

i notice that harold is usually the person they figure will have the hardest time, for personal reasons, rejecting it. they've taken, in other words, the path of least resistance, done their damndest to minimize their chances of rejection.

i guess i shouldn't expect them to say, "yeah, i submitted my work to harold because he owes me a favor" or "because he's too nice a guy to turn me down" or "because i was scared shitless of my work being judged with any modicum of objectivity, impartiality."

i know that's too much to ask, but, please couldn't we just find some other way of phrasing it, some formulation that will remove the implication that we're a bunch of fucking philanthropists?

SARTRE MISUNDERSTOOD

i frequently hear people saying, "in the words of jean-paul sartre, 'hell is other people.'" actually sartre never said that: a character in his play no exit did. and the three characters trapped together in that little room are all in what sartre would have called mauvaise foi, or "bad faith." they are, in other words, trying to deny their freedom, their responsibility, and to blame their lives on other people. they don't want to admit that hell is a state of their own making, and that while their self-deception may make them hellish for others to deal with as well, it all starts in the inferno of their own self-absorption.

marlowe's faust learned this;
so did goethe's.
so, of course, did sartre.

DOWN TIME

my father would leave me in the car outside henner and bennett's bar and grill while he went inside for a few drinks

with his friends. i don't remember whether he told me not to tell my mother; probably he did, since i don't remember ever ratting to her, and i suspect she would have been furious. i didn't like being left out there. in those days it was safe enough, but it was also boring. he may have left me with a book and permission to use the car light, but i've never been much good at reading to kill time, although my own kids are. he may have said it was all right to listen to the radio, but there wouldn't have been much of interest to a kid on our few stations. mostly i remember sitting in the driver's seat, turning the steering wheel, probably pretending i was at the controls of a tank. i lived mainly in my own head in those days, as i still do.

i don't know if my father had a girlfriend in the bar. kids would have been allowed inside, i think, so maybe he did. it would be fine with me if he did, but more likely he just wanted a few drinks with men his own age, people who had been through the same mill and were still going through it. i've never left my own kids in a car, because i hated it so myself, and, of course, it would be taking a big risk these days. but i don't hold it against my father — we were usually on the way home from some ballgame that he'd taken me to — he did lots of things with me and was (except when he tried to teach me to golf) generally a patient man. he deserved some life of his own — god knows, my mother made plenty of time for her own clubs and classes. and i guess i learned how to tolerate boredom in such situations, learned that time does pass, albeit more slowly, when you have nothing to do but wish it along, not ever knowing exactly how much longer you will have to wait. i wonder if kids today can deal with it.

THE NUNS

everybody ridicules them, especially people who have only encountered them in the media and risque jokes.

i was educated by them from kindergarten through eighth grade. i received an excellent education