

# THE AVIARY

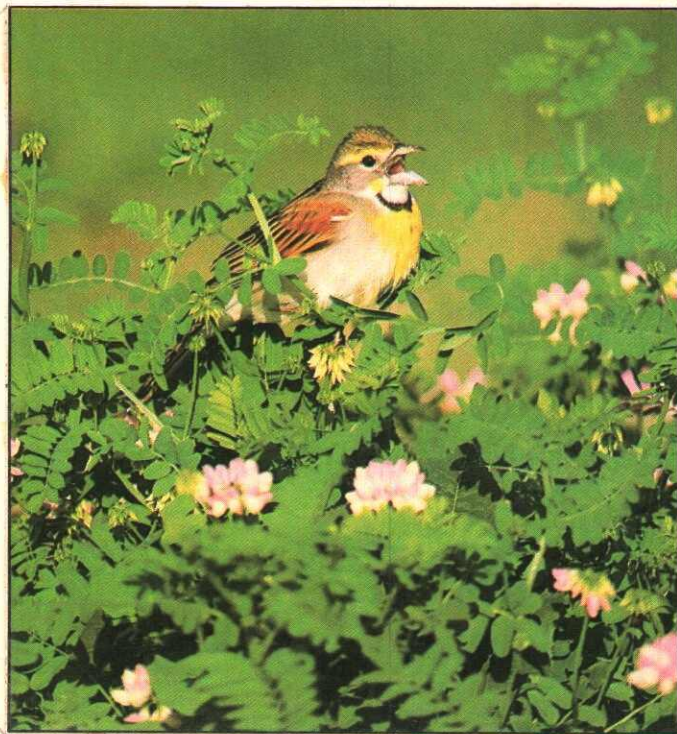
Vol. 11, #1  
(Jan.-Feb., '94)



Thus, once again,  
Saint Baumli blesses  
his most ardent and  
devoted disciples.

"... let us now suppose that in the mind of each man there is an aviary of all sorts of birds--some flocking together apart from the rest, others in small groups, others solitary, flying anywhere and everywhere."

Theaetetus by Plato



Last year I began the writing of a very tardy Aviary on June 28. This year I begin on June 30. I plead weariness, distractions, other duties, and such, for my thus postponing the task. Yet I begin to wonder (again) if my thus indulging in procrastination (which does not come easily to one of my compulsive temperament) really means that I just do not want to continue doing these massive, expensive, and, for the most part, egregious form letters. If so, then I suppose I am very adept at deluding myself; and thus, despite my reluctance, I proceed with another. Thus I force myself to do what I don't want to do,



rather like what happens when one bends over to vomit.

But then, vomiting is not always such a bad thing. When one suffers from the sort of spiritual malaise which daily afflicts me, vomiting is not an insufferable means by which to discover that I am not yet dead--with my soul atrophying faster than my body is rotting.

So despite this disinclination (actually, this revulsion) I have for doing another Aviary, I am going ahead with it. But along with the revulsion, there also is a practical reluctance, based upon the mere fact that there are fewer and fewer people I am doing this Aviary for. As the years go by, fewer people read anything at all. When these people confess to me that they do not read The Aviary, then I very appropriately stop sending it to them. The result is that this year I doubt that I shall send out more than about 35 copies. Perhaps, even, the day will come when I will find myself producing but one copy, and that for myself--to keep as a sort of yearly diary.

The response to last year's Aviary was generally friendly. People said that Baumli was being nicer to the world that time. They were wrong. I wasn't being nicer to the world; I was merely ignoring it. But if people mistakenly take my disdain for being a virtue, that is well and fine with me. As it was, I received but one angry letter, this one from a woman who considers herself a poetess (yes; this is her own term). Years ago, she, for a while, served as a casual, i.e., convenient, lover. But I left her because she was always writing bad poetry, which, I suppose, was not such a terrible thing except that she insisted on reading it to me. (Imagine the saintly Baumli, lying there with an erection, who must endure her poem before she will tend to the important business at hand.) (Only once did I lapse from patience, when, after having heard over 200 lines which she had just penned that day, I interrupted her with, "So should I just go on to sleep, or are you still wanting to get your oil changed?")

But I must not go on about the poetess's poetry; rather, I was mentioning the letter she wrote in response to The Aviary. The letter is not worth citing entire; the salient point, the insult she hoped to hurl, was, "You've been living in that place you hate for so long you've started talking like them, and now the drawl you've picked up has insinuated itself into your prose. Your prose can't even crawl across the page. Instead it just drawls. This is what has become of you. You need to write poetry. Maybe that would tighten up your style and help you lose your new drawl."

I replied, in part: "What you perceive as a drawl is actually a melodic, well-inflected voice. As for it entering my prose? You have paid me the compliment of recognizing that my prose, like my speech, is melodic and well-inflected. And as for my writing poetry--I already do, when I've the opportunity. But I seldom have the opportunity, since I seldom visit public restrooms, and when I do I become very frustrated because the walls are so difficult to write on."

Do you see how acrimonious, and unfair, people can be, when I am being so righteous and judicious?

But, as I said, this was the only critical letter. And it came from a woman who, for reasons I have never been able to decipher, has harbored a grudge against me that has lasted more than 1½ decades. In fact, I have never sent her a copy of The Aviary, but she knows people I know, and somehow always manages to get her paws on a copy. She then reads it, and sends me her version of The Aviary's antithesis. (I did find out, one year, how she bribed a friend of mine to lend her his copy. Desperate to get a copy, that year, and use it as fodder for her shrewish faculties, she inflicted upon my friend a gift which he described to me in strictly oral terms. I will say no more about it, except to here remark that the oral bestowal did not involve her reading him her poetry.)

There. Enough said about the poetess. (You, my loyal friends, will of course discern my transparent motive for saying this much about her; namely, I am hoping that my mild rejoinder will shut her up.)

In this year's Aviary there are changes--significant differences from last year's form, even though these changes are few in number. For one thing, my twin sister, Frances, has chosen to henceforth absent herself from these pages. She believes that this Aviary is not good for my spiritual health--that I should, instead, be writing my "important stuff," as she says. By this she means my fiction. Moreover, at the moment she is angry with me--or, rather, angry with herself, because despite her resolve in last year's Aviary, she unwittingly began referring to me as a saint. I did not point this out to her until she had done it in three consecutive letters. She thereupon resolved that she would no longer enter into literary company with me, because she was convinced that it was this exercise, and not my virtues, which had caused her to assume an exactitude with prose which she was later to regret. (And to think: I was just getting used to her being nice to me.) (The truth is, she is much nicer to people in general than I am. But she makes up for it by not being very nice to me.)

A further change involves mention of future events. I had done this in early editions of The Aviary, but had halted the practice given that anticipated futures were so rarely actualized. I shall this year try to make some predictions about my life, but they will be modest in scope, and usually will describe a future that is already being actualized.

As for other changes--they will primarily involve a shifting of focus. I do not wish to go on about--complain about--Southern Illinois as I have done in the past. I am sick of Southern Illinois, and would rather not think about the place except when



events force me to.

Furthermore, I hope to trim down the length of this Aviary. I want to report events, and register opinions, without going into such detail (or going beyond the realm of detail to the abstract, metaphysical realm--which is what I probably more often do).

One final note: I made an egregious error in last year's Aviary which I should bring to your attention. Namely, on the front cover, it is listed as Vol.9, #1. It was supposed to be Vol. 10, #1. This mistake was not repeated on subsequent pages, but I felt very embarrassed that it should appear on the front cover. Because, as you know, it is so unlike me to make such a mistake, I did a considerable amount of soul-searching to understand why I might have committed it. After having meditated on the matter more than an hour this day, I do think I at last understand. I confess that I was succumbing to a kind of artistic superstition. You realize, of course, that Beethoven composed only nine symphonies, and failed to finish his 10th. The same was true of Schubert, Mahler, and Bruckner. Many a composer has wondered if there is a kind of universal law of tertiary finality which applies to artistic works, and causes them to succumb to their mortality (even if prematurely!) if they try to compose more than nine symphonies. Big symphonies, that is. (Thus we exclude the likes of Haydn or Mozart from this rule.) I do think that, upon beginning Volume 10 of The Aviary, I was somehow worried that a foray beyond the trio of triads I had already completed would somehow be, as Mahler put it, "tempting providence." I think that I, too, was afraid to thus tempt providence. (Even though I really do not believe in providence. Yes; I confessed that it was a sort of superstition.) The result was that I wanted, somehow, to believe that I was not yet committing an act of hubris by aspiring to a tenth symphony (of sorts). I thus, momentarily, experienced a lapse of craft (and courage), and pretended that I was safely at work on my ninth major opus. My apologies for this error. (I must assume that the only reason none of you pointed it out to me was because you were being polite. You needn't have been.)

But I have said enough by way of introduction. What follows will be an attempt to tardily report on what happened in 1993. And, all the while, curb my usual incontinence with words, and instead try for a leaner, more athletic prose.



What brings about this curious order that comes without compulsion, without planning, without deliberate mentation? Have you ever considered it? Do you know what I mean by order? It is to sit quietly without pressure, to eat elegantly without rush, to be leisurely and yet precise, to be clear in one's thinking and yet expansive.

Think on These Things by J. Krishnamurti, p. 71.

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF 1993

Jan. 2: I attended a concert by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by André Raphael Smith.

Smith is young, new to the task, but he did a respectable job. The orchestra itself showed its merits with Beethoven's Overture to "Fidelio," Op. 72b. David Herbert, a very young timpanist did an impressive job with William Kraft's mediocre Concerto for Timpani and Orchestra. (Why doesn't anyone ever do a work of the same title by Hertel, which is vastly more interesting, and has been out of print for many years?) The final work was the Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43 by Sibelius. This is a favorite of mine, and although I've heard it done better, I very much enjoyed this opportunity for again hearing it performed live.

Jan. 6: After spending much of 1991 and 1992 trying to get new glasses, and always getting a wrong prescription, I finally, this date, obtained



new glasses--both a pair for reading and a pair for distance, and they work. I had, after bad luck with many optometrists, finally gone to two ophthalmologists, and from each of them had received a prescription that was virtually identical, although very different from the prescriptions given me by optometrists. I thereupon took the two prescriptions by ophthalmologists to a patient and very kindly optometrist, explained to her the difficulties I had had, and asked her to take the two expert prescriptions as a starting point, and let me come in several times over the course of two months so she could get an average (given that it had been suggested to me that perhaps, what with my having MS, I was varying somewhat in my acuity, depending on the time of day, etc.). She was glad to comply, the visits were made, the readings, which varied from each other only a very small bit, were averaged, and now ... I have glasses that help me see better.

A small matter, you may think; but when one has only one eye to begin with, being able to see well with the other eye is not insignificant.

Feb. 2: On this date I underwent a most unusual and impressive ascetic purgation. You, my friends, are aware of my penchant for hoarding socks. Well, on this date, of my hoard, I gave away 51 pairs.

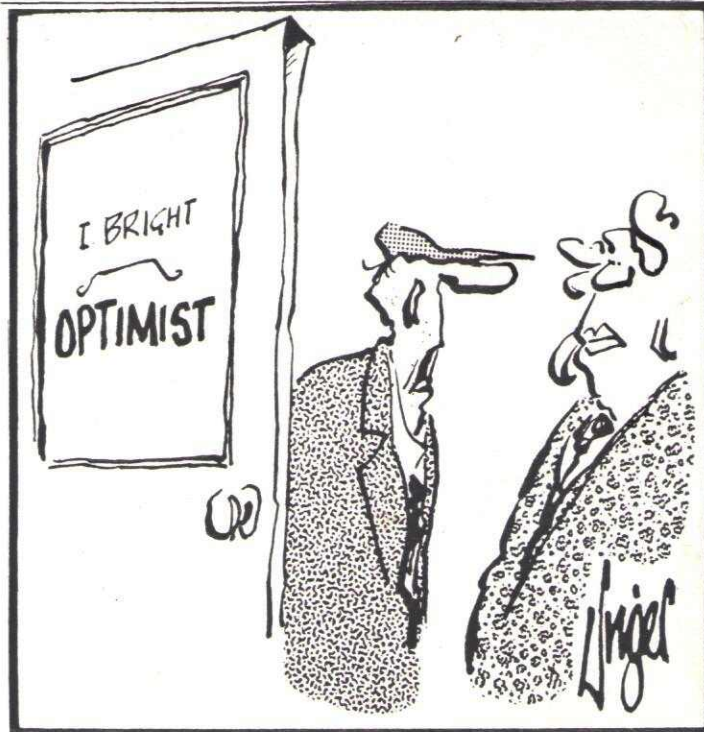
Lest anyone think that I am, after this purgation, proceeding rapidly along the mystical path, be informed that, on this date, I also tallied my remaining pairs. There remained no less than 92. This included 13 pairs for winter, 43 for summer, and 36 regular pairs. I yet retain that single, unmatched crew sock which was lost (probably by Abbe) on July 16, 1989. I have never forgiven her for it.

Mar. 25: I attended an attempt at a concert by the Warsaw Soloists with Klara Wuertz on piano. I had heard Wuertz some years before, in solo recital, so was especially looking forward to this concert. But it was very much a disappointment. They were conducted by their bass player, and given his posture, plus where he positioned himself (forward, stage right), it was very difficult for the chamber orchestra to follow his cues. Every beginning note was dragged out too long, and then the tempo would quicken as though the entire orchestra were trying to make up for the lost time. And the bass player himself, even though he somehow had the wherewithal to have obtained a position as leader and conductor of this orchestra, was a very mediocre, and sometimes very bad, bass player. He always played sharp on the D string, even though it was tuned correctly. And he never played with enough volume. He used very short bow strokes, thus attenuating the dynamism of the instrument, and what was ridiculous, used a mute for most of the numbers. His mute seemed to serve almost as a stage prop for him. He was constantly busy taking it off and then putting it back on, in the very midst of numbers. All this--a timid bow, and a mute, when his bass was never loud enough even on those rare occasions when he was playing at full volume.

They did Marcin Mielczewski's Canzona Prima, and it was terrible. They did Vivaldi's Concerto for Strings and basso continuo in C Major, RV 109, and it was worse. They then did Handel's Lovely Concerto grosso in a, Op. 6, No. 4, and although they played the third movement quite well, the rest was tedium and butchery.

Klara Wuertz then came out for Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 12 in A, K. 414. When I had heard her before, I thought it one of the finest concerts I had ever attended. This time she played well, but was not at all outstanding. She too often eschewed staccato, seldom used enough force, and ... well, yes, there was that mediocre orchestra backing her. Plus she was playing the school's wreck of a Baldwin, which is never in tune, and has terrible timbre.

March 27: I saw the movie A Few Good Men. It was worth seeing, especially given the truly great acting on the part of Jack Nicholson. The script itself was flawed, especially at the end, when the admission of guilt in the courtroom happened abruptly--too easily. This end was too stereotypical, reminding one of those old Perry Mason shows where, at the end, the true criminal would stand up in court and make his keening confession.



"He said I don't need glasses!"



Mar. 31: Why don't I ever learn? About 3½ years ago, I had heard a cellist, who is on the faculty of SIUC, play in a piano trio. He had played quite impressively, so, learning that he would be giving his faculty recital, I decided to attend.

He first did Bach's Sonata in G. On this piece, he was accompanied by a woman on harpsichord who plodded along with all the finesse of an obese woman walking in Dutch clogs. As for cello technique, there was none. Mellado played so badly, as though he were nervous, that by the third movement his left hand was clutching, and he almost had to stop the performance. I truly felt sorry for the fellow, the way he was sweating it.

He then tried to redeem himself by doing Eugene Ysaye's Sonata for Cello Alone. It is a busy, aggressive work, and yet it does not require great technique, i.e., it is the sort of thing a mediocre

cellist can usually use for impressing an audience. But Mellado did not impress me. Occasionally his technique was worthy, and sometimes he had the emotional tenor right, but generally the playing was dull, dead.

After an intermission, he, along with Dan Nedelcu on viola, and his wife, Fairya Mellado on violin, did Mozart's Divertimento in E Flat, K. 563. The violist was excellent; I had heard so, and this was why I stayed after the intermission. Mellado played adequately on cello. As for his wife, Fairya, she made so many mistakes the results were more miasma than medley. She never did not play flat, and she never stopped smiling, while throughout this six-movement chamber piece she displayed her tonal virtuosity by running the entire gamut of emotions from shrill to hysterical.

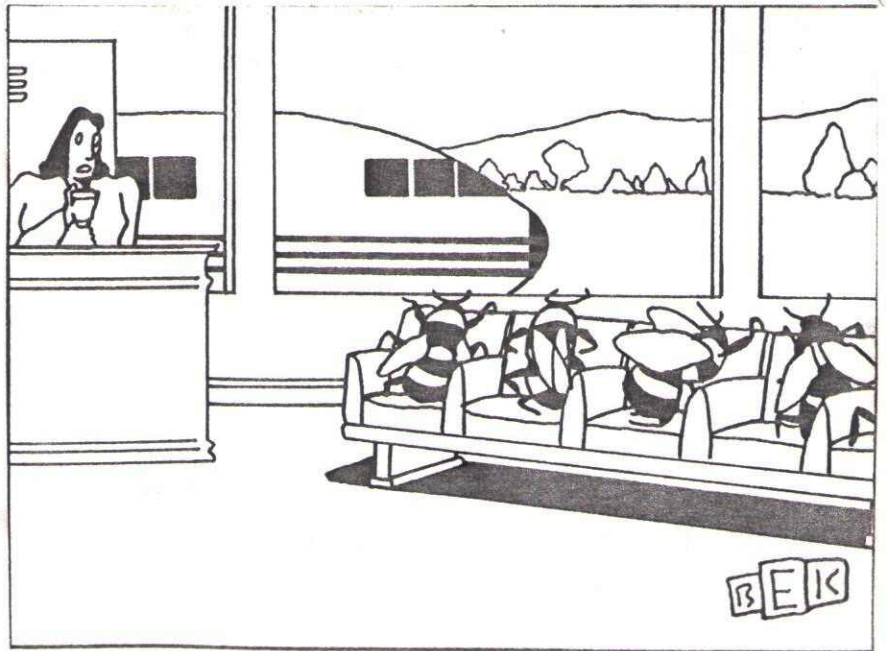
One comment about Mellado's cello: It has a very unique and wonderful tone. It is hard, almost harsh, and while not appropriate for all chamber settings, would be a great instrument in the hands of someone like Starker doing solo work. Too bad it currently is being abused.

Apr. 21: I attended the worst performance by a dance troupe that I have ever felt compelled to scorn. It was put on by Nikolais and Murray Louis Dance, which is a "modern dance" attempt. As for the dancers, a couple of the males, and one female, were fairly good. The others (and there were many) were all very bad. The choreography was dumb, and ... well, I stayed past the intermission, but then the first piece was so bad that I got up and left right in the middle of it, not even bothering to wait for a pause between this dance and the next.

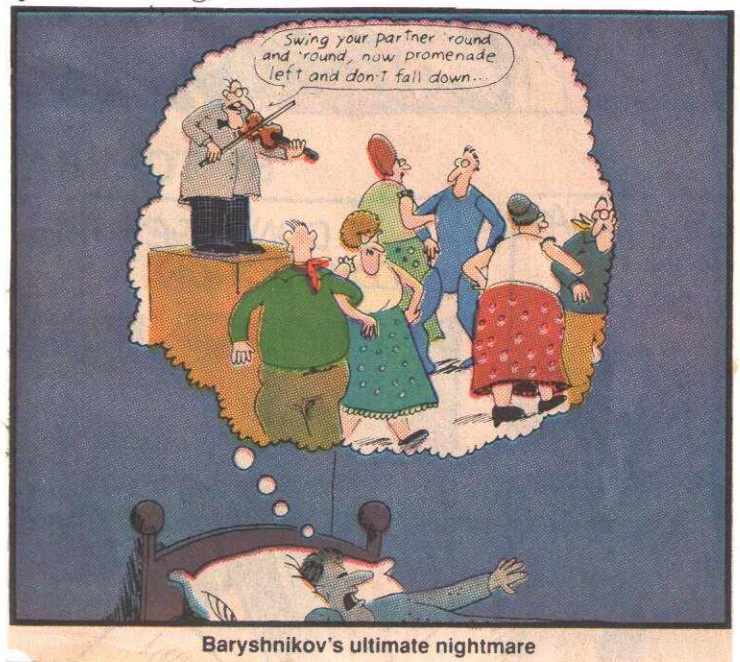
Apr. 22-26: My first trip to California. We went to San Diego, all three of us--meaning myself, Abbe, and Marion.

In some ways it felt like a big, scary city. But I loved the ocean, which was beautiful and (as Schopenhauer would say) partook of dynamical sublime. There was good food, and while Abbe attended a conference, I would stay with Marion, entertain him, play with him. But upon our arriving there, he promptly came down with a bad case of the flu, and for most of that visit, I was trapped in a small motel room with a crying boy and a jungle of concrete going in every direction from where I was. A lesson to be learned from this trip--be circumspect when making a decision about traveling with little Marion.

May 1: Last year, when I was on medication to address the possibility that



"I'm sorry, but the flight of the bumblebees has been cancelled."





I might have myasthenia gravis, a side-effect was that the hair on my legs, down around my ankles, began falling out. This made me feel very bad, in an odd way, about my body; so I was very happy to discover, on this date, that it had finally begun growing back in.

May 29: I saw the movie, Dave. It was a pure delight all the way through, with excellent acting, and along with the comedy there was a very profound commentary on American politics.

June 4: I saw the movie, Unforgiven. You know, the Clint Eastwood Western which won several Academy Awards. Well, it was perhaps the worst movie I've ever seen. I wanted to see it because somewhere, in a review, I had seen it referred to as a "nonviolence Western." I saw nothing in the movie which matched this descriptive; rather, its approach was quite the opposite.

June 8: Because of a history of heart disease on my mother's side of the family, and because I had been experiencing shortness of breath after extreme exertion, I took a stress-treadmill test. It turned out that my heart is fine; I still have cardiac function equal to what is average for a 45-year-old man.

So why the shortness of breath? Because I am somewhat out of shape. I do not get enough aerobic exercise, partly because my MS limits such, but also because the many hours spent caring for Marion are rather sedentary. As he grows, and becomes more active, I suspect this will change--perhaps to the opposite extreme, where he will be so active I'll be getting too much exercise.

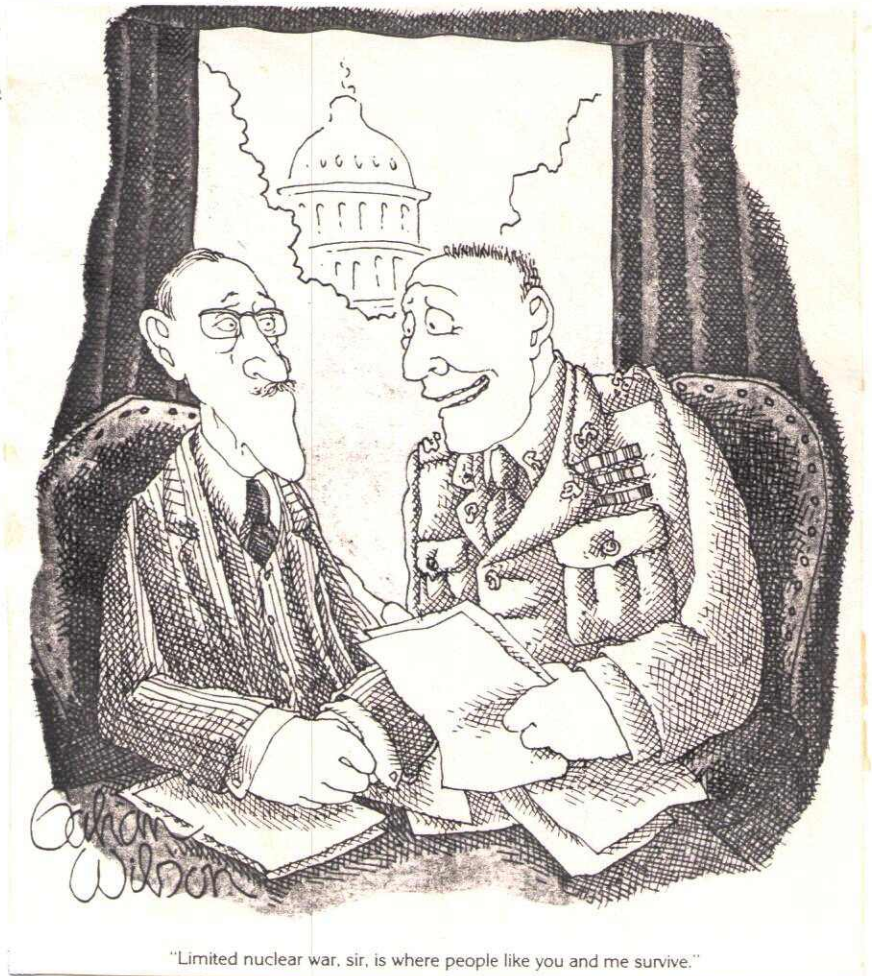
July 24: After much begging by Marion, and what with him showing every promise of becoming a real man, we bought Marion a big tractor--a John Deere diesel 4020. He had preferred getting a "red tractor," as he put it; but this would have meant getting a Case-International, and the company is not that strong these days. So we purchased the John Deere, and Marion is putting it to good use, more than working out the investment.

Aug. 6: On Hiroshima Commemoration Day, Abbe gave a speech on the perils of nuclear war before a large group of people in Carbondale. In years before I knew her, she had been quite an orator, although this activity had pretty much given way to other duties over the last few years, and I had never heard her at the podium. On this occasion, I did not get to hear her in person, but I did get to later hear a tape of it. The woman was eloquent. Nothing but eloquent. It was the sort of speech that makes you want to cry, and exult, at the same time. Its only drawback was that it was too short--they had limited her to ten minutes.

I hope she avails herself of more opportunities, in the future, for public speaking; and that these will take place in a venue where people are not so stingy with time.

Aug. 17: I purchased, for my stereo system, a new (used) Janis W-1 subwoofer. At this point I could not hook it up because I lacked the proper crossover, but I looked forward to replacing that big JBL E-130 with the Janis, which goes deeper, has less distortion, and certainly is less colored. The JBL E-130 was, in many people's opinion, an adequate subwoofer, but I had never been satisfied with it, aware of its tendency to emphasize 2nd-order and 3rd-order harmonics.

Aug. 30-31: I was so careful; I tried to anticipate every difficulty and avoid them all. But once again Southern Illinois got the better of me. We had been trying to stop a small leak from our east porch roof ever since we moved here, and had never been successful. We elected to have it completely replaced, so hired two Southern Illinois carpenters who had been recommended



"Limited nuclear war, sir, is where people like you and me survive."



by several people we knew. It turned out that one of them was thoroughly irresponsible, and the other slightly retarded--"teched in the head," as the rednecks in Northwest Missouri (where I grew up) would say. For two days, at \$16. an hour each, they pattered, tinkered, and lazed about, and sort of did a bit of "wurrk." I fired them, with the roof still leaking, and now unfinished. After some searching, I found one of those golden souls (a few exist hereabouts) who is a responsible fellow, and he, with a very good co-worker, finished the job up right.

We lost about a thousand dollars on this job, paying for those two imbeciles.

I later made inquiries (scarcely discreet ones) to find out why people we knew had recommended those two incompetents. It was because they felt sorry for the two fellows, and some of these people did it because they felt it was a way for two otherwise "limited" men to make some money.

Well ... beware of facile compassion. It is always costly. Spiritually and financially.

Sept. 18: I attended a concert by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, with Leonard Slatkin conducting. The first piece was Copland's Symphony for Organ and Orchestra. I confess that I had never before heard this piece, and, as with most of Copland, I liked it, but only moderately so. The orchestra's playing, however, was superb. The last piece on the program was also for organ, this time the Symphony No. 3 in c, Op. 78 by Saint-Saens. This time the orchestra did not play so well, and the limitations of the organ, somewhat evident in the first piece, were glaringly evident in this otherwise sublime work. Simon Preston was at the keys, and he is a fine musician; but the organ used is amplified, rather than using pipes for conduit, and what we heard from the organ, especially in the Saint-Saens piece, was more in the way of volume than tone.

The best part of the concert was a recital of several songs by Mahler done by the superb mezzo-soprano, Sylvia McNair. I confess that I am not overly fond of Mahler's songs, so could not advance a great deal in the way of spontaneous appreciation; but with McNair's lovely voice, I did succeed in absorbing more of these songs' aesthetic dimension, thus perhaps bringing myself closer to one day fully understanding, and appreciating, them.

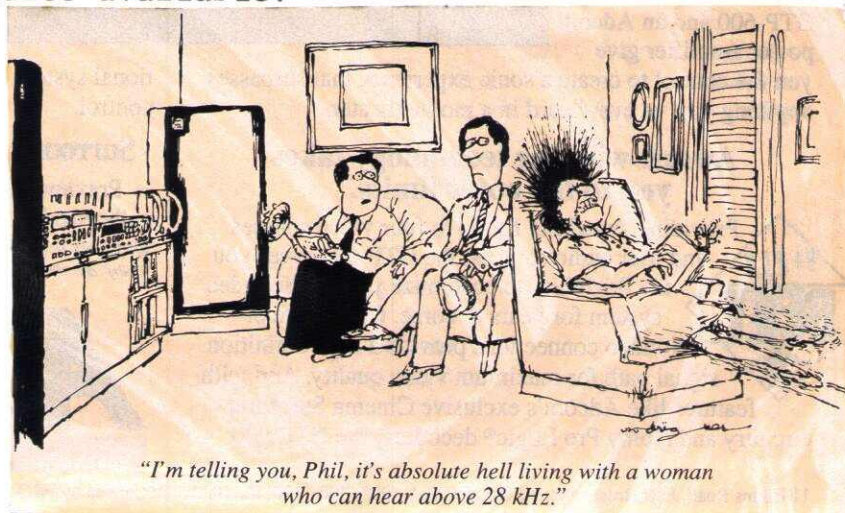
Oct. 16: I saw the movie, The Age of Innocence. I did not like it. The camera angles, and tracking, were dizzying and exhausting. The acting, with some exceptions, was generally poor. (The main character's wife, whose name I do not remember, was, however, truly wonderful.) I suppose the movie nicely criticized the American upper classes during the late 19th century, but the portrayal of these people as stiff and emotionally constrained tended to incarcerate the entire movie. Moreover, the people who put the movie together had not been able to construct a clear story line. As a result, they had a narrator busy talking during perhaps ten percent of the movie's running length. Her duty was to explain what was going on--which really wasn't necessary, given that there never was very much going on.

One just couldn't care very much about those characters. The movie's only redeeming traits were a couple of very good female actresses, and the fact that, at the end, it avoided the sappy, sentimental love scene which otherwise was quite available.

Oct. 20: I bought a new (used) Holman amplifier. It proved to be a vast improvement over the Dynaco Stereo 400 I had been using. The Holman has tighter bass, a slightly better midrange, but was especially better on the high end.

Nov. 12: After much searching, I was finally able to obtain a good, moderately priced used active crossover for my new subwoofer. I purchased a Dahlquist DQ-LP1 from a fellow in Canada, and after a bit of repairwork--to undo some modifications the previous owner had made--it was up and running.

Now, my whole system began to come into focus. Wonderful bass from that Janis, without the fatigue I had experienced with the JBL. Plus, the midrange of my little JBL Studio Monitor's--the 4406's--improved vastly since the crossover attenuates them at -6db below 100 Hz. Overall, the system now sounds like a "High End" system. It still has drawbacks. The midbass is still rather weak, and must one day be compensated for. The



"I'm telling you, Phil, it's absolute hell living with a woman who can hear above 28 kHz."



solution might be using a second subwoofer, or perhaps going with better satellite speakers. Or, for now--and for a good while, until I can save the money--the solution might simply involve not being so critical, and simply being satisfied with what I have.

Nov. 13: Our kitty, Star (her entire name was Star-I-Are), was killed on the highway. This makes three cats we've lost to the highway since moving here. Kimmy-Sue died there, as did Sam-I-Am.

Marion was especially fond of Star, and she of him. He missed her much more than we would have thought a three-year-old could, and for about two weeks he had nightmares about her death, and about his own fears of death. He would, for example, awaken from a nightmare about a car coming into his room and "squishing" him just like Star got squished.

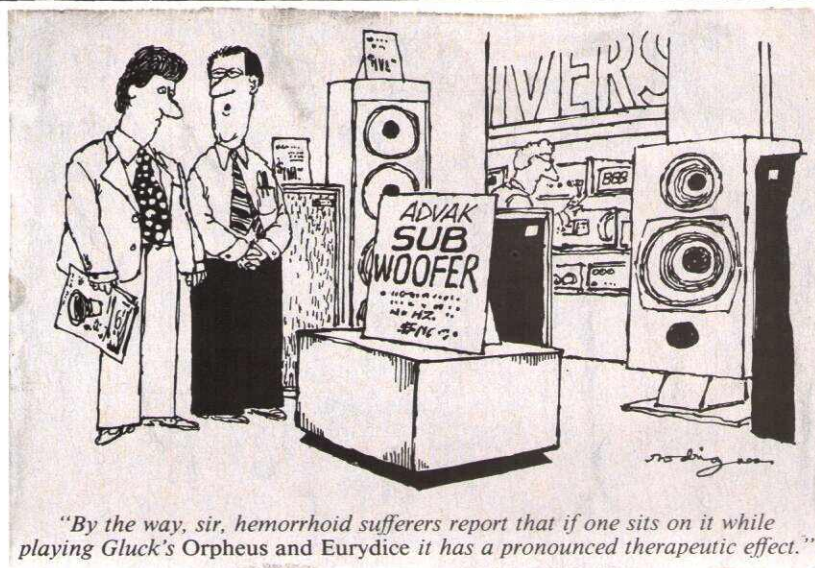
It was a sad time for all of us, and a strong lesson, for Marion, about mortality.

Nov. 19: I attended a solo recital by the pianist, Mykola Suk. It was very well done. He first did three sonatas by Scarlatti, and although he did not have the delicate touch of someone like Alicia de Larrocha, he nevertheless gave them a worthy personality. His subsequent playing of Beethoven's Moonlight was not very well done in the first movement, and although the second movement was not great, the final movement was tremendous. It was with Bartok and Liszt that he truly transcended the usual limits of virtuosity. He did Three Burlesques by Bartok, and gave them that strong, percussive sense of command that Bartok himself bestowed upon his works. He then did Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, Nos. 11, 12, & 13. This was the best playing of Liszt I have ever heard in my life. Not Horowitz, not Richter, not Bolet played these pieces nearly as well. For the first time, I was able to see how so much of Liszt's music is laced with humor--a constant self-awareness, on the part of Liszt, of his own virtuosity as a pianist and his skill as a composer. One hears all the emotions appropriate to a piece of music, and at the same time perceives his many references to other composers, his way of good-humoredly parodying them, and even his way of skillfully parodying himself. I came away from this concert with new respect for Liszt.

There was an encore, and I am sure I recognized it at the time, but now, for the life of me I can not recall what it was.

This concert was seriously flawed, not by the musician's playing, but by other things. For one thing, the concert was very poorly attended--probably not 50 people in a hall that would seat 800. I have before heard Suk, and consider him one of the finest pianists alive. Hence, it was amazing to me that the concert was not better attended, especially since Suk had been to SIUC (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale) before. On previous occasions, as on this one, he was brought in by The Beethoven Society for Pianists. As I was leaving, I passed the director of the Society, who was sitting by himself outside, waiting for Suk to come out of the dressing room. He was in despair. Suk had complained about the piano forcefully and hinted that if a better one could not be had, then this might deter him from coming back. But the director's upset was primarily caused by the poor attendance. He even pointed out that he has 24 colleagues in the music department, and only one of them came to hear this world-class (and world-famous) pianist. And as for the rest of the audience, well . . .

I should comment on one member of the audience. As I stated, there were perhaps 50 people in this huge auditorium. One fellow attending, a man in his early twenties, seated himself in the fifth row, audience right, and began reading a newspaper when the concert began. He did not read discreetly. No; he held it up with both pages all spread open, actually holding the thing rather high so he could catch enough light to read by. He kept shaking the newspaper to keep it straight, and



"By the way, sir, hemorrhoid sufferers report that if one sits on it while playing Gluck's Orpheus and Eurydice it has a pronounced therapeutic effect."



"Nobody was suppose to win, Leroy, it's opera."



when he would turn a page, he would fold the page over, and then give the newspaper a hard flip to straighten out the pages. On the stage one of the finest pianists in the world was at work, and we would hear that loud WHAP!! of the newspaper being straightened. I was furious, and several times was ready to go remove the fellow from the auditorium; and I swear that the only reason I did not was out of fear of causing even more of a disturbance. Finally, about half-way through the second movement of the Moonlight, when the newspaper was particularly loud, an usher came striding down the aisle, grabbed the newspaper from the fellow and told him to follow him out.

At intermission I saw the fellow. He seemed completely unaffected by the incident, standing about the lobby very calmly. He then attended the second half of the concert, and then, at the end, I saw him turn in his ticket to the student who collects them for credit.

You wonder, I am sure, what I refer to.

There is an arrangement with the School of Music such that students of certain music courses have to attend a certain number of concerts to receive their grade in these courses. To prove that they attended the requisite concerts, they turn in their tickets, with signature affixed, to a paid student worker who collects them.

So ... you see? A number of those in the audience were there just to get a credit. And the reason that fellow with the newspaper did not care about the concert was because, for him, being there was an onerous obligation.

One would think that the School of Music could work out a more humane means by which to motivate students to attend concerts. By "humane" I am not pleading for better treatment of the students; I am concerned about the feelings of the musicians.

It is not unusual for me, in the course of thinking about the significant events of a year, to omit (suppress) mention of something that affects me deeply--especially if it also occasions sorrow.

I did omit mention of one thing, namely, the death of my Aunt Jean. Jean Tindall was her name, and she died of heart failure on June 20. She was the youngest of my mother's siblings (and younger than my mother). Yet, her body had been under assault for a long while. Her husband, my Uncle Rawlings, had died on Jan. 8, 1992. And 11 months before that, her daughter--their only child--had died on Feb. 8, 1991 of acute diabetes. She was a smoker, a hard worker, and was enmeshed in the stressful role of having a granddaughter living with her, and a great-granddaughter, i.e., the child of the granddaughter who was living with her. There was a great deal of stress in all this, and what with her continuing grief, her smoking, she did not have much reserve. She succumbed.

I was closer to her than to any of my relatives. And yet I did not feel a great deal of sorrow at her passing. She had been suffering emotionally, and I was glad she was relieved from it. And there were no unsettled issues between us. I had seen her fairly recently, the interaction had been a good one, and so ... a door opened, and then it was closed for good.

Many people in Maryville, Missouri, where she lived, will remember her for her cooking. For most of her life, she served as a cook in various restaurants, and for about eight years, she owned "Jean's Cafe" in Maryville.

There, in Jean's Cafe, a fair number of people sought Nirvana and found it. In fact, a fair number of people would drive a hundred miles on Sunday to have dinner at Jean's Cafe. The fare: homemade pies and bread every day. Homemade tartar sauce. The best catfish you could ever hope to eat. Potato salad that resembled ambrosia. Milkshakes that were pure nectar. And ... but no, I can not go on in this vein or I will be hungry for a week.

But after a few years she sold the business. It was too much work, too much responsibility. She preferred working for other people.

Even during her last few years, she worked six days a week at a local restaurant, where she would, every morning, bake pies for the day and make fifty pounds of potato salad. Yes; I do not exaggerate. By "fifty pounds," she meant that she used fifty pounds of potatoes. And--again, I do not exaggerate--this woman could peel and cut up, in preparation for boiling--fifty pounds of potatoes in twenty minutes.





When she first told me this, I did what any good Missourian would do. I said, "Show me." She did. On three different occasions. Three times I dragged myself up to that restaurant at five in the morning to watch her peel those potatoes. Why three times? Not because I needed an average. Rather, she had the damndest way of distracting a person while she was peeling those potatoes. She would talk, smoke her cigarettes, and look at you as much as she looked at the potatoes. Invariably I would forget to watch her as she worked, and then she would say it. "There. Now to get them on to boil. Since you're here, would you help lift the kettle over to the stove?" Each time I was there, I would time her, and while I can not say that I saw the skin come off of each of those potatoes, given the way she would talk, I can say that each time she did the job in under 20 minutes. One time in 18 minutes and 20 seconds. Other doubters would claim that she must just take half the potato off, peeling them that fast. No. She took off less with her paring knife than I would with a carrot peeler.

How did she get so good at peeling potatoes? She said it was from being a nurse in the Navy. She helped peel potatoes when she wasn't busy; otherwise the cooks wouldn't prepare them, and would expect the men to eat less hearty fare.

One other thing she was good at, and she claimed that she also learned this in the Navy. She could play poker better than any man I ever met.

But, as I said, the door closed. As for the memories, they are sweet.

#### GENERALLY:

1. Yes, I continue living in Southern Illinois, and thereby am exposed to these creatures I have, in the past, generously called peasants. Shall I criticize them at length, as I have done in previous issues of The Aviary? No. I am wearied of it. Moreover, criticism really does not suit my saintly temperament. While it may be true that Saint Augustine made the observation that one of the pleasures of heaven would be watching the sufferings of those in hell, I am not that voyeuristic, that perverse, or malicious. So this year, within these pages, I will not, for a while, gaze with you upon these peasants. Instead, I shall provide us with a glimpse only.

I will even do more, by attempting to praise them. I have noted, for example, that these people, more than any people I have ever seen anywhere in the world, take great pride in a well-mowed lawn. They may live in a ramshackle house, with pet feces on the floors and the sewer backed up into the basement, but their lawn will be immaculate. They mow, fertilize, replant, and then mow again unendingly. Virtually every man who works during the day (and there are few, since most people hereabouts are unemployed), will, when he gets home in the evening, go outside to mow for at least an hour, often longer. He will have a beer can in one hand, and a cigarette in the other, somehow managing the steering wheel of his riding mower nonetheless, and he will be mowing that lawn. From Murphysboro, about 5:30 in the evening, the summer sounds are scarcely bearable. The din of so many mowers going at once is so loud one can hear it, as a low, raucous buzz,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles away (the distance we live from the place). They even mow when it is raining. And it matters not if they live on a hill, and the rain makes the grass so slick their riding mower can not traverse the yard. If this is the case, then you will see two people mowing--one on the mower and the other walking behind pushing. It is amazing, this admirable commitment to a trim, even immaculate, lawn, considering that it comes from people whose culture does not even include wiping one's ass after defecating.

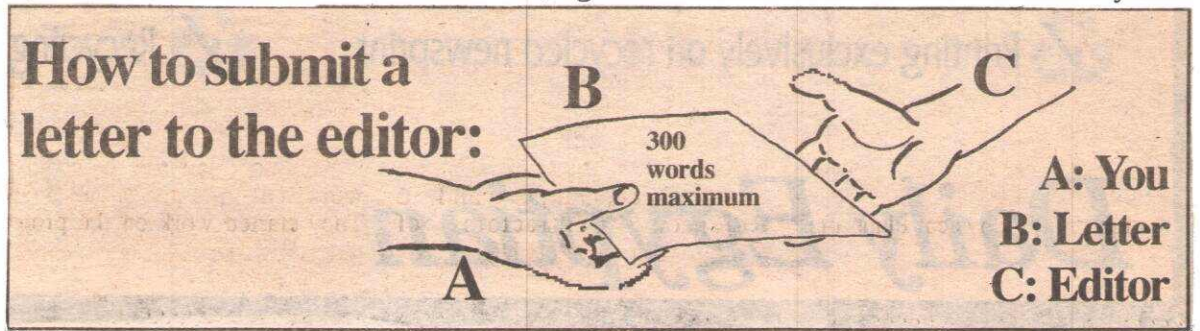
As for the problem we were having with visitors, that has been solved. Abbe's mother had told me about her father's method of getting rid of visitors, and how well it worked. If people were dallying too long, he would not only say that he was tired and needed to get to bed, he would pull his shirttail out, perhaps take off his belt, unbutton a couple of buttons on his shirt, and, if the people remained unmoved, perhaps even take off his shoes and socks. Well ... I tried this method a total of three times, and only succeeded in putting myself in a very awkward situation, especially one evening when it was very cold and I ended up putting my clothes back on, and then once more tried the method of beginning the process of undressing, only to reverse it again as I began to chill and our visitors remained, oblivious to our desire that they leave. But, as I said, the problem now is solved. We virtually never invite anyone over.

As for the general level of irritation which I experience with these people, it is not so bad. I have become better at avoiding them. My only contact is through merchants, when I must go to a store to buy something. Or, occasionally, I do have indirect contact with them



through, for example, their newspapers. There actually are two newspapers in this area. The one published in the city, called The Southern Illinoisan. It is terrible. And then there is the Daily Egyptian, published by SIUC's school of journalism. It is terrible too, but better than the SI. I rarely read it, even when it is available, given its level of illiteracy.

For example, in every issue of DE, there appears the little diagram I portray here at right. One would prefer to think that if



someone is intelligent enough to write a letter to the editors, then he would not need the procedure spelled out for him in this way. But, we are, after all, dealing with Southern Illinois.

Now and then, I myself seek out contact with a person in Southern Illinois, even though circumstances do not necessitate my doing so. For

example, I one day spotted on the bulletin board at the local Kroger grocery store the little ad which I here have pasted in. A lawyer "chasing an ambulance" via a grocery-store bulletin board? I had to find out if this was for real. So I phoned the lawyer, and indeed, he himself had put the ad there. He was young, just "starting out," and was trying to get business. His name was Alvan Hanovoff, and I invented a very convincing story about an injury I had received, and gave him the name of a company which, I told him, had over 800 employees and a good insurance plan. "But the insurance fellow in the personnel office won't talk to me about my needs,"

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I complained, and at this point it seemed that Alvan was so excited he was probably evincing an intercrural odor. I set up an appointment, asking for two hours, given the difficulty I would have getting in and out of his office because of my bad back and the leg that had been broken in four places, but had not been set right by the doctor, who admitted to me that he botched the job. (Thus I had him sniffing on the trail of a second lawsuit.) So ... I suppose I managed to waste a bit of the fellow's time. (Yes; I do hate lawyers.) (With a few exceptions--my friends who are lawyers.)

Thus I do, occasionally, have phone contact with people in this area. And on very rare occasions, we do invite people over. For example, we did invite over an elderly couple because the wife had done us a great favor some time ago during the custody hearing over Dacia. As for the husband--I have actually alluded to him before in The Aviary. He is the fellow who spent most of his life being both a preacher and professor, and as a result, has never been able to break his old habits of presuming that he is the one who should be talking, while everybody else should be listening.

I do grant that this fellow has some intelligence, and not a little erudition. And he considers himself quite the aesthete, although his conduct, that evening in our home, disqualified him forever, in my eyes, when it comes to making judgements about art. We were all sitting in the music room (the room, in our house, that contains the stereo system and also all the musical instruments) when he, while seated on the couch, looked over to one corner of the room and remarked on how pleased he was to see that I had purchased a piece of sculpture by the "renowned artist," Brent Kington. I had never heard of Brent Kington, and, since I do consider myself to be rather conversant about the well-known artists, it was with a bit of (vain) embarrassment that I asked him who Brent Kington is. Our guest was shocked that I would own a piece of sculpture by a famous artist, and not even bother to remember the artist's name. I confessed that indeed I could not remember this Brent Kington, but if he would be so kind as to enlighten me, I was sure that my memory, in the future, would ... I then



explained that the two pieces of sculpture in the room were by myself, and I was surprised that they would bear such marked resemblance to the work of a famous sculpture. But no; the fellow informed me that he was not speaking of my two works, which had merit, but quite obviously did not have the genius of the piece over there in the corner. And yes, he would educate my memory as to who Brent Kington is. Why, this Brent Kington is none other than the chairman of the local art department at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. And he does sculptures which are just like the one over there in the corner, and how much, if I would not mind saying, did I have to pay for "that very fine Kington."

The room was lit dimly, since we had been listening to music, so I got to my feet to better see this supposed piece of sculpture over there in the corner. After careful examination, and queries answered by increasingly querulous directives from my guest, I finally was able to realize the source of the confusion, and then explained to my guest that he was viewing, not a Kington, but rather, a twenty-nine dollar Radio Shack microphone stand.

(It is here pictured, to the right. We photographed it outside, where there is sufficient light for the camera, rather than in its usual place in the music room.)

Was our guest chagrined at his blunder? Not at all. He cheerfully stated that, well, it bears a close resemblance to every work that the renowned Brent Kington produces, and I should make sure that sometime soon I seek out a Kington display so I am not ignorant of his work.

So ... does this incident say something dismal about the art scene in Southern Illinois? Or is it a sad commentary on the contemporary art scene in all of Western civilization?

Regardless, I did say that I would not go on ... and on, about Southern Illinois. So suffice it to say that when the day comes and I can leave this area, I'll be gone like found money in Detroit.

2. News of Marion. Yes; I must curb my pride, or I will be conducting myself in a most unseemly manner.

He is wonderful. A

great joy, a cheerful little fellow, who now insists on being referred to as a "bigger boy." He used to be called a "big boy," knows he isn't yet a grownup, so ... "bigger boy" it is. Still, he talks incessantly. There was a reprieve--in late July, just when I thought I was going to go crazy from the constant talking, he abruptly stopped. Or rather, his talking lessened to where it was at a more or less normal level. But then, after about one month, it began again. Nonstop talking, except when he is listening to a recording we have made of him talking.

But I have become more accustomed to it. And I even appreciate his way of speaking. He has that slow, very melodic way of speaking which he has inherited from his father--a way of speaking which some people might think of as a drawl did they not take note of the impeccable diction.

Overall he is happy, full of joy. At night, when he goes to bed, when asked what he is going to dream about, he always replies with the same





thing: "I am going to dream about kitty-cats, and puppy dogs, and bunny rabbits, and donkeys, and purple butterflies, and mommies and daddies who love you."

There is a very odd thing we are encountering, as Marion's parents. Namely, the yuppie values of parents as they live them out through their children, and try to impose them on us. These are parents who would be too embarrassed to brag about how they themselves are interested in acquiring material wealth and such, and are even reluctant to do so. But they can go ahead and acquire this wealth, and be quite ostentatious in the process, if it is done "for the children." Hence, we are always being challenged by other parents in terms of how much we are doing for Marion. Why haven't we already given him a private tutor? Why isn't he in dance classes, or taking violin lessons under the Suzuki method? It is the yuppie parents who always extend these expectations toward us. How do we encounter such parents? Many of them are "professionals" (a euphemism I hate!) who know us because they are doctors, and associate with Abbe at work, or because they are lawyers, and are always, like vultures, circling the place where Abbe works.

We usually have a very simple answer to such expectations; we reply that we can not afford such things. Realizing, then, that they can not bolster their conceit through comparisons, they content themselves with merely parading it. One of the more gruesome displays I listened to happened about a year ago when a woman I knew, from Canada, was bragging about how the forthcoming summer would be so busy for her eight-year-old son because he would be taking piano lessons, flute lessons, and drum lessons once a week; three times a week he would be taking French lessons and Yiddish lessons; once a week he would be at hockey lessons, twice a week at baseball, and twice a week at soccer. Plus, she bragged how, when he someday has his bar mitzvah, she will not spend \$40,000. on him like her sister had spent on her son; rather, she will have a private gathering of friends and family, and then take her son on an extended trip, of at least six weeks, to Israel, which she believed she could do for about \$15,000.

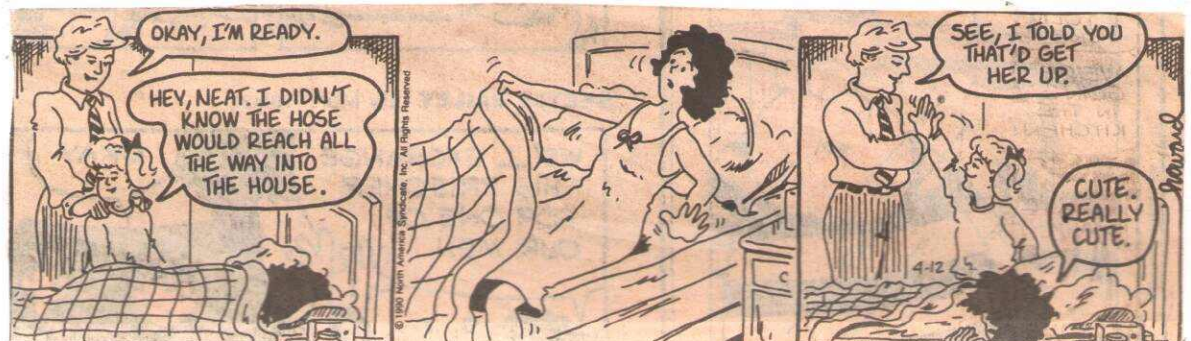
Oh well. Marion won't have a bar mitzvah, maybe he will start piano lessons in a year or so, and meanwhile, he plays with his dumptrucks, his blocks, and his "babies"--mainly his stuffed animals.

3. As for news of Dacia. I have virtually none. She has been attending college at The University of Missouri-Columbia, she works at a Hardee's, and has a boyfriend. She continues living with her mother, and continues blaming me for the fact that her mother would not spend time with her as she was growing up. Patty has brainwashed her into believing that I was a monster, so horrible that Patty had to stay away, even if it meant not seeing her little baby girl. So ... Dacia, now at "the age of maturity," communicates little, is sullen or distant or aloof or superficial when she does, and I continue to grieve--although I continue to recover too.

4. Abbe continues with her work, which she dearly loves. But she works too hard--never gets enough sleep. She is very



*"My parents are the same way. Lots of ostentatious child-rearing, very little direct nurturing."*



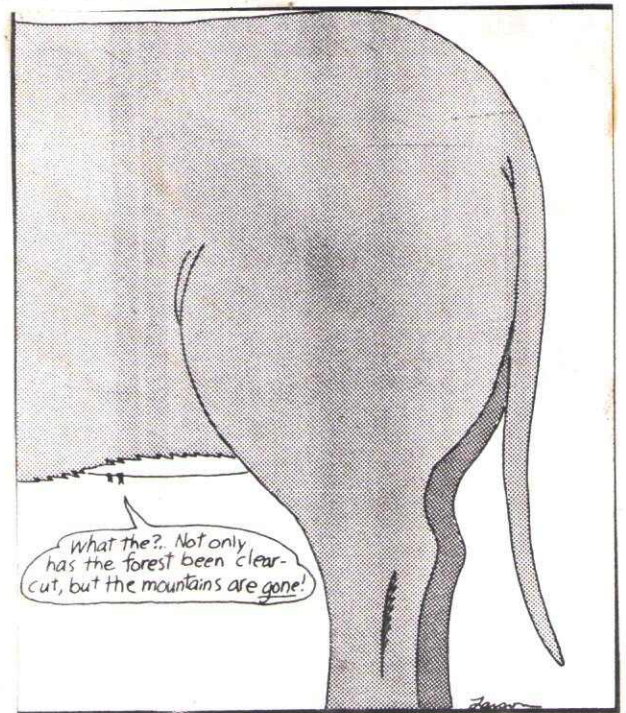


sad about the fact that she will be leaving her patients in Southern Illinois, but she looks forward to practicing medicine in a big city one day when we have left here. As for my relationship with her, it is good--a blessing, which I am not ungrateful for. And I continue to partake of the agapistic synecchism available via this repository of uxorial connubiality and felicitude.

5. In July, I suppose we officially adopted Midnight, Marion's "baby black kitty," by having him neutered. But the operation seemed to make him even more aggressive and territorial. (Rather like what marriage does to husbands.)

He promptly initiated our house in the exact same way every other cat we've owned has done. Namely, he slipped into the music room when we were unaware, and shat on my stereo equipment. He laid two large ones, the first of which was deposited on the padding around my speakers (which is where every cat has done a job), and the second of which was deposited on one of my new interconnects, leaving a permanent stain. I kicked his ass so hard over this that he still hasn't landed.

Meanwhile, the majestic and beautiful Buttercup, the "glorious Tom," as some of the neighbors call him, continues to preside over the front porch, undaunted by dogs, opossums, and raccoons.



Environmental disasters in a flea's world

6. People ask me how I am sleeping. Terribly. Not as badly as I was doing back in the early '80s, but again I am to where I am lucky to get six hours of sleep a night. And I need eight. Nightmares keep me awake. The usual manifold of worries does its share. And ... there is something else, and I am not sure of what it is. As for a cure, I've not found one. The latest cure I tried was a suggestion made by Abbe. She said I should try sleeping with a teddy bear--it might help me sleep better. So I went to bed that night, hugging a big, brown teddy bear, and ... I dreamed that a huge brown bear had knocked me down and was eating my guts while I lay there on the ground, stunned but conscious, watching the big muzzle of the bear as it poked into my torso and then was raised as it pulled out more length of intestine. It was eating my small intestine like one might eat a long piece of spaghetti, slurping up my viscera while chomping noisily. Finally, it swallowed the last bit of intestine, whereupon it bent down and sank its teeth into my throat. I woke up.

7. And people kindly ask about my health. My MS has been more or less stable. A trial it is, but at least it is not getting worse.

As for my teeth, this is another story. Some time in the last year I went to the dentist for a complete cleaning of my teeth. A few months later, after receiving the cleaning and some advice--that I needed a "full-mouth reconstruction," which would involve pulling my wisdom teeth, and putting crowns on all but six teeth, I had had all the work done with new crowns and three permanent bridges put in. Insurance had paid for most of it, and I was glad that at last I had had all this work done. But then infections began. The result was root canals, which did not "take." By the end of 1993, one root canal had been attempted six times, and two others had each been attempted three times. With no luck. Most of the permanent crowns, and all the bridges, were taken back off. And so the saga goes, with the dentists, endodontists, and prosthodontists trying to save my teeth, which were not in the worst of shape when I went in for that cleaning. So now I am in constant pain, I have lost a lot of time not only sitting in the dental chair but also being relatively incapacitated because of the pain, and I do not know if the end result will be that I lose my teeth, or one day, after much money and stress and pain, they finally are fixed. Meanwhile, no teeth are healed, and my "dental health" is much worse than it was when all this work was begun. And now, what with the need for specialists, it will end up costing a small fortune.

8. My war against smokers has heated up. I now let owners of restaurants and such know that I will not be back because there is too much cigarette smoke on their premises. If I catch someone smoking in a nonsmoking section, I go over and tell them to put it out. If they refuse, I tell them I am a deputy sheriff of the county, and am not on duty at the moment. But I have the option of going on duty at any time, and if they cause me



to have to go on duty, and thus change my plans for the next couple of hours, then I will make sure that their plans get changed for the next 24 hours. So far, no one has ever called my bluff. I have even accosted people who are smoking in public places where smoking is not clearly prohibited. Yes; I am becoming a true ~~asshole~~ activist about the matter.

9. So that no one will brand me a complaining pessimist, I should herein report on one situation in my life which has improved--namely, my dealings with the telephone. Yes; sometimes it still happens that someone calls and their first gush is something like, "Guess what! It's ME!! And I'm not doing anything! So we have time to talk! Isn't that NEAT!?" And before answering, I look at the huge stack of work on my desk, or I try to shush Marion, but then, before I can answer, they begin talking.

But things have improved. In mid-March, I obtained another answering machine, and this time, it has ameliorated, rather than exacerbated, the problem. Why? Because of a shift in my own attitude. Whereas before I thought I had to return all those phone calls which the machine picked up, I have come to the profound (and tardy!) realization that I don't have to call people back just because they want me to. Moreover, if I do choose to call that person back, I can do it at my convenience; thus there is less stress. Plus, if it is someone I really do not want to talk to, but must call back because of business reasons (there are no proprietary reasons in my world), then I often will make such a phone call at a time I am quite sure is most inconvenient for the person I am calling back.

Of course, there do remain some minor problems with the phone, and these are somewhat furthered by the presence of an answering machine. My original message on the machine was simply, "Hello, you have reached 618-687-3832, residence of Francis Baumli and Abbe Sudvarg. Feel free to leave a brief message." The problem: certain friends of Abbe's would call, and leave messages which I was certain they did not intend for my ears to hear. But since the machine is in my office, I am the one who always listens to the messages. So I changed the message so that it included the phrase, "... 618-687-3832, which is a direct line to Francis Baumli's desk." Did this deter such shocking messages? No. It remained the case that many of Abbe's female friends and family members, seeking her doctorly advice, would leave on the answering machine lengthy and detailed messages describing the tactile, visual, and sometimes even the olfactory aspects of their gynecological difficulties. One woman even, calling 3 times in 1½ days, used the very same phraseology during each of the 3 messages--to wit, "... thick and creamy. But not white like cream. Green." I might have felt disgust at these words, given my refined nature, but being a gentleman I quelled any such response, and instead felt some small admiration for this woman's onomatopoeic (well; let's just say poetic) proclivities.

Of course, not all irritating messages are so carnally shocking. Others might be considered benign by anyone except a person such as myself, whose good breeding insists that only cogent speech be uttered in my presence. For example, I am the sort of person who considers it no small assault upon my refined sensibilities when a friend of Abbe's left the following message (which took up a full minute). I here give it, without the punctuations of "uh's" and "well's" and sighs and pauses: "Hi. This is \_\_\_\_\_. If you can call me today, that'll be great. And if you can call me in the next couple of days, that'll be really great. Actually all of 'em would be really great. If I could talk to you today, or in the next couple of days, I'd really like that. Bye."

I predict that in the next year this problem, too, will be solved since Abbe and I anticipate having separate private phone lines. A luxury, yes; but I believe I should, despite my ascetic nature, indulge it.

Is it Abbe's friends only whose messages are irritating? Yes. Not because her friends are necessarily more garrulous, or more given to utterances from the gutter, than mine are. It's just that my friends know their speech is being scrutinized and judged by Baumli. Hence, to avoid my condemnations, they exercise considerable grace in their verbal deportment when communicating with me.

## Smoking Called 7-Minute Killer

ATLANTA (AP) — Every cigarette steals seven minutes of a smoker's life — adding up to a staggering 5 million years of potential life that Americans lose to cigarettes each year, government doctors claimed Thursday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that 418,690 U.S. deaths in 1990, or 20 percent, were directly attributed to cigarettes.

And those premature deaths added up to 5.04 million years of life that cigarettes stole from Americans that year alone, the center said.

The center compared the average number of cigarettes those dead smokers had puffed with the number of years they lost. The center found that every minute spent smoking took a minute off a life. An average smoker takes about 7 minutes to finish a cigarette.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Friday, Aug. 2, 1993, p. 10A





10. My disdain for television has scarcely abated, even though, for a time in 1993, we were considering getting one to use as a VCR monitor so we could watch movies at home. We decided that if we actually bought a TV we would install a scrambler so it could not pick up stations. But we then decided against it. Marion clamors for TV whenever we visit someone who has one, and we did not want to have to put up with his clamoring in our home. Plus, I sat down one day to



watch some TV, so I could make a more rational assessment about getting one. I had to confess that the programming for children is generally quite good, although it unquestionably would breed a passive, as opposed to an active and creative, mentality. And the programs for adults on public television were quite good too; or, one could not very well describe them as toxic. But again, they seemed to breed passivity, and would take a very long time to make a minor, mildly entertaining point. But except for these two types of programming, the rest of what I very briefly viewed on the TV was awful--like being fed raw sewage and drinking it up greedily. I just did not care to let a conduit for such offal enter my home.

At the urging of one friend, I watched some news-special shows ... or, I watched part of them. They were not entirely bad, but again, they took a very long time to say very little, and there was a good deal of unnecessary sensationalism.

Plus, I always felt that these programs were not dealing with the most crucial problems within our country. As a matter of fact, I wondered mightily why it is that a certain problem I have come to observe, here in Southern Illinois, has never been dealt with on national television. The problem I refer to is not unique to this region, although I confess that I had never before observed it. I refer to a kind of racial apartheid which happens, not only in big cities (insofar as the "inner city" or the ghetto is separate from the rest of the city), but also in small towns. My realization of this problem came about thus:

I was on my way to deliver some goods to a very fine person named Robert Stalls. He is a leader of the black community in Carbondale, and heads an agency called Star Human Services which gives food to those who need it, in-home care to the elderly and infirm, and aid to young single mothers so they can keep their children. He is a man I enjoy, admire, and with whom I can be quite frank about racial politics.

On my way through Carbondale, I accidentally took the street which leads toward Star Human Services, rather than taking the highway south to the warehouse where I was supposed to meet Robert Stalls. But the street I accidentally took runs parallel to the highway, and is separated from it by but one block. So I thought I would merely proceed to the next side-street, turn left, go one block, and be on the road I needed to be on. So I drove north a ways, never did encounter a sidestreet leading to the left, and finally came to a dead-end. So I went right, thinking I would encounter another road going north. None. I went about a mile east, and again ran into dead-end streets. I turned back south, and encountered the same thing by the time I got to the end of those streets, except for one street which led out at the very southeast corner of what now seemed to be a hemmed-in square of roads. I did not leave the area via that southeast exit, because it seemed so far from where I was wanting to go, so I drove back west. Eventually I came to the street I had originally come in on, and I could have gone south on that street, and then, in the middle of Carbondale, encountered a street that would take me back west to the highway I needed to be on. But no. I was getting stubborn. How could I have failed to find any street going north out of town? I turned back and went north on the street I had originally been on. This time, when I came to the dead-end, never having encountered a street where I could go left or west, I turned right, keeping a more careful eye out this time for any street that might take me north. I did not find one. So I turned around, and came back to what is the northwest corner of this confined area. Over there, not a hundred feet to my left--to the west-- I saw the railroad tracks, and fifty feet to the west of the railroad tracks, the highway I needed to be on headed north. How to get over there?

I was in my pickup, and thought that, well, with this big, high rig, I can just drive right over the damned tracks. So I headed off the road, down the decline, and up toward the tracks. But no. I couldn't be sure I wouldn't tear off the oilpan, or the differential. So I steered to the right, headed north beside the tracks, and soon found myself on a dirt road that obviously had the function of providing service access to these railroad tracks. The dirt road was barely a road, I could barely traverse



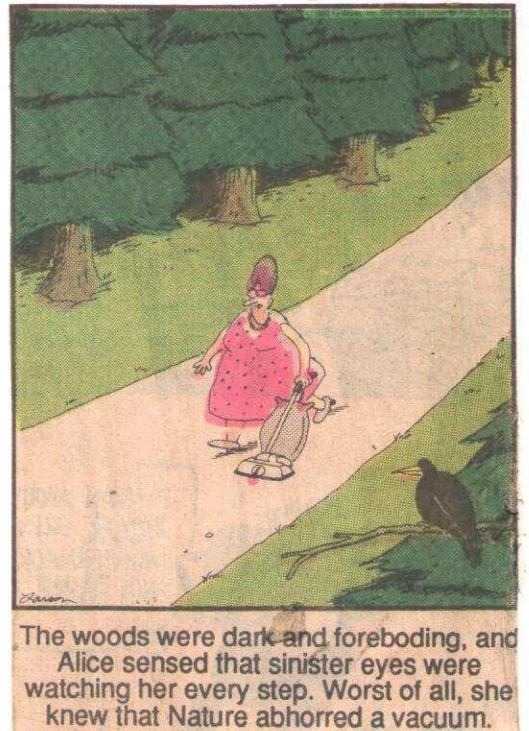
it in my pickup, and could never have negotiated it in my car. I followed this road, bouncing through huge ruts, hoping that rain-filled potholes had a bottom to them, and finally, after about five miles of nerve-racking driving, came to a highway. I went up a steep incline onto that highway, turned left, and drove about 200 feet to the highway I needed to be on. But by this time I was way north of where I needed to be, so I headed back south. I was running late, and gave apologies to Robert Stalls when I met him, and also explained to him my difficulty of getting out of the area where his office is. He understood my predicament perfectly. He explained that yes, this is intended by the city, and is a problem in just about every city in this country. It has come to be called "enclaving," because it involves a plan, by a city, to close off existing streets, or refuse to build new streets, so that wherever a black community exists in the city, there are but one or two accesses (and exits) from that area. He said that when forced to justify why the enclaves exist, cities always deny that they have done anything intentional to bring them about. Two decades ago, they would admit to the existence of these enclaves, and gave various reasons. The police said it helped confine crime to one area and keep it from spreading to the entire city. The white citizenry of a town would, if honest, concede that it helped keep segregation intact. The white citizenry, if not honest, would claim that it was a way of contributing to the cohesiveness and well-being of the black community. Clearly it is segregation--a kind of racial apartheid. I asked Robert Stalls what could be done about it. He said nothing could be done. Even the ACLU will not touch it. They have tried, but they can never crack a city's enclaves open. It becomes an unbelievable court scenario, where the evidence pertaining to just one dead-end street is so complicated it can easily tie up the court for more than a month. Any such case could go on for decades, with each street, each entrance and exit, and everything that has happened to those streets, being examined in meticulous detail. Police, firemen, ambulance drivers are all brought in to testify. Citizens of the communities on each side of each place, where there otherwise might be an access, are brought in to testify. It has always ended with the case being dropped because the court process is too protracted, expensive, and too draining on the plaintiff's emotional resources.

I subsequently discovered that Murphysboro has an enclave also, and this information did not come about from anyone telling me (although I verified it later by talking to several people). The realization came about in exactly the same way the suspicion began in Carbondale. I was headed to the home of a black friend, went in at the only entrance I knew about, but then, when I tried to leave by what I thought would be shorter routes, I could not get out of the ... enclave. (Yes; this is a perfect word for it.)

Has there ever been a single television program that has dealt with this very ubiquitous form of racial segregation? No. Not according to people I have asked. People who are true TV addicts, and watch it all the time, tell me they are sure that this topic has never been on the news programs. So ... I ask myself, what else that should be news never makes it on the news programs. And I then think to myself that the merits of having a television (and yes; I do concede that there truly are merits) simply do not, at this point in my life, motivate me to overcome my repugnance at a great deal of what passes for TV programming.

11. It has been unfair of me, when commenting on airheads in The Aviary, to focus on how this malady is so obvious in religion and the occult. It exists in just about every arena of human thinking, and I suppose it is Baumli's duty to point this out, and to the extent he is able, eradicate it.

One such instance: I went into a McDonald's to use the restroom, and then sat down at a table while my three companions used the restrooms. Across from me, a group of five was having a heated discussion on their various "environmentalist" projects. They chewed their food vigorously, expostulated loudly about waste and pollution, all the while shedding food wrappings about them like it was confetti. On a piece of paper, I noted down the amount of waste being produced by the person among them who seemed to be consuming the least. Her menu: 1. Salad, with plastic tray and plastic cover. 2. Salad dressing--in a plastic packet. 3. Hamburger, wrapped in paper, then placed in a little foam box. 4. Catsup, in a plastic



The woods were dark and foreboding, and Alice sensed that sinister eyes were watching her every step. Worst of all, she knew that Nature abhorred a vacuum.



packet. 5. Mustard, in a plastic packet. 6. Soft drink, in a paper cup, with a plastic lid. 7. A plastic straw for the soft drink, wrapped in a paper parcel. 8. French fries, in a paper packet. 9. A disposable food tray that seemed to be made out of a kind of plastic or foam product.

This latter item was the most disturbing, but, come to think of it, there were other things being throw away too: The salt and pepper in little disposable paper packets. A plastic fork for the salad. Several paper napkins.

As I got up to go, I walked over to their table, pointed down to a pile of paper, rustled it about a bit, and said, "Why don't you practice what you preach?"

There was silence for a few moments, and then one of the young women said, "Uh ... usually we do."

"I'm not impressed," I said, and I walked away.

12. The most common question people ask me about Marion: "Is he a real man?" I reply that, as for now, he is a mere lad; but he shows every sign of becoming one. His weaning from the bottle was begun on June 28th. He handled it fine, the transition aided by the fact that he had already learned to like spicy foods. At present, at his mother's request, he remains a vegetarian, but even this does not detract from his manly personality. As long as he retains his worthy role model, and as long as he follows the proclivity of the Baumli genetic makeup, then yes, he will, inevitably, turn out to be the real man he already virtually is.

His role model: Yes, it occurs in a thousand ways, ranging from preferred brand of chainsaw to eating the sort of cooking that only a real man can provide. I must confess, here, that while indeed I do give him this kind of cooking, I am perhaps not as good a cook as I used to be. This results from being married to a vegetarian, who for years has at times exacted, and other times demanded, my culinary generosity, i.e., asking me to modify my recipes so they can be eaten by a vegetarian. From her, and from other vegetarians too, I often hear that dreaded statement which poses as a question but actually is a pronouncement: "Can't you just make that with tofu instead of meat?" I reply that, yes, I could, but without the meat, it wouldn't taste as good, and as for the tofu, that would make it taste quite awful. To which they always have the same reply, to the effect that tofu doesn't taste all that bad, and besides, "It absorbs the other flavors."

"So does motor oil," says the exasperated Baumli.

"But it does! It absorbs the other flavors!" And they pronounce that second syllable of "absorbs" so mightily, intoning that o as though they hope to circumscribe the whole of our earthly orb with their lips, and drawling that r as if to protract a consonantal arc from here to the nearest black hole.

So next time he makes that particular dish, Baumli adds tofu instead of meat, and thus more people are pleased, although Baumli is not.

Is it sacrifices such as these which have brought about the Pope's recent petition to recognize, officially, Baumli's sanctity? No matter.

But one thing I must say: In Southern Illinois, of all places, I found two real men. They both are house painters. We hired them to paint the exterior of our house in June, and on June 28th they were finished. They did the job well, they were cheerful, and they never failed to show due respect to the presence of the alpha real man.

From that group of people which continues gathering evidence for a new biography about Baumli, I again received a box of their preliminary notes. Again, there were several hundred pages. I began reading it, but it was all so obvious I put it away and have not returned to it since. I do remember two things that were stated on the first page, so here, I pull out the box to render them exactly as my biographers wrote them:

"7. A real man will use salve or ointment, but he would never apply to his skin anything as wimpy as lotion or cream.

9. The most gallant thing this real man did so far, this week, was to give a woman his handkerchief to use as a menstrual pad." You see? It is information you already knew, or expected. But on page 411, I see a note which merely reads, "He today complained about being a real man, but would not elaborate." I think I know what they are referring to. I was angry about a situation which has been happening with increasing frequency over the last thirty years. It must be brought on by something





about me, the pheromones I emit, or some such. The situation: If, for example, I have company over, and I am planning to get laid after they leave, they simply will not leave. Apparently my anticipatory pheromones are so strong they can not bear to leave them. But, being a recluse, I very seldom invite people over. Nevertheless, it seems that my pheromones have extensive spatial appeal. It appears that they are so powerful that if I am merely contemplating the copulatory act, or, as is more often the case (given that I seldom dally with anticipation, and instead, proceed directly to the act), when I am amidst the act, people will come by to visit--as if the moment the Baumli's body went into action, the pheromones spilled out into the atmosphere and the peasants began sniffing and were immediately drawn to the scene. Truly, this is starting to drive me crazy. In my youth, I not infrequently joked, "The worst fuck I ever had was ... wonderful." Over the last decade or so, it would be much more appropriate for me to say, "Just about every fuck I've had was interrupted." But, being a real man, I don't joke about such things. And, being a gentleman, I generally avoid mention of such topics, here making the exception for the sake of my philanthropic conscience, which dictates that, while on this earth, I do what I can to inform the masses of my status as their telic exemplar.

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\*\*\*\*\* READING FOR 1993 \*\*\*\*\*

Again, because of parenting duties, my reading was quite sparse. I this year made my way through 51 books. To some people this seems like a lot, but 20 years ago I usually read more than 300 books per year. The best books I read this year were:

1. Theory of War by Joan Brady. This is the best book of the year. It is about white slavery in this country--"boughten boys" who were bought at a young age, and then worked until they were age 21. The subsequent abuse spawned in this boy's family, and how it tainted subsequent generations, is horrific and thoroughly believable. It also hit close to home, insofar as it brought forth memories, griefs, and rage at the ways I was abused as a child. Thus, in an odd way, I empathized with this character, and yet, also, I felt ashamed at this empathy because the abuse I received was certainly less than his. The book is very well written, except for the last few pages--especially pages 249, 250, & 257 where editors were obviously meddling.
2. The Man Who Steals the Flame by Shura Gehrman. This book, written by the great Welsh basso, is beautiful, wise, and it has vast breadth. It is thoroughly romantic, in the highest sense, and yet, in terms of its formal structure, it is very modernist. It's a book to carry with you when you travel. It inspires, teaches, and elicits no small melancholy.
3. Darkness at Noon by Arthur Koestler. I consider Koestler one of the finest philosophers of this century (especially as evidenced in his The Act of Creation). In this novel, he puts forth what is without a doubt the most devastating critique of Stalinism I have ever read. His plotting of the main character's redemption is not as great at what one sees in Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilych, but in some ways it is more believable--less lofty, more human, more limited. This book was recommended to me more than 20 years ago, and it took me this long to get around to reading it. Truly, it is a sterling book, and while it stands as pure literature, it should be read by anyone seriously interested in the political sciences.
4. Down from Troy: A Doctor Comes of Age by Richard Selzer. Selzer is perhaps our finest living stylist, and in this book, he carries that stylistic finesse, erudition, and Latinate finesse to his highest pinnacle. I approached this book with caution, since it is autobiography. I have found that many fine writers are abysmal when it comes to writing about themselves; moreover, often I am simply not interested in the author's personality--I am interested in his creativity only. But Selzer brushed aside all my cautions, and set forth what is perhaps his best book. One note: If you do read this book, have several good dictionaries with you, along with your Latin lexicon and a good medical dictionary.

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The disappointing books I read in 1993 were:

1. Dreamtigers by Jorge Luis Borges. There were moments in this book which are stunningly profound. But there is so very much emphasis on Borges' usual context: dreams, hallucinations, mirrors. Especially dreams. I weary of the image; one almost believes that Borges could not write about anything without this touchstone.

In the latter years of his life, Broges proclaimed that all literature should reduce epic to vignettes--the short story or brief essay. Later, even, he preached that even these short works should all be reduced to the terse brevity of poetry. Why didn't he just go ahead and preach that it all could be reduced to that one word, "dream," and leave it at that, since this is what he almost ended up doing anyway.

Yes; I love Borges. And yet I thus quarrel with him, precisely because I do love him so much.

There were two translators. Boyer did the prose, and it was wonderful. Morland



did the poetry, and it was awful. Witness: "His every-dailiness is here (74)," "Oh never-from-me and mystery-my-country (81), and, "In the whereness of music (83)."

2. The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran. The first 30 pages or so were actually quite impressive--inspiring, beautiful. But then it began diminishing, and finally, by page 39, when one of the judges of the city asks Almustafa to speak of crime and punishment, it all collapses into pretty words and vapid cliches. From here on out the book reads like the most inane of poetry by a stoned airhead.

3. Letters by Henry Miller to Hoki Tokuda Miller ed. by Joyce Howard. This, by one of my favorite authors--it was truly awful. Hoki is his new love. H.V. Miller is infatuated. He acts childish. He falls in love. He makes a complete fool of himself. They marry, and the world's reality asserts itself. They fight a lot, they spend time apart, and eventually they divorce. In his letters, Henry Miller now and then betrays a bit of his artistic genius, but for the most part, the letters are slavish drool. I was keenly disappointed--almost ashamed, to thus see a great man being so common. Throughout the book he worries about money. In every letter, he protests Hoki's general reticence with him--to the point that she would not even say that she loved him. A few months into the relationship, by always proffering and then retracting offers of intimacy and affection, she has Miller bewildered, gutless, and at her feet--thanking her profusely for having ended one of her letters with the words, "I miss you." (91) He plaintively asks her if she misses him as much as he misses her (132), and toward the end of the marriage he is even reminding her of all the things he bought for her and how ungrateful she was (144). It isn't clear that this woman ever even had sex with him, even though they did live together, off and on, for several years. If ever there was a pussy-whipped man, it was Henry Miller during his marriage to Hoki. At the end, it is hard not to believe that the only reason she married him was to get a certain degree of status (by which to promote herself as a singer), and so she could remain in the United States.

It is often interesting, reading the correspondence of great authors, as long as one stays away from their love letters--which usually reveal their greatest, and most unforgivable, failings.

4. Dear, Dear Brenda: The Love Letters of Henry Miller to Brenda Venus ed. by Gerald Seth Sindell. More letters to one more woman he is in love with. This one makes it clear that she will not have sex with him, although she will not come out and say so; instead, she merely refuses to answer his pleas. The result: again he is prostrate with devotion. And by the end of this affair (ended by his death, not by her utter rejection) this old man, in his late '80s, had become a blathering idiot. Note his, "You know, for all the 'randy' letters I write you, when awake and thinking of you I never think those thoughts. Oh, yes, I'd like to touch--but that's all. You're too beautiful and holy to be desecrated(167)."

Thus it happens. A woman is aloof, her sexual charms are dangled and proffered but then snatched away, and the man, his passion kindled but denied, begins to think of himself as base. He believes his sexual desires are wrong, and since women do not have the same sexual desires as men, well then, women are morally superior to men. Note his, "I love women and consider them superior to men. It's men who create war and other terrible things--torture, for example(20)." Apparently Miller hasn't paid much attention to history. Nor did he ever have the privilege of reading Baumli. Regardless, it seems he learned these self-effacing (and man-hating) attitudes well before his relationship with Brenda Venus, and perhaps before his relationship with Hoki. Sad, to see a great mind this mistaken--this abject in his glorification of women.

5. Imagine a Woman and Other Tales by Richard Selzer. This book was written just before the aforementioned Down from Troy. The former book is most decidedly a diminution from his usual writing. There were some good stories, some very bad ones, and too many mediocre ones which contained glaring lapses from his usual facility with story-telling. Still, even with all the faults of this book, Selzer always remained the inimitable stylist.

6. East of Eden by John Steinbeck. I had never read this epic, and had considered this omission a major detraction from my education in literature. So at last I took it up, and while I concede that it is a great novel, I must also judge it to be very flawed. The book's greatness: Steinbeck managed to take the Cain and Abel archetype and carry it through, casting its net over several characters without ever becoming banal or trivial. (Although one could imagine what an English professor would do with this novel and its theme--one sees the creature scurrying back and forth from one end of the blackboard to the other, drawing out a schema for the class, and managing to protract this exercise for perhaps as long as three weeks. After which, the novel, in the minds of every student present, dies a gruesome death.)

But this novel, while it aspired greatly, did not succeed. The main character, Adam Trask, never did quite become a character. He was too lifeless. Henry James could work well with such a character--a sterile character--as in The Beast in the Jungle. Even so, James would not try to bring off such a feat for more than about one hundred pages. Steinbeck succeeded for about as long, but then his Adam Trask just seemed to deteriorate into a listless, weak, supposedly honest and compassionate, drudge of a character. One began almost hating him, thinking that if you have to be this boring to be good and honest, then evil and decadence are preferable.

When, about three-fourths of the way through the book, Steinbeck began working



Adam's two sons into the story, he began faltering and groping. It was clear that he had no idea as to how he wanted to proceed with, or end, the book. He did finally move it along to a kind of summation and even a sort of climax at the end, but he certainly tried the reader's patience along the way. For example, Kate's suicide was not at all believable. It did not fit her character, it did not mesh with the circumstances, and ... well, it just seemed that Steinbeck needed to kill her off so as to tidy things up as he killed off other characters so he could end up killing the book too. I am the first to assert that Steinbeck has written some of the finest novels ever penned by an American. The Grapes of Wrath is a tremendous epic, and Sweet Thursday is probably the funniest book I have ever read. But in East of Eden Steinbeck tried for an even greater dimension of art, and he was not equal to the task.

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The most offensive book I read this year was Gender by Ivan Illich. A discussion group, centering around ideas and books, had formed in Carbondale, Illinois, and I had been invited to attend since I am conversant in gender studies. They had chosen this Illich book for their next format, so I bought it, began reading, attended a couple of the discussions, and dropped out. I was not going to subject myself to that drivel. But being a rather compulsive person, I did feel that since I had read so much of the book already, I might as well finish it. (Plus, I did not know how else to fill this category in The Aviary for the year, since I had found no other book particularly offensive.)

Illich is, I concede, an awesome scholar. He brings together resources, notes, ideas, esoteric bits of research of such a variety as to make one truly respect his research abilities. But what he does with that research is not at all impressive.

For one thing, Gender is a profeminist book which takes the very simple, i.e., standard feminist line that all women are saints and all men are shits. With that scarcely profound (and scarcely true) observation as his starting point, the end is not an auspicious one.

I said that he brings together resources from a large number of varied places. Yes, he does; but the result is that his research becomes so desultory, he ends up doing a virtually schizophrenic juggling of topics, tangents, and ideas that often amount to little more than a Peircean surd or medad. Note this statement from pages 49-50: (For space considerations, I am not going to indent, or set this and other lengthy quotes in block quotation.): "The investment in the household equipment of a median Canadian family--and the same would be true in every other modern home--is now higher than the median plant investment per factory job in two-thirds of all nations. As a result, housework has become more sedentary, and the incidence of varicose veins has decreased. For a minority of women, this has meant an interesting, well-paid part-time job and free time 'to write their books or go fishing.' But the 'new' kind of housework most present-day women perform has also become more lonely, more dull, more impersonal, more time-polluting. Valium consumption and addiction to TV soap operas have often been regarded as indicators of this new, muffled stress." Household equipment investments, varicose veins, and Valium consumption. You figure it out. Or, worse yet, try reading an entire book that goes on this way. And see if you can figure out, better than me, how he draws some of the most startlingly stupid conclusions from all of that discontinuous research, as is witnessed on page 122: "The encroachment and usurpation of normative space frustrates the flesh of women as it does not and could not affect men. Unisex architecture is necessarily male-sexist, as is the unisex ticking of watches. Such designs place women, in their flesh and rhythms, in double jeopardy: Their potential contribution to homemaking is frustrated, and they are yanked out of their proper gender context; in both respects, they suffer more than men." The unisex ticking of watches is necessarily male-sexist? I do not buy it, I scarcely understand what he is trying to get at, and nowhere before this statement did he ever mention anything about ticking watches, nor does he ever bring the subject up again.

But see how he, like just about every other profeminist man, in the course of trying to be so chivalrous toward women by condemning men, is actually, very craftily, trying to put them back into their old roles? The woman is alienated unless she is restored to her rightful place--having domestic power in the home. The only problem is, men aren't nice enough to her when she is a homemaker, and if only this could be changed, then women could stay at home, spin wool, cook food, have babies, and everyone would be happy in a nonsexist world in which women are allowed to have "their proper gender context."

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The worst book of the year was Herzog by Saul Bellow. Actually I did not read the book entire. I tried to, but could not force myself to proceed. Showing valiant courage, I did, some years ago, force my way through his The Adventures of Augie March. It was one of the worst books I ever read. Years ago, I tried reading Mr. Sammler's Planet, and Dangling Man. This was at a time in my life when it was almost unheard of for me to begin a book and not finish it. But with both these books, I did not get beyond 40 pages before giving up.

But people kept recommending that I read Bellow, talking about how profound he is, and such. Even Gore Vidal thinks highly of him. (Although he always seems to end up praising Bellow's good looks more than he praises his novels.) But with all these recommendations, I thought that I would take it upon myself to read what is considered to be his best book. So I asked a professor to tell me what is Bellow's best book, and



that is how I ended up reading Augie March. I forced my way to the end of its 557 pages of tiny print, hoping that there would come a great inspiration that would suddenly reveal to me the book's profound character. But no such inspiration ever came. It was one of the most agonizingly boring books I had ever read.

But this year, thinking that I should read more contemporary fiction, I took up Herzog. I can say that of this book's 341 pages, I read 120--more than a third of its length. But I gave up. There was very much that was very wrong with this very boring book. For one thing, he tried, many times, to wax philosophical. But every time he tried, he sounded trite, when he believed he was being original and profound. (He is, let us not forget, an English professor. When I was in graduate school, studying philosophy, it was often said that most of the graduate students in English departments were there because they had tried philosophy but were not smart enough to make their way through its difficulties. The judgement was often made sarcastically, but it was not thereby untrue. What is done in most English departments, where literature is taught, is to study the themes of various works, and expostulate how they do or do not fit under the rubric of a certain school of philosophy. I attended many such classes, and was always startled, sometimes amused, at the elementary--and often misguided--grasp these professorial teachers had of even the most simple philosophical principles.) I also wearied of Bellow's descriptions of his characters. Most of them come in one color only: gray. He does take avid pains to describe, often at some length, the nose of each new character. One begins to think that this Jewish writer has an inferiority complex about his Jewish nose, or about the noses of all Jews, given how he could not introduce a new character (especially a Jewish one) without giving a precise, and usually flattering, description of the person's schnoz. The nose might be pithily described as Etruscan, or Roman, classical, elegant, fine-boned, flared and alert, a bit crooked but nevertheless of aristocratic line, or some such. It became a game for me, watching to see how soon, upon introducing a new character, Herzog would describe the owner's proboscis.

The copy I was reading was a 19th printing done in December of 1976--thus, 12 years after the book's initial publication in 1964. Yet, as early as page 19, at the last word of the very first line, "corrupt" is misspelled, "corrup." One would think that after 12 years, the author, or his friends, would have pointed out this mistake--along with the several others I encountered. (Or is it possible that other people did not read the book, but never would admit to it?)

I do concede that this book has some brilliant writing: well-crafted sentences, brief commentaries of startling ingenuity. In fact, by the time I had read 20 pages, I was convinced that this book would take the prize for being the best I would read during the year. But by the time I had read 30 pages, I was encountering much redundancy in those phrases which, at first encounter, had seemed so novel. By the time I was to page 40, I was wondering if I would be able to finish the book.

The main thing wrong with Herzog is that Bellow just never succeeds in making the reader care about his characters. They never quite come alive. And Bellow never gets inside the reader, the reader never gets inside his characters, and ... I do not anticipate ever again trying a Bellow book. I don't care if he did win all those literary prizes, and I do not care if other writers consider him great. The fact is, he bores. He is clever, he is occasionally ingenious, but he is never brilliant, and he never evinces genius. One has the impression that he aspired beyond the reach of his talents.

But why do I go on about this book? Because I am pissed off. I confess that I read this book because so many people (most of them academicians) nagged me until I finally took it up. I gave in to their nagging, and I am angry at myself for having done it.

I am left wondering why English professors like Bellow so much. I can not divine it, with any certainty, but I do wonder if it is for the same reason they like John Updike so much, i.e., because of the pervading theme of marital infidelity. This theme pervades the works of both authors, and, from long exposure (and an embarrassingly long immersion in) the academic milieu, I have perceived this to be one of its most pervasive themes. But like everything done by the average professor in the average liberal arts college, this theme is acted out gingerly, timidly, wimpily. The wimps of academe wander about in their cloister, the males always troubled by their tiny iota of testosterone, the females always undone by their coursing rivulets of varied hormones, and all are always tempted to adultery because of those young, comely students; and occasionally they do succumb to the temptations. But it is always a mild succumbing. Just as the English professor's succumbing to philosophy is a mild one. Mild, meek, trivial, trite, shallow, boring. Such are the lives of the average hacks of liberal-arts academe, and such are the works of Bellow, Updike, and those many others of similarly ailing ilk.

Read another book by Bellow? Never. Ever. Do not even mention it to me.

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There are certain books I read during 1993 which do not really fit under the above categories, but nevertheless are noteworthy, and deserve some comment:

1. White Palace by Glenn Savan. This book I picked up immediately when I finally put down the Bellow book. White Palace is in many ways a poorly written book, a mediocre story, and it has absolutely no sense of style. But it was a better book than Herzog. Glenn Savan could tell a story, he could keep the reader's interest, and although he never inspired, he did consistently entertain and he sometimes provoked one to ponder life's deeper mysteries. He wrote a very fine third-rate novel, whereas Bellow's was a terrible second-rate novel. I will always choose the good third-rate novel.



Don't get me wrong. I am not going to give Savan much in the way of praise. But after struggling through 120 pages of Bellow's self-satisfied prosaic narcissism, it was refreshing to read a book that was, simply, a good story.

2. The Secret History by Donna Tartt. In a way, this was an excellent book. It was gripping, suspenseful, and was very hard to put down. It had that sense of looking into the horror of humanity, and wanting to get the viewing over and done with, which characterizes very few books, e.g., Deliverance, Straw Dogs, or Lord of the Flies. Yet the book, for all the interest of its tale, was not well written at all. Twice in the book, the mystery wound tight, and the story literally could not go on without some of that mystery being revealed. But Tartt did not have the skill to reveal it in the natural unfolding of the tale; instead, in two instances--once during a very long meal, and another time when two characters stopped at a roadside stand on their trek back to town--a long, confessorial explanation was given which was an attempt to bring everything to light. There were other problems too. Conversations she can not move along without interspersing brief digressions, or moments of action, so the context seems real; this is all well and fine. But it seemed that the only prop, or device, Donna Tartt could use involved the speakers reaching for a cigarette, or sipping from a drink. It became tiresome, these, "He paused and blew a plume of blue smoke as he prepared to commence his story." "She snatched the drink, her hands trembling, and took a quick gulp before continuing." "As she picked up the cup of coffee, he realized she had put sugar in her coffee, and she never did that!" And so on. It became distracting, then amusing, then boring.

A further, and ubiquitous, problem in the book: the attempt to contrast the modern idiom, and its many sillinesses, with the ancient (and more respectable) way of doing things. Tartt was trying for satire, but in such forays, she usually ended up incarcerating her story in contemporary confines--from which it then could not easily escape.

But the main problem of the book was its ending. It was terrible. She just did not know how to bring this story to a close, so ... she did what too many authors do. She conveniently staged a death. The book's main character killed himself. But the scene in which he killed himself was so awkwardly written one wondered if at this point the editorial staff had taken over the writing instead of her doing it herself. But most frustrating was the simple fact that the main character's killing himself was completely out of character. Not at all in keeping with his personality. There was a brief epilogue, and therein the book rallied briefly, but then it ended poorly too.

But, despite its many failings, I must say that the book was intriguing, even consuming. It made you want to read faster, and yet run from the pain of the book too. Not a bad achievement, for a first-time author.

Just now, ready to end this section on books, I realize that in the "significant events" section I left out one small happenstance: namely, on December 21st I saw the movie, Hero. Why did I forget about it? Perhaps because it was not a very good movie. Why do I remember it now? Because I just wrote about Tartt's book, which ended so poorly, and have already written about how East of Eden, like The Secret History, ended with a death that was out of character. The movie, Hero, while it did not end with a death, also seemed to reveal a complete lack of understanding on the part of the writer (producer? director?) as to how to end the thing. The drama on the ledge, as one person, and then the other, threatened to jump, or would almost accidentally fall, and such, went on ... and on, until what otherwise had been a good story, which had moved toward a sort of emotional climax, just sort of drained away until nothing more could be sucked from a tale that had some time before gone stale.

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\*\*\*\*\* MUSICAL MUSINGS \*\*\*\*\*

1993 marked the passing of two very important figures in music: Marian Anderson, who died at the age of 96, and Carlos Montoya, who died at age 89. Have they been replaced? No. Likely there will never be another flamenco player like Montoya. As for Marian Anderson, although I never much liked her standard repertoire--the spirituals--I acknowledge that her singing of them was unsurpassed. As for current black singers, and their approach to the same repertoire: Kathleen Battle, though gifted with a lovely voice, will never be Anderson's equal because she has no ability to deal with the emotional content of music. Jessye Norman has more emotional ballast, but her voice is too sturdy, too turgid even, to take flight with spirituals.

Much of this last year was spent trying to like music which I have traditionally disliked. Irish music, for example. I confess that, in terms of its artistry, it is no worse (and nobetter) than bluegrass, C&W, or folk. But I simply do not like it. The stuff grates on my sensibilities, and I think this is largely because so many of the instruments are so often somewhat out of tune. (Show me a pennywhistle that has an even scale! As for those squeezeboxes--a fellow I know who plays one explained to me that each note has three reeds, and it is customary to allow the three reeds to be ever-so-slightly out of tune with each other, thus to get a wider timbre, and a resulting illusion of greater volume. He carefully took his box and tuned it so each reed was correct, and then showed me how he then could bend the tuning of two reeds of each three-reed set. I much preferred the straight tuning. The "dissonant tuning" as it is sometimes called was very irritating.) Still, I do think there is something in Irish music



music I am missing, and I will try, in 1994, to better appreciate it.

I will not be so generous toward "modern classical" music--which, of course, in terms of its name, is a virtual oxymoron. The only exception might be when the composer is truly a genius, and one can, with some confidence, predict the future, and claim that this music will eventually become a classic. But of course there is much music out there now which is being called "modern classical" which ... well, what do we call it? It bears similarities to classical music in that it uses the same instrumentation, and often pretends to be as ambitious. But what is it really? The answer was suggested to me when I came to realize that Vintage Vinyl, a huge dealer in used records which has been in St. Louis for many years, has a very large selection of this modern classical music. Once when I was doing some trading there, the buyer told me that they could not get enough modern classical in, that they have an almost unlimited demand for it. I asked him who, in all the world, would be buying so much modern classical--is it just one person, very wealthy, who comes in and buys everything they have? No; he explained to me that they have become a rather popular clearing house for the genre, and the buyers are professors of music--professors in composition, musicology, "resident composers," professors of "synthesizer pedagogy," and the like. So ... now I begin to understand. Modern classical music, for the most part, is music of, by, and for the professors. Which helps explain why most of it is so bad I could, on a serious weekend drunk, compose better symphonies than most of those inspired drudges are doing during their semester-long sabbaticals.

So now I no longer refer to this type of music as "modern classical." I call it professor music. My worthy friends know exactly what I mean.

One other task, over this last musical year, has involved trying to improve my stereo system. Elsewhere in this *Aviary*, I have mentioned the purchase of certain components. But the main improvement has involved the purchase of new interconnects, most of them Apature brand. I began by trying a different, and embarrassingly expensive, brand--I purchased a 5-ft. pair of hand-made interconnects from California for no less than \$120. They worked about two days, and then began buzzing. I phoned the fellow who had sold them to me, and he sent me on a five-hour task of checking every aspect of my stereo to see what could be wrong with it. I finally had to conclude that the problem was with the interconnects. So they were sent back; he sent me a new pair. Still, a problem. He was testy about it, but finally sent me a third pair. Bad too. This time he blew up, yelled at me over the phone, and said to just return them and he would refund my money.

I then purchased a much cheaper interconnect, which sounded quite good to my ear, and the pair worked fine. Later, the fellow phoned me, saying he had indeed discovered that something was wrong with the wire he was using for the interconnects, and now he had the problem solved, and would I want to buy more? No; I wouldn't want to buy more. The fellow had blown up at me, and yet, the problem was caused by his product. Later, when he discovered the problem was his product, did he apologize for blowing up at me? No. Did he apologize for the hours of inconvenience caused me? No. He merely tried to sell me something else. Well ... Baumli may be a fool, but he isn't a complete idiot. Still, I do find that the main deterrent (other than money) to improving my stereo is the fact that the products made, no matter how fine they sound, are so consistently unreliable.

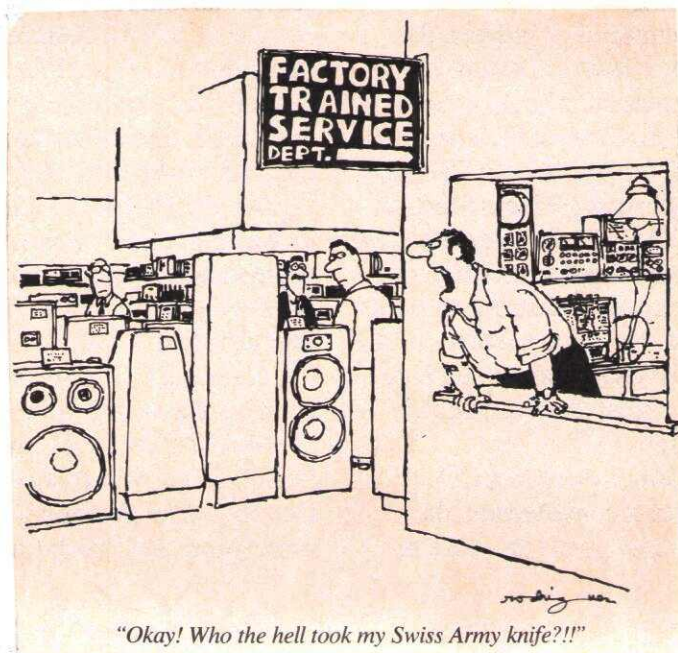
I would be remiss if I did not, as in previous years, give some account of albums I have listened to.

The best albums of the year:

1. If You Love Me by Cecilia Bartoli.

I had avoided buying anything by this new star soprano, because it seems that every couple of years, the music world, hungry for a new starlet, manufactures one even if she is not deserving. Dawn Upshaw had been the latest, and while she is a worthy soprano, I am hard put to concede that she deserved her portion of acclaim. I rather assumed that the same would be true of Bartoli. But it isn't. She deserves her amount of fame. She is actually a mezzo-soprano, and my God, she has a gorgeous voice. And unlike so many sopranos, hers is very well trained. She lacks maturity, but she has more of this than many seasoned sopranos. Her ability to keep her volume even, no matter what the register, is uncanny--clearly the result of careful training. She should have a long, and very fertile, career.

2. Bayless Meets Bernstein: West Side Story Variations. This Bayless is an unbelievably powerful pianist! And this synthesis of classical with jazz helped me appreciate the beauty of Bernstein's music, which I have heard one worthy musicologist describe as, "The Magic Flute of the twentieth century."



CONDUCTOR GEORGE SZELL was credited with having made the Cleveland Orchestra one of the world's finest. His manner, aloof and autocratic, earned him few friends, however. After he had stalked out of the Metropolitan Opera in New York on one occasion, someone said to Rudolf Bing, the manager, that Szell was his own worst enemy. "Not while I'm alive," said Bing.

—The Book of Musical Anecdotes, edited by Norman Lebrecht (Free Press)



3. Alexis Weissenberg's playing of Beethoven's major triad. The playing is perfect. Perhaps the touch is a tad heavy for my taste, which puts Weissenberg's playing of these pieces one notch below Klien's. But it is the next best thing to Klien, and this in itself is startling, given that Klien's recording of these pieces is the best ever done.

4. Organ Music by Buxtehude. I had never paid much attention to this composer. But now, listening to him, one realizes the influence he had on Bach, and I must say that Bach is not a whole lot better than Buxtehude. Thus, again, I discover that the genius is not so very often a giant stride ahead of his best contemporaries.

5. Crystal Gayle Sampler. This album contains songs that are from four of her very early albums, but the mastering was so well done that it possesses better sonics than any of those four albums. Put simply, this sampler is a gorgeous compilation of the early Crystal I love.

6. When I Dream by Crystal Gayle. I had never before heard this very early album, although I had before heard some of its songs on later collections. This features her young voice, not as expressive as it would later become, but still with that lush, and yet very approachable, sensuality that would characterize Crystal's voice when she was at her best.

7. Several albums by Shura Gehrman, the Welsh bass singer. I truly can not say which ones I first encountered during 1993, given that I have listened to so many of his recordings so many times, and they take up a kind of niche in my brain which is utterly atemporal--in terms of my appreciation. Gehrman is my favorite living bass singer, and perhaps he is my all-time favorite.

Many of my friends share this opinion, and not infrequently I have been pressed to pass judgement as to who Shura Gehrman sings best. For a long while I have reserved judgement on this question, but finally, after much reflection, I one day rather spontaneously said, "Shura Gehrman's second voice loves Schubert the most, but I believe his first voice favors Handel."

First voice? Second voice? I shall say more on this subject next year.

8. Haydn, Schubert, Beethoven: Dances with Walter Klien at the piano. Yes; another by Klien. This album does its title justice: a lot of fun, it is, with a great pianist at the keys. The dances are quite enjoyable, often amazingly simple, and always gay. I do confess that it is a bit difficult appreciating these pieces as dances, given that Klien's virtuosic playing is so compelling that one almost tends to focus more on the musician than on the music.

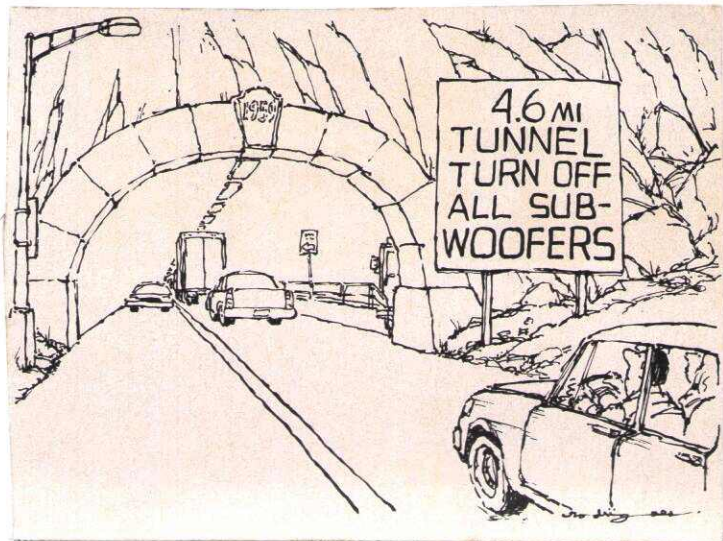
9. Unlimited by Reba McIntire. I have "discovered" this singer only in the last two years. Before, I never liked her music very much. I think she is getting better. I like her energy, her timbre, and except for that drummer of hers, who has a habit of laying it into the floor toms like someone beating a truck tire off its rim, her backup band has improved too. All in all, this was a most enjoyable album, with a certain level of sophistication uncommon (and often inappropriate, but here, fully at home) in C&W music.

10. Mozart's Concertoes for Flute and Orchestra Nos. 1 & 2 with James Galway on the flute, and The New Irish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Andre Priour. This album has truly glorious playing by the orchestra--accurate, with a fine balance of restraint and power. Galway is perfect--controlled, mellifluous, emotional, with his usual bright tone, but without the carelessness that later came to characterize his playing. (I hate to thus register a criticism in the course of praising an album. But this album was recorded way back in 1973, when Galway still had enough humility to put forth his best effort. He no longer tries very hard, he is careless, and he substitutes flashy display and manic emotion for what formerly was admirable technique and breadth of emotion.)

11. Saint Luke Passion by Penderecki. I must say that the writing for the solo soprano is rather poor, but the rest of the writing for this piece is excellent throughout. The voices of the chorus, appropriate to the emotion of this piece, sounded almost dissonant at times--just as would an angry throng. (Penderecki, by the way, is an example of a composer whose music does deserve being termed "modern classical.")

12. Brasileirinho by Paula Robison et al. This is Brazilian jazz, tamed by the touch of a classical flutist, while given impetus and unusual novelty by the freedom allowed the other musicians when they thus are playing with a musician so skilled and yet so free. Robison's playing is celestial, and the result is music that is sexy and fun.

13. Tito Schipa on the Nimbus Records label. Schipa is my all-time favorite tenor. One has to forgive the sound of the 70s to appreciate him, but once one has made this concession, one hears the great voice, and even more, the full range of emotional expression. The digital re-recording, and mastering, by Nimbus are flawless, and on this album my favorite tenor is given his due.





14. Nisi Dominus and Magnificat in G Minor by Vivaldi, with the Angelicum Chamber Orchestra conducted by Carlo Felice Cillario. Although on this album the soloists were poorly miked, this nevertheless was a very well-performed album, especially the singing by Anna Maria Rota. I especially recommend the first work--the Nisi Dominus. (I must comment that the liner notes to this album, on The Musical Heritage Society label, which were written by Douglas Townsend, are perhaps the worst I have ever encountered. Note the last sentence of his extensive notes: "Vivaldi's understanding of the nature and difference between instrumental and vocal music are clearly manifest in this aria, which despite its florid character, is not only grateful to the voice, but it is pleasing to the listener." One long grammatical error, is it not?)

15. Probably the best single album I heard this year was a jazz work: "That" Nigger Music: Introducing Les Oubliés de Jazz Ensemble: Featuring William "Smiley" Winters. I do not even recall where I bought this used record, but it is the most unusual, creative, and impactful jazz album I have ever heard. It is on the Touché Records label, and is numbered 101, which causes me to think that it is the first album they ever issued, and perhaps the only one. It was issued in 1973, and has a kind of rap overlay to great music. Truly, I do not know how to describe it, except to say that listening to it leaves one emotionally limp--satisfied and inspired too--and wondering why other musicians can't play this well. One thinks of jazz as uninhibited music. Believe me, you have never heard uninhibited jazz if you haven't heard this album.

I can scarcely describe it further. Listen to it with me when you visit. Meanwhile, if you know anything more about these artists, and if they have other recordings that are available, then please let me know!

As in previous years, I shall list the disappointing albums I confronted. There were too many this year, likely the result of my trying hard to appreciate more popular artists I once was drawn too, while generally failing at this task. These works were:

1. Gravity's Rainbow by Pat Benatar. The problem with this one is probably me. I like her early albums, but I was exposed to them at a younger age, in company with a man I love dearly, who himself was mad about Pat Benatar. These old memories persist, but they do not seem to transform what Benatar now does into something enjoyable. Maybe I had my fill of her, and that was enough. However, I did think that this album was badly produced: the voice miked poorly, with not nearly enough vocal volume in most of the cuts. I did, however, especially like track # 11, "Kingdom Key." If every track on this album were even nearly as good as this one, then my opinion of this work would be very different.
2. Cante Flamenco with various artists. This true Spanish (as opposed to Mexican) flamenco was actually quite good, with excellent guitar playing. However, the singing was very compromised at times, and the main problem was with the participants' yelling. Their exclamations might have been acceptable had they been less frequent. But the constant "Ole!" and "Ala!" from one or two voices, sometimes as frequently as twenty times a minute, became tiresome. It would be rather like listening to coffeehouse folk music and hearing someone in the audience yelling out, "Yeah man!" every few seconds, or being at a blues concert and hearing someone yelling "Hey baby!" over and over. Most irritating, and the presence of this "live ambiance" completely destroyed what otherwise might have been a fine listening experience.
3. Tattoo by David Allan Coe. On this work he was tired, he did not sing well, but he pushed his way along as though he were merely recording this album so as to be putting another one out.
4. Miriam by Jessi Colter. I have never thought this C&W singer has a great voice, but she has a damned sexy voice, and sometimes that makes up for a lot. But on this album her lusty sensuality wavered from the note too much, and this time she was singing all about God and gospel. Yet, in a way, I did appreciate the subject matter--it was refreshing, in an odd way, to hear someone singing love songs about the divine instead of about the same old romantic human subject matter.
5. Collection by Rodney Crowell. This contains some of his best songs, such as "Heartbroke," "Leaving Louisiana in the Broad Daylight," and, "I Ain't Living Long Like This." But some of the songs--later ones--are just plainly lacking in quality. Moreover, the sound of several of these songs was flawed. I kept thinking that my amplifier or preamp were cutting out now and then, until I finally realized that what I was hearing were glitches caused by poorly-done analogue tape edits--the splicings not smooth, with moments of silence allowed in the finished master tape.
6. Yes I Am by Melissa Etheridge. I always appreciated her acoustic hard-rock act, and the energy of her voice. But the hard voice has become ragged, the soul has become hollow, and the energy is nothing more than clumsy bombast.
7. The Eclectic Vince Gueraldi. Gueraldi is one of my all-time favorite jazz pianists. But this album is almost an embarrassment. He is branching out by playing the electric harpsichord, which he does very well. He also plays the electric guitar, which he does moderately well. On two cuts he sings. This he does terribly. Had he left the singing out, the album would have been acceptable, but .....
8. Happy Anniversary, Charlie Brown. This is a commemorative album, for Vince Gueraldi, on which well-known jazz artists play songs which were originally done for the Peanuts



or Charlie Brown TV shows. The Gueraldi songs are here played by the likes of B.B. King, Dave Grusin, Joe Williams, Gerry Mulligan, etc. Most of the playing is simply awful. Lazy, uncertain, usually with poor backup--spastic drums, electric bass players with a rock sound. "The Great Pumpkin Waltz" as played by Chick Corea is, however, nothing short of wonderful. The "Linus & Lucy" reprise also was very good. And one other tune showed promise, namely, "Benjamin," with Brubeck on piano, Randy Jones on drums, and Bob Militello doing especially fine playing on flute. Unfortunately, this tune was ruined by Chris Brubeck on electric bass--his sound put one in mind of an old cow rubbing its hind-end on a rickety wooden fence.

9. Behind the Mask by Fleetwood Mac. It was boring, with monotonous percussion, an out-of-tune bass, and poorly miked vocals. The songs' lyrics had all the inspiration of a stale fart on a humid morning, and ... well, there isn't much to say except that this group, which I loved so much during the early '70s, has faded away to a cipher. Christine McVie's voice is still captivating, but that is about all that can hold one's interest on this album. (An aside: I never could understand why Stevie Nicks was considered the superstar of this group. McVie is a much better singer, and also is a much more beautiful woman.)

10. Handel's Messiah done on period instruments with John Eliot Gardiner conducting the English Baroque Soloists and the Monteverdi Choir. This version had been recommended to me by several people who claimed that it is the best ever done on period instruments. I disagree; it is the worst of several period-instrument versions I have heard. The sound was scarcely original, did not at all seem authentic, and whatever merits the recording as a whole might have, it is compromised--even ruined--by the soloists. Robert Hale, the bass, has poor diction and is generally ridiculous in his attempts at coloratura. Charles Brett, the counter-tenor, does not sound like a tenor, a counter-tenor, and, for that matter, does not sound very much like a trained singer--he missed too many notes. Anthony Rolfe-Johnson is a pleasing tenor at times, but then he becomes nasal, and then abrasive. He is just too inconsistent, he exaggerates his diction, and rolls his r's distractingly. The mezzo-soprano, Catherine Robbin, was fairly good--not great, but she certainly stands out from the other soloists, and is at times capable of great emotional drama. The boy soprano, Saul Quirke ... well, he was okay. Not great, but more than adequate. The soprano, Margaret Marshall, was the best of the soloists, showing a unique voicing along with the emotional richness of an alto. Yet, she butchered the, "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth" aria, which is perhaps my favorite aria in all of classical music.

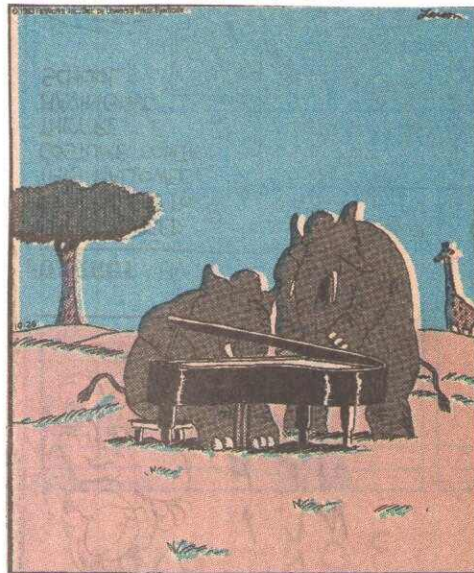
I should here note that the trumpet was nothing short of excellent, with Steele-Perkins himself at the mouthpiece on "The Trumpet Shall Sound." As for the orchestra, it was generally weak, and given its vibratoless approach, clashed with the highly exaggerated vibrato (scarcely appropriate in an "original" performance!) of the solo voices. The best part of this recording was the chorus, which at times was nothing short of awesome, although they did manage to ruin the "Hallelujah" chorus, virtually giving it a parody instead of a performance. But then they rallied, and did the "Amen" chorus in a very sublime way.

No, my friends, the Gardiner version is not the best of the authentic-instrument versions. It isn't a good version, period. If you want to hear the best of the authentic versions, go to the Christopher Hogwood version. Or, to hear the second-best version, try The Smithsonian Chamber Players conducted by Weaver. Please, do not again recommend the Gardiner version. Your enthusiasm is nothing more than an exercise in sucking wind.

11. The Horowitz Collection. I bought this album primarily for his recording of Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 7, which I had not even realized he had ever recorded. It was not very good. He simply pushes his way through it. His is an instrumentalist's approach, but, if one wants to hear an instrumentalist approach, then I recommend Ashkenazy. But the more percussive versions of Richter and Gould are better, with Richter's being the best.

12. The Karr-Lewis Duo. I heard this duo back in the mid-'80s, and it was a very enjoyable experience, with some of the most impressive (if scarcely profound) bass playing I have ever heard. As for the present album, Karr does not do very well on the serious music; Lewis actually is much better. On the first cut, Handel's Sonata in C Major, Karr's intonation is so far off as to be literally out of key at times. His emphases on individual notes are poorly chosen, and there simply is no life. The best work is an arrangement of the Kol Nidrei by Max Bruch, but even here, the work became boring because of a lack of tonal creativity. The other two pieces on this album, a work by Tittle and a work by Farrell, were played better, as though Karr is more interested in contemporary pieces. But as music they were not so good, and so ... I put the album in my box of LPs to sell or trade. Anyone interested?

13. Country Guitar Man by Albert Lee. This one actually has Lee playing more piano than guitar (and believe me, he plays the guitar better). He sings songs that he does



"Smash your left hand down about right here three times, then twice up in this area, then three times right about here.... That's "Louie Louie."



not seem interested in, and overall, this work is a marked diminution from his other playing, which I have appreciated immensely (especially his work when with The Hot Band).

14. Just a Little Love by Reba McEntire. The sonics were poor, and the production terrible--the songs fade at the end, and then are abruptly cut off by the engineer before the fade is complete. And that drummer she likes to use--hitting that loud, resonant, dominating floor-tom as often as he can, and always on the third beat of the measure. The entire album is irritating, distracting, fatiguing. Reba has turned out some great songs, but because of poor production and engineering, she rarely turns out good albums.

15. Mozart's Piano Quartets played by Walter Klien with members of The Amadeus Quartet. Some years ago I had heard this album, but other members in the listening room were drunk and talking loudly, the result being that I could not say that I ever got to actually hear these two pieces as they deserved. And I certainly was not able, subsequently, to remember very well how they were played.

At last a friend of mine obtained this album, and kindly lent me her copy. I sat down to listen, and very soon sensed that things were awry. I kept trying to deny it to myself, out of loyalty to Klien, but yes ... there were many things wrong with this album. The playing of the K. 478 on the first side was boring, trifling, lifeless. Worse, there was something very subtle that was wrong. At first I thought the strings were flat. But no; the piano, too, seemed flat. At the beginning the problem did not seem so pronounced, and in fact, there were parts when it would seem like everything was back in tune, but then it would go slightly flat again. Ever so slightly, but it was enough to make a person with perfect pitch uneasy. I think the problem must have been caused by a defective master tape--one which stretched in places, and allowed the playing to go a bit more slowly than it should have in places, subsequently going flat.

On side two, which contained the K. 493, everything was in tune. But here Klien himself was not doing well. He was hesitant, he came close to making mistakes, and was obviously very lacking in confidence--lacking any sense of command. He had not played very much with these musicians, and he felt out of his element. In the final movement of this piece, Klien rallied and the small ensemble came together with a rare sense of inspiration and perfect playing. Were the entire album as good as this final movement, it would be one of the finest I have ever heard. But, much as it pains me to admit this, Klien's playing compromised this entire album.

16. Peter, Paul and Mommy, Too. The microphones were out of phase, Mary can not sing anymore, and only one of the two men (I do not know which--the one with the higher tenor voice) can still sing. I hated the album. Even Marion, for whom it was bought, was only mildly entertained.

17. Schubert's Impromptus played by Wilhelm Kempff. Although Kempff is one of my favorite Beethoven pianists, he often does not do so well with other composers, as is the case with most of his Schubert playing. On this recording, he just plods along, as if he is not at all interested in the music.

18. Phil Spector: Back to Mono. Actually, in some ways, this is a great 4-CD set when one looks at everything accomplished by these many groups and soloists who made their careers under Spector's tutelage. But it was difficult listening to more than two or three tracks at a time. All those teeny-bopper love songs. Too many of them. And ... too often they were in the same key. All about immature, yearning, sad, simple love. It is tiring, given the size of the dose. For small doses of nostalgia, it is fine.

One realizes the monotony of the Spector "wall of sound" when listening to these recordings. It was a fine concept, but it did not grow.

My favorite, still, of all those songs from the early- and mid-'60s is, "And Then He Kissed Me" done by The Crystals. There was a certain plush young woman against whose body I pressed mine, while we danced together at those Catholic Youth Organization dances. ("CYO dances," we called them. "Dancing with a virgin hard-on," is how I described it in later years.) And whatever happened to the aforementioned young girl? (Yes; I write "girl." You prefer that I write "woman"? Well, we were only in the 8th grade.) She did not finish high school. She married, and by the time I was a sophomore in college, she had three children. When I was yet a Freshman, working at a place in Maryville called "The Music Shop," she came in, crying, saying that life was driving her crazy, and she wanted to buy some trumpet music, since she had played the trumpet in high school, still had the instrument, and wanted to see if playing it would help her feel better. With much embarrassment, I helped her pick out some music, and she left. I never saw her again, except from a distance--with those three kids.

So what happened to you, dear Rita? Do you now, more than thirty years later, remember getting hot, dancing with Baumli to, "And Then He Kissed Me"?

19. Wind in the Wire by Randy Travis. It is a "cowboy movie" motif, and although tracks 2 & 7 were enjoyable, overall the whole album seemed too old fashioned, dull, boring, with too much of the old-style cowboy twang.

20. Simply the Best by Tina Turner. On this 1991 album, she does very well when she fits into the old rock groove. But too many of the album's many tracks are dominated by synthesizers. And often there is too much reverb on her voice. The songs usually began well, but soon would become boring.

21. The movie soundtrack for Tous les matins du monde was highly recommended to me, but



I simply could not enjoy it. The instrument sounded too boring, too redundant, "too samey" as one articulate young woman I know put it. Moreover, the artist had a sort of pulmonary tic (actually quite common in double bass players), such that he would inhale abruptly, and audibly, every second measure. It became too distracting, and what with the music not being very interesting anyway, I traded the CD away.

The movie was also recommended, but I never did get to see it. I should here take opportunity for explaining one thing: Namely, the title of the movie, contrary to what most Americans think, most definitely does not translate as, "All the mornings of the world." Rather, the title is a play on words. In French, tout le monde is a phrase which translates, very simply, as, "everybody," or, "everyone." The word, "matins" comes from the old Latin, "Matuta," who was the goddess of dawn. This spawned the Latin word, "matutinae," (feminine plural) which means, "of the morning." The word evolved through old French and Middle English to become "matins," which means early morning--and later, in the canonical doctrine of the Catholic Church, became the word to describe the first of the seven canonical hours. Hence, prayers chanted by monks in monasteries began with the matins, which in medieval times were said at either midnight or 2 a.m., and later came to be the first prayers chanted by those modern monks (less ascetic when it came to giving up their sleep) when they first gathered in the morning around dawn. This first set of canonical prayers thus greets the day; they are considered to be the prayers of hope, of longing, of faith in God and trust in one's own human capabilities for doing as God wills. In short, matins is a prayer of newly-born and newly-resolved hope.

So do you see? The title actually means something like, "Everyone's renewed hope," or, being more poetic (and more accurate to the meaning intended by the phraseology), it would translate something like, "Eternal hope springs anew in the breast of everyone."

Not so mundane a title as many people had supposed.

22. Jennifer Warnes by Jennifer Warnes. I keep trying to like this woman's singing because so many people, who share my musical tastes, are enthralled with her. But on this album--her first, which I had never before heard--her voice sounded strained, off-key at times, uncertain in the vibrato, and very lost everytime she tried to put a lot of emotion into her singing. Moreover, her voice was usually buried by the instruments. "Right Time of the Night" and "Bring Ol' Maggie Back Home" were nice, but they were more a pleasant respite than songs which could stand on their own merits.

23. Shot Through the Heart by Jennifer Warnes. I register the same criticisms as I did above, except to state that this album had an even more irritating instrumental line, and there were no redeeming songs.

24. The Hunter by Jennifer Warnes. This album was so highly recommended, and after having heard Warnes sing so well on Rob Wasserman's Duets (she participated on one track only), I had very high hopes. But it was terrible. There are some fine stereo effects, but these obviously were special-effects used by the three producers (one of them Warnes herself) as they were casting about in the dark, hoping to fix the album.

On this album, Jennifer Warnes' voice is not so pure in the mid-alto as it once was, and she has absolutely no soprano left at all. As for the songs, she did a good job of picking tunes, but never turned even one of them into a fine showpiece.

I anticipate that no small number of my friends will protest my disliking this album, so I will here go through it track by track, with brief commentary which, let us hope, will be as convincing as it is true. The tracks: 1. She sounds like a weak Joni Mitchell. The synthesizer is coarse and harsh. 2. The male voice harmony ruins it, after a good beginning. 3. The unimaginative Fender bass, doing nothing more creative than reading jazz lines from a prepared score, is so distracting and irritating one almost forgets to notice that, here again, the voice sounds like a weak Joni Mitchell. 4. The voice is better in this one, but the electric bass is out of tune. 5. A good string bass in this one, but the voice sounds like a weak Janis Ian. 6. Here the voice sounds like a weak Christine McVie. 7. Better than the others; at times it sounds like the old JW, but it really isn't so very good--it's just that it sounds better than the other tracks. 8. A bit heavy on the deep bass, which buries the vocals, but this tune makes a good showing, being the best on the album. 9. JW is weakly parodying the weak JW who sounds like a weak Joni Mitchell. Her soprano attempts sound like the orgasmic vocalizations of a woman I knew when I was a junior in college. I.e., enthusiastic, but not very aesthetic. 10. Here JW sounds like a weak Joan Baez.

As for the most offensive album of the year, that is easy to name: Two Generations of Brubeck. Why offensive? Because a musician as fine as Dave Brubeck would try to foist off on someone like me an album that is pure trash. The old man Dave, who can beat the keys as well as anyone, was there with three of his sons, who gimped along while a few other musicians lent their creaks, whimpers, and squalls. Darius, the son, hacked at the keyboard like a senile old granny chopping scallions. Danny, who on the album's cover is billed as, "one of the strongest drummers today in any field" (!) clips along with all the creativity of a termite lost in a sandstorm. And as for Chris, who plays at playing bass, he is one of the most unimaginative plunkers on the instrument I have ever heard. I appreciate Dave's fatherly sentiments, but he should confine his familial partisanship to parlor music, and not try to make it public.



And the worst album of the year? I hate to say this. I am a decent gentleman, and I hate to be an asshole (however familiar the role has become). But ... the worst album of the year was a tape called Beattie Plays Beattie by Donald Beattie. I know this fellow. He is head of the local Beethoven Society for Pianists, and he is as dedicated a pedagogue as I have ever known. More, he has an uncanny ability to recognize great talent, and bring it to Southern Illinois. But when he this time composed, and recorded--piano and song--the results just did not succeed in being music.

I had thought to eschew mentioning his name, but since I know many people who peck out songs and things they call compositions, I feared that I would cause these many people to writhe and squirm with insecurity at the thought that it might be them I am referring to but not naming. Perhaps, come to think of it, I should have done this. It might have had the happy effect of making these pseudomusical anecholaliatic writers more frugal with their noise, with the happy effect of sparing the world no small measure of aural misery.

Other recordings, which do not fit the above categories, are nevertheless noteworthy:

1. Cowgirl's Prayer by Emmylou Harris. This woman is one of my favorite singers, but her voice is getting weak. She uses a falsetto pitching to get to the upper registers, and the transition from lower to upper register is too abrupt. Her voice cracks, and one is too aware of her straining. These problems, although very notable in the first four tracks of this album, smoothed out in later tracks. One wonders if the entire album was recorded in one day, and her voice got better as it warmed up. For all its faults, the album did contain two wonderful songs: track #5, written by herself, and #11, written by Leonard Cohen. These were truly gorgeous flights. The names of the songs, respectively: "Prayer in Open D," and, "Ballad of A Runaway Horse."

2. am I not your girl? by Sinead O'Connor. I and many of my friends were surprised at how well she rendered the many torch songs on this album, especially given her rock/folk/Celtic background. Had she left it at this, it would have been a fine album. But no; at the end she tacked on that insipid protest poem, which was a bad poem, with terrible enunciation, and a stupid message. She talks about how she is oppressed, in so much pain, and is about to be part of some kind of violent revolution (she never says what) and suggests that she might have to die, "but that's okay," and it is all so prissy, so pseudoprofound, so utterly insipid as to be absurd.

3. Carnaval, Op. 9 and Kinderszenen, Op. 15 and Waldszenen, Op. 82 by Robert Schumann, played with a most unusual interpretation by Claudio Arrau. I did not like the Carnaval. Arrau was using a heavy touch, on a piano with an odd personality. Arrau put no poetry into the playing of this piece. All his emphasis was on precise notes, and an attempt to give each of the twenty "scenes" a highly individual stamp or personality. Most pianists who play this piece attempt to meld the twenty scenes together so the piece is more coherent, flowing, less disjunctive. I prefer this approach, but I do concede that Arrau's playing is perhaps the approach preferred by Schumann, since he himself was enamored with the piece's program, i.e., its referential content.

As for the Kinderszenen, it is adequate, but rather emotionally boring. The Waldszenen is the best piece on this disc, but again, Arrau's heavy hand constricts the emotional flow, and in the end we are left with what feels more like an aggressive exploration of the notes than with an emotional interpretation of the score.

Still, despite its faults and difficulties, this album is worth hearing given the distinctive interpretation of the Carnaval, Op. 9. You may not agree with the approach, but you will concede that it is legitimate, daring, and unique.



\*\*\* ARTICLES \*\*\*

This year, I published but 10 articles, the best being, "Succumbing to the Matriarchy," which appeared in the June '93 issue of Aladdin's Window. Over the years I have written a great deal, published too few books and too many articles, and at this point in my life I am getting used to it. Years ago, seeing my name in print was a huge honor, but the novelty of that passed after about 30 or so articles. Subsequently, for a couple of years, I felt honored when I would be quoted. Later, when even the practice of quoting me became commonplace among writers, I lost my sense of elation when that happened, and instead took pride in the many times when authors devoted entire articles to refuting my theories. Yes;



this meant that Baumli had established himself quite securely as a thinker and writer. But after a few dozen such articles, even the novelty of this honor faded. So now ... do you know what thrills me, i.e., what feels like I am still a writer of some import? It is when I see my name in print, invoked as an authority, without the author even feeling it necessary to refer to my works. When they don't feel they have to explain who I am, well, yes, I do take a bit of pride in that. But one day, I am sure, even this honor will grow redundant, and will fail to thrill me. What will be the next stage? Maybe to stop writing, and again become anonymous. That perhaps is an even higher level of artistic achievement.

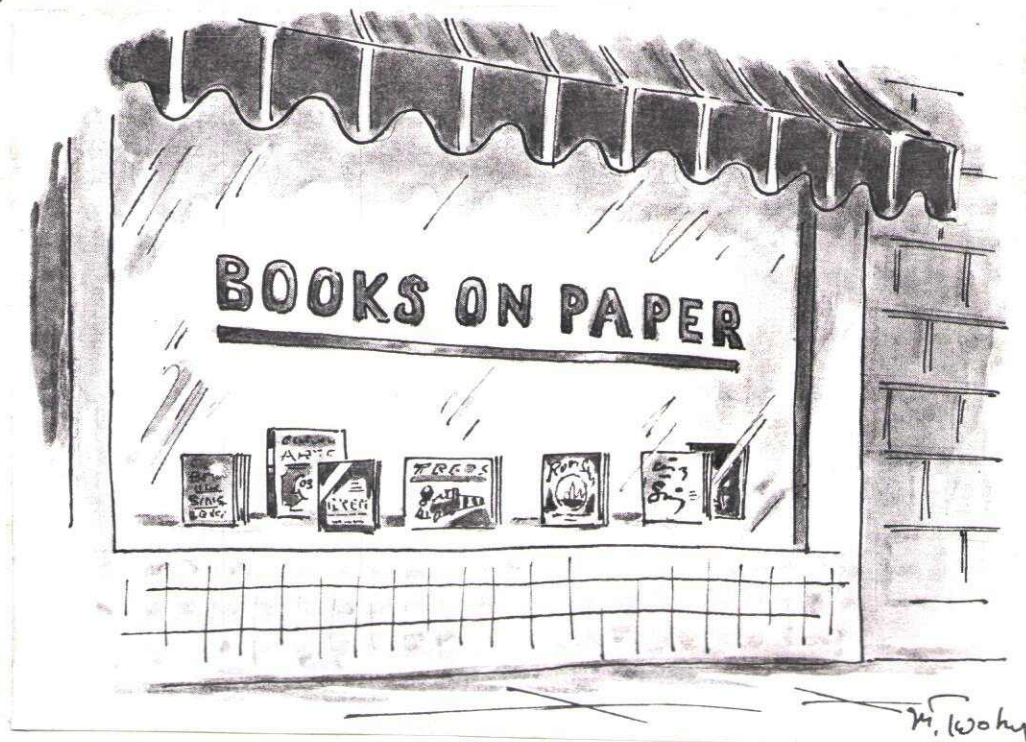
Meanwhile, it would be nice to succeed in publishing some of my fiction. I can publish nonfiction fairly easily. In fact, there is more of a demand for my nonfiction articles than I can fill. But I have had virtually no luck in placing poetry, short stories, much less a novel. I do not think the problem lies with the quality of my writing. I am told by many, and all evidence I witness bears this out:

There is simply too much in the way of supply. There are thousands of unpublished novels produced each year. And enough poetry, short stories, vignettes, and the like to fill many Libraries of Congress. There is more, in fact, than I had for a long while suspected.

Trying to get a more definite idea as to why it is difficult to get my fiction read by prospective publishers, I phoned The New Yorker (arguably the most prestigious literary magazine in this nation) on August 26. I had submitted some poetry to them on April 30, and wanted to get some idea as to whether such unsolicited submissions even get read. I knew, of course, that if I were to state that I were inquiring about a poem, they would refuse to speak to me, i.e., a receptionist would tell me that I would eventually receive a reply. So I used a ruse: I told them that I am part of the Illinois State University administrative offices, and we have a large grant for distributing prize money to Illinois writers of fiction and poetry. I told her, however, that we were not sure as to how to parcel out the money, i.e., how much should go for poetry, how much for short stories, and how much for nonfiction. We had thought that if we could find out what the submission rate, and proportions, are for The New Yorker, that might give us some idea. (Also, for the sake of giving my query a more personal tone, I told the woman I eventually talked to that I had a \$100. bet riding on this inquiry. I had bet a colleague that there are more than 100 poems submitted per week to The New Yorker, and my colleague had bet that there are fewer than 100 poems submitted per month.)

The figures startled even a pessimist such as myself. The woman told me that they receive about 1500 submissions per week. About 100 are letters to the editor, most of them angry. About 300 are nonfiction--articles and miscellaneous fillers. As for fiction--short stories--they receive about 500 per week! And as for poetry, they receive about 550 to 600 per week! My God! It is no wonder that I can not get a hearing on my fiction and poetry.

I asked the woman how much of the submissions they read. She said all of it, although often the reader doesn't get beyond the first paragraph, since it obviously is so bad. She said they have 3 people who do nothing but sort and handle the submissions, and an entire roomful of people who read them. They read--or, read the beginning of--everything. And most of it is bad. "Real screamers," she called them. A year ago they were six weeks behind with the reading; now they were three months behind. (I could not, given my facade, at this point tell her that they were four months behind with my poem.) I asked her if they ever published unsolicited things from unknown authors. Yes; they do, but rarely. The huge baskets in their reading room of unsolicited (and unread) manuscripts they call the "slush pile." As for the poetry, she said that is the worst of the stuff received. She said that they get submissions that are





done carelessly, e.g., poems written on the back of labels that were taken off of tuna cans, poems written on restaurant napkins, poems scrawled in the margins of recipe books and then torn out for submission. Other poems were submitted as though the poet believed here was the opus of the century. Not infrequently, they would get poems of several pages length, each page individually wrapped in parchment paper. Other poems would be sent in a box sealed with iron strapping, and attached to the poems would be long warnings that this poem is copyrighted, and if they plagiarize it they will get sued. Other poems would be written in large calligraphy. Some poems would be two-pound novellas--hundreds of pages long.

So ... that is why I can not hope to get my poetry or short stories taken seriously by The New Yorker. If you were a college English dropout, working for a little above minimum wage, resentful that you had not succeeded as a writer yourself, and your job was to read as many of these submissions per day as possible, how seriously do you think you would take all that material? Not at all, I suspect.

Meanwhile, that poem I submitted to The New Yorker did eventually come back. I received it on December 4. Seven months it took them to get it back to me. I doubt that I shall try their magazine again.

I comfort myself somewhat with the judgement that The New Yorker isn't a very good magazine anyway. The poetry is terrible, the short stories need an apology, and the articles generally are the best part--some of them bad, but occasionally an excellent one. Most of the articles, however, have a "TV sound" to them as one reads. They are shrill, maniacal, constantly flailing about for one more clever phrase as though the writer is afraid of losing the reader's attention at any moment. Seldom is there a sense of sure development--of building toward a climax, or a well-rounded thesis--as happens in good literature, good music, etc. However, I do concede that there are exceptions. Some of the finest articles I have read, I have encountered in The New Yorker over the last two years.

How to publish my fiction? I have thought of starting my own publishing company. But I do not have the money, I doubt I have the business acumen, and if I did, for example, print ten thousand copies of a novel, what then? In this Age of Video, one does not sell books unless one gets on the TV talk shows to market them, and unless they are actually on the bookstores' shelves while this marketing is happening.

Another reason I have thought of starting my own publishing company is so that I would not have to deal with publishers when I do get my nonfiction printed. Publishers, even when enthusiastic about your material, want to meddle. They think they can improve it; they always end up making it worse. I tire of fighting with them, and the option of being the boss of people publishing my works appeals to me. But ... how would I have time to write if I were running a publishing company?

And, for that matter, who would actually want to read what I write, given that most of what I write is for a very esoteric market. I do not, as I am sure most of my friends realize, fit into what is called mainstream culture. Look at what happened last year when I, and certain of my writing friends, did our best to protest, in print, this country's gleeful fixation on the Bobbitt mutilation. I wrote two articles, sent many a letter of protest to various editors, but got nowhere. During the meantime, even that supposed high bastion of sacrosanct literature, The New Yorker, got into the act of deriding male sexuality by joining in the chorus of Bobbitt jokes, cartoons, and such. The above cartoon appeared on page 91 of their Nov. 29, '93 issue. In this very same issue they printed two other cartoons; I reproduce them herein on the next page: they appeared on pp. 102 and 150. Three grotesque cartoons, in one issue of an august magazine, deriding men. Does that sound like the kind of forum Baumli would want to participate in?

As it is, I now subscribe to no popular publications except for National Geographic. Instead, my mailbox brings me a few small but very fine publications such as Transitions, Aladdin's Window; plus it brings me educated letters from my friends. These my mailbox receives, along with a weighty pile of junk mail every day. (About three years ago I ordered a

"No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else's draft"—H.G. Wells



"She cut off his what with a carving knife?"

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razor through the mail. This put me on mailing lists for catalogs which sell men's products. The list metastasized. From men's hygiene catalogs, I was put on mailing lists for hypermasculine goods such as hunting knives, workboots, mercenary soldier goods, and such. My name was picked up from these catalog's lists by other catalogs only peripherally related, e.g., bar-room supply catalogs, porno film catalogs, and so on. Now I get everything--gardening catalogs, catalogs that relate to fly-fishing, travel brochures, and so on. You name it and I get it. All from having placed but one order in a catalog. I wrote many letters, trying to get my name removed from those lists, but to no avail. I finally gave up, and now I throw away one to two pounds of junk mail a day.)

But I suppose junk mail will suffice in an era which has no use for high literature anyway. (Yes; there are exceptions, but please do not protest my generation. You know what I mean.)

The English departments at the universities do their small part to try and keep literature alive. Do their efforts work? I do not see it working for students. Not long ago an English professor, a man I respect, told me about giving a test to his students. The class is a "300-level" course, i.e., it is an upper-level undergraduate class for juniors and seniors. On

that test, the students were asked the question: "How does the viewer of a tragedy feel after a catharsis?" Of his 27 students, 6 answered with the simple phrase, "Chilled out." Depressing, isn't it. But are the English professors any better? In a recent test of English professors in America, which was conducted by a group of English professors from Great Britain, various questions were asked. I do not remember all the abysmal details, but I do recall that of the 100 respondents, only 13 could give "a philosophically rigorous definition" for the word, "solipsism."

In past issues of *The Aviary*, I have given examples of what I considered to be gruesome spoken language which I have heard over the course of the last year. But I have pretty much stopped keeping track of these things, simply because it is depressing enough to notice them, much less note them down. However, I did record a few such things, the worst such examples occurring on radio shows. On one, which was a show related to alcoholism among college students, a female professor, in the course of an interview lasting less than five minutes, used, "custodient" for "custodial," "concealant" for "concealment," and, "reconciliate" for "reconcile." On another "call-in" radio show,



"Pass the cream or I'll cut off your penis."



"What's the big deal? I lopped off my own damn penis years ago."



this one in St. Louis, I heard the radio announcer use a phrase which she termed, "a fact a complete." Her diction was good; this is exactly what she said. She even used a long a for both articles. It took me a few seconds to realize that this was her peasant-like way of saying, "fait accompli."

I have been, over the last year, trying to become more tolerant of people when they do not use good English. I do think I am succeeding. Not long ago an older woman I know said to me, "I do think you've become a little bit more tolerant of people not using exact, precise language."

To which I replied, "Tolerant? I never thought of myself as intolerant. Only irritated, and occasionally, amused."

Whichever it was I actually felt, this woman's observation still holds--Baumli is being more benign in his dealings with the peasantry. Not only more benign, but also more prudent. I almost got into a fight one evening when, per his besodden speech, I politely (almost tenderly) informed a man that the phrase he had just used, "available opportunity," is redundant. It would have been a shame to get into a fight over such a small matter, and end up being charged with murder just because a peasant didn't have enough sense not to mess with Baumli.

So now I confine my criticisms of language to more anonymous speakers. For example, Marion was given a "Fire Chief Car" which has three buttons on it. One button, when pushed, activates a siren. Another button activates the lights. A third button activates sirens, lights, and a man's voice saying ... well, that was a problem. Neither Abbe nor I could, at first, figure it out. Finally, after coming home from a very harrowing day at work, during which Abbe had been exposed to a great deal of what I have come to call "hick speech," Marion pressed the button and she was able to understand it. The man's voice intends to say, "Roger. Two-alarm fire. We'll be there in two minutes." But the syllables that come out actually say, "Roger. Two-'larm far. Be there ... two mis."

Am I becoming too critical? I suppose I am. I've even become such a nasty brute about proper language that, if I come to a grocery checkout lane, with a sign above it which reads, "Fifteen items or less," i.e., the "express lane," then I refuse to use it because of the sign's slovenly grammar. Abbe can not understand why I would rather wait ten minutes to use one of the ordinary lanes, but ... a man has to stand up for certain principles, even though they be small. And what if it should happen that someone were to photograph me standing beneath such a sign? What would this do to my reputation? No; it is not worth the risk.

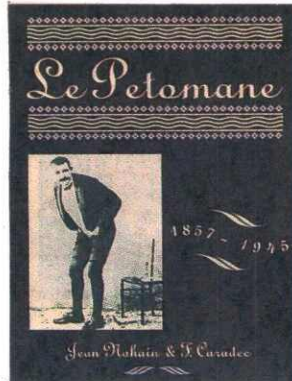
I last year admitted that I had even noted a few instances when my own language, exposed to contaminants, has become tainted with solecisms. During 1993, I believe only one such instance happened, and this was a matter of enunciation. I was very tired, having gone nearly 50 hours without sleep, and was conversing with a group of physicists about plasma irregularities as described by certain equations, when I unwittingly said "fer" for "for." Or I think I did. At the moment I made what I thought was a mistake, I stopped myself and apologized. Everyone present assured me that I had not let my tongue lapse, but I rather believe that I did.

I suspect that no such lapses will occur during 1994. This is because I spend less time around peasants, and hence, seldom am contaminated by their speech. This has the side-effect of causing me to be very ignorant about what happens in modern culture, but I suppose I can live with this ignorance. (By way of example--on my birthday, May 31, someone was putting questions to me about sports, and realized, to his dismay, that I really don't know anybody who plays in big-league sports. Or, I know virtually no one. As for football? I couldn't name one person except for Joe Namath, and they told me he had retired. Baseball? Not one name. Hockey? None. Basketball? I had heard of Michael Jordan (Or is that Michael Jackson? I do not now recall.) because the son of a friend has posters of this player all over his room. As for golf? I knew of Arnold Plamer, but was told that now he only plays in the seniors singles--whatever this is.

Well ... I just can't keep up with everything. I read Plato, Duns Scotus, Peirce, Bergson, and the like. How am I to keep up with these futuristic thinkers, and still be expected to keep abreast of all the contemporary trivia about sports?

Enough on this topic. It is depressing, and only illustrates, all the more equisitely, how very lonely Baumli is when he tries to make his way about this world.

I have, in previous issues of The Aviary, published one or more pieces of small literature that came from my own hand. I this year will



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publish but one. It has a long history. Originally it was solicited by the journal, Philosophic Research and Analysis. Their editor initially accepted it for publication, but then later rejected it, believing it too long. Even later, he wrote me again, asking if they could still publish it, and I assented. But then he died before it was published, and then the article lay dormant for a couple of years. I subsequently submitted it to Contemporary Philosophy. They rejected it, but then, later wrote me asking if they could publish it, acknowledging that I might have found a different publisher meanwhile. But no; I had not. So I sent it back to them. It was scheduled to be published in a later issue, but then the journal changed editors, and the new editor rejected the manuscript. So I said to hell with it. Thus meddling with academic journals robs me of my writing time.

So here. I present an article which has a variegated past. Frankly, I do not think it is overly good. I wrote it on request, which is not often a prudent approach for me to take to writing. It is usually best that I stick with my own ideas, and avoid what other people suggest. In the present case, the publisher of the journal wanted me to address six questions in philosophy. The questions seemed, to me, rather disjointed, and not necessarily all that worthwhile. But I liked the fellow, admired him, and wanted to indulge him. So:

### PRELUDES AND ETUDES:

#### SIX PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS IN SEARCH OF AN ANSWER

Philosophy is distinguished from other disciplines in that it explores mental and emotional terrain which is unmapped territory, attempting to chart out new, definable content and explicit postulates. Once philosophy has done this--has given a field of study a certain groundwork, or definition--it leaves the field of study behind for those who wish to specialize, and goes on to other unmapped realms. Such, for example, was the case with optics: Leibniz and Spinoza were as concerned with problems in optics as they were with problems in epistemology, but one hundred years later, the basic rules of optics had been worked out; henceforth, optics would be studied diligently by opticians and astronomers, but would not be considered a part of philosophy. Similarly, "natural philosophy" has, in the last 150 years, become physics, chemistry, zoology, biology, and botany. These studies, especially physics, are still favored by philosophy, but are no longer considered a part of its proper province. The same has happened with psychology. In the nineteenth century the study of human behavior reached a new level of sophistication: certain suppositions were generally accepted, and rules were laid down. As a result, psychology branched off from philosophy to become a new, if virgin, science. Henceforth, philosophy would keep close company with psychology, but it would devote itself to more elusive questions about human behavior such as issues in epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics.

Given the exploratory nature of philosophy, it is quite understandable that although most philosophical essays analyze a problem and try to solve it, there are other philosophical essays which attempt no more than to take a first cautious step into the unknown, formulate some crucial questions about this unknown realm, and make a few preliminary statements about its general parameters or implications. In this spirit, many philosophers of the last century have stated that the philosophical quest is best served, not so much by eagerly pursuing answers, but by carefully formulating worthy questions.

Clearly, a philosophical essay which attempts nothing more than to formulate a question, while providing only limited preliminary discussion, must defer to any subsequent essay which attempts to answer this question; after all, the question has been posed for the sake of finding an answer. But this is not to demean the essay which only formulates questions. Setting forth a problem in a way that invites or stimulates dialogue is a first and indispensable step toward the solution of a problem. Moreover, an essay which carefully formulates a philosophical question, and proffers suggestions and cautions about dealing with that question, can serve as a valuable guide for those who later take it up. Subsequent writers can thus have a common touchstone with which to work. They can more effectively give mutual assistance because they know they are dialoguing about the same thing. There is a shared terminology, recognition of a common goal, and a sense of community which can variously provide comfort, competition, and inspiration.

Having said this much about the importance of formulating workable philosophical questions--questions which invite the response of a community of philosophers--I will,



*"I don't suppose you'd care to play plasma physics trivia?"*



in this essay, proffer six questions which deserve philosophical comment. But, in keeping with the methodology I have just described, I shall do no more than formulate the questions and offer certain suggestions about their terminology, their limits and scope, and some observations about directions of inquiry. Thus, each of the questions I pose is intended as a prelude; the limited discussion I proffer is but a brief etude. As for answers--solutions--to these questions, I invite other philosophers to share in the task.

The six questions I pose are as follows:

1. How shall we go about determining the nature of consciousness?
2. How shall we explore or demonstrate the physical nature of mind?
3. How shall we establish procedures for determining what human meaningfulness is?
4. How shall we order, i.e., delineate dimensions for, the non-conscious universe?
5. What are the essential elements of a philosophy of world order?
6. What attitudes shall we adopt if we are to successfully formulate, and maintain, a workable and healthy belief system?

These questions are quite basic; and they appear to invite broad-ranging, seemingly interminable, answers. Allow me to state each question separately, and follow each with a few comments. Thus I can help circumscribe the scope of each problem, and provide nascent direction.

First: **How shall we go about determining the nature of consciousness?**

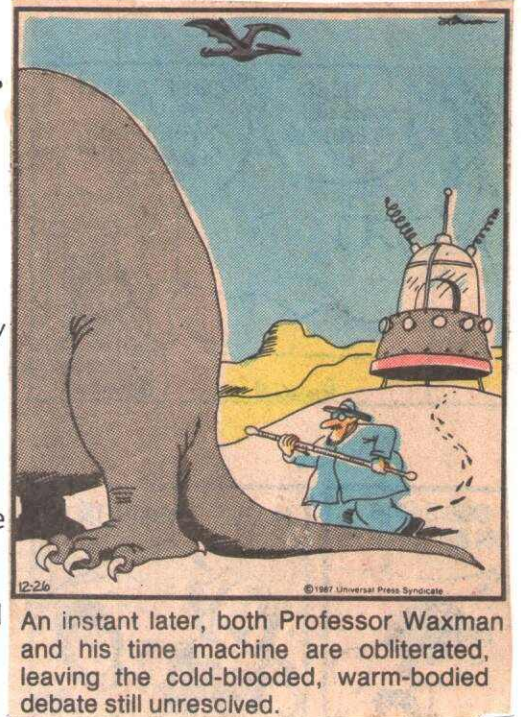
This is one of the most difficult issues with which modern-day philosophers must grapple. Fortunately, in the history of philosophy, Bergson's books, Matter and Memory and Mind-Energy, along with the major works of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, can be especially helpful as we engage this question. In our own approach, we should keep in mind that consciousness is not an essence with a boundary or a definition that is easily specifiable or highly determinate. It has varying levels of determinateness, which are reflected in how our ordinary parlance refers to different levels or aspects of consciousness, e.g., sleeping, dreaming, waking up, day-dreaming, emoting, logicizing, etc. Varying levels of determinateness in consciousness are also illustrated, or at least are suggested, by neurologists and zoologists who speculate about, and proffer evidence for, consciousness or the possibilities thereof in lower organisms and higher animals, e.g., "Does an earthworm feel pain when it is put on the hook?" or, "Are dogs actually dreaming when they whimper and make twitching motions with their legs while sleeping?"

It thus appears that if not only questions raised by scientists, but also the ways we use everyday language, suggest various--or varying--levels of consciousness, then both philosophers and psychologists must accept the possibility that consciousness has a multiplicity of dimensions as suggested by the terms: unconsciousness, subconsciousness, superconsciousness, supraconsciousness, etc. Tersely defined, unconsciousness refers to mind that is capable of consciousness, but is temporarily--because of sleep or illness--either entirely or relatively lacking in consciousness. Subconsciousness refers to instincts, drives, feelings, and memories of which we are not entirely aware, but which direct our behavior and become--crystallize into--thought. Superconsciousness is a higher level of awareness indigenous to artistic genius or mystical awareness. And supraconsciousness may involve a congenital groundwork of perceptual and language capability which we all share, such as that described by Noam Chomsky and Jean Piaget, or it may involve shared cultural archetypes of social functioning such as Jung delineated.

Truly, the term "consciousness" entails not only a multiplicity of dimensions, but also a high degree of complex perceptual variation within any one of these dimensions. Arthur Koestler aptly describes this complexity in his book, The Act of Creation:

... awareness is a matter of degrees. Conscious and unconscious experiences do not belong to different compartments of the mind; they form a continuous scale of gradations, of degrees of awareness. We may call, as Leibniz did, conscious events 'light', unconscious ones 'dark'--provided that we remember the infinite shadings from lighter to darker grey between them. The dark end of the scale extends well below the human level to an unknown limit--which may possibly be some form of 'protoplasmic consciousness'; Bergson even asserted that 'the unconsciousness of a falling stone is something different from the unconsciousness of a growing cabbage'.

It should here be explained that when Leibniz refers to varying degrees of "light" and "dark," he is making a metaphorical statement which only means that a "more illumined" experience is one which involves a fuller awareness, whereas a "darker" experience



An instant later, both Professor Waxman and his time machine are obliterated, leaving the cold-blooded, warm-bodied debate still unresolved.



refers to a more subliminal or vague awareness. Some elucidation is in order, too, with regard to what Bergson says about unconsciousness. One might be inclined to think that "non-consciousness" entails no consciousness at all, and that if there is no consciousness, then one can not speak of varying degrees of non-consciousness. However, I believe that non-consciousness does not necessarily imply no consciousness; the grammatical inference does not hold. (Keep in mind that to say someone is "unaware" does not necessarily imply that they are entirely lacking in awareness; "irrational" does not entail a complete lack of rationality; and "ignorance" does not entail a complete lack of knowledge.) Non-consciousness is a relative term, implying that consciousness--of a type or degree--is absent in a certain situation or context. For example, one might be non-conscious of something that is happening to him: an undetected cancer which his body harbors. Yet, this person may be in a process of becoming conscious of it. He may experience--be conscious of--symptoms of dizziness, weariness, and the like.

Moreover, he may at some point finally become aware that he has the disease. This continuum of learning about the existence of the disease shows how at some point the person was relatively



"unconscious" about something, while yet being a conscious being. The unconsciousness was relative to a physical state of which he would become less unconscious, i.e., more conscious. A second example, which can further illustrate the relative continuum of nonconsciousness and consciousness, is the simple act (or non-act?) of day-dreaming--when we are virtually unaware of ourselves and therefore somewhat unconscious. In this situation, one might say, "I'm sorry; I was day-dreaming and didn't hear what you said, but I know you spoke to me." And a third example which illustrates this continuum is the state of an anesthetized person during surgery. The person is quite unconscious, and after the operation has no memory of it; yet, under hypnosis, this person might remember certain things the surgeon said during the operation. Again, we have a state of relative non-consciousness, but not thereby a state of no consciousness.

William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, helps elucidate the point that non-consciousness is a relative term, but he also asserts that consciousness is a somewhat relative state too:

... our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence, but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.

Indeed, ordinary consciousness lies somewhere between what we generally call the unconscious or subconscious, and what we yearn for when we refer to a higher, or transcendental, consciousness. Psychologists tell us a great deal about the unconscious or subconscious. What with the seminal work of thinkers like Freud and Jung, and the general acceptance of these terms--these realms--by our culture, I need not here argue for their existence. As for questions about the existence of transcendental consciousness, we must rely upon the mystics, who merely point to it and are often reticent about describing this supposedly ineffable realm. Those who are of a skeptical bent, or who are convinced that there is no reality except that found in what ordinary language embodies, are reluctant to admit the existence, much less the value, of an ineffable realm of conscious experience. Indeed, claims about the existence of transcendental consciousness strain the limits of credibility, but perhaps we could forego a reflexive denial of what is ineffable, would we but keep in mind how some of our very ordinary experiences are rather ineffable, for example, when someone says, "I'm in a strange mood, but I can't really say what's bothering me," or, "The key of D Minor, when used in classical music, has a very tempestuous, frightening feeling to it, but I have no idea why this is so." If we thus keep in mind that there are many commonly accepted ineffable realms of experience, we might at least be more open to the possibility that the realm of transcendental consciousness is somehow real. Even if this realm is ineffable, and we therefore can never prove its reality whether through discursive or analytic argument or through any semiotic approach, we might yet be willing to defer to authority on this matter--accepting the virtually sublime charisma of the mystic personality as evidence for some kind of transcendental (although not thereby theistic) consciousness.

We must remember, here, that not only does the mystic have difficulty discoursing about higher realms of consciousness, it also is difficult for philosophers to talk



about the basic nature of consciousness. Consciousness, as a general term, presents itself as a simple given: it might be compared to a quality such as yellow or good. Yet consciousness seems to be an even more simple quality than yellow or good since yellow or good can be apperceived, comprehended, or contained as part of the content of consciousness.

We might describe consciousness as an activity or faculty which engages qualities such as yellow or good as its content, but the converse does not hold: we would not say that yellow or good, as qualities, have consciousness as their content, even though we may acknowledge that such qualities are to some extent shaped into being what they are by the selective, creative, or ontologically determining function of consciousness. It seems that basic consciousness is more rudimentary than sensory or moral qualities; it can engage--perceive or contain--such qualities, but it can be emptied of any one of these qualities (perhaps of all qualities?) and still persist as consciousness.

It would appear then that consciousness has a simplicity which is virtually pre-qualitative. And if indeed this is the case, then any discursive analysis of consciousness is not likely to be epistemically serious; i.e., the analysis could never explain more to us than we already experience in our immediate awareness of consciousness. While this may be true, it nevertheless is possible that some analysis of consciousness can help us appreciate not only its elusive nature but also its basic simplicity.

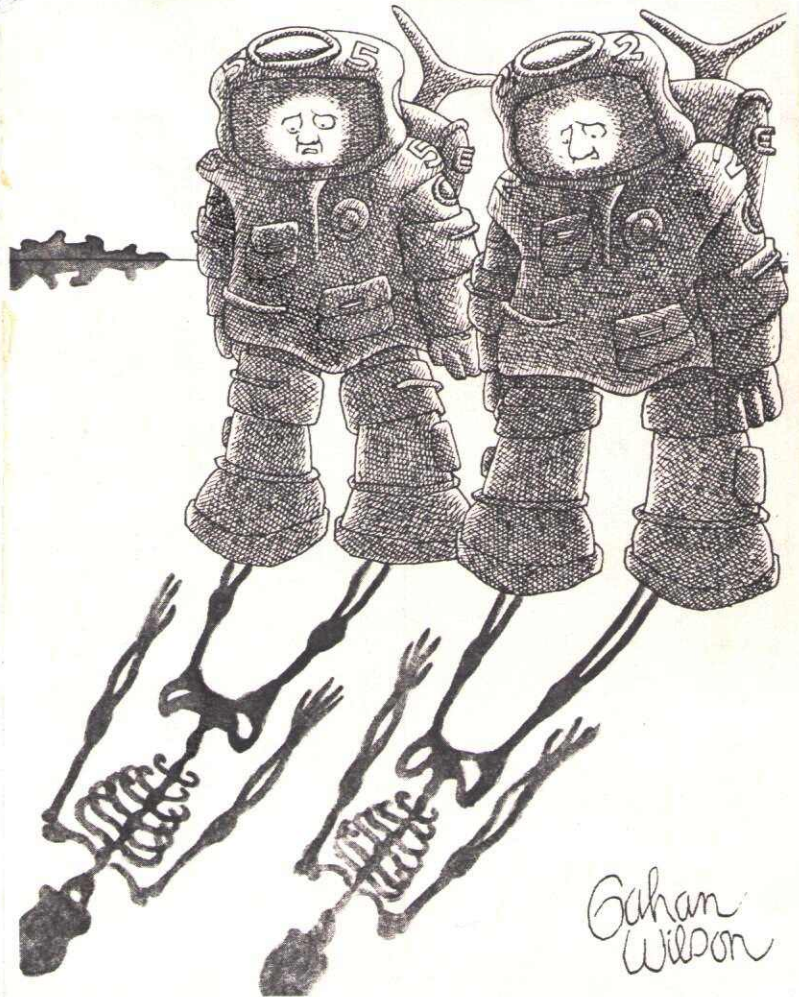
For example, one basic aspect of consciousness is its sense of promise. Consciousness is always tending toward--moving toward--further experience. Consciousness thus is felt or inwardly experienced as an increase, a tension that expands in spite of resistance. It thus is an active state--even an action--that carries itself forward despite the burden of memory. Bergson somewhere said that it is the nature of consciousness to bring forth more from itself than it contains. Put differently, consciousness is always in a process of discovery or creativity. It moves toward finding more content, and yet is not clearly reducible to its content.

Whether or not consciousness is contingent on its content for existence is a difficult question which admits no easy answer. Hume claims that consciousness is reducible to its content; Popper seems to believe that consciousness is contingent on its content but not reducible thereto; many Eastern philosophers and mystics describe consciousness as a state of pure being which can be experienced without content. I tend to accept what the Eastern mystics say about consciousness simply because I find it difficult to argue with anyone who claims to have immediate experience or knowledge of a phenomenon. This is not to say that such claims about consciousness should be accepted without caution. It is only to say that we who do not experience such dimensions should not hastily or dogmatically negate the claims of those who say they do experience such.

A second question quite naturally arises out of the exploratory comments regarding the first question. This second question, stated succinctly, is: **How shall we explore or demonstrate the physical nature of mind?** For the interactionist, this question is crucial, given that for him the mind is contingent on a physical nature. For the parallelist, this question is perhaps superfluous, but not without interest. For the epiphenomenalist, it may be merely superfluous, given that he focuses upon the physical nature of mental events and finds any mind correlates to be incidental events without intrinsic causal continuity.

My own position is that regardless of one's theory about the relationship between mind and brain, a great deal can be learned by studying the physiological data that can be correlated with mental events. For these purposes, it makes no difference whether mental events are treated as chimeras of our language--as the behaviorist would claim, or whether they are treated as primary or transcendental--as the epistemological idealist would claim.

Anyone who has studied neurology or neurobiology realizes how limited is our knowledge of the brain. The brain is a complex, interacting organism which communicates with the body and itself in many mysterious ways: chemically--involving hormonal circulation and molecular transfer, electrically, neurally, and in many other ways we do not clearly understand. But one thing is clear: while the brain can perhaps be better understood by studying it through the experimental models of the behaviorists, it



"I think it means we'd better find some shade!"



will never be completely described by their hypotheses. The behaviorist model depends upon a stimulus-response theory; this theory rests upon a Newtonian model of cause and effect, and this model is contingent upon a discreteness of elements which can be described as cause or effect. But the workings of the brain are sufficiently complex and interwoven as to thus far elude any claim that its constituents are determinately discreet; hence, the Newtonian model of causality, upon which the behaviorist hypothesis rests, is not an accurate scientific paradigm by which to study the brain.

Philosophers seriously pursuing the mind-body problem should take it upon themselves to do some serious work in neurobiology. A great deal of sophomoric theorizing about the brain which we find in the philosophy journals could then be eschewed for more productive hypotheses, and a more humble and productive approach to this mystery might emerge. Books such as The Self and Its Brain by Popper and Eccles are good introductory reading. Further study in neurobiology using the common texts would then be proper. More attention given to language function by primates, porpoises, and the humpback whales might also be helpful.

Study of the human mind naturally leads to study of the implications of mind, i.e., the realm that is known through cognition and feeling. To encounter this realm is to confront an important question--our third question here under study: **How shall we establish procedures for determining what human meaningfulness is?**

The term, "meaningfulness," is so broad that one can, without being trivial, say that everything which is known, or might be known, is meaningful, i.e., it serves consciousness in the semiotic process of thinking and acting. But, to narrow the application of this term: note how the clause just mentioned, "serves consciousness," is crucial to our present inquiry. Something is meaningful if it gives service, i.e., if it is a part of our pragmatic immersion in the world; conversely, that which serves us must be accepted and better understood as to exactly how it is meaningful for us, and as to how it can become more meaningful for us.

Thus, to speak both of what is now humanly meaningful and of what can potentially be humanly meaningful is to immediately broach issues of human responsibility: we must be responsible to the world which serves us--the world which is meaningful to us--if we are to live a life that is worth living.

H.V. Miller once said aptly,

We tell the story as though man were an innocent victim, a helpless participant in the erratic and unpredictable revolutions of Nature. Perhaps in the past he was. But not any longer. Whatever happens to this earth today is of man's doing. <sup>3</sup>Man has demonstrated that he is master of everything--except his own nature.

In other words, procedures for establishing human meaningfulness must address not only what is outward (nature, technology, etc.) but also what is inward (spiritual and psychological). The procedures for analyzing outwardly-oriented cognition have been dominant in Western science and philosophy for some time. Epistemology and metaphysics have been given great stature and often put to good use, although it might be argued that in this day and age their subject matter has become too esoteric and pedantic to be very useful outside of academia. To revitalize these pursuits, it might be helpful if the overlap or intrameaning of epistemology and metaphysics were scrutinized. In this study, it would be helpful if rather amorphous but important topics such as Peircean abduction, theory of essence, the meaning and existence of God, and other speculative issues were emphasized. This would serve to better interest students who are first exploring philosophy, and it also would help philosophers disseminate their insights to an educated citizenry.

Procedure, however, is not enough; emphasis is also important. We could profit from further emphasis on the aesthetic or emotional aspects of our history and our social consciousness. By refining our aesthetic sensibilities, and encouraging artistic creativity, the boredom and ennui which plague our modern world might then be somewhat mitigated.

An equal emphasis must be placed on the emotional aspects of moral issues. The study of ethics today has become overly pedantic. Issues are so couched in mentalistic, logicized arguments that the basic elements of happiness and unhappiness are scarcely treated as though they are relevant to the human milieu.

Ethics must begin from a realistic, concrete basis: namely, that ethical wrongs happen when people are hurt emotionally, and ethical rights accrue from the nurturing and expression of emotional happiness and freedom. From this basis, questions of "ought," "laws," and "normative" or "deontological" issues can be derived or extended; but they must never lose touch with the initial groundwork of human emotion. More complex issues in social and political philosophy that are concerned with self-actualization, the family, government, and the possibilities for a world order, can then, within this basic context, be approached more realistically and fruitfully.

Human meaningfulness, then, refers to that which is scrutinized or absorbed by human consciousness. Meaning contains or renders value when whatever is meaningful becomes especially important to the intentions of both individual and social consciousness.

We might here be tempted to go on and explore the various dimensions of social consciousness. But as I stated at the beginning of this essay, our present study is intended to be preliminary. Hence, before broaching the nature of social consciousness, I suggest that the first question discussed above, regarding consciousness, be studied. However, to thus not only raise explicit questions about mind and consciousness while looking into the dimensions of human meaningfulness, but also hint at questions about



social consciousness, is to invite a further question; namely, how can we expand the boundaries of what is humanly meaningful, i.e., how can we scrutinize those aspects of the world which, though non-conscious, are amenable to the workings of human consciousness? Let us formulate this question more precisely: **How shall we order, i.e., delineate dimensions for, the non-conscious universe?**

Put briefly, my answer is: by studying or ordering the non-conscious universe in a way that gives value to its meaning. While some thinkers believe there is only a semantic difference between the terms, "meaning," and, "value," I believe the two terms are closely related but not identical. Keeping in mind the above remarks about meaningfulness, I further assert that value is the sense of continuing importance we assign to what is meaningful for consciousness. In other words, something that is meaningful is of value when we determine that our consciousness depends upon it for emotional health, rational continuity of experience, the necessary momentum which attentiveness requires to prevent boredom or ennui, and further or greater consciousness.

For our purposes, we might divide, i.e., order, the non-conscious, but valued, universe into three strata: crude economic

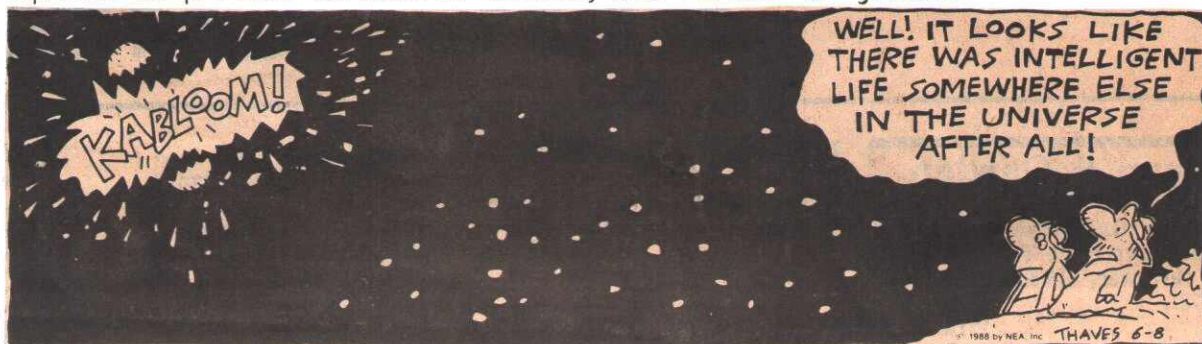
resources, ecological concerns, and the complexities of sense perception or the beginnings of consciousness in animals. The first stratum becomes especially meaningful, i.e., of value, when we realize that our planet's capacity to support human life is limited in terms of its basic ores, agricultural potential, and atmospheric balance. The second stratum takes on value when we realize that we must attend to every ecological question with which we are confronted, for it is becoming increasingly evident that our ecosystems are not only limited with regard to crude energy and material resources, but also are fragile in their complex balance of intra-support structures. Finally, our condition can be bettered by continuing to use animals in the study of humans. In medicine, animals provide valuable experimental models for better understanding the nature of nutrition and disease. In psychology, animal behavior sheds some light on human behavior. And in neurology, the study of language in primates, porpoises, and even insects gives insight into the neurological make-up of the human brain and how we human beings communicate with one another.

My three-fold stratification of the non-conscious universe is rather broad, but it serves the purposes of consciousness. I.e., by ordering the universe in this way, we are considering how we may preserve and utilize the environment upon which our conscious lives depend. This stratification subordinates the non-conscious universe to the conscious universe, but a different type of relationship between the conscious universe and the non-conscious universe can be studied too; namely, how to discover further consciousness in what we ordinarily perceive to be the non-conscious universe. This attempt at discovering consciousness in the seemingly unconscious universe is not unlike the attitude of the Bodhisatva figure in Mahayana Buddhism. He eschews Nirvana, returning to the world where he may work toward bringing the entire universe-- mineral, plant, animal, and human--into a state of ubiquitous conscious witnessing.

Western thinkers may not be overly interested in such speculations about the non-conscious universe. But we should at least be aware of these attitudes, and attempt to incorporate their possibility--perhaps their promise--into our thinking as Eastern and Western philosophies continue a process of mutual rapprochement.

For the sake of better understanding and ordering the non-conscious universe, we must ask the further question: **What are the essential elements of a philosophy of world order?** Bergson, in his book, *Creative Evolution*, has described order as a structuring of the world whereby the intellect imposes on life a pragmatic matrix which more or less satisfies our biological needs during the course of a period of time. Such ordering of the universe is highly varied and complex since what we recognize to be of value in any one given situation is contingent upon a great number of circumstances. It follows that if we are to address the extremely broad parameters of a world order (while confronting its current state of disorder) then we must proceed with a great deal of humility. Attempting to order the internal workings of any one government is itself a bewildering and sometimes virtually impossible task. In emerging, and also in established, nations there are conflicts between different ethnic groups, language groups, religious, economic and political ideologies, personal interests, outside economic exploitation or ideological interference, and the tensions which result from war, hunger, and uncertainty about the future. If the situation can be so complex in any one country, how can we hope to order the entire world?

We can "begin at the beginning," so to speak, and hope that as the groundwork is laid further programs for theoretical ordering and action will follow. I would initially suggest that all factors in any society which foster unnecessary gender identification with regard to individuals be done away with as quickly as possible. This would involve harkening to the advice of those who are working in women's and men's liberation. Furthermore, we should attempt to accept, within our philosophical worldview as well as within our personal lives, what is valuable in all cultures. This should be





attempted at a prudent and cautious pace however, so that we are not initially overwhelmed with what would seem to be contradictory worldviews, and so that this axiological acceptance respects cultural and language differences which are necessary for the identity and personal pride of individuals. Economic equality among people and nations should also be worked for, so that the exploitative greed of those who have wealth does not oppress those who are poor. Such equality could more easily be attained if there were more attention given to population control in countries that are already overcrowded. Along with such programs, more work toward helping arid or backward countries produce their own food needs to be done.

Any single political ideology, no matter how democratic it claims to be with regard to representation, or how communistic it claims to be with regard to equal distribution of material goods, can quickly succumb to politically ambitious persons. Such persons conduct government with a convincing rhetoric which hides the fact that theirs is a disguised fascism. Perhaps with a controlling body similar to, but with more power than, the United Nations, a practical government might emerge which could utilize trained personnel instead of competitive politicians to administer governments, economic programs, and promote aesthetic, ethical, and humanistic values among the various peoples of the world. Such a controlling body could not hope to address all the problems of the many nations from a centralized viewpoint. Rather, its control likely would best be exercised in terms of coordination of economic and political programs, with enough force exercised over the implementation of such programs to ensure that they be applied equitably and smoothly. The exercise of such force would be most effective if used only when necessary, and if unilateral disarmament of current powers--both major and minor--were implemented to some degree.

The question of world order is a macro-issue which requires caution, courage, and the cooperation of many people--philosophers, politicians, and citizenry--if we are to make a sound beginning. But what about this beginning? We must not begin unless we are sure we can proceed with one very important goal in mind: namely, the pursuit of equality among all human beings. But of course, to thus raise the issue of equality is to immediately pose a problem: What kind of equality is at issue here?

A simple answer to this question is not easily forthcoming, as is evidenced by the fact that literally thousands of philosophers have struggled with the concept of equality as it applies to questions of justice and world order, and in this theoretical struggle have more often than not succumbed to the concept's difficulties--getting lost in a maze of formulas, rules, examples, exceptions to the rules, variations on the formulas, and so forth. While most such forays into dealing with the topic have been instructive to other philosophers pursuing theory, they have not always been of practical value. Hence, we must determine how we can better delineate a practical approach to the question of equality as it applies to human conduct and morals.

I believe that questions about equality among people could most fruitfully be answered were the following creed adhered to: Equality refers to the idea that each person, however unequal he may be with regard to other people when abilities are at issue, should nevertheless have as much opportunity as anyone to actualize his abilities and find happiness in his personal and social life. This means that equal consideration to each person must be given with regard to basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, as well as love and kindness from other human beings. And it means that selective considerations with regard to more unique capabilities, e.g., mathematical or artistic inclinations, must be extended to each person. Thus, if a person is a genius at physics, let him have full opportunity for actualizing that aspect of himself. If a person, however, is a hopeless idiot, let him at least have full opportunity for attaining as much happiness as he is capable of.

In brief, let us address people, not by presupposing that they are equals, but rather, by presupposing that they are different and unique individuals who should each have equal opportunity for self-actualization.

And let us keep in mind that self-actualization refers to a process of discovering and creating the self, i.e., expanding our horizons of consciousness, probing and incorporating new dimensions of human meaningfulness, and better ordering the world so that we, along with the broader human community, are capable of valuing it. But self-actualization, or self-realization, is not a creative, forward-moving process only. It also entails a concomitant process of preserving the self and keeping vital what has already been discovered or created, thus making sure that what is humanly meaningful to us--what we have come to know and value as part of our world order--continues to sustain us.

The process of self-actualization, and the difficulties it poses, bring us to a sixth question: **What attitudes shall we adopt if we are to successfully formulate and maintain a workable and healthy belief system?**

My own inclination, in questions of belief, is to take a skeptical position with regard to knowledge--at least when such knowledge is theoretical only. Yet, a skeptical attitude is often a retreat into the safety--and supposed intellectual superiority--of



*"EUREKA! Pending confirmation of my results by others in the field."*



never having to vouchsafe one's own beliefs, and never having to work at instantiating any one belief, given that all beliefs are looked upon as rarefied, transitory, or dispensable. My second, and perhaps more fruitful, inclination is to address problems of belief with an all-embracing attitude which, for want of better terminology, can be described as an epistemic anarchism. This epistemic anarchism is not so naive as to think that people are better off without belief structures; rather, it is ambitious enough to think that all belief structures can be incorporated into human thinking and can make a contribution to the well-being of humanity. But this viewpoint has its limitations too. A simplistic skepticism can be intellectually constipating; a simplistic anarchism can be intellectually and emotionally bewildering. Skepticism and anarchism thus produce similar results, and perhaps differ very little in method. This seems to be suggested by the novelist John Updike when he said of a character, "Woody believes everything because he believes nothing and his anger is terror and his terror is lack of faith."<sup>4</sup>

A more mature approach to belief can perhaps include elements of both skepticism and epistemic anarchism, and yet go beyond them. Albert Einstein said somewhere, "I never believed an axiom;" and in his philosophical writings, he was cautious enough to refer to causality as an hypothesis.<sup>5</sup>

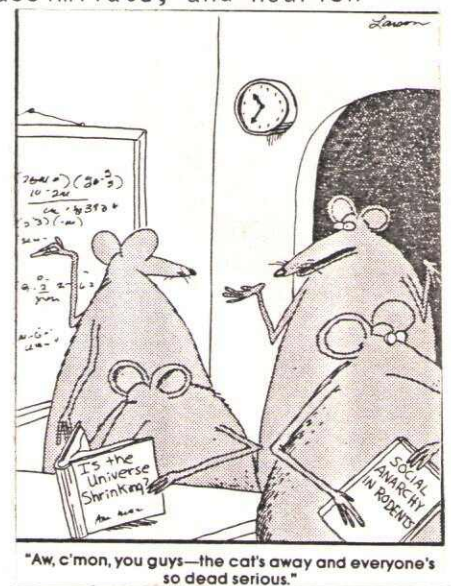
His skepticism, in this sense, was very all-encompassing; yet, it did not hamper his belief system. Perhaps this is because his belief system had the enthusiasm of epistemic anarchism while eschewing its careless inexactness.

A contemporary piece of mentalistic graffiti states that, "Everything is relative; therefore, nothing is relevant." Einstein would likely have modified this to, "Everything is relative; therefore, we must make everything more relevant."

In other words, the answer to our last question is implied by some key points I have already made concerning the previous five questions. We must address this last question by assessing what is conscious, what is non-conscious, finding out what is meaningful, converting meaning into value, and discovering which values can contribute to a realistic and long-lasting world order. I think we can do this if we dare to believe everything, and yet believe with caution. We can believe all that might be relevant, and then proceed to incorporate into our belief systems those elements which can actually better our lives. This will necessitate a pragmatic stance not unlike that set forth by William James, i.e., our beliefs about the material world must be workable both materially and spiritually: our theoretical beliefs must reap certain practical benefits such as ample food, clothing, shelter, good health care, and well-maintained ecosystems; furthermore, we must cultivate our emotional, aesthetic, moral, and religious sensibilities so that our capacity for joy and happiness can be ensured. To accomplish all this, we do not have to cultivate any one rigid belief system; rather, we must cultivate many beliefs, each of which can tolerate, sometimes assimilate, and nourish as well as derive nourishment from other beliefs.

So ... in the course of posing certain philosophical questions, we discover that we have set ourselves a great task. These questions will require a great deal of intellectual discussion and theorizing. To what extent can we hope to answer them? Just as importantly, these questions, now that they are broached, are already clamoring for practical programs which would instantiate, or at least set in motion, the solutions toward which these questions are already tending. To what extent can we hope to now begin with such programs?

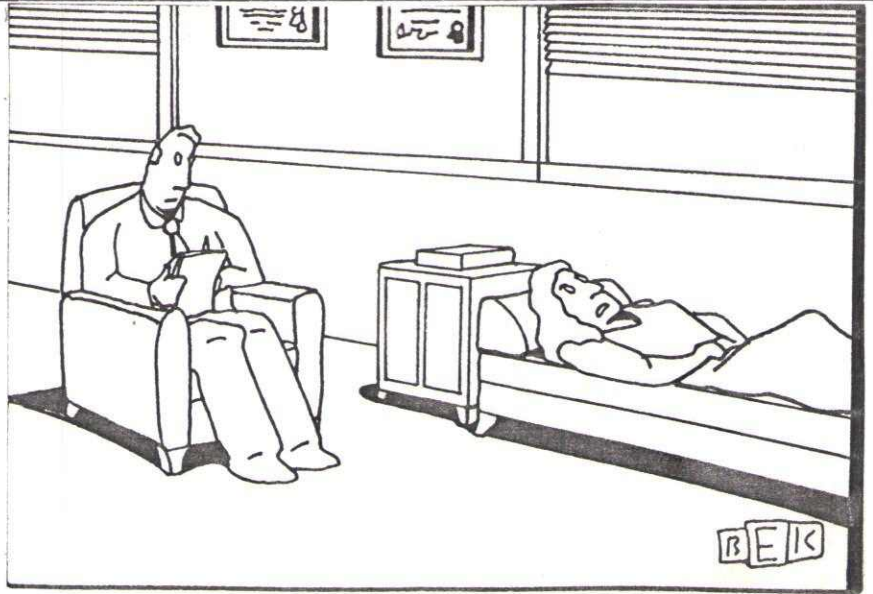
But perhaps hope is not the point. What is important is that we now work on these questions, allowing our work to engender its own hope as well as initiate the momentum of success. We must keep in mind, however, that our theorizing must be true to what is possible. None of our theories, and no proposed solutions, have any worth at all if they do not go beyond the language and confines of our mentalistic cogitations. A solution begins as theory--as a written proposal--but as such it remains no more than a hopeful, nascent potential. It is not realized--actualized--until it is a spatiotemporal occurrence. In this sense, a solution is not a hoped-for future event. It is something which is instantiated, which actually happens. It proceeds from theory to the real world, there referred to in either the past, imperfect, or present tenses only; e.g., "We did it, and it worked," or, "It has been working as it should," or, "The program is functioning smoothly." In this sense, solutions to the six questions I have discussed must entail not only further analysis and theorizing, they also must become a body of practical knowledge which finds a niche in the common world--embodied by the average citizen, government leader,





scientist, or artist.

But at present we have not arrived at solutions for the questions I have raised. While indeed it is true that theories are worthless if they are not practical, and solutions mere fictions if they are not instantiated, it also is true that the philosophical quest remains forever barren if it does not begin with questions that are carefully formulated, given breadth that is both precise and fertile, and clearly promulgated. Such has been my task: to delineate the importance and scope of certain philosophical questions, and provide initial direction for consequent analysis, thus inviting other philosophers to both participate in the quest, and together share the fruits.



*"Well, I do have this recurring dream that one day I might see some results."*

<sup>1</sup>Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1967), p. 154.

<sup>2</sup>William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature: Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902, with a forward by Jacques Barzun (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Miller, The Air-Conditioned Nightmare, vol. 1 (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 175.

<sup>4</sup>John Updike, A Month of Sundays (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 199.

<sup>5</sup>Albert Einstein, Ideas and Opinions, based on Mein Weltbild, ed. by Carl Seelig, and other sources, new translations and revisions by Sonja Bargmann (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), p. 39.

### \*\*\* FORTHCOMING EVENTS \*\*\*

I had removed this section from recent issues of The Aviary because predictions of the future seemed rather like tempting the fates. Plus, my future always seemed either entirely unpredictable, or so utterly predictable as to scarcely warrant comment; thus, to write about it was either misleading or uninteresting. But as of this writing, there is enough about the future which is already coming to pass, i.e., about to become the present, that I should comment on a few things.

For one: Our move from here to Kansas City has not worked out. Several job opportunities for Abbe were explored, each of them appeared to be working out, and then, at the last minute, they would fall through. We gave up. So now, by the end of August, we will have moved to St. Louis. Abbe will begin work there at a community health center, and I shall have my office there--this time, not separate from the house, but actually in the home. For those of you who might have occasion to correspond, our new address will be:

4 Ranch Lane  
Des Peres, Missouri  
63131

Yes; I know. "Ranch Lane" sounds a bit wimpy, or some such. I grew up in the country, raising horses, and my dad had business dealings with thousands of horse breeders, and I never--absolutely never--heard a single one of those men who raised horses refer to their "ranch." What they own is a horse farm, pure and simple. So, for you who have trouble with the name, simply address mail to "Raunch Lane" and I am sure that will suffice.

We bought the house. It's a big ranch house, about 40 years old, and we may spend the rest of our lives paying for the damned thing. To me it is a very opulent house, and yet, it was much cheaper than other houses in the neighborhood--for three reasons. It has no basement. (This is an advantage, as far as I'm concerned.) It has a kitchen with old metal kitchen cabinets instead of wooden ones. (What do I care?) And the bathrooms supposedly are not very fancy. (They are fancier than any bathroom of any house I've ever lived in before. Plus, they are stocked with toilet paper.) We bought this house because it has plenty of room, i.e., I can have my office in the house. And, it sits on an acre of ground, at the end of a quiet street. This bit of pastoral feel is important to a country boy like myself. So ... now I go to live in the



city. A big change for me.

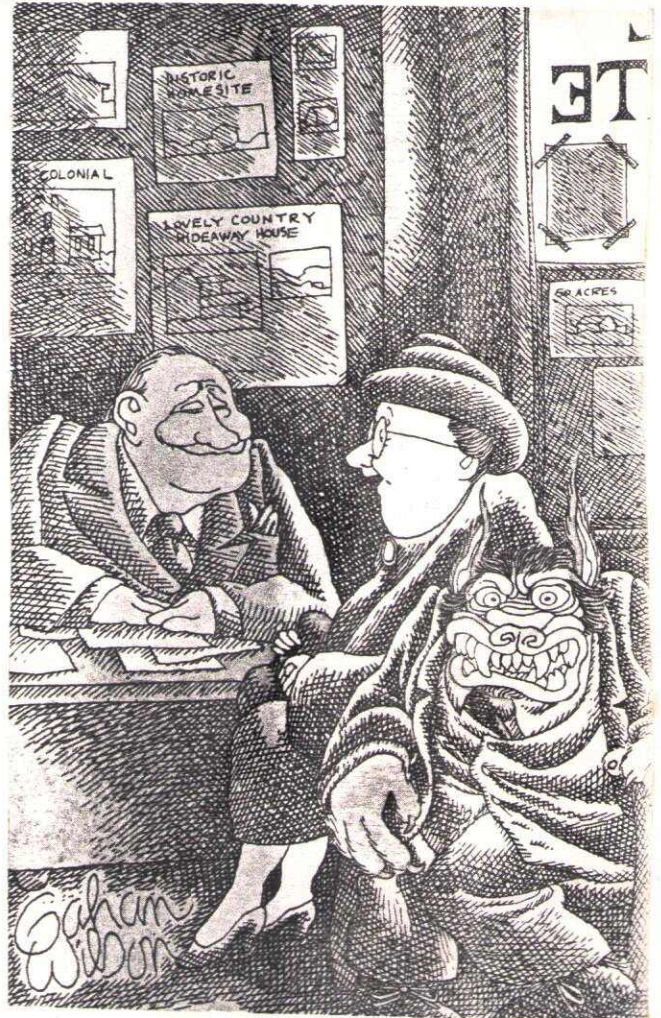
We experience anxieties about the move. The drive, for Abbe, to her workplace will be about 35 minutes. That's a hell of a long drive, and it may prove to be more than she cares to deal with. (Yet, it seemed that any place we looked at, which had even a bit of a yard, would involve at least a 20-minute drive.) She will be spending a good deal of time out there on the concrete jungle with four wheels between her and the pavement, and not enough padding between her car and all those other cars. It is a danger.

There are other dangers. One reads of murders in the city. They happen almost daily. With Marion going to school in a couple of years, he will be exposed, probably in more ways that we can predict, to a good deal of that violence. I am hoping that he is not harmed by it.

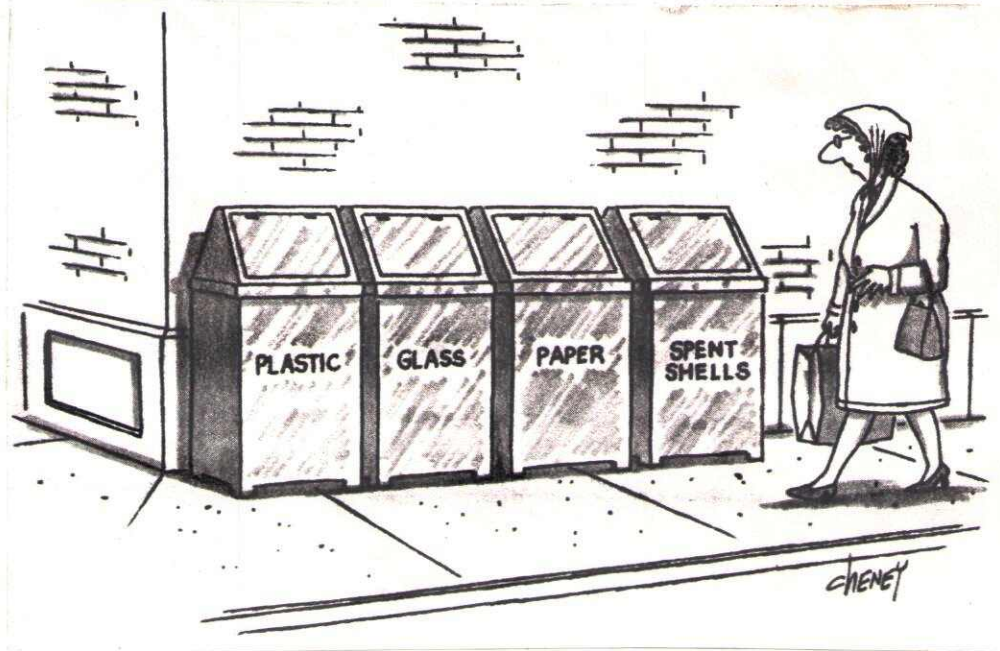
And then there is the noise. The place we are moving to seemed to be quite quiet every time we looked at it, and then, right after buying it on June 13th, we took a load of our things there, and at six o'clock it was terribly noisy. Planes overhead, and the traffic from the highway, which before was only a distant hum, now was a grinding roar. Abbe and I, while outside, were shouting to hear one another. This is most distressing, but ... I am hoping that such noise levels are uncommon, or are confined to a small portion of the day.

I tell you, I am determined to make this move work. After having spent so much time hating Southern Illinois, hating the place I live, I am resolved to liking our new home, our new locale, the city of St. Louis. And there is much to like about St. Louis. The people are friendly, there is much going on in the city, one can relax there and yet at the same time feel that infectious excitement which characterizes a big city. I am looking forward to friendships, enjoyable times, extending hospitality to friends when they come to St. Louis (there is a spare bedroom), and one day feeling at home again in Missouri. In short, the anxieties about moving are, I am sure, quite normal; and, considering the magnitude of the change, they are relatively small. I am looking forward to the move with much glad excitement, and my friends tell me that, ever since the choice was finally made to go to St. Louis, there is something about me which seems happier and more vivacious than they have experienced in several years.

As for the violence in the city: I am asking my friends, who are from the city, to tell me how better to deal with it, i.e., how to avoid it. The rules I learned, growing up in a very tough and often violent rural area, are not the same as the rules today. When I was young, if a fight was about to begin, it was considered cowardly to pull a gun or a knife. This meant that you didn't have faith in your fists, and couldn't "fight like a man." In other words, it was very nonmacho to use a gun;



"My husband, of course, will want a den."

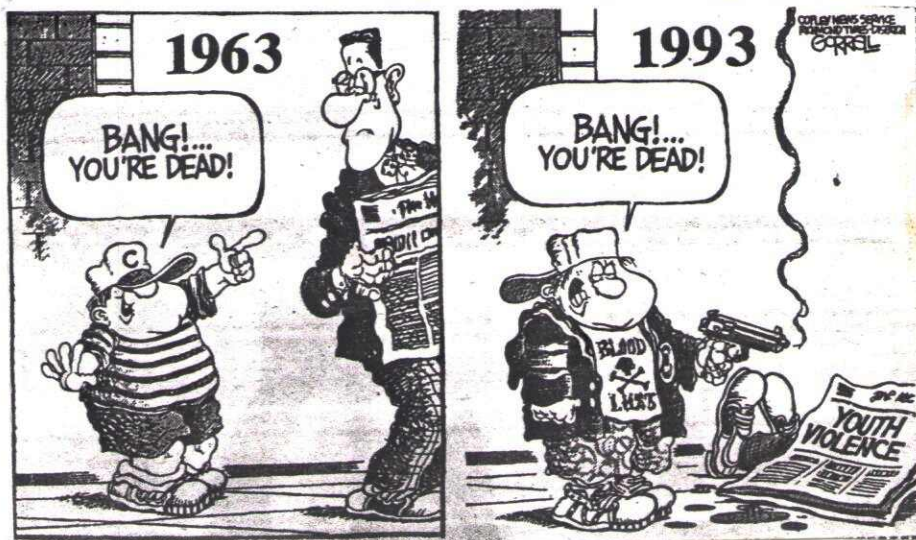




now, having a gun, using a gun, is considered a power symbol, and whereas at one time violence between youths was likely to result in a fist fight at most, now it can easily involve weaponry that spills blood. This is not an insignificant matter. While violence with fists was not exactly the kind of thing I now recommend (my own still bear scars), it is worth pointing out that fights with fists were less dangerous. Rarely terminal. And they allowed both people to, if not on the same day, then a few weeks later, shake hands and let the hostilities pass.

Mind you, I am not here merely complaining. Rather, I am asking for concrete advice: How do I help Marion, as he grows up in the big city, avoid the violence to which he will, undoubtedly, be exposed? I am not interested in theoretical treatises about why peace is better than violence, and such. And I don't care to hear about what the violence in the cities is caused by. I myself

could write an essay about the roots of violence ... and they are many. I am the first to say that it seems to be quite a contradiction for our government to protest the way inner-city black youths arm themselves, when our government is busy arming third-world countries in the name of economic politics. I can point out how contradictory it is for our government to arrest



inner-city youths who are putting drugs in their veins, when we are pouring toxic wastes into the bowels of the earth. Yes; I can go on and on. But what I am interested in is helping Marion avoid all that. I was exposed to much less violence, in rural Northwest Missouri, and yet I was enmeshed in it for about three years. I remember, in fact, the date of July 31, 1968 because this was the last day of July, and it was approaching midnight, and I had been in a fight every other night that month. And here, the last day of the month, and not a single rumble? What was wrong? I was frightened by it. No fight? That must mean that people were waiting, planning to jump me later in the night when I would be least suspecting.

It took my leaving Northwest Missouri to get away from the violence, and that is one of the main reasons I left that area. It took me another few years before I finally got it through my thick head that there are very simple ways of avoiding that kind of violence. For one thing, never, ever go into a bar. That is where 99.9% of the fights begin. For another thing, don't go anywhere that you know a fight has happened before. Most fights happen in the same place. A lot of other rules I learned, but I do not think they very well apply today. When children bring guns to school, the old rules for knowing how to avoid trouble no longer apply so easily. So ... I am serious. If any of you, friends and colleagues, have sound advice on this matter, I do want to hear it.

As for Abbe getting hints about how to avoid the dangers of the concrete jungle--well, she gets enough such *gripping* hints from me.

As for me getting advice about how to avoid the macho posturing of the cityman wimps, I shall have to learn that myself. My general approach to these types (and they do proliferate in the cities) is to just walk away. The average city man, you realize, considers it a very macho thing to, for example, build a fire in the fireplace. This may, in fact, be the only display of his manhood he will have indulged during the last month. So when the fire is at last going, he is very proud, does some grand strutting, and feels so very kingly as he marches about the house boasting and gesticulating. He may interrupt his display of male prowess by a loud declamation such as, "I'm gonna take me uh walk!" and he stalks out the door with a swagger that would give dignity to a pronounced case of prolapsed hemorrhoids.

Yes; this is the sort of cityman Baumli avoids. Baumli's soul is better off that way, as is the cityman's puny ego.

But ... I said I would talk about future events. Are other things afoot?

One small matter: During 1994, I will have pretty much stopped giving birthday gifts. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that people virtually never thank me; and since most such gifts are sent through the mail, I don't even know if people received them. Yes; it bothers me not to be thanked. I admit to this selfish, egocentric motive. There are other reasons, too, why I am halting this practice.



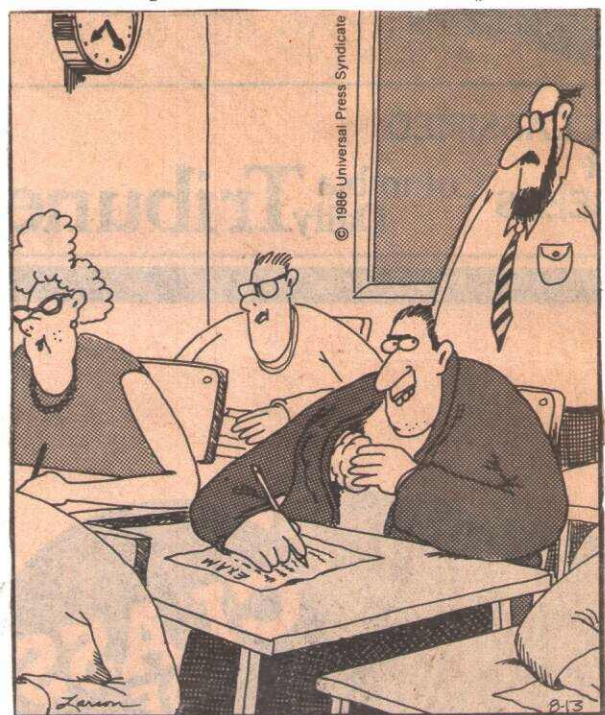
It costs a lot of money, and right now Abbe and I are wondering how old we will be before we have a house paid for. Moreover, there is the not inconsiderable fact that not infrequently, I feel that I should get someone a birthday gift because I did the year before, and I am not sure what they might want. So ... I buy them something which may have no more value to them than the three dozen bottles of Old Spice aftershave up in my closet have for me.

As for other events of the future-- I have resolved to curb, even more, my involvement in academic philosophy. I have said it before: the average college or university, especially the College of Liberal Arts division at major universities, is nothing more than an intellectual ghetto. And as for what is being published in the journals, it is mostly drivel. The sort of thing I could turn out with my tongue in cheek. As for publishing me, I had no trouble publishing the things I wrote when I was a graduate student, but since that time, as I have become a more original thinker (not attested to by the article herein, which I admit is a very mediocre piece), I have not been able to publish. I receive rejections, often on the basis of my not now being affiliated with any academic institution. Sometimes the articles come back with the frank acknowledgment that the topic is simply too difficult for their readers. Usually they are more guarded in their rejections, and simply say that it is not the sort of thing they usually publish. Not infrequently they tell me the article is too long. And so it goes. I have stopped trying to publish in these journals; when I do publish I get no feeling of pride, or accomplishment, whatsoever. All I need do is look at the other articles in the journal, and realize that I will be, to some extent, judged by the company I keep, and given that company, well ...

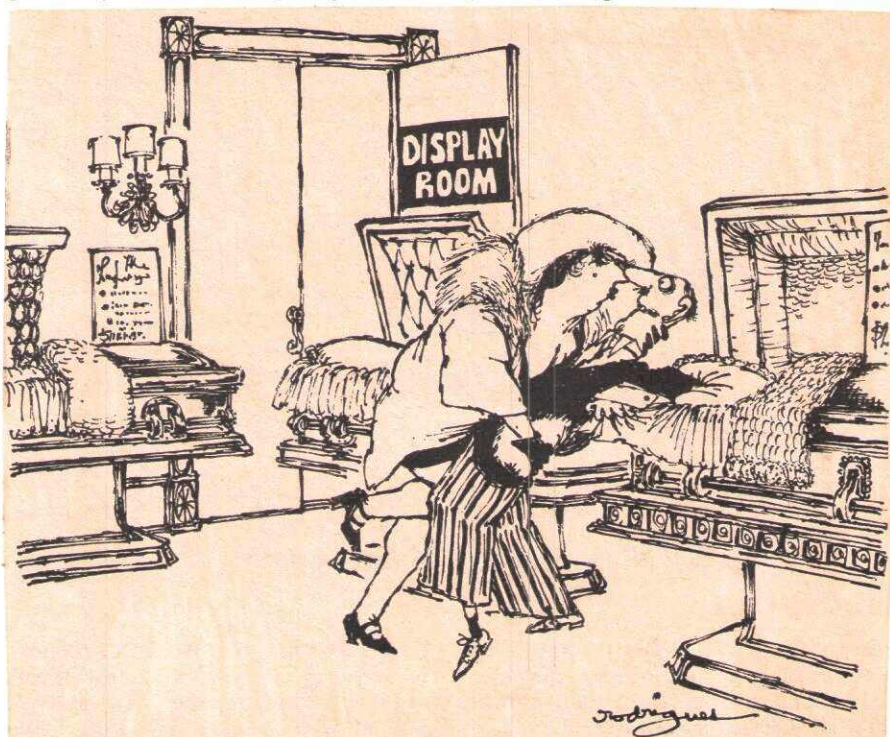
I have even, with some sadness, ended my relationship with The Institute for Advanced Philosophic Research. I was the youngest member to ever be elected to the National Board of Advisors, and I think I did much to make them a better Institute. During the years Alfred Koenig was their moderator (a humble and yet very crucial position), the Institute did much that I was proud of. But after his death a few years ago, there was a slow decline which soon transmuted to a rapid decline in the Institute's functioning. The yearly meetings became perfunctory duties, with participants reading dull papers to bored audiences. Attempts to bring philosophical messages to politicians and policy-makers in the world came to a complete halt. And the journal put out by the Institute, Contemporary Philosophy, degenerated to where it was just one more forum for dry, pedantic, boring drivel.

So my interest in the Institute died, and I felt that, accordingly, I should terminate my professional relationship with them.

In November of '92 I refused to renew my membership with them. For some reason, they retained me on the National Board of Advisors, but no ... I did not want this. I wanted my relationship with them to die. So some time in early '94 I wrote them, explaining my sentiments, and asking that



Midway through the exam,  
Allen pulls out a bigger brain.



"For all night?  
Hmmm—*for all night, I'll make it  
solid mahogany with Colonial bronze handles  
and paisley-satin interior...*"



they "let me go." I was frank in my explanation, but also very polite.

So thus it is. I am pretty much finished with academia, even as a writer. I even, at this point in my life, like to think of myself as a "former Ph.D." or an "ex-Ph.D." I realize that the disease is for a lifetime. One can never stop being a Ph.D., just as an alcoholic can never say he is no longer an alcoholic. For the latter affliction, it is only appropriate to say that the person is a "recovering alcoholic," or a "nondrinking alcoholic." So, out of shameful humility, I shall henceforth concede that I now remain a Ph.D., but I am a recovering Ph.D. May the fates forgive, and bless, me accordingly.

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### profinis

In this section of The Aviary, I usually try for a grand, even grim, conclusion. This time I want to do something different. I want to tell you about what was the funniest event of 1993:

I was on the phone with a fellow named Bob Cerchio, who is an employee of SIUC--the university at Carbondale. He is the administrator of Shryock Auditorium, which hosts most of the concerts on campus. I have come to know him over the last few years, since he periodically calls on me for advice when making plans for booking groups. He is a very short man, rather puffed up with self-importance, with the usual attitude of people who work at a university, i.e., his world scarcely extends beyond the borders of the ghetto.

I do not now recall why I phoned him on this occasion, but when I did, he immediately began complaining about all the work he was having to do. His voice rose, he became more agitated, and he concluded his lament with, "Francis, I have never worked so hard in my entire life!" His voice was shrill, indignant. "I've been working from 8 in the morning until 5, and this last weekend I probably logged 5 or 6 hours!"

I was sympathetic. My God! From 8 A.M. until 5 the next morning. He is in his late 40s, and how could he manage to put in 21 hours a day and then put in another 5 or 6 hours on his weekend? I offered my sympathies, wondering what could be done to help him, while remembering how, during that terrible summer between my Junior and Senior years as an undergraduate in college, I was putting in over 100 hours per week. I was desperate to earn enough money to go back to college, and during the last 6 weeks of the summer I worked 65 hours a week at the Swift Packing Company in St. Joseph, Missouri where I was living. Plus, Monday through Friday nights, I drove a 200-mile round trip to Creston, Iowa to play music there, and on Saturday nights I drove a 100-mile round trip to play music at Maryville, Missouri. I would get home at about 3 or 4 A.M., be met by the woman who lived down the hall and expected a nightly servicing, do the servicing, and then fall to sleep--hallucinating even in my dreams--getting about 1½-2 hrs. of sleep before getting up to go back to the meat-packing plant. I worked 6 days of the week at the packing plant, and on Sundays I would sleep maybe 14 hours. I was putting in 65 hours at the meat-packing plant, 24 hours of actual music playing, and counting all the driving, about 25 hours of driving per week. That was 114 hours per week. Yes; I know what working like that meant, and I listened to this college administrator as he spent another 5 minutes complaining about his long hours. But then ... something was said, I am not sure what, which revealed to me that I was not understanding him. I asked a couple of questions, and then told him briefly, and sympathetically, how hard that summer was for me, but I was a younger man then, and how could he stand to work between 105 and 110 hours per week? An embarrassed silence, on his part, followed, and it suddenly became clear that he was not talking about 8 A.M. until 5 A.M. He merely meant 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. He was working until 5 in the evening, when normally he got off at 4:30. Plus, he was only taking half an hour off for lunch, when usually he would take an hour off.

And I was supposed to be impressed. The poor baby. Complaining like a typical liberal arts professor, administrator, whatever.

As for this tardy Aviary, let me bring it to an end. Last year I discussed the issue of my incipient saintliness. It no longer is incipient; it is either instantiated, or unsubstantiated. I am not sure which. I do know, however, that the truly good man disguises himself as an evil man. He desires that other people do good, and he knows that people learn more about virtue from abhorring evil than from the good example of others. So if my conduct seems abhorrent, horrific, spiritually assaultive, then flee from me even as you forgive me, for you shalt know that Baumli is fulfilling his role as exalted moral exemplar. And all the while he is considerate, compassionate, and unfailingly gentlemanly in his combative, didactic role. In so doing, he cogently adheres to R.D. Laing's shrewd observation about human nature, to wit: "They are playing a game. They are playing at not playing a game. If I show them I see they are, I shall break the rules and



they will punish me. I must play their game, of not seeing I see the game. (Knots, p. 1.) Thus I pick my way, gingerly and prudently. I am, you realize, a very tiny self. In this Aviary, I, for a while, become bigger than life, not because I have exaggerated who I am, but because I have aesthetized my own personality. But then I leave these pages, and I quickly shrivel to my deservedly small stature.

One last thing: Over the last years, hundreds of people have written me, asking for my "chart." I did not even know what this is, until someone told me two years ago. I do have a "chart," the makings of which were arranged by a lover of yore. In order to satisfy the many requests, I here print it in black-and-white, i.e., without its pretty colors. I understand nothing of its symbiology, and believe nothing when it is explained to me.

Yours celestially,

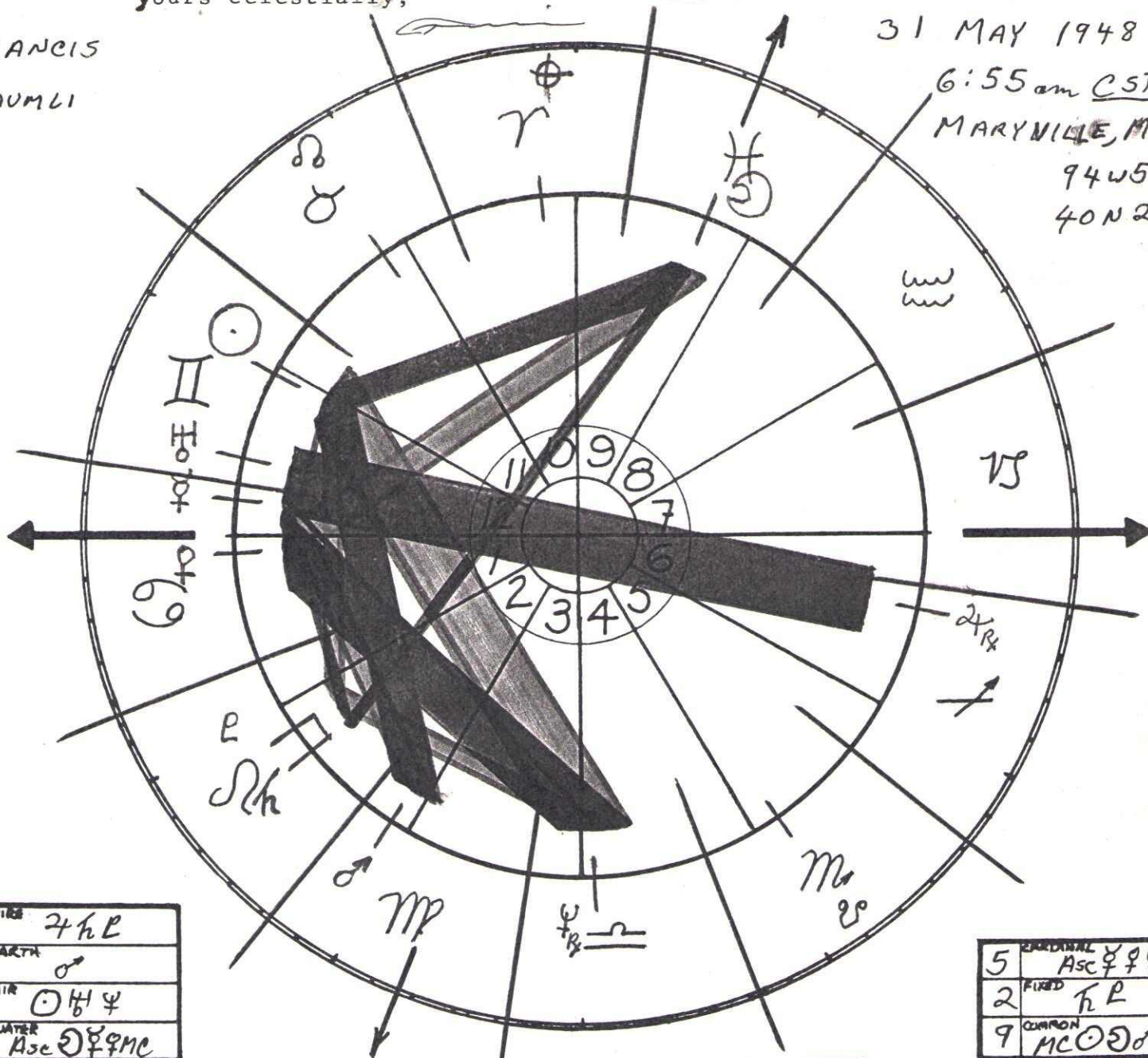
FRANCIS  
BAUMLI

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MOON PHASE - LAST QTR.

Planets	
Angular	♁ ♁
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Exaltation	
Detriment	
Fall	

Quadrant Houses				
	11	12	2	3
Placidus	227	311	295	204
Regio.	247	711	224	224
Campanus	157	278	711	274
Porphyry				
Quadr. midpoints				