The New Sentimentality

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INTRODUCTION

There is a New Sentimentality, but nobody knows it exists. Once it was a kind of virtue, as in, "He is sentimental, he has a good heart." Then, as times changed, the term slipped from grace and became pejorative. "Don't give me that sentimental stuff." And as all the wise people and the intellectuals believed there was no more sentimentality in them. They thought they had replaced it with conciseness and honesty. But they were wrong. They merely exchanged Old Sentimentality for New Sentimentality.

The mangrove came in the Fifties. Eisenhower was a key figure, perhaps the last bloom of Old Sentimentality. It was seen that the masses loved him, as a father or maybe Gramps, and those who felt they were above that kind of adulation said: "Look at that. How could anybody get? It's like a Norman Rockwell cover." They cut off sentiment, seeing it as weakness. They cultivated the art of "playing it cool." But the New Sentimentality was growing, without their ever knowing it.

Suddenly it was 1960 and John Kennedy was there, and the wise, the intellectuals and the time-making people did him homage. They didn't think he was a father or Gramps. They liked him because he was tough, because he was all pro, because he was a man who knew what he wanted and grabbed it. They loved that in him as furiously as the crowds loved Lee. They sentimentalized every power grab. And that was when the New Sentimentality came out in the open.

Old Sentimentality had "values" that everyone could see; bywords that meant the same to all: Patriotism, Love, Religion, Mom, The Girl. The values of the New Sentimentality are not out there enshrined on banners. They differ slightly from man to man, because one of the definitions of New Sentimentality is that it has to do with you, really just you, not what you were-old or stilted, but what goes on in your head, really, and in your heart, really.

Here are its tenets: Personal interest is the shibboleth of emotion. In the Old way you had ideals, causes, goals that were, in some way, beneficial to all. In the New, your primary objective is to make your life fit your style. There is professionalism about all. For example, the Old concept of selling out, which tended to drive good men crazy, causing them to cry in their beer and bemoan their wasted talent (writing ad copy, for instance), has disappeared. Now we glory in what pros we are, and a man loves his job for writing the best jingle on the market.

We used to be sentimental about Common Sense. To have it meant you did the Right Thing, considered its effects on all concerned, acted wisely. Now Common Sense has been supplanted by Sharpness. We love ourselves when we are really sharp. We love to see evidence of a sharp cookie winning the day, as long as he isn't a villain.

Self-indulgence used to be a bad idea. Anyone who was labeled with the term was wasting himself. Now it is a virtue. We think it is worthwhile because it tells us the truth about ourselves, about our desires and appetites. So we swing with it. We say, "Don't have a wild night!" and we feel pleased. It shows we have a sense of self.
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PATRIOTISM

A\I WANT YO\U

OId Sentimentality: The Fourth of July
Marilyn Monroe moved from Old to New. In her life, her movies, her art, she became a factor of the New in her death. When she died, we did not react by saying, "How tragic." We said and felt, "Look what can happen to you when you screw up your life." We mourn her artificialism.

TRANSITIONAL FIGURE

New Sentimentality: Nothing

Friendship

In the Old Sentimentality, men had buddies and pals, a bunch of "the boys" they played poker with every Monday night, a world without women to retreat to. They treasured "the girls," and ben partners, and a close girl/boy to confide in. In the New Sentimentality, the women are accomplices. It's them or us. They are not for escape, they are for "boys." Men have given up the heartbreak and the losers. The New Sentimentality is for childhood enemies. We recall not what happened, but the bully that beat us up and made us feel small, and the smoothie who didn't back up, the coup that worked.

ETYMOLOGY

Old Sentimentality: The Ox-Bow Incident
New Sentimentality: The C.I.A.

Psychology

We had finally learned the cynicism of politics and there was nothing left to do but romanticize it. No longer shocked by corruption or insipidity is high places, we now admired the smoothie who didn't back up, the coup that worked.

Politics

Politics

Old Sentimentality:
Narcissism
Pacificism
SANE
Reform movements
Splitting your ticket to vote for the man

New Sentimentality:
The C.I.A.

Soviets

Old: Karl Marx, who believed in Utopia based on mankind cooperating. All would amends be well. Men, wise. New: Nikita Khrushchev, who knows that tension is the natural condition, that playing angles is the control.

Old: The Mets. The myth of the lovable loser, the good old underdog. New: The Yankees. To win is everything. To be hard it is to be in charge. Money talks.

Maturity

Old Sentimentality:
Reform movements
Sane

New Sentimentality:
Reform movements
SANE

Life Patterns

Old Sentimentality:
Bad Luck
Marrying
Common Sense
Carrying the Torch
Has Beens
Loyalty
College Ties
Finding Yourself
Selling Out

New Sentimentality:
Getting Carried Away
Wounding and Being Wounded
Inherent Flaws
Vulnerability
Anxiety
One-night Stands
Change
Going Where the Action Is
Sharpening

Esquire: July
In the Old Sentimentality, we believed in the efficacy of Whitman's Samurais with sweets for the sweet. We intended "Dumb Girls Are Forever." We gave the same old eight dancing, "our song," packing, "best girls," engagement rings. We loved to propose. We subscribed to the theory that self-sacrifice would prove ardent ("I'll go through fire for you:"), and to the concept that one could trade on his ardor. We had a vantage of the easily old in feeling that one should have semi-honorable attentions toward his beloved. We believed love had a capital L, that it was wise, that True love was everlasting, that neans broke, that there was one Great Love, that for every man was a woman, that you didn't say, "I love you," unless you really were positive. They're all gone. The New Sentimentality is organized on other lines. We now get smart-eyed about the fact that everybody is bound to get hurt in an affair that we can be destroyed, but we can surely bounce back. We no longer carry the torch. We ride ourselves on our ability to bounce back. We are sentimental about the transient nature of love affairs; we cut them knowing they won't last and loving the impermanence. Under Old Sentimentality, we believed we should keep something in reserve. Now we do our best to Get Carried Away. We assume that going overboard is part of love. We need in the blunder and we have as much in the lows. We like to tell our lovers that we have moods and a lot of weaknesses. We pray they don't use them to scare us, but that we do the same thing to them. Love is insecure.

**MARRIAGE**

Old Sentimentality: Current and Future

New Sentimentality: Current and Future

Old Sentimentality said that Marriage was an Institution. New Sentimentality says that Marriage is a day-to-day situation. Old Marriage had pipe and slippers, and what's for dinner-to-night, honey?, and family meetings, and protecting the little woman, and sanctity of the home above all else. New Marriage believes that things will work out, but it will not be easy, that trials will be forthcoming constantly, the love will help to hold it together but more is needed. New Marriage is based on privacy when everybody wants its on at least one good knock-down, drag-out screaming fight a month just to clear the air, on both partners being kind to weaknesses. We expect our mates to be sophisticated in bed because we still like to preserve the sanctity of the home. New Sentimentality also allows for people to get very sentimental about their divorces. You hear it all the time. As for Adultery, it is an Old phrase, like Extramarital. New Marriage is more faithful than Old, because the people have already had enough affairs. One or two more don't damage the union, we understand the nature of the unhappy marriage.

**CELEBRITIES**

**Old Sentimentality:** John Wayne

**New Sentimentality:** Marlon Brando

The Old Sentimentality said that anybody who was famous was a celebrity and therefore possessed glamour and excitement. It didn't matter what the person actually did or what qualities he or she possessed. The New Sentimentality is more concerned with the individuality of the person. It also places more importance on the individual's personal qualities and abilities. The New Sentimentality is more concerned with the individual's personal qualities and abilities. The New Sentimentality is more concerned with the individual's personal qualities and abilities. The New Sentimentality is more concerned with the individual's personal qualities and abilities.

**CHILDREN**

Old Sentimentality: Lillie

New: Clarice Brand

In the Old Sentimentality, we believed that children were cutie "little people." In the New Sentimentality, we see that kids are kids, and they've got their own problems. They are not little anymore, but they remain in our schools because we see our own problems forming in them. We tend to raise our children to be Good Citizens, to be loyal to our values. Now we know better, having seen the results in our kids. Now we raise our kids above all else, to be Sharp. We want them to be on top of it, for their protection.

**SONGS**

**Old Sentimentality:** One for My Baby (and One More for the Road)

**New Sentimentality:** Surf City

It is no longer the tunes about Mom, or Summer, or That Girl Who Left Me that turn us on. We are capable of being disappointed by a Tenor lyric, or a quartet screaming "Zain." Rock 'n' roll is calculated, cynical. It's about us, now.

**LOVE**

**Old Sentimentality:** Good Girls vs. Bad Girls

**New Sentimentality:** People Who Touched You How To Make Love

The age of the tramp is gone. To be a "swinger" is to put yourself on the market and be glad you're weak, kind of, not having a ball. We expect girls who sleep around a little. They are nice. Virgin scar us out of the room. Fun is fun.

**TRANSITIONAL FIGURE**

Bogart makes the jump from Old to New. He was always a bit of both. Old because he was a man's man, a tough guy with the ladies, an arrogant walker, a distance from authority. New because he always played a good man who was quite unscrupulous, because he grumbled at the sexy girl first and then kissed her in sudden passion, because he took the torch. New Sentimentality of Sam Spade and transformed it into New. Bogart says that a man can both care and not give a damn. We may there­ into paths of glory not give a damn.

**SEX**

**Old Sentimentality:** The Whores With a Heart of Gold

**New Sentimentality:** Major Premises Minor Premises (yours)

We respect girls who sleep around a little. It is no longer the tunes about Mom, or Summer, or That Girl Who Left Me that turn us on. We are capable of being disappointed by a Tenor lyric, or a quartet screaming "Zain." Rock 'n' roll is calculated, cynical. It's about us, now.
Places

Old Sentimentality: Tchadistan

Travel: The Old Sentimentality about travel was the delight derived from visiting colorful countries, seeing the natives. In New Sentimentality, all the romance is in the traveling itself. The airport is as exciting as the destination. The idea of flying across the world is better than landing any place. We do not paste stickers on our luggage, but we tell our friends about the movie we saw on the flight. We get in love with the foreign girls as much as with the stevedores. The idea of going is what we like best.

Television: The Old Sentimentality watches C.B.S. Reports and Sunday afternoon cultural programs and educational TV. The New Sentimentality watches The Beverly Hillbillies not because they like it, but because they admire its success. Late-night movies and afternoon reruns are the most beloved.

 Writers

Old: Ernest Hemingway

Bravery above all. Dying well. Honor as an eternal value. Hunting, Bulls.

Old: Dorothy Parker


Old: E. E. Cummings

Love is like a flower, or a mountain. Love as a gift. Condemnation of compromises.

New:

Robert Lowell

Beauty of destruction. The sanitarium as a setting for a poem. The order of chaos.

American writers are almost entirely of the Old Sentimentality. They gave us values to create conflicts. Their heroes rebelled against some existing order—social, psychological, romantic, familial—and were meaningful thereby. The hot new writers are much the same; even the surrealists who deal with the bizarre as a mirror of reality are upset about values. They chronicle their decay. The writers of the New Sentimentality appear in Europe. Few are good at it. Beckett is, Colere was becoming. The case of Nabokov is interesting. He is Old (Pnin, The Gift) and New (Lolita, Pale Fire), but he is never entirely one or the other. That is a measure of his greatness, no doubt about it. Robert Lowell is our most New Sentimental writer. He sees it happening.

The New Sentimentality always had us seeing you in all those old familiar places, cozy bars; certain hills and lovers’ lanes, great steel-canyon cities that pulsed with glamour, colorful settings, simple streets where dear hearts and gentle people lived, crowded rooms where we saw a stranger one enchanted evening. In the New Sentimentality, all the places are inside you. There are no more “settings” against which we play our little dramas. We can be sentimental in our kitchen if we feel in the mood. Life doesn’t “play better” against a moonlit sky anymore. There are no places; we make our own. We have learned that you can have a beautiful time on the Staten Island Ferry, or a lousy one. It has nothing to do with the Staten Island Ferry. Nothing at all.

Old: Jackson Pollock

Pollock is Old Sentimental, the lli because he projects Lichtenstein is New, no other
**ART**

**Old**
- Jackson Pollock
- Roy Lichtenstein

**New**
- Balthus

**PROPAGANDA**

**Old**
- La Dolce Vita

**New**
- L'Avventura

**FASHION**

**Old**
- Malcolm X

**New**
- James Baldwin

**JAZZ**

**Old Sentimentality: Count Basie** is playing controlled emotion. He prefers the rhythm section. The hotter it is, the tighter the arrangement. The hotter it is, the more you have to control the orchestra, and Basie never jumps at one o'clock anymore. New Sentimentality: The Modern Jazz Quartet plays music that doesn't release you. It doesn't release you. There is no release. The Modern Jazz Quartet plays music that doesn't release you. The music is a mixture of introverts and extroverts. We want that in the New Sentimentality, because it's more fragile but rooted in blues, ordered but given to flights of fancy, insecure but heading in some direction. Problem swing.

**JAZZ**

**Old**
- Count Basie

**New**
- The Modern Jazz Quartet

**THE PROBLEM**

- Malcolm X

- James Baldwin

**HEROES**

**Old**
- Ben Hogan

**New**
- Sonny Liston

**ART**

**Old**
- Jackson Pollock

**New**
- Roy Lichtenstein

**PROPAGANDA**

**Old**
- La Dolce Vita

**New**
- L'Avventura

**FASHION**

**Old**
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**JAZZ**

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PURVEYORS OF OLD SENTIMENTALITY

These are the people who stand for past values. They are role players. In some cases, they played that role purposefully and aggressively. In others, they didn't plan it. They were of their time and that time is going. Best of their breed, they gave us the living manifestations of the Old Sentimentality.

Adlai Stevenson
He is Honorabl e Man; myth of the egghead; Lincoln; the lost leader; Old Liberalism; wise.

Lyndon Johnson
He is FDR; the big ranch king; cowboys; The Last Hurrah; humble beginnings.

Dwight D. Eisenhower
To Old Sentimentalists, they will always be Ike and Mamie. They are red, white and blue; apple-pie American; Gettysburg farm; grandchildren; West Point; Western novels; simple decency; Republican.

Adams Seaver
He is the happy sailor; muscular ballet; MGM; open smile; lover of ideal woman.

Jackie Robinson
He is the American Way; the Hard Road Up; courage; the very legend of the athlete.

Pete Seeger
He is the dust bowl; a rebel with a cause; the hobo mystique; Old Left Wing; strikes.

Gene Kelly
He is Children Are the Same the Whole World Over; a smile and a song; Universal Language of Love; Uncle Sam; beloved by royalty; the warm heart with the Funny face; sweetness and light.

Pete Seeger
He is the American Way; the Hard Road Up; courage; the very legend of the athlete.

The Clan
They were sophistication for the little man; waltzes; torch songs; Blue Room; Little Girl Blue; marriage is for sweet lovers, Falling In Love With Love; the romantic aura of bittersweet love; Manhattan.

Grace Kelly
She is our Cinderella: the Princess; the re tireu Movie Star; Only in America; Family.

The Beatles
They are the Put-On face; Professionalism; Ringo's looks; Yelling a good time; You're a good time.

Git·Carlo Henning
He is Puccini; schmaltz; a Culture Concept; Amahl; sweet mutes and cripples.

Rodgers and Hart
They were inspirational; singing of nuns; dancing cowboys; Climb Every Mountain; a song from the heart; You'll Never Walk Alone; Mary Martin; popular religion; the U.S.A.
PURVEYORS OF NEW SENTIMENTALITY

These are the givers of the New Way. They have enlisted our interest all along without our realizing the changes they were making. They are the vanguard of a different set of rules, of concepts, and, most importantly, of attitudes. Sometimes intentionally, sometimes not, they have been touching us the value system of the New Sentimentality.

The Beatles

They are the Pop-On; the big laugh; a slap in the face; Professionalism; the new idea of the Celebrity; Ringo's looks: "We're not any good, but we're having a good time". Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

Allan Weibel

He is the manipulation of the audience; the terror of horror; cynical control; tension as art.

Martin Baker

He is the last man with his own God; the existential Jew; to Thou as disciple; big religion.

The Christianites

They are the Real Idea of Television; the violence, Love gets in the way and ruins the scheme; Nena as cynical do-gooder. The Rotten Twenties; the Cult of the Criminal; kicks for art's sake.

Audrey Hepburn

She is Holly Golightly; big sunglasses; beauty of the unbeautiful; the fragile that is tough.

Carlo Ponti

He is the lover in a new guise; the husband of Sophia; big Italian bankroll; Roma.

Maria Callas

She is the cult of Arrogance; the Professional; the subjugation of Nice to Tops; temper.

Nicholas Ray

He is the sentimental eroticism; the condition of Alone; going overboard; Monica Vitti.

Elvis Presley

He is the Unlikely Winner; the hard and mean sound; Sharpness; the end of Authority; rock.

Jean Shrimp/on

She is Woman as wrathful, vengeful God; the love that devours; Pierre Cardin; Jules et Jim.

Kelly

He is Style over Content; the idea of the Lover; Women are Fatal; the past is now.

Lady Bird Johnson

She is "no conflict of interest"; the quiet tycoon (radio stations); Muzak; not just a wife.

Lenny Bruce

He is the hipster; the trouble with cops; hum-pvation; a summit of Style; anger.

Les Curnitt

He is the giver of Pop; money made in mockery; the Painter as Anti-Hero; Power.

Jean Shrimpton

She is the Age of the Model; the Queen of English fashion; the Look; awareness of aloofness; physical attractiveness as an End; cold perfection; the beauty as a tough cookie; Makeup all day long.