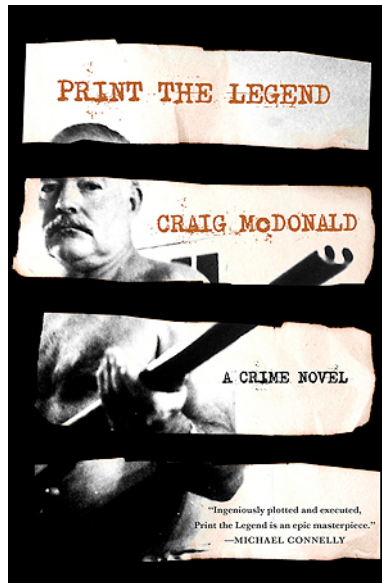

***PAULSON:
#2 IDAHO, 1965***



“There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

THE WRITING LIFE

That night, as the crickets trilled outside the hotel window, Hannah wrote a short story for herself, writing in the old, wonderful groove for the first time since her flight from Idaho.

Inspired by her discovery, Hannah framed her story as another kind of “lost” chapter of *A Moveable Feast*. Hannah’s was a chapter written from first wife Hadley’s perspective describing her trip on the night train to Lausanne where, upon arrival, she would have to tell Papa that she had lost the suitcase containing his extant manuscripts, including what was written of a first novel.

Hannah composed in collaboration with her hidden self, as she always did when she wrote her best — that wondrous, difficult to master legerdemain that writers, like magicians, dared never reveal. That was the wonderful secret that she had learned early from Papa: She was alive within her story, but still controlling it, all the while knowingly unknowingly working with her silent partner, her wonderful subconscious.

That was the ineffable feat of alchemy that could never be effectively taught: The critical need for the writer to be sensitive enough to detect what the hidden side of him or herself contributed to the narrative.

Papa knew all about that secret of great writing. He also knew the importance of not incessantly, stubbornly thinking about or forcing it. He knew the importance of allowing the well of his own creativity to refill; trusting that his exceptional brain would work out any of the problems that daunted the conscious mind.

And when Papa knew that he could no longer do it, that the old alchemy had deserted him, then he — to Hannah’s mind — *rightly* knew that he could no longer live.

Hannah closed her notebook and turned down the light and sat on the foot of the bed, thinking of Hector. He was a morning writer and he wrote at the typewriter. Hector was an astonishingly fast typist, but Hannah figured he had to be that to produce fourteen- or fifteen-thousand words a day during the golden age of the pulps.

She had found an article written about Hector in the Ketchum Library...found it among the bound copies of a defunct men's magazine. The profile, written for *True* by Hector's improbable friend, the noir poet Eskin "Bud" Fiske, had given Hannah the broad strokes of Hector's biography. She was astonished by the depth and breadth of the life the man had packed into his nearly sixty-five years. He had chased Pancho Villa...fought in the Great War. He had lived in Paris in the 1920s, Key West in the 1930s and had shared the Spanish Civil War with Hem and Dos Passos. Hector had moved through Hollywood as a screenwriter and gotten in potentially serious trouble during World War II, in France, when he'd reportedly violated protocols and moved from war correspondent to guerilla leader...organizing his own band of French irregulars and killing several hold-out Nazis in the streets of Paris. It made Hannah sad that she could not have been there with Hector and Hem in Paris during the 1920s, particularly. She'd had pressed Hector for details a few times, but he had demurred.

She knocked on the connecting door, said, "Hector, wake up. Wake up, Hector."

He mumbled through the door, "Everything okay? What time is it?"

"Late. Tell me about Paris, Hector. Tell me how it was. Don't say no this time."

"Now?"

"Right now. Make me see it...make me feel and taste it. Tell it to me like a story."

Hector groaned and checked the clock. He shook his head.

Resigned, he sat up and stacked pillows behind his back, running his hand back through his hair. "Door's unlocked..."

He smiled tiredly at Hannah as she crept into his room. He said, "You're going to be a longtime making up for this one, kiddo."

“You’ll think of something,” she said, smiling. “But now tell me how it was.”

<http://www.craigmcdonaldbooks.com/legend.php>