

drinks]—four syllables for one, and the unresolved enigma of how the plural will be formed. “Our Italian language must not be despoiled by foreignisms!” declares Filippo Tommaso with a Puritanism not unworthy of the aseptic Cejador or the forty stalls of the Spanish Royal Academy. Foreignisms! The old impresario of Futurism cannot abide such mischief.

[1938]

[EW]

Richard Hull, *Excellent Intentions*

One of the projects that keeps me company, that will in some way justify me before God, and that I do not think I will accomplish (for the pleasure is in foreseeing it, not in bringing it to term) is a detective novel that would be somewhat heterodox. (This last is important, for the detective genre, like all genres, lives on the continual and delicate infraction of its rules.)

I conceived it one night, one wasted night in 1935 or 1934, upon leaving a café in the Barrio Once. These meager circumstantial facts will have to suffice for the reader; I have forgotten the others, forgotten them to the point where I don't know whether I invented some of them. Here was my plan: to plot a detective novel of the current sort, with an indecipherable murder in the first pages, a long discussion in the middle, and a solution at the end. Then, almost in the last line, to add an ambiguous phrase—for example: “and everyone thought the meeting of the man and woman had been by chance”—that would indicate, or raise the suspicion, that the solution was false. The perplexed reader would go through the pertinent chapters again, and devise his own solution, the correct one. The reader of this imaginary book would be sharper than the detective. . . .

Richard Hull has written an extremely pleasant book. His prose is able, his characters convincing, his irony civilized. His solution, however, is so unsurprising that I cannot free myself from the suspicion that this quite real book, published in London, is the one I imagined in Balvanera, three or four years ago. In which case, *Excellent Intentions* hides a secret plot. Ah me, or ah Richard Hull! I can't find that secret plot anywhere.

[1938]

[EW]