

August 3, 1970

William F. Buckley

National Review

150 East 35th street

New York, New York 10016

Dear Mr. Buckley:

Tonight I watched a dialog, so to speak, between Eldridge Cleaver and you. Cleaver was true to his image as a strong silent type, and that's the kindest thing I can say. Eldridge, the Johnny Weismuller of the jet black set, can come on like a tiger when he's in the right setting (college campus rally = Tarzan movie set). He calls himself a black panther but the minute he tries to cope with civil conversation he gets cornered, bagged and tagged without further ado, so like the jungle cat he mistakenly reveres. The power he seeks is ruthless, a brute force that shades imperceptibly into criminal violence, and it took no stunning insight to interpret his extreme discomfort in your presence as a conflict between an all but uncontrollable urge to overpower you physically, to invite you to his own kind of firing line, and his party role as an outspoken, articulate, even intellectual Minister of Information. This conflict quickly reduced what we're supposed to believe is an indescribably

beautiful soul brother to a jumpy borderline psychotic, too busy shifting his eyes and sweating out his precious bodily fluids to be able to follow the ground rules of your debating game, much less better you at it.

For you this was a moment of puerile triumph. The psychological modus operandi of any pseudointellectual is to divide and conquer, and in Cleaver's paralyzing perplexity you found a hack job brought to completion before even begun. With your ebony Hamlet tying himself up in conceptual knots, you were left free to pirouette in a kind of viciously circular victory dance (effete too, tsk tsk) about what was left of the once snarling but now exhausted pussy's brain. "All those white middle class kids who love to hear you curse - they're really just patronizing you, aren't they Eldridge?" you ask sympathetically, patronizingly. But you've tickled the right spot, and the frog jumps. Eldridge pulls himself up, ahems, and recites the party line on porcine racism, a colorless (even so) rendition of his patented pending and more than perfected pig speech. But the Cleaver I wanted to hear had already been rendered speechless, and this pathetic performance came out like a tipsy Uncle Tom telling tales about massuh to the darkies in the woodshed. On Halloween.

Yet you continue to listen patiently to the pig-talk, your alerted eyes gleaming perversely at the sight of this fox about to be cornered by the hounds of your debating points. As you assiduously decode Cleaver's pig-latin, taking mental notes and preparing a devastating counter-attack, your eyes grow cold, freeze over, and assume the glister glaze of an evil genius qua junkie, the fashionable kind of junkie whose horse is better known as the false premise, the invalid inference, the faulty analogy, and the vicious circle, all rolled into a philological palace of polymorphous perversity. At the height of your triumph you remain as mind-boggled as Cleaver. Your bug-eyed expression of fiendish glee is utterly shameless, hence without redeeming social value, yet you are far from the archetype of the white supremacist Cleaver asks you to be. As a bogeyman you are banal, bogus. You are neither villain nor saint. It is a victory as hollow as the defeat is transient.

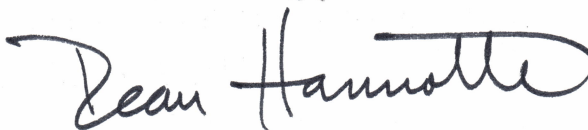
Each of you has played out his game, and the show ends. Cleaver promises himself to get you come the revolution. You have already promised yourself to let this piddling pyrrhic victory appease any longing for true moral superiority which may yet flutter in your dried up breast. The

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house lights come up and each of you wanders off into your own little world. Somewhere there has been a failure to communicate.

How does it feel to be a straw man?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dean Hannotte". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large, sweeping initial 'D' and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Dean Hannotte

128 St. Mark's Place

New York, New York 10009



September 8, 1970

Dear Mr. Hannotte:

You wrote a fascinating letter. It isn't plain to me what you are finally driving at, but I find I didn't much care. You have a wonderful imagination.

Yours faithfully,

Wm. F. Buckley Jr.

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