages. My actual chapter one would open with T. E. Lawrence accompanying Fitzwilliam Museum director Sydney Cockerell to Shaw’s home at Adelphi Terrace to carry away a GBS portrait which Augustus John had promised to Cambridge. It would be the first meeting between “Public Shaw” and the future “Private Shaw.” In his Lilliputian hand Sir Sydney, then in his nineties, wrote about the episode to me, quoting from his diaries and then postcarding me about his conversations with Shaw’s cousin “Judy” Musters. By the time I could use his memories, he had died, in 1962, his papers, including my correspondence with him, left to the British Museum. Discovering that in 1968 made me
aware for the first time that one’s mail, and later electronic mail, was not private, and that careless or confidential talk had tenacious survival possibilities if the recipient was, or might become, the subject for another writer. My letters over the decades (and very likely e-mail print-outs) are now everywhere, and only once did a Rare Books curator ever ask me when correspondence to a friend was willed to his institution what my preferences were. Did I want my letters kept there, destroyed, or returned? Keep them or trash them, I wrote.

Later I would begin Beardsley at the unveiling of a memorial bust to Keats, who died at about the same age as the young ’Nineties artist. Whistler opened at his funeral, when few mourners turned up at Chelsea Old Church for a farewell to the cantankerous artist. Victoria began in 1887, “fifty years on,” at the Golden Jubilee of her long reign. Four Rossettis had aged William Michael Rossetti, last of the siblings, sorting the posthumous papers of his brother and sisters. Albert. Uncrowned King opened at his leavetaking festivities in Saxony as the young “serene highness” at twenty departed to marry Queen Victoria (who had proposed to him) in London. Disraeli began at the surgical ritual of his circumcision, the only Jewish observance which ever involved him, as his father would have him converted to the Established Church to make possible, in an age of sweeping social and legal prejudice, a public career. Charlotte and Lionel had Lionel de Rothschild writing to his mother to “thank you for my fair bride.”

A Stillness Heard Round the World, on the armistice in 1918 that ended the seeming endless Great War, opened with the grim prediction that the end “would be signaled by four black flares rocketed invisibly into the night sky.” Long Day’s Journey into War covered, worldwide, December 7, 1941, the date of Pearl Harbor, opening across the International Date Line to the west, where the day began, and ending there when it closed. MacArthur’s War, about Korea in 1950–1951, began with the general’s reluctant return to the United States after being sacked—as he deserved to be—by President Truman. The book, by flashback thereafter, became the narrative of how and why that electrifying episode had happened. I learned to look for an event that encapsulated a life, or a period.

Letting go at the close, however much a narrative necessity, often became an emotional wrench. As a writer, one has vicariously lived
the life and witnessed the times. I wept privately at Queen Victoria’s
death, and even at the demise in Florence of little-remembered Reggie
Turner.

Rodelle had already become my editor of first recourse, and the
nursing staff at the hospital in Bellefonte where Erica was born was
more surprised than Rodelle when I brought to her bed early in May
1961 chapter two of Private Shaw to look over. It would deal with Law-
rence as a charismatic personality without previous military experi-
ence, drawn upon by Shaw to reflect aspects of T.E. which he saw in
Joan of Arc. The play Shaw was working on at the time he first met
Lawrence was Saint Joan. From her
hospital bed, Rodelle would suggest
that I begin with a strong paragraph
I had placed farther along in the
chapter. Also, she alleged, many of
my sentences were “too German”—
the controlling verb coming toward
the end of the sentence. I would
heed such strictures when I remem-
bered them. Tirelessly, as my editor
she would continue to correct these
failings in my writing style for many
more decades.

Controlling events rather than verbs became a problem when the
book was ready for release. Its timing close to the David Lean–Peter
O’Toole Lawrence of Arabia film epic was entirely, if happily, coinci-
dental. Frustratingly, then, for book publicity, New York Times print-
ing employees were on strike. For months there was no Times Book
Review—the key to respectability for a new title. Release was delayed
until March 1963. Eventually a rather good review by William Irvine,
with a few cavils, appeared. Irvine had published The Universe of G.B.S.
(1949), the last book about Shaw to appear in the playwright’s long
lifetime, but Irvine knew little about the other “Shaw.” In Commentary,
Norman Podhoretz wrote about my “one shoe, other shoe” approach,
apparently criticizing my shifting personalities, in his view, too abruptly
from one Shaw to the other Shaw. Podhoretz would never write a biog-
raphy himself, except about himself, but book critics, I would discover
much too often, enjoyed lecturing practitioners how to write what they could not.

Pleased with my giving T. E. Lawrence post-Aldington cachet, Columbia Pictures sent us passes to see the blockbuster film during its Philadelphia opening. The producers had arranged that I would be called upon by the media to talk about how the real Lawrence compared to O’Toole, who would earn an Academy Award for his striking performance—although he was nearly a foot taller than the five-foot-six Lawrence. For me it was a promising beginning, but the assassination of John Kennedy that November would put a stop to discussion about almost anything else for many months.

Reggie was ongoing. In England I had an afternoon with H. Montgomery Hyde, a biographer of Wilde, and later of the impossible youth who got Oscar into legal trouble, Lord Alfred “Bosie” Douglas. He had just sold his Wilde and Douglas collections, he told me, to Mary Hyde, with a surname that was only a coincidence. She was a Columbia Ph.D. with a wealthy stockbroker husband. She already owned Shaw’s letters to Douglas and now also Montgomery Hyde’s own collection, including his Reggie stuff. “Visit her,” Hyde urged. Although she had a lavish domicile in Sutton Place in Manhattan, her library was in Four Oaks Farm, near Somerville, New Jersey, where Donald Hyde had a model dairy. Rodelle and I arranged to visit and found that the Hyde “farmhouse” was much more than a mansion. The sumptuous ambience was beyond anything in our experience.

Rodelle and I lunched on a luxurious dinner service, extravagantly complete, all the way to finger bowls. Mary Hyde, an attractive fifty, chatted about her library—her first specialty had been Samuel Johnson and his patroness Mrs. Thrale. Other than the art on her walls we saw no collections of books, not even a token volume. As coffee was being served by a butler, she rose and walked to a large portrait and pressed a hardly visible button. The portrait and wall slid aside and revealed a vista of tall shelves, complete to a scholarly assistant perched on a high stool. “I always get my librarians from Oxford,” she said. We may have been geographically in New Jersey but she was effectively in country house England in an earlier century.

Rodelle and I penciled notes through the afternoon, refreshed constantly by a waiter with choices of wines. As it was soon obvious that we
were not to remain for a late dinner, I asked, as we were running out of
time, whether the librarian could photocopy some pages for us. “List
them,” Mary agreed, and with that accomplished, we said our good-
byes, returning home via Philadelphia to reclaim our children. Mrs.
Hyde later sent me the three-volume, privately-printed bibliography
of her holdings (then in preparation) and her edition of the correspon-
dence between Shaw and Bosie Douglas, the obstreperous son of the
Marquess of Queensberry.

Even later, when widowed, Mary Hyde continued collecting, acquir-
ing a new husband in England and becoming Viscountess Eccles. When
she died at ninety-one in 2003, her holdings by bequest went to the
British Library.

As Reggie Turner had surfaced often in a lengthy New Yorker series,
“Conversations with Max [Beerbohm],” by S. N. Behrman, we drove
to Harvard, to which Behrman had given the manuscript letters from
Max that, with his visits to Italy to talk to the aged but apparently
voluble (and now deceased) Beerbohm in Rapallo, seemed the basis for
his book. I had pressed Sam Behrman, also a witty writer of high com-
edy, for permission to look at the letters, presented to the Houghton
Library, and he agreed. Several were apparently still under seal. It was
an unfortunate time for Rodelle, who accompanied me with our chil-
dren. I came down with a serious sinus infection and was bedridden at
our hotel every moment that I was not struggling in the library. She was
marooned with baby-sitting all four of us, and her list of sightseeing
priorities once I emerged from bed was reduced to one. In the park set-
ting in Boston where the boys’ favorite book, Make Way for Ducklings,
took place, we rented a boat and cruised with the ducklings.

The supposedly sealed Beerbohm letters proved to be open. I brought
them to the desk and reported the find. “Oh, that’s all right,” I was told.
“Mr. Behrman bought them and gave them to us and he had a right to
inspect them. You can, too, since they’re all open. Afterwards we’ll seal
them again.” It turned out that many of Sam’s alleged conversations
with Max, of allegedly capacious memory, were lifted from the letters
about Reggie and other contemporaries.

I said nothing to Behrman, and posted my thanks to him. With his
reply in a fat envelope I received a long, typed copy, single-spaced and
several pages in length, of extracts from a letter to him written by el-
derly Dame Rebecca West, a pioneer feminist and once H. G. Wells’s
inamorata. A prying Professor Weintraub had queried her, too, she told
Behrman, but she wouldn’t reveal anything. If she would have respond-
ed, she wrote to Sam—and then she gossiped on about her encounters
with Reggie at Somerset Maugham’s Riviera retreat, and elsewhere.
Turner was not only a self-exile after the Wilde affair but later, in Flo-
rence, a denizen of the scandalous D. H. Lawrence expatriate circle. Use
what you want from Dame Rebecca, Sam advised, but paraphrase and
attribute your information to “Private Source.” I did.

Presumably unaware of my borrowings from her, Rebecca West re-
viewed Reggie in the Daily Telegraph and carped about my invading the
privacy of too many of Turner’s friends. So did novelist Anthony Pow-
ell, who nevertheless liked the book, as did journalist Malcolm Mug-
geridge. That the life of a peripheral figure elicited reviews from major
writers was a triumph of a sort. I realized that I had created an au-
dience for a more significant follow-up project, which would emerge
from Reggie’s being a contributor to the iconic 1890s The Yellow Book.
Its art editor was the tragic young Aubrey Beardsley. Much later, I
was asked by Publisher’s Weekly in an interview where my book subjects
came from. “From the index to the last book,” I said.

Other than piggy-backing upon the film epic, Lawrence of Arabia,
my first major publicity opportunity for promoting Private Shaw came
when I was invited to Chicago late in March 1963 to appear on the
Midwest’s premier television interview program, “Kup’s Show,” hosted
by Chicago Sun-Times gossip columnist Irv Kupcinet. I found myself
at a large round table under the TV lights with Danny Kaye; President
Kennedy’s press relations man Pierre Salinger; New Yorker writer Em-
ily Hahn, more famous for her cigar smoking than her writings; peren-
nial Socialist presidential contender Norman Thomas, in his eighties
but still spry; and biographer and journalist Merle Miller (he would
publish Plain Speaking, about Harry Truman, a decade later), who had
the most limp handshake I would ever experience. Norman Thomas
talked about Bernard Shaw as inspiration for his politics (Shaw’s cable
address was “Socialist, London”), and Emily Hahn recalled reading
Penguin paperbacks of Shaw while a Japanese war prisoner in Hong
Kong. Danny Kaye described his meeting the elderly Bernard Shaw in
the garden at Ayot St. Lawrence, where GBS in his nineties sang a duet
with another guest, Gertrude Lawrence. I talked about visiting Shaw’s house at Ayot, where a bedroom upstairs was still known as “Lawrence’s room”—T.E. overnighted there on his visits by motorcycle. It was a feast of repartee, broken only between sessions when Kup sent downstairs for drinks and pastrami-on-rye.

One of the bonuses of the visibility of Private Shaw and Public Shaw was an invitation to a summer visiting professorship at UCLA. When I visited my department head to arrange leave, Henry Sams quickly made some excuse to exit the office and bid me to wait. In five minutes he was back. He had seen Liberal Arts Dean Ben Euwema on the floor below, apparently warned him that the UCLA invitation might lead to my departure, and returned with a pay raise for me, and still another guaranteed for the year after. They were attempting to put a possible offer from UCLA out of financial reach.

As we packed the last of the luggage on the roof of our Ford station wagon, Rodelle called out from the still-unlocked front door: “Come look! We have a flood!” The basement water heater had broken. She rushed to the phone to call our plumber and former Hamilton Avenue neighbor, Luther Maelhorn. He rushed over, stemmed the leakage, and said: “Give me a house key. When you come back you’ll have a new heater. And I’ll clean up the mess.” We handed Luther a key and drove off toward California.

Once we arrived at a small rental house in West Los Angeles, I realized that UCLA was financially impossible. The cost of living was enormous compared to Happy Valley. Commuting from afar on the freeways was a poor alternative. We would return to buy a lot in the Harris Acres development, formerly the Hubler farm, between State College and Boalsburg, two miles away, and have a modernist house built to Rodelle’s redesign of commercial plans she would purchase.

A bonus at UCLA was access to the William Andrews Clark Library, a walled, mansion-oasis in Culver City, once a film-making location now gone seedy if not worse, which housed a rich collection of nineteenth-century books and manuscripts amassed by a mining baron. With one of the great Oscar Wilde archives, it was replete with Reggie-related material. For personal safety, researchers using it could arrange for a university car, with driver, for transportation from the Faculty Club to the Clark, and back again at closing.
Since *Private Shaw* had emerged, I had publicity opportunities in the LA market, useful experience if I hoped for a publishing future. We had driven across the country in our Ford station wagon, and I gingerly risked the freeways to promo gigs, one at the NBC studios in Burbank. I had to cross six lanes of traffic to exit in a hazardous hurry once we spotted the building. The occasion was a forgettable afternoon talk show, where the interviewer had not opened my book until the green “ON” light flashed. He casually opened *Private Shaw* from back to front, as if it were written in Hebrew. Encountering, first, the index, he exclaimed dishearteningly, “Oh! This must be a very scholarly book. It has an index.” I imagined all the television screens in the Los Angeles viewing area going black. With feigned enthusiasm, he let me describe the book to him as an epilogue to the Peter O’Toole film. At the close, which could not have come soon enough, he gushed: “And now we have a gift for you from our sponsor.” It was a sack of knockwurst and a portable charcoal grill. We consumed the knockwurst and gave the grill to local friends.

Another live interview was scheduled for a radio station in an area unknown to us. Rodelle found the address on an LA map and we discovered ourselves in Watts, which turned out to be a crowded Black ghetto, its trash-littered streets cluttered at the curbs with ancient cars and the gloomy sidewalks populated by what appeared to be the many unemployed in various states of undress due to the intense afternoon heat. We were the only whites, it seemed, for miles. Clots of curious bystanders peered into our open windows as we stopped for traffic lights. Although our Ford had no air conditioning, Rodelle suggested that we roll up the windows and lock the doors.

We parked with some trepidation close to the radio station—a shabby storefront with two rooms. Several employees lounged about. None had any idea who Lawrence of Arabia was, let alone Bernard Shaw. Someone there had been sent a book but they could not find it. “Why don’t you just go on at 4:30, as scheduled, after the next commercial break,” one said, “and talk for twenty minutes? Then we’ll go to commercials and the news.” We waited while music I hadn’t heard since my days at the Sun Ray record counter blared. Then I rattled on for the prescribed time, shook hands and left, relieved to be on the road again in late summer daylight. In August two years later, Watts made head-
lines with a six-day civil rights riot for which National Guardsmen had to assist the LAPD. Thirty-four residents died, hundreds more were injured, and hundreds of cars torched. We never checked to see whether the radio station survived.

I had two morning preparations at UCLA—the twentieth century English novel and twentieth century world drama. Before my arrival I was assured that there would be a maximum of thirty-five students in each class. The drama course overflowed the classroom and even the hallways. Thirty-five bulky text anthologies were in stock at the university bookstore—and quickly gone. I had 284 attendees signed up. We moved to an auditorium. The department urgently hired two grad assistant graders for me—an actor and an actress in waiting for Hollywood gigs. Unexpectedly to them they acted out, with me, scripts in hand for the book-short class, the plays I had scheduled, most of which they had never read or seen before. They were game, and the alternative delighted the class, which was downcast when emergency supplies arrived and with them reading assignments. Hugh Dick, the department head, was delighted. I would be turning a huge tuition profit. But, he advised me several weeks later, he had tried out the idea of offering me an appointment, and his senior staff would only go as far as a top-level associate professorship. At thirty-four I was too young, and short in accomplishment. I had lots of promise, he explained, but only one major book. I was not disappointed. With all the professional and cultural advantages I could see around me, I could not afford UCLA.

Just before the mid-term exams, my two drama assistants vanished. Students’ grades suddenly were on hold. Then, exhausted and happy, the graders returned. They had been booked as extras for the Sermon on the Mount scene in The Greatest Story Ever Told, which director George Stevens had filmed in Monument Valley, Utah, with Claude Rains as Herod and Telly Savalas as Pilate. I worried that some other crowd scene would come along at final exam time, but I escaped catastrophe. We made the long drive home to Pennsylvania after a lecturing pause at Lake Arrowhead, where the Sudocks from my past had turned up and I had acquired an unexpected necktie.

Back home we bid on a house modernist in design but were turned down, as our offer was judged too low. A year later the house sold for far less than our bid. We then bought an empty lot and observed, day
by day, our house rising from the meadow. When *War in the Wards* was published that summer, I inscribed a copy, “For Rodelle, whose ‘dream house’ made this book necessary,” though I would need royalties from many more books to pay off our mortgage.

Ed Basler, our glib realtor, elevating job titles and ranks, boasted that all the residents on the former Hubler farm, present and future, were high-level professionals—and that we would be living at night “under the planetarium skies.” In the bright LA basin that blotted out the sky, the stars were only in the gilded mansions below.

*Reggie* (1965) was dedicated to LaFayette Butler, in whose collections I had found the first references to Reginald Turner. Although the book was widely and generously reviewed on both sides of the pond, it proved that a favorable press does not always lead to generous sales. At best it did not lose money for its publishers and it kept them eager for more from me. *Reggie* also created new acquaintances for whom the 1890s had powerful appeal. One was Serrell Hillman, the *Time* bureau chief in Toronto, whom we would visit year after year, curiously in January or February when winter in Canada should have seemed forbidding. It never was. We first met him in the rooftop bar at the Royal York Hotel, where he had obviously arrived several martinis before us. He and DuBarry Campeau, his wife, threw literary parties when we came, the most memorable a bash in the high-rise flat of his “Girl Friday.”

An elegant, dinner-jacketed gentleman tended bar, and Serrell vowed that I was about to sample the finest martini ever mixed. One was poured for me with professional finesse, the barman making light conversation as he shook and decanted it and deftly added a twist of lemon. As I sipped my drink and carried my goblet away, Serrell whispered that it was a rare martini indeed, as it had been prepared by a former death-row inmate at Sing Sing.
The bartender, Girl Friday’s companion, was Wayne Lonergan, who in the early 1940s as a young sailor had been sentenced to death for a murder he claimed he had not committed. Circumstantial evidence—and his possibly coerced confession—went against him, yet despite the unforgiving era he was spared the electric chair. After years of appeals financed by his wealthy Toronto family, he was paroled to his native Canada with the stipulation that he never re-enter the United States.

I went back to the bar for another martini.

Endnotes

1. The anti-communist loyalty oath, though struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and declared unenforceable by Pennsylvania’s attorney general in 1975, remains unreppeled by the legislature in Pennsylvania.

2. Fanny Holtzmann, David’s sister, also represented Gertrude Lawrence and Noel Coward.

3. Rodelle had dropped our typewriter, cracking the case. It had been repaired with a weld, for five dollars, with no longevity guarantees.

4. Lawrence’s cottage in Dorset, near Bovington Camp.

5. Constance Wilde (née Lloyd) changed her and her sons’ last names to Holland in order to escape public scrutiny after her husband’s conviction and imprisonment, in 1895, for ‘gross indecency.’

6. The banning of coal fires in London was only beginning to thin the fogs.

7. John Kennedy was in Chicago for a speech; Kup could only land Salinger.

8. The NBC campus in Burbank, the first designed for television, opened in March 1955 and closed in March 2014, its facilities moving to NBC Universal Studios nearby.

9. His wife Patricia, heiress of the fortune earned by Max Bernheimer, who in New York City owned the Lion Brewery and then the Betz Brewery in pre-prohibition years, had been murdered in 1943.