

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

with these precautions, it still won't be easy to talk about humanism in France. You know, I've been very poorly looked on by the French intelligentsia.

**KB:** You've made some enemies.

**B-H L:** Lots, and I couldn't care less. Why? Because I tell the truth about some subjects that most people would prefer to leave in obscurity.

**KB:** That must amuse you, too.

**B-H L:** Enormously.

*The man who breezily turned up for the meal without knowing its purpose, explaining that that's his habit (the next night he was to lecture but had no clue what about), is suddenly jolted by a clove of garlic lodged in his lobster salad. When he'd thoroughly reprimanded the waiter, we continued.*

**KB:** Any opinions on the state of intellectual affairs in the U.S.?

**B-H L:** I'm afraid I'd appear frivolous.

**KB:** How about our "naiveté"?

**B-H L:** I only like sophistication, complication, and intelligence. The typical French anti-American notion of the naive and *sympathique* American obsessed with a modernity without roots is false. In your classic literature, in your modern films, in everyday life, in your women, there's an extreme sophistication. And civilization.

*Dessert arrives and by now the intellectuals are swapping ideas on what's "in." B-H L "the man" talks about New York and California (both places he likes); he admits a weakness for New York's Pierre Hotel and to one peculiar flaw.*

**B-H L:** I don't have a credit card.

**TB:** Well, luckily, they accept checks everywhere in France.

**B-H L:** Nor a checkbook.

**KB:** What's your secret?

**B-H L:** I have accounts everywhere. I have a system of paying for taxis at the end of the month. And I always carry a lot of cash in my pocket. [He takes out a wad.] It's crazy.

**KB:** Not really if you consider that you don't know what you'll be lecturing about tomorrow night.

**B-H L:** It's very childish.

**KB:** Very free.

**B-H L:** I guess it's that good old fantasy of being able to pick up and go on the spur of the moment. Oh, yeah, I don't have an identity card either. The last one expired in 1966.

I'm lucky to be free. I like to play, and I have a happy temperament. Just take a look at me.

**KB:** Yes, and your look doesn't hurt.

**B-H L:** Well, that's true. In the first place, it's good for my morale. □