

personal sacrifices than a few days in jail; though Mailer, who has been in jail before, is not inclined to underestimate the cost even of this. Sacrifice, he feels, grudgingly, unwillingly and with a sudden surprising access of modesty and humility, may be unavoidable, and this acceptance of the idea of sacrifice, which does not come easily to a man of Mailer's belligerent temperament, marks, one may think, a notable stage in the pilgrim's progress of his life.

FOR BY THE END it has become clear that what has happened to Mailer during his three days in Washington is possibly important, certainly to him. There was something both pitiful and abject in the appalling personal exhibition he made of himself when he first arrived in Washington, on the stage of the Ambassador theatre, mug of Bourbon in one hand, mouthing ribaldries and obscenities in phoney Irish and Southern accents, maudlin, drunk and incoherent, and no one could describe it more pitilessly, though with a kind of wild and Gargantuan humour, than Mailer himself does here.

But there was nothing pitiful or abject about the short speech he made on his release from jail, though its closing sentences will not endear him to liberal technologists; it is almost impossible to believe that one man was responsible for both performances. "Some of us were at the Pentagon yesterday, and we were arrested in order to make our symbolic protest of the war in Viet Nam, and most of us served these very short sentences, but they are a harbinger of what will come next, for if the war doesn't

end next year, why then a few of us will probably have to take longer sentences. Because we must. You see, dear fellow Americans, it is Sunday, and we are burning the body and blood of Christ in Viet Nam. Yes, we are burning him there, and as we do, we destroy the foundation of this Republic, which is its love and trust in Christ."

For Mailer the March on the Pentagon was both a symbolic and an historic event; his magnificent account of it is, he says, "a discovery to himself of what the March on the Pentagon had finally meant, and what had been won, and what had been lost in that quintessentially American and most contemporary event—the scheduled happening which begins with the given and ends on the road to that mystery where courage, death and the dream of love give promise of sleep."

What is most remarkable, however, in his article is that out of his own subjective reactions to the March, he creates a brilliant picture of the turmoil, the profound diversions and confusions, the conflicts and contradictions of the American scene today. He makes one think of Whitman:

*Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then, I contradict myself.  
(I am large, I contain multitudes).*

And because whatever Mailer feels he feels violently, he somehow succeeds also in conveying a sense of the terrible strength of the conflicts in the heart of America today. It is as if he himself were being torn apart by the forces which are tearing America apart.

R

## To My Mother

Like an old windmill  
Two hands always raised  
To howl at the sky  
And two lowered  
To make sandwiches.

Her eyes are clean and glitter  
Like the Passover eve.

At night she will put  
All the letters  
And the photographs  
Side by side,

So she can measure  
The length of God's finger.

I want to walk in the deep  
Wadis between her sobs  
I want to stand in the terrible heat  
Of her silence.

I want to lean on the  
Rough trunks  
Of her pain.

She laid me,  
As Hagar laid Ishmael  
Under one of the bushes.

So that she won't have to be at my death  
In the war,  
Under one of the bushes  
In one of the wars.

**Yehuda Amichai**  
*Translated by Assia Gutman*

### *Jain sequence*

# I

## Illustrations

The boat spat out by the harbour  
on the map  
splits off from England  
Thomas Maurice  
(A History of Hindoostan)

captain  
breath of India  
our sails lean on an engraved slipstream  
I am crew  
a second-rate geographer  
steers us into fiction

impossible to sail  
like Roussel's mother  
who called for a telescope—  
"So that is India  
captain  
we are returning to France"  
on my seas  
an artist combs the waves  
at every landing  
imaginary countries retreat from me  
natives race back into the woods  
no return home either.

## II

## A treacherous foreigner lands

Soul atrophied  
 frees me from destinies  
 like this bull in Calcutta streets  
 hitches pants  
                     over bony hips  
 disconsolate rustler  
 run him out to where the sun goes down.

The street full of saris  
parakeet colours  
women in vivid green Indian blue  
men in slum shirts  
baggy trousers who  
all could be beggars  
half the population  
lying down alongside bicycles in the shadows  
indolence of low-caste  
nobody pats the bull  
as they do cows  
evil gouts  
burst out of a tuft below his stomach  
thoughts of a sacred cow to shag.

to brighten him up  
I could whisper a western religion into his ears  
parable of the slaughterhouse.

### III

## The temples

Gandhi's text  
alive: ahimsā hurt no one  
they should print it on  
vegetable curry packets.  
Ahimsā for Jains meant  
not to hurt insects in your path  
to strain drinking water.

## The last of the Jains' 24 perfect lords

left footmarks    fossils  
                                at Pava-Puri  
he wouldn't tread on any living thing.

Our very religious Indian coalman gives me a handshake. I set him dancing among temples where the stones are fried-egg hot polished statues of the perfect ones couch their toes in Jaina perfection non-workers.