THE AVIARY

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From Francis Baumli:
for friends & associates.

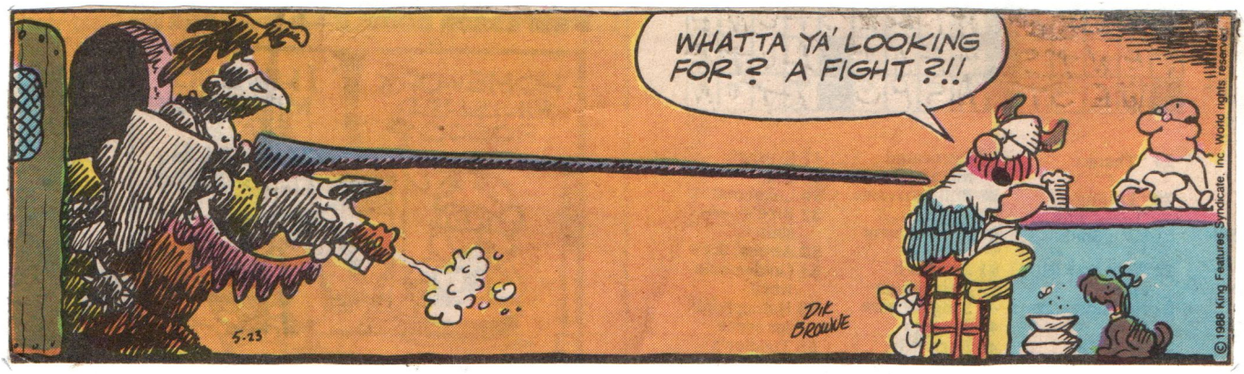
" ... let us now suppose that in the mind of each man there is an aviary of all sorts of birds--some flocking together apart from the rest, others in small groups, others solitary, flying anywhere and everywhere."

Plato (Theaetetus)

I must here concede that the many negative, angry reactions to last year's Aviary were perhaps deserved. I fancied myself in rather a fine mood, when writing it, and yet, only when other people began holding up mirrors, did I begin to see that, indeed, it was full of rancor, cynicism, defiance. One message, rather confusing because of the inward complexity it suggested, seemed to pervade: "I hate you, you swine and swill, because you do not love me enough--because you have not the character and compassion to love me despite my hatred for you." Yes; I was wallowing in execrations. And now, for the life of me, I do not know why. And I confess that I haven't much desire for grubbing into that mystery. Usually, anything that is rank and mysterious, especially if it abides within my soul, is something I can not leave be. I must ferret it out. But this time it simply does not interest me. Such a

pity, to thus be so apathetic about one's previous sins.

But I suppose that my time herein would be best spent making amends. Rather than shamefully reviling my friends and debasing my own soul, I must this time extend my friendly good will, my most sincere (even frenzied!) laudations, and the most profound obeisance that has ever contorted a body. So ... allow me to depart from my despicable norm, and this time present myself perfumed of body, pure of soul, and perhaps a bit timorous of words.



Both /man and woman\ are exuberant bloody growths. I would use the defects and deformities of each for my sacred purpose of writing, for I know that it is the marred and scarred and faulty that are subject to grace. I would seek the soul in the facts of animal economy and profligacy. Yes, it is the exact location of the soul that I am after. The smell of it is in my nostrils. I have caught glimpses of it in the body diseased.

Mortal Lessons by Richard Selzer, p. 19.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF 1987

Jan. 6, 1987: You may recall, from what I said in last year's Aviary, that on Nov. 1, 1986, I very unjustly received a traffic ticket: "Failure to yield the right-of-way," even though the other fellow was speeding and by all appearances was trying to beat a traffic light that had just turned yellow. I resolved to fight it in court. And on this date, I went to court, played at being my own lawyer, and won. Oh God, I was scared; but oh God I was brilliant. Such brilliance was nurtured by my anger--anger at the traffic officer, but primarily, anger at the cretin who plowed in to me. I tricked the fellow into perjuring himself on the stand, I pissed the traffic officer off so badly (quite unintentionally) that he was yelling at me from the stand, and at the end I saw the judge nodding his head as I was making my closing statement.

Feb., 1987: The Coalition of Free Men saw fit to apoint me to its National Board of Directors. With some reluctance, I accepted the appointment.

March 1, 1987: I attended a very mediocre concert by The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. See the music section herein for details.

March, 1987: I received an award from **The Coalition of Free Men** for, "Best Book on Men's Issues: 1986." The award, for my book, Men Freeing Men: Exploding the Myth of the Traditional Male, was quite unexpected, and yet most appreciated. I remained humbly aware that this book, which contains the writings of more than fifty authors, is not my own work only; hence, the award can not be to myself only.

April 4, 1987: A visit to The Museum of Art and Archeology, of Columbia, Missouri. Such a fine little museum, with a few pieces of world-class art. And yet, I have been there much too infrequently. See the section herein on painting and the visual arts for details.

May 15-June 30, 1987: Abbe, Dacia, and I went to the United Kingdom for what proved to be a wonderful, wonderful vacation. Actually, during the first four weeks, we did a good deal of work: Abbe studying geriatric medicine, and me doing research for a book. But all in all it was very relaxing, my health felt improved during that time, and I returned with a strong ache in my heart. I would have voted for moving to Edinburgh, but neither Abbe nor Dacia were similarly minded.

What to say about this trip? And how much should I say? The greatest part of the trip, for me, was the plethora of art. Great music by world-class orchestras, wonderful paintings and sculpture in some of the world's finest museums, and a culture replete with enthused, passionate people who have a great appreciation of art.

Despite my appreciation for the British culture and people, I did not, as did my goodly wife, obtain a British accent while on this trip. She claimed that the reason she changed her way of speaking was because she was out, working with more British people than I was. I claimed, correctly of course, that my own way of speaking remained intact because I have a stronger personality. Whichever the case may be, this small difference in our personal response to the people and the region in no way diminished our mutual appreciation for one another. Even the virtual celibacy we endured while on this trip, occasioned by the constant close proximity of our daughter, did not fray our nerves overly much and our enjoyment remained fairly constant.

The thing that struck me first about the British was the fact that, generally, they all have a splendid physique. Both the men and women are tall and well-proportioned. Obesity was virtually nonexistent, which I attribute to the British penchant for walking a good deal, always at a very brisk clip. They are hurried, but without seeming stressed or frenzied. And, of course, very formal. A closer inspection of the English physique revealed to me that a goodly number of the men, when viewed from behind, can easily be mistaken for women with short hair, given that they have such wide hips and large buttocks. I mentioned this--my observation that many English men have a broad ass--to an Irishman, and he replied, "Yea; the ones with the broad asses, it's because they're the ones got sent to boarding school when young." I did not at all understand his explanation, but when I asked him to elaborate, he merely laughed and said something like, "They do more than read books at those boarding schools.'

The English women, I believe, wear more perfume than the female members of any other race. Being in the vicinity of several can be positively intoxicating to the brain cells, an intoxication, alas, which tended to pre-empt intoxication of certain glandular regions of my body. Moreover, the English woman insists on her high heels. Truly, I saw young women stocking groceries on the shelves at the local market, wearing high heels that would have crippled a stork. To approach a group of more than five such women, coming toward you on a concrete sidewalk, puts one in terror of being run over, given that the sound is so akin to that of shod horses clopping along on cobblestones.

For such a healthy people, their addiction to cigarettes was phenomenal. Both men and women, very young to very old, whether sitting quietly or walking quickly, would always be sporting a cigarette, sucking away as if their British dignity depended on it. And such foul-smelling cigarettes they were! The odor would cause one to believe they were made of goat-dung and straw, imported from India, perhaps, rather than made from a mixture of tobacco, ground-up newspapers, and potassium nitrate as are American cigarettes. Given the pervasiveness of the cigarette addiction, I was especially worried about the health of these people, despite their fine stature and seemingly robust constitutions, when I became aware of how difficult it is to find drinking water in England. Truly, unless you are at your home or apartment, the option of finding a drink of water can be very difficult. In a restaurant, they do not serve it with meals. If you ask for water, they will bring you a glass that holds maybe six ounces; and, they will not refill it unless asked. I took to cupping my hand beneath faucets in public restrooms, a practice which, judging by the cold stares of the British gentlemen, was considered almost obscene.

In conversation, one is struck by the British appreciation for literature. They can scarcely discuss any subject, no matter how mundane, without very quickly bringing in an illustration from literature. This I appreciated--I exulted in! And to see them reading--virtually every person, riding the subway home from work, would be reading a book. Not a magazine, mind you, and not a pulp romance or western of a book; no, usually the book would be one of the classics: Shakespeare, Hemingway, Maughm, Forrester, Nabokov--a wonderful admixture of great writers! Witnessing this literacy, I found it curious when I stopped to reflect on the fact that, even though the British read much more than the Americans, they have not, during this last century, turned out writers as good as ours.

During the six weeks of that visit, I ate more Indian food--my favorite of all the culinary specialties!--than I have in my entire life. At Leicester, we three thrice times partook at a restaurant called The Maharaj--"Maharaja's"?--I am not sure; my memory of the restaurant's name is weakened by a lust for the food, which rises up and consumes me whenever I think about those gustatory delights. Truly, I proclaim it here; that restaurant in Leicester served the best Indian food I have ever had in my life.

Stepping out of a restaurant in the United Kingdom can expose one to a bit of a shock, given the sudden contrast. I refer to the dog feces that is

to be found in plentiful quantity on most streets in the United Kingdom. The pigeon shit at Trafalgar Square was overwhelming enough, but the dog shit is even worse. There were some cities in which it was so plentiful one could not but believe that it would entirely cover the sidewalks, engulfing every square inch of the city, were it not for the fact that unhappy pedestrians found it necessary to often wash a goodly dose of doggie doo-doo off their shoes, thus occasioning the disposal of a great portion of the feces. Edinburgh, even though it was the city I enjoyed most during this trip (and even though it is my favorite city in the entire world!) is more severely afflicted by this problem than is any other city I visited during this trip. Truly, it was both comical and sad, watching people of that city going about the streets. No one strolled along in a relaxed way; no one even walked quickly. Rather, they made their way about the streets like children playing hopskotch, as they tried to avoid the many piles. Seeing elderly people negotiating the hazards in this way, their brittle bones creaking and popping from the gymnastics, moved me often to pity--a sentiment which I harbor but rarely.

The weather--rainy and cold--not suitable for either my constitution or my temperament. I spent several days in bed from a bad cold, and during this time, tried to sample the supposedly fine qualities of British radio and television. My sister, Frances, has often praised the British media, claiming that it is far superior to what we have in the USA. Well, I must disagree. I think the newspapers are not as good, and the radio much worse. Radio in both the USA and in Great Britain is very mediocre, but of different types. In Great Britain, they broadcast a mediocrity that is boringly banal; in my country, the mediocrity is manic. I must admit that I prefer the latter variety of mediocrity, since mania is a more becoming mirror for my personality. As for television, it is no better than American television because it is much the same. They broadcast the very same shows that one can see in America, the only difference being, as far as I can judge (not being one to watch American television), that they broadcast shows that appeared in America one to two years before. Glimpsing some of these shows (my pride forces me to attest to the fact that I watched none of them for more than two minutes), caused me to realize why the British constantly spoke to me of the terror of guns in my country. Over and over, it would happen that a Britisher would praise to me the things he or she loves about the USA, would go on with grandiloquent and sometimes rather vapid praise, but then so often cut the conversation short with a look of pained consternation and the comment, "But you have guns. So many guns. Killings all the time." Well, yes; we have guns, and too many killings. The back streets of London, at midnight, felt safer than the main streets of Chicago at noon. But still, we do not have as many guns nor as much killing as these people imagine. One day it occurred to me: these people watch television shows that depict life in the USA, and on these shoot-'em-up shows, there is always gun play. And their movie theatres are replete with movies of the James Bond/Charles Bronson type. Having noticed this, I talked with these people about where they got these views about all the guns and killing in the USA, and sure enough, it was from television and the movies.

The phone: Oh what a blessed relief to be free of the phone! I am so plagued by that infernal machine that, truly, when I am in an airport terminal, and an announcement comes over the intercom that there is a phone call for so-and-so, I always listen carefully, sure that the call is for me. But when in Great Britain, I did not have to worry about it. We had a phone at the house we rented the first four weeks of our stay, but I was called probably no more than half a dozen times during those four weeks. I am not at all being facetious when I say that I believe my improved health, while abroad, was largely occasioned by having been freed from that toxin.

I truly come alive, am at my very best emotionally, when I have opportunity for interacting with large numbers of people. I must say, however, that such interacting was rather difficult at times during our stay. I can not say that, as individuals, I found the English people to my liking. They are friendly, but not warm. In the streets, they are very aggressive with their bodies; one day, at an open air market, I left because, after having been elbowed, bumped, and pushed about for nearly an hour, I knew that within another half hour I would be at the point of becoming violent. What is infuriating about this English habit is the fact that they are totally oblivious of how aggressive they are. A man ran into me, head-on, carrying a large wooden box, and merely looked the other way and went around me as fast as he could. I saw a very tiny, very old--at least in her eighties--lady walking along in a very stooped position, so bent over that her head stuck out, and her eyes were fixed on the ground; a tall man, hurrying along, hit her protruding head with his hip so hard that it spun her around a full 180 degrees. I hurried to help her, but the bewildered lady, never having even looked up, scurried off in the direction her assaulter had pointed her--the opposite direction she had been headed but moments before.

Don't get me wrong. I like the English, as a group; but the individuals, with exceptions I do not. Of course some of the English are warm. Children are warm, as are some of the old people. But with these exceptions, among the hundreds of English people with whom I interacted during this trip, I encoun-

tered only four to whom I would ascribe that lovely trait of personal warmth.

As for the Scots, they are different. They are a soulful, warm, and impassioned people. Unlike the English, who are impeccably friendly, the Scots put themselves forward. They will touch you. Their smiles are more than a gesture; they wear them to show you how they feel--about themselves and about you.

The Scots have their pride, but it is a fiercely strong national pride, which apparently is harbored with sufficient security that they do not need to express it in their interactions with individuals. Their pride seems sure of itself, unlike the British classism--a haughty pride--which never for a moment drops its guard. I found the British fidelity to their pride at times irritating, at other times merely boring. Class distinctions among the English are clearly defined, constantly adhered to, and something they will often allude to. I confess that class distinctions made by Americans, although less clearly delineated, are nevertheless pervasive in my country. And Americans can indeed be vicious in their class distinctions; but somehow I prefer this to the callous haughtiness of the British. Where there is viciousness, there is passion; and one can interact with--transform that. But a callousness. Well, you've your abrading ahead of you, if you want to get through it to the person.

But I must not complain overly much about the English, or it will seem that the trip was a most negative experience for me, and this is not so. There were many things I liked about England. I was especially impressed by the fact that the poor, even the completely indigent alcoholics, were all cared for. And I liked the harmonious mixing of people from so many different cultures and races. There is racial prejudice in England, yes, but it does not seem to possess the constant undercurrent of restrained violence that one senses when encountering racism in the States. The wonderful familiarity with literature--great literature--I have already alluded to. And in the whole United Kingdom, there is so much art--the visual arts, and music. A veritable synaesthesia for the soul!

I say we traveled in the United Kingdom. Actually, we were in England and Scotland only; we did not make it to Ireland, Wales, or the dependent islands in the channel or the Isle of Man. After our business of the first four weeks, we were primarily intent on seeing art, hearing music, and taking in the countryside. Bath, I did not enjoy overly much, but I loved York--York Minster, and the small York gallery with the fine collection of paintings by William Etty. Leicester offered comparatively little in the way of art, although there were unexpected delights to be found there, for example, the St. Martin's cathedral. Therein was art which one was allowed to touch. I took especial delight in the woodwork and metalwork of a huge trunk that was 700 years old. In the States, except for the North American Indians, we have no history that goes back nearly that far, and certainly no architecture. Hence, my amazement, which I never cease to feel, when I come face to face with a piece of architecture which is centuries old, sometimes thousands of years old, and which the local people take as a quite unremarkable part of their everyday surroundings.

The art galleries of the big cities had so much to offer. The National Gallery at London has a great, great collection. And I was stunned to find so many of my favorite paintings at the Tate in London, paintings which I had not anticipated being there. The Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum had a limited, albeit spectacular, collection of great paintings. The National Gallery of Scotland at Edinburgh was my favorite, taking into consideration the quality of the collection, the way the paintings were hung, the friendly and

helpful personnel. Turn to the section on art, herein, to read more about the art we viewed in these great galleries.

There was also great music to be heard, although all of this was savored in London. See the section on music herein for details about concerts.

As for the cities: The fast-paced life of London was refreshing, the vivaciousness of the people at Glasgow very appealing, but Edinburgh pleased me more than any of the cities we visited. As a city, it has so much charm. The bagpipe players, the wonderful book stores, the architecture, the grand palace, a lovely Museum of Childhood, and ... more delights than can be listed herein.

Another delight was the time spent with my sister Frances. This is the first time I have visited her since she moved abroad, and she has justifiably complained of having been the one to always be traveling to see me. She spent several days with us at Leicester, accompanied us to London on one weekend visit, and was with us for three days at her apartment in London. I was able to visit with her, and do it on her turf--on her terms. Doing so, seeing where she works, how she makes her living when she works in London, and such, helped me to better come to an awareness of the two of us as adults. We are all grown up now. The earlier years we have shared truly are memories, and there is the awareness of each other's mortality. Abbe and Frances were able to establish something of a relationship with one another, and Dacia really enjoyed going out on the town with her aunt--who was much more tolerant of Dacia's love of shopping than are her two parents.

There was one thing I really wanted to do while in Scotland at which I was not successful. I wanted to find, or have made for me, a wool hat that would fit me. Now this may seem like a small desire to some, but realize that I have the biggest head which makers of headgear have ever encountered. (Yes; I anticipate the pseudo-humorous rejoinders here, so please do not tire me with them.) My head-size is eight & three-eighths. In high school, when I played football, I had to wear a special helmet made to fit over a bandaged head. (Yes; again ... please do not tire me.) When I worked at a meat packing company one summer, they dispensed with the regulation requiring me to wear a hat like all the other workers, since their largest headpiece (7⅜) perched atop my crown like a Charlie Chaplin derby. The result is that I have endured many a cold winter without proper covering for my head, and I had hoped that, somewhere in Scotland, I would find a kind person who would knit a hat of good wool to cover my caput. Not so.

I am proud to say that I did accomplish one deed, while in London, which I had for some months anticipated with great relish. I stole a hat from a real live Bobby. Not a hat that fit me, but still, a Bobby's hat which he was using. I pulled off this caper quite smoothly, without the Bobby's ever knowing it--at least at the time, which is fortunate for me because I doubt that I could have outrun him. How did I do it? Well; the bobby was very friendly. It was a hot day. And I had just purchased a plastic fake bobby's hat for three pounds. As I said, it was a hot day, the bobby liked me, and as for me--callous bastard that I am, and having already bought that plastic fake one for the sake of doing a switch, I just could not let the fact that I myself liked the bobby disrupt my plans. I felt very guilty afterwards, and I suspect that this is why I recount the tale herein--so as to, hopefully, expiate my guilt somewhat with this public confession.

Yes; above, I said that I am proud that I accomplished this ill deed. I am, but what I mean is that I was capable of doing it after having hoped to do it for so long. But frankly, I now am sorry I did it, and in fact, was very sorry within fifteen minutes of having done it. In fact, I stayed in the subway for about two hours, agonizing over how I might return the fellow's hat without getting myself arrested. I finally decided to just find him out, own up to it, try to pass it off as a practical joke, state that I had intended to return his hat all along, and take a friendly leave. But when I went back to find him, he had disappeared. Whereupon I became very afraid that another roving bobby might discover me carrying that hat, concealing it as best I could.So I headed back to Frances' apartment, and lay abed in agony a good part of that night.

I more or less recovered from my guilt, but then, when flying back to the States, I sold the hat to a fellow traveler for two hundred dollars. At the time I reasoned that the sum was simply too much to pass up, but now, after a few months' reflection on the matter, I think my selling the hat was an attempt to, in a sense, wash my hands of the deed.

As for my detractors, who thought it plainly awful of me to steal a poor bobby's hat: Yes; I am guilty, I felt guilty, and I still feel guilty! You do not have to keep rubbing my nose in it.

Many things occurred, while abroad, which deserve special mention; there-

fore, I hereby return to my usual method of listing things by date:

May 23, 1987: Abbe and I viewed the musical, Lady Day, starring Dee Dee Bridgewater as Billie Holiday. Bridgewater's performance was quite good. As a singer, she is almost great; her acting, however, although well above average nevertheless had certain shortcomings. In the scenes where she was barefooted, one could not but be distracted by her misshapen, very flat and very long, feet. Moreover, her gestures were concentrated into her left hand, which flapped spastically and afflicted one's suspended belief. Still, she did a good job, with a role that was obviously very demanding. The musical group, called, "The Lady Day Quartet," was quite excellent too, and their accompaniment to Dee Dee's singing lended the play a very fine quality.

As for the play itself, my appreciation is much more reserved. The play, of course, is autobiographical: about the life of Billie Holiday. And it was very mediocre--a fact which I suppose I should have anticipated, given that there seems to be a plethora of plays these days which are autobiographical, and consistently disappointing. I do realize, of course, that in the past the great plays were always autobiographical also. But a Sophocles, or a Shakespeare, had enough sense to wait until the personalities had leavened, grown, and taken their place in history--not only temporal history, but also within the history of human morals and human aspirations. The problem with our contemporary playwrights seems to be that they believe the store of historical material is depleted. Hence, if they wish to do a play that is based upon an actual character, they do not reach deep into the historical cauldron. Rather, they go back a few decades at most, sometimes less than a decade. And basically, all they do is attempt, in the span of a theatrical production, to retell the glitter of a celebrity's life. There is no depth of personality in such plays, virtually no moral sphere, and little that is created by way of artistic input. The aesthetic sheen therefore is absent; and mediocrity prevails. Nevertheless, it does seem that theatre goers like this placid genre. It affords them mild entertainment, without exacting anything in the way of appreciative fortitude. They can depart a theatre with nothing more profound on their minds than something on the order of the following: "Yes; that was good. I was entertained. It made me laugh. And once, there, I rather believe--no; I am certain of it--I was mildly depressed, because of the character's sadness. This means I felt something. And if I felt something, well, to feel feelings is no small thing! Feeling feelings means there is something right with the world. Because ... well, it gives me something to think about. And later, I can talk about this. And people will know me as a person with deep thoughts. And then, why, yes, I can entertain other people too. With my deep thoughts. Indeed, they will appreciate me then, and know me for who I am--what I truly am! I'll tell others about this, and they will laugh. I will reveal my reflections, and they will know that I have very important thoughts. They will find my important thoughts entertaining. Very good entertainment. I wonder if I should have a little snack before bed tonight. Something to get my mind off the play so I can sleep better."

May 24, 1987: We attended a performance by one of the very best symphony orchestras in the world, the London Symphony Orchestra. Imagine my surprise, upon getting tickets, to find out that it was being conducted by none other than my Missouri maestro, Leonard Slatkin, director of The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. For details about this performance, refer to the section herein on music.

May 31, 1987: My 39th birthday, and one of the most miserable I have thus far endured. As to why I was thus emotionally disturbed, I am not sure. I was acutely aware of pushing 40, of moving toward that point in my life where I could not for much longer pretend that the grim reaper would forever be held at bay. Moreover, my health was taking a toll upon me that day, and I had very much hoped to spend the day in company with Frances, but due to her work commitments, we were not able to do this.

June 14, 1987: I discovered what I thought to be a broken vein--very tiny, not an eighth of an inch long--in the arch of my right foot. Such corporeal decay my psyche could not abide. I spent a day feeling depressed, and not

being the best of company for Abbe and Dacia.

June 15, 1987: A careful medical inspection revealed that the worry of the day before had not been warranted. There was no broken vein. Instead, it was nothing more than a tiny capillary close to the surface of the skin. The physician explained to me--showed me--that by pressing on the skin, the color would disappear, i.e., the blood was being pushed out of the vein. When the pressure was released, the color would immediately flood back into the area, i.e., the capillary would refill with blood. Were it a broken capillary, the blood could not be pressed out of it so easily.

I was much relieved.

June 26, 1987: We attended a brilliant performance by Vladimir Ashkenazy. For details, refer to the music section herein.

June 27, 1987: One of my life's dreams come true: we attended a performance by The Academy of St. Martin in-the-Fields. See the music section herein for details.

July 1, 1987: The trip to Great Britain was over. The postman brought us three very large boxes of mail, and Abbe brought home another box full from her office. The time was incredibly busy. All that mail, and in the first 16 days I was back, I read 18 books.

July 6-7, 1987: This date marked the fifth anniversary of Abbe's and my ... uh, I mean, of our relation-shipping.

July 31, 1987: I signed a contract for the translation of my book, Men Freeing Men, into Japanese. It feels like quite an honor.

August 6, 1987: Joy of joys! For years I have been on a very rigid diet to help control this multiple sclerosis I have. The diet has meant that I have not been able to eat ice cream, which is my very favorite food in the world. I had several times tried substitutes, such as soy milk dessert that was sweetened with honey, and diet ice milks that were sweetened with sorbitol. The substitutes all tasted terrible. But on this date, my goodly spouse, Abbe, discovered, and I imbibed, an ice cream which I could eat. A very good ice cream it was, too. I received the sacrament on this date, and on many days thereafter.

It was noted that exposure to this substance produced certain effects which warranted speculation that real men, exposed to said substance, incur a substantial elevation in their already very high testosterone levels.

August 8, 1987: On this date, a rock from a passing truck fell off and went through the windshield of my pickup, barely missing Dacia. I chased the sonofabitch down, made sure that I would be compensated for the damage, and neutralized his belligerence.

August 10, 1987: I was given a "Commendation Award" by The Institute for Advanced Philosophic Research for my paper, "A Meditation on Minds and Bombs: When Philosophy Lacks the Last Word because It Is Not the Last Act: Unless: ." I did not get first prize, and mine was one of two commendation awards. But the paper received a lot of attention, was featured at a conference, and was subsequently published. I believed I had reason to feel proud.

August 19, 1987: On this date, I at last finished that very tardy, Jan.-Feb. '87 edition of The Aviary.

September 1, 1987: I resigned my position as a member of The Coalition of Free Men's National Board of Directors. I found the political games to be boring, scarcely ethical, and not at all suiting my temperament.

September 5-7, 1987: Abbe and I went to Carbondale, Illinois, to check out that site as a possible place where she might work. Abbe, having been put through medical school by the National Health Service Corps, must work for them at an understaffed health site for four years. Moreover, the site must be one of their choosing, although they do present options from which we can choose. In other words, Baumli and Sudvarg are one day going to vacating the old homestead.

September 10, 1987: Aided by darkness, three blankets, inattentive flight attendants, and an eager partner, this was the first time I ever did, uh ... you know ... in an airplane. Being a gentleman, I would never mention who my complicitous partner was.

September 10-16, 1987: On this date, continuing to look at site options for Abbe's forthcoming work for the National Health Service Corps, she and I flew to Florida. It was a frenetic trip. On Sept.10,we drove to St. Louis, flew from there to Jacksonville, and from there drove to Lake City. Sept. 11 saw us in Lake City, and then on Sept. 12 we drove to Gainesville. Sept. 13 we flew from Gainsville to Orlando, and drove from Orlando to Clermont. Sept. 14, we drove from Clermont to Groveland, then drove to Apopke, and then drove to Orlando. Next we flew from Orlando to West Palm Beach. On Sept. 15 we drove from West Palm Beach to Clewiston, then drove back to West Palm Beach. We then flew from West Palm Beach to Atlanta, Georgia; then, we flew from there to St. Louis, whereupon we drove the 135 miles home in a driving rain, replete with lightning, arriving home at 3:05 A.M. the morning of Sept. 16. It was agony. Craziness the whole way. Almost as crazy as the fact that I still remember the itinerary.

I here list the itinerary of our travels only. I care not to remember the interviews, and the many other details--all of them of no more import than the above.

September 23, 1987: I attended a concert by the Royal Philharmonic conducted by Andre Previn. An excellent orchestra, but the concert was disappointing. See the music section herein for details.

October 11, 1987: The year was good for music! On this date, I attended a concert by The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. See notes in the music section.

October16-18, 1987: Abbe and I drove to Alley Spring, a beautiful fresh water spring in southern Missouri. This place, which I have visited several times before, is the most beautiful place on earth I have ever experienced. Its flow is 81 million gallons daily, and its main pool has blues, greens, pinks that are truly indescribable. They would have made Monet despair. After witnessing such natural beauty, he would never have attempted to paint again.

Strange, that when I leave this place, I always feel so sad. I am very aware that when I exit this world,that is perhaps the one place I will most regret leaving.

October 24, 1987: I saw the play, Alice in Blunderland, in which Abbe Sudvarg, a woman I know rather well (actually, a woman I have known many times), played a leading role. It was fun; not intended as a brilliant play, it nevertheless does a very fine job of getting its anti-war message across.

A strange realization during this play: Abbe was wearing a walrus costume, complete with mask, and only after the play, seeing her up close, did I realize that the mask did not have a fake nose, that the nose I was viewing was actually Abbe's. I had never before realized hers was so large.

October 31, 1987: I attended a concert which involved The Murray Louis Dance Company and The Dave Brubeck Quartet working together. My impression of the Brubeck Quartet was pretty much what I have always experienced with his music, namely, Brubeck himself is very good, very competent, but he does not inspire me; however, his ability to bring out the best in his musicians is truly phenomenol. Or, perhaps I should say, most of his musicians. His son, Chris, who played bass, was barely adequate for the job. However, the drummer Randy Jones did a fine job, and the woodwind player, Bobby Militello, did one of the best jobs on sax and flute that I have ever heard. His lengthy improvisation on flute, complete with singing voice as he blew into the flute, was the most impressive exhibition of woodwind playing I have ever heard.

I need say no more about the D.B. Quartet in the music section herein; I believe I have said enough.

The dance company was very good, although quite uneven. There is no need to go in to details, except to say that the solo which Murray Louis himself did, entitled, "Frail Demons: A Suite in Four Parts," was absolutely brilliant. If you ever get a chance to see him do this work, do not pass it up.

I might add that I was impressed by the fact that, when Murray Louis first began the dance I mention, he was dissatisfied, left the stage, and began again. I appreciated the humilility involved in admitting to the audience that he was not doing it as well as he could when he started it the first time;moreover, I appreciated seeing such forthright insistence on artistic perfection in oneself.

November 4, 1987: On this date, Abbe received into our home an old Steinway upright grand piano. It has some problems which need tending, but its tone is wonderful--and such volume! Its design patent is registered for the year 1893, and the year it was actually produced is 1895. Truly a unique tone

it has. All in all, it is a most remarkable instrument.

November 30, 1987: The Baumli seed has gone forth and is propogating the earth! On this date, my new niece is born of sister Christine and brother-in-law Chris. Named Melody Anne, she shows every sign of being worthy of this uncle.

December 3, 1987: You will remember that last year Dacia was, within eight weeks of beginning the flute, first chair in the junior high band, a position which she held all year.

Dacia this year joined the high school band, and on this date, when they all were ranked, out of 15 flutists, most of them seniors, my seventh grade daughter ranked 7th chair.

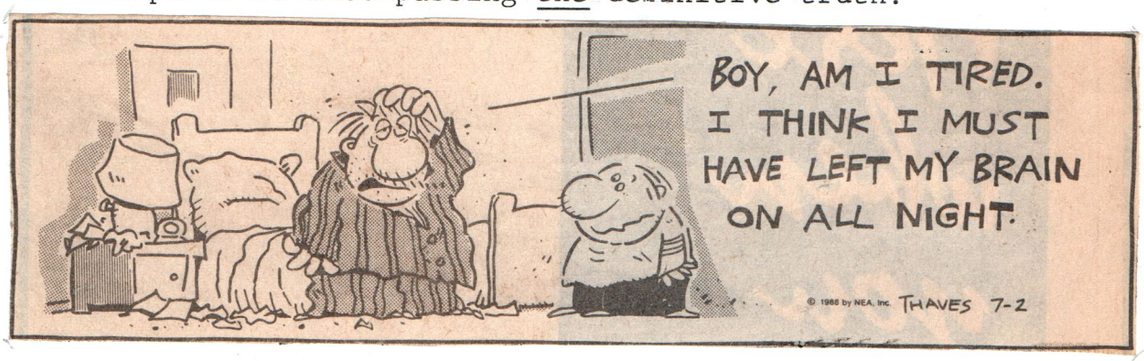
December 15, 1987: A very sad day. Eve Eisner, one of the neatest people I had met in many years, after a splendid life spanning more than four score years, and an acute illness lasting a few weeks, humbly accepted her mortal fate and died. She is Abbe's maternal grandmother, and it was a time of deep mourning for us all. Her death was a lesson: grief and sadness can harbor memory that will not relinquish the fiercest of joys.

December 24-27,1987: With Abbe and Dacia, I went to my old stomping grounds, northwest Missouri. There I saw several members of my family, had a rollicking good time, caused two major scandals which I shall not here mention, and was able to play country-and-western music with a band I had played with years ago.

December 31, 1987: I this day stared one of my neuroses in the face, gave it a good throttling, and took five pair of my socks to the St. Francis House--a home for men who otherwise are homeless. From reading previous editions of The Aviary, you are aware of my worldly attachment to socks and underpants. I can not, I will not, part with them, until they are completely worn out. And as for numbers, well, a census has not been taken of late, but the number of socks I own approaches one hundred pair. But this day, I conquered myself somewhat, and suffered virtually no debilitating emotional consequences.

GENERALLY: There are other things of note, which happened in 1987 but do not warrent being given a date. So I list them as follows:

1. Achieving a more succinct style than I have previously been using, I finished volume 10 of my Phenomenology of Pseudo-Sentient Aeschatology. More volumes will follow, but I believe they will each be shorter than previous ones. I have already written more than two million words, and I must keep in mind that I am not writing what you would call a highly publishable item. Moreover, the libraries are already over-full, publishers over-committed. I must remember that the shorter the opus, the greater its chances of being published. So ... although I do not intend to abbreviate the scope of my topic, I am glad that my prose style is becoming more succinct, clearer, and (of course) even more capable of encompassing the definitive truth.



2. The struggle with insomnia has continued, with very little progress on my part, and no new insights to report herein. The only departure from the norm was during the first three weeks we were in England. I during that time put myself on a very rigid sleeping schedule, and as a result, was able to sleep better. But other times when I have attempted to improve sleep via this method have not been successful at all.

3. And the battle with the damnable phone continues. There was a three week period, during this year, when we found it important to leave our phone plugged in the entire time so we would be available for family emergencies. What happened during this three weeks helped me understand, anew, why we usually leave the phone unplugged. We of course received phone calls from family members; this was okay, since this was why we were leaving the phone hooked up. But there also were many unwanted phone calls, some from Abbe's patients, most from men in the men's liberation movement. These men's lib calls came in as early as 6:30 in the morning, and as late as midnight. And always--goddamn always!!--these people never ask whether it is a convenient time for

me to talk, and they usually expect me to talk to them for at least an hour.

A rather humorous interchange occurred, using the phone, which helped me realize why I have come to despise the thing as deeply as I do. During this three weeks, I myself attempted to call a fellow in the men's movement; his name is Warren Farrell. Six times I called, and six times I reached his answering machine, each time leaving a message as to when he could call me back. During the 1½ weeks that I attempted to call him, he never phoned me back, or, if he did, I was not at home. So I sent him two letters, each requesting that he call me as soon as possible. He, thereupon, sent me an angry letter, asking me how he could reach me by phone, given that he had called me twice, and neither time reached either an answering machine or an answering service which could tell him when it would be convenient for him to call me. So I promptly called him, got his machine, and left a very precise message telling him when I would be at home the following week, and carefully informing him of the one day out of that week when I would not be at home. Well, he called on that very day I had explicitly told him I would not be at home, and left a message with my daughter telling her the exact time I could reach him. So the next day, I called at that exact time I could reach him, and reached his answering machine.

And ... he had expected me to believe that my having an answering machine, or an answering service, would solve our problems with getting in touch by phone?

All this complaining about the phone did, long ago, reach the point of the absurd. I need to cease wallowing in my complaints. And perhaps I should cease waddling these words across paper, wasting valuable space herein when that machine has already wasted too much of me.

4. And perhaps shame should prevent my any longer speaking of that strange neurosis of mine: the need to collect, hoard, count, and protect this vast number of socks and underpants which I have.

I confess that, when in England, I purchased no less than 15 pair of underpants.

But, as for socks, I think I have that aspect of the neurosis somewhat under control. In fact, I believe that this year I added not a single pair to my collection.

5. The question of my health remains a question. In February I incurred a very serious exacerbation, and this multiple sclerosis which has found me out took a further toll. I managed to recover from most of the damage, but was quite emotionally shaken by it all.

In the course of dealing with this exacerbation, I several times saw physicians, and amidst these many visits, found out what had been causing those strange lumps and bumps which had been appearing in various places upon my body. You may recall that in last year's Aviary, I mentioned the various bumps--attached to my bones--which came up on my knees and on my chest. You may also recall that my many friends, even family members (as intimate as my dearly beloved spouse), implied that I was succumbing to a debilitating hypochondriasis, that these lumps, of unknown and elusive etiology, were nothing to worry about, did not imply cancer or anything like that, and perhaps did not even exist, but rather, had always been there, and only now were taking on noticable qualities because I was so insistent with my noticing.

Fortunately for my peace of mind, my psyche was exonerated in late May and early June, and it was determined that indeed something was wrong. The something wrong was caused by the special diet I must adhere to for the sake of better preventing damage from multiple sclerosis. As it turned out, on this diet, which had been formulated by a physician, recommended to me by a physician, and approved by several subsequent physicians, I was consuming too much Vitamin A. In fact, I was daily consuming three times the amount that, if chronically taken, is toxic. In other words, my daily intake was poisoning me three times over. I owe it to luck that the symptoms did not present themselves much more direly, and that I was able to go for so many years without the toxic amount catching up with me.

Lo and behold: I ceased taking the substance which contained the Vitamin A, and within three weeks, the bumps had entirely disappeared except for the largest one on my right knee, and the largest one on the right side of my sternum. Relief at last!

And to think that my most intimate friends and family members had,over and over told me that I was merely being hypochondrical, sucking for attention. Did they admit they were wrong? No; they shuffled, muttered, looked aimlessly

about, and distracted themselves in the ways guilty people do. Some of these very people, in fact, will, if my predictions have any veracity to them, point to my having brought the subject up in these pages as further evidence that hypochondriasis must lurk somewhere within my personality. They will claim that even if there really was something wrong to begin with, the fact that now I have to point out that they were in error indicates that there is a hypochondrical element to it all, even if the all in question be a malady which they recommended I pretend did not exist.

Sheesh!

After that exacerbation in February, and except for a terrible bout of the flu in April which caused me to lose an entire seven days of writing, my health has improved somewhat over the course of the year.

I did undergo a very strange encounter with my body in July, which perhaps bears mention here. My sex drive became somewhat erratic. It would peak for several hours, then plummet for several hours. Or such peaks and valleys might happen in terms of days. This I was not accustomed to. Normally, the drive stays rather high, and what fluctuations there are happen gradually, or can be clearly linked to both positive and negative events which I experience. But this time I was on a roller-coaster, and it was not pleasant. I would get terribly depressed after sex, or perhaps experience quite the opposite--a persisting ecstasy which demanded more and more of what seemed to have been the genesis of this most amenable state of mind and body. But then, abruptly, perhaps within a few minutes or hours, those good feelings would vanish, I would feel physically unsettled, and ... . Well, after about one month, I realized that the itching on my back was occasioned by the appearance of new bodily hair. At first there were just a few--sprouting wild boar's hairs that were big and black. But then they were joined by others, these softer and less uncomely, and then it all stopped. And as the hair growth slowed down, my emotional swings abated, and after about three months, they were virtually gone.

Now I know that many commentators--physicians and psychologists both--claim that a man's mid-life crisis, and its various concomitants, are all either fictional, or simply the result of his having to realize that he is not going to attain all the things in life he hopes to attain. I am certainly willing to concede that one major component of this crisis may involve redefining goals, but I am not willing to agree with what seems to be the one point these commentators all agree on--namely, that there is no physical component to this crisis. The physiology textbooks speak of this period in a man's life, late 30s or early 40s, when he will begin growing hair on his back. Well, if physiological changes are happening inside a man which have such visible effects, and since they are related to the fluctuations of sex hormones, then do not expect me to believe that there are not going to be other effects--still sexual, although perhaps more subtle or less visible, which must be reckoned with--in this case, endured. I am fortunate that I am a man who is rather in touch with his body and his emotions, and also quite conversant with medicine and human sexuality. Keeping in touch with my body, and giving myself permission to assert that, yes, this has to be something physiological--it could not all be the result of a sour state of mind, helped me get through what was truly a horribly depressing period of my life. Strangely, it was from my redneck friends that I got the most support on this. I was blunt in approaching them. I would go to see them--men older then me--and tell them what was going on, and ask them if they had experienced something similar at my age. From virtually all of them, there was a, "By God yes, and I tell you, it was one helluva ... ." Most of them, it seems, experienced it a few years later than I did--three to ten years later--but they sure remembered it. And obviously, it had been a very rough time for them too. Unfortunately, many of them had gone through the experience with no idea of what was happening to them, and with no one they felt they could talk to about it.

To sum up: By God it was one helluva rough thing to go through, and I think it's about time physicians, psychologists, sociologists, etc., begin taking this phenomenon a little more seriously so it can be made somewhat easier for men.

6. Truly, I do not understand why it happened, but last year's Aviary elicited many inquiries from women, and challenges from men. Why the interest? Is there a dearth of real men in this world? Certainly I said nothing that was untrue, and yet, several men, of a caliber well below that of the real man rank, claimed that I was exaggerating and bragging. Quite the contrary, if anything I am given to understatement. Ask my closest friends. Ask women who have bedded me (but be a gentleman and do not ask the woman who wedded me). Ask men who, in the past, were foolish enough to think they were reckoning with less than a real man. Ask anyone you care to, but don't ask me because I don't give a rat's puckered ass as to whether or not you believe that I am a real man. Frankly, it is a question I would rather not consider; moreoever, it is a question I myself never would consider at all, were it not constantly being thrust at me by lesser creatures.

But I certainly am curious as to why the issue interests so many people. I certainly do not have time for answering the many silly queries that come my way, inquiring about my personality, putting forth challenges to my masculinity, making proposals that are beneath my dignity. Yes; without any qualms at all, I said, "dignity." Realize, dear friends, that I received a letter from a woman who lives on the Isle of Man (an associate of my sister's, I must presume), who told me she was glad to hear that there is at least one real man left in the world, and could she knit me an ascot? Well for Christ's goddamned sake, a real man would never even consider wearing something as sissified as an ascot! Another young woman, whose first name was Fuzzy (you figure it out!), wrote me from Maine, stating that she had heard about my chili, and she enclosed a garlic press. Now I must tell you that this gift really pissed me off. First of all, this young woman (judging by the comely photo she also enclosed) was presumptuous enough to pretend she knew one of the ingredients in my chili. Furthermore, she was thoroughly unaware of the fact that a real man would never use a dainty little garlic press to squeeze the juice out of garlic cloves. A real man keeps a pair of pliers (clean, of course) in the kitchen for crushing garlic. But, just to prove to you, my loyal and understanding readers, that I do not use pliers out of pride, but rather because of their practical durability, I gave that little garlic press she sent me a try. The result was that, in my manly grip, it was bent and useless after half a dozen cloves. So you can understand why I stick with pliers for pressing garlic.

Oh yes--lest I forget! There was the young fellow (he said age 18) who described himself as one of the "new warriors," whatever the hell that timid phrase is supposed to mean. He gave an account of his doings over the last two years, and wanted to know if I approve. I told him I couldn't take him seriously enough to either approve or disapprove. Furthermore, he confessed (his word) to me that some of his friends had been calling him a wimp. And he wanted me to define what a wimp is for him. Well, this is something I had thought about before, and I was kind enough to write him my reply: A wimp is someone who gets upset if he is called a wimp. This, I assure you, is the most accurate definition you will ever find. Is a real man a wimp? Who cares. Call him a wimp any time you want to. Call him anything; just don't spit in his face, because if you do, you won't have a face.

"I heard that, Simmons! I'm a wimp, am I? ... Well, to heck with you — to heck with *all* of you!"

Then there was the woman who sent me an offer of marriage, stating that she would cook and sew and wear her sexiest lingerie to bed with me. My God! Since when does a real man need a woman to cook for him? He knows how to cook a steak, doesn't he? He knows how to make good chili, doesn't he? He can fry eggs and ham and make borscht and drink his whiskey straight, and ... well, if something needs sewing, he can do that too if needs be. But as for sewing, when this real man, for example, sews a button on his daughter's band uniform, he does not use that dinky thread a lady would use. Instead, he uses thirty-pound test nylon fishing line, so that that button by god will never come off again. But I have delayed addressing the most salient aspect of this woman's offer: that she will wear sexy lingerie to bed with me! Since when, in all hell, would a real man tolerate a woman wearing anything when she comes to bed with him?! And since when would a woman, once in the presence of a real man, ever want to wear anything when she goes to bed with him?!

Spare me such drivel!

And, as long as I am on the subject of things I would like to be spared--please, dear friends from afar, never again send me a letter opener as a

birthday gift, even if it is hand-carved out of red oak. A real man doesn't need a letter opener since he usually just rips them open with his hands. On those rare occasions when he thinks it necessary to open a particular letter carefully, because of some fragile document it might contain, then he simply slits it open with his hunting knife. Instead of sending me a letter opener for my birthday, send me something useful, like, for example, a set of light-weight tools for traveling. I could have used something like this in London, when the keeper at one hotel where we spent two nights (before receiving the key to Frances' apartment), insisted on calling us to breakfast by sounding a very large buzzer that was situated just above our bed. Angry arguing did not change his habit, so I, not wanting to incur an expense--or worse, an arrest--by smashing the thing, dismantled it. But I tell you, a small set of tools would have made that job much easier. Did you ever try dismantling a six-amp buzzer with coins and a pair of fingernail clippers?

But I have digressed. I was wondering what it is about me that elicits so many letters inquiring about, or challenging, my real man qualities. It remains a mystery.

Come to think of it, it is quite possible that there is nothing about me that elicits those letters. Maybe my sister Frances puts people up to it. It would not be unlike her. And I suppose it would provide some outlet for her real man envy, a trait rather to be expected in my very female twin.

NOTICES ABOUT FORTHCOMING EVENTS

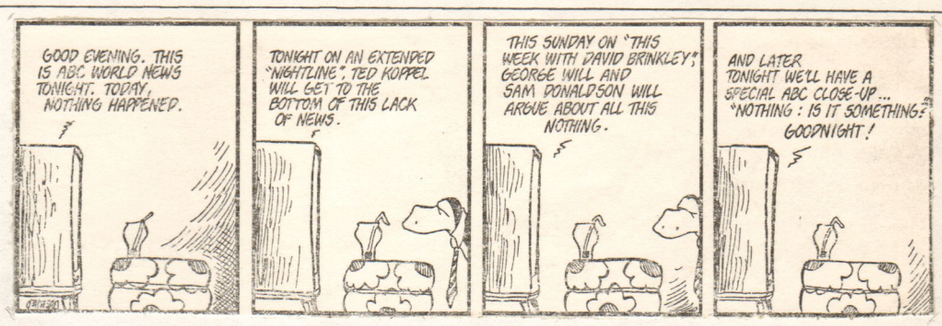
1. Consider your selves forewarned about one event which many of you would probably prefer did not happen. Namely, the forthcoming eruption when I at last lose all inhibitions, and mete out to smokers the response they deserve. Rumors have begun as to what my solution will be. Such rumors are to be discounted, because I myself can not anticipate my actions; such is the nature of the human mind when anger, resentment, and hatred are all repressed, until at last, in one moment of keen-sighted justice, the problem, as well as those who embody it, are severed from this world.

Actually, out of fairness to myself, I should herein state that I have been trying to become more tolerant toward smokers. Clearly, it is a terrible addiction, and I have seen people go through sheer misery trying to break the habit. So I have tried to respect their needs, understand that they perhaps can not give up the habit, and say fewer snide things about their love of cancer sticks. But, in the course of becoming more considerate myself, I have become even more keenly aware of how inconsiderate smokers often are when around me. For example, it has happened too often that I have told people, when they have visited my place, that no they can not smoke in my house, they have to go outside. Then, a minute later, I smell the smoke, walk into the living room, and there find the person standing by the front door, holding it open maybe three inches while sucking away. These idiots actually seem to think that cracking the door is the same as going outside to smoke. Confronted, they always say that they opened the door to let the smoke out. Well, opening the door a few inches does not let the foul odor, the smoke, or the toxins outside. Instead, it merely creates an in-blowing draft which all the more effectively blows the smoke inside and throughout the house.

Generally, I concede that people whom I know have become more considerate about smoking when around me. A few have become quite belligerant about their "smoker's rights". To the former people, I try to express my appreciation. As for the latter group, I will respect anyone's right to die, my only request being that if indeed they are so intent upon their goal, then I would like them to take measures to guarantee that it happens more quickly.

2. As for my war against television, I confess that things have abated somewhat on this battlefront. I have not shot any televisions of late; my friends are on to me and no longer are willing to give me live televisions. As for their dead ones, I anticipate no satisfaction in shooting those. Their demise has already satisfied my needs, and I do not care to waste .44 magnum bullets on a corpse that has already died a natural death.

I suppose that my hatred for the medium has abated somewhat simply because



I have done a much better job of making sure I am not exposed to the thing. And my friends, generally, are more considerate about turning their machines off when I visit, or when we are conversing by phone.

Still, I would enjoy killing one now and then. If you have one that you do not particularly value, say, one which works on only one channel, then please give it to me. I will ensure its mortality, and properly dispose of the remains.

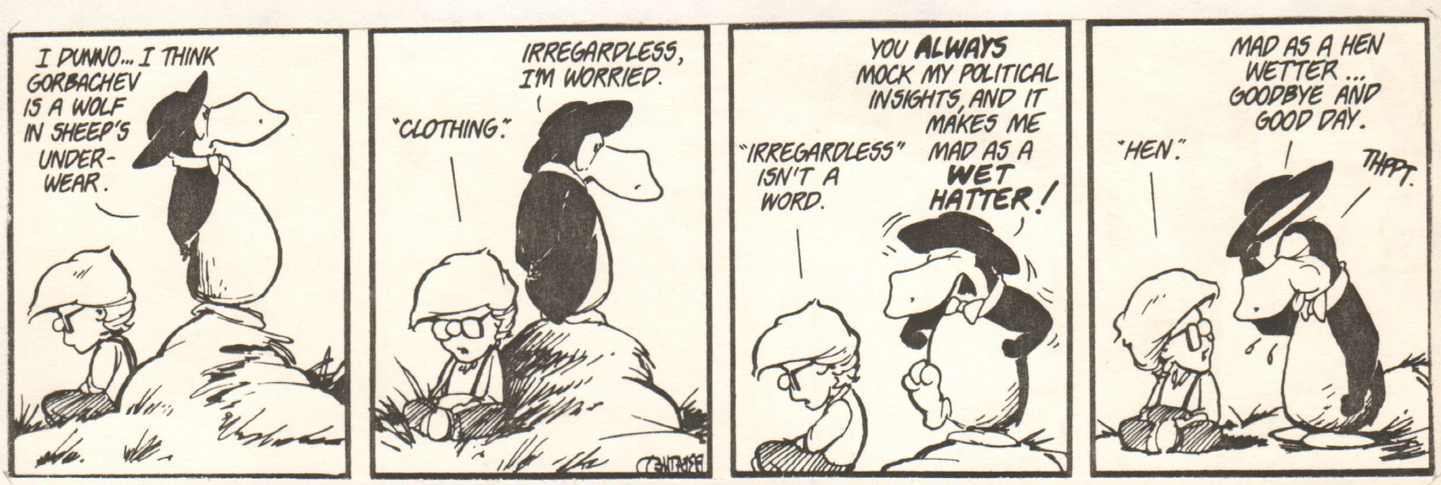
3. As earlier stated, there is a move in the offing. Some time in July of 1988, Abbe, Dacia, and I will be moving to another location, somewhere in these States, there to live while Abbe puts in four years working for the government, and I put in four years trying to give the local people a fair chance at adjusting to my presence.

One thing: I am seriously considering not having a phone at all after we move. Such a welcome relief that would be.

ON-GOING WORK

Well, on this topic, there is much the usual, and too much of it. During 1988 I will continue with my Phenomenology, do some editing, now and then dabble in fiction, maybe write a few poems, and do some translating. I suppose I will continue my men's liberation work pretty much as I have in the past, serving as Missouri State Representative for The Coalition of Free Men, working at editing Transitions, and serving on The National Board of Advisors to The Institute for Advanced Philosophic Research. But ... why here waste my time writing about what I am going to do, when already I am behind with all that work?

READING FOR 1987



It seems that during the entire year of 1987, I was complaining about having too little time to read. And yet, according to the list of books read, which, in keeping with my compulsions, I keep, I read 153 books for the year. Still, I do not understand how I did it, because truly, I did not have the time to do nearly the amount of reading I wanted to do.

It was a good year for reading--I turned to many contemporary writers and found them most satisfying. Of course, I read the classics too. Here, below, I list the best of the books I read:

1. Factotum by Charles Bukowski. This is a book about the many jobs Bukowski held during a very low period of his life. Each job is presented as a short sketch. And Bukowski shows his usual skill--an ability to portray, in but a few sentences an entire scene or a tale entire.

2. A Pictorial History of Western Art by Erwin O. Christensen. Even though this book is in black and white, the reproductions are sharp, and the terse commentary very edifying. I learned much about the history of art, especially in the 14th through 17th centuries. I highly recommend it.

3. The Artist by H.L. Mencken. Sheer enjoyment, this one. It is presented as a play, but ... no one says anything, and it really isn't staged; instead, what goes on in the minds of various people during a concert is set forth.

The pianist is thinking about a woman he recently pleasured, a musicologist in the audience is hoping the pianist will not do an encore, because too often, after a concert, people ask him what the encore was and he does not know. Do not read this book at a library, like I did. You won't be able to contain your laughter.

4. The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self by Alice Miller. I read this book twice. On the first reading, I found it tiresome, and scarcely worth my focused attention. But after finishing it, my thoughts kept returning to it, over and over, for the next several months. So I picked it up again, read it through carefully, and was amazed. This woman has, in this book, set forth a plausible explanation for the roots of violence, and also for many other personal and social pathologies. The translation, by Ruth Ward, is a bit rough in places, but it does not detract from one's ability to understand the book quite well.

5. My Sister and I by Friedrich Nietzsche. This book is most interesting given that it is his last, and also because it refers the reader to Nietzsche's childhood and his incestuous relationship with his older sister. We come to better understand the roots of Nietasche's personal suffering as an adult, and along with all this insight gained about Nietzsche the person, we also are given a hefty dose of philosophy--herein focused on history, social science, and mythology in art.

Nietzsche scholars may protest my enthusiasm for this book, claiming, as does the venerable Nietasche translator, Walter Kaufmann, that this book is not authentic. I concede that the origins of this book's manuscript are difficult to trace, and that parts of the book are given over to raving. But then, as for the raving, let us not forget Nietzsche's mental condition at this time; and as for the book's origins, let us not worry about them overly much until we have judged the book itself. I myself must say that if indeed this book was written by someone other than Nietzsche, then the writer was a better Nietzsche than was Nietzsche himself. Frankly, I believe that Walter Kaufmann's cursory dismissal of the book is based on jealousy. Dr. Oscar Levy did a commendable translation of the book, and Kaufmann, who otherwise has done such a fine job translating many of Nietzsche's other works, never got a chance at this one. Sad, that personal envy colors professional pronouncements, and thus obfuscates scholarship while delimiting a fine book's reputation. As for myself, in all my future writing, I shall treat My Sister and I as fully authentic, and will eschew any apologies or excuses for my confidence.

"The true University of these days is a collection of books"
—Thomas Carlyle

6. Views from a Window: Conversations with Gore Vidal, edited by Robert J. Stanton and Gore Vidal. This book contains selections from various interviews of Gore Vidal, organizing those selections according to topic. One gets to know Vidal more personally; he is more frank than usual about his bisexuality and what this means for him personally--as well as impersonally. His wit is engaging as ever, and as usual, his unkind commentary slices like a knife. One thing about Vidal which has always bothered me comes through very clearly in this book. Namely, for all his professed concern for people--his political liberalism--he seems to care very little about, or for, individuals. There is something morally wrong with this approach to politics, and people. I enjoy Vidal, but I do not like him as a person. Of course, he would be the first to point out that he could care less about opinions such as this. Which is part of my point.

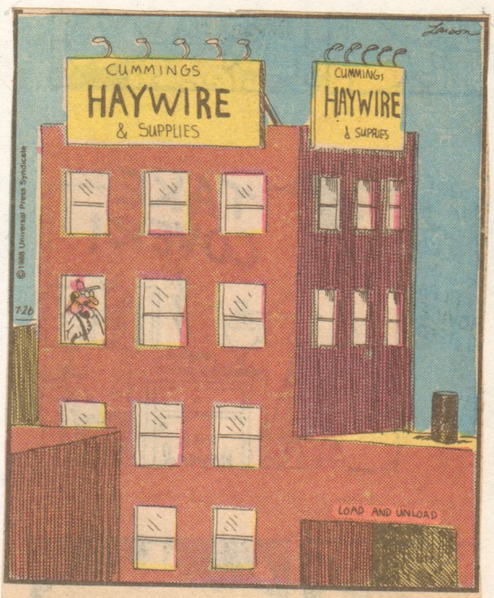
7. Homage to Daniel Shays: Collected Essays 1952-1972 by Gore Vidal. In this book, Vidal shows off some of his book reviews, which are not always very astute. However, the book is worth buying simply for the sake of reading his review of volume IV of Anais Nin's Diary. Vidal, as usual, is at his best with political commentary, and the book has some very astute essays about our pseudo-republic.

In past issues of The Aviary, I have made it a point to list those books which I read but found disappointing. I hope that, at some point in the future, I will have succeeded in becoming so selective and discriminating with my reading that I will no longer have to list such books. But this year there were four:

1. Selected Poems by Robert Bly. This man has excellent ideas. And I have heard some of his tapes; his poems flow rather smoothly from his own tongue. And his prose--well, there he is at his best. So I went to this book of poems with high expectations. And I was very disappointed. Bly

achieves some brilliant moments. Some of his images are truly awesome. But he never sustains the effect. His leaps always end with a sprawl in the mire. And he seems to never know when to end a poem. So often, a poem, after two or three stanzas, seems to have finished--to have achieved a kind of aesthetic perfection. But Bly is never willing to leave off with his ranting. Instead, he must raise the volume of his voice and press ahead, bawling and muttering all the way. Tiresome, it is, and would be boring too, except that one has already hurried on to the next bad poem.

2. Play It as It Lays by Joan Dideon. I read this book because it had been recommended to me by a friend, who said it was, in his opinion, the best book he had ever read. Well; I can not share my friend's enthusiasm. Basically, the book is thinly disguised autobiography. Moreover, it is a tale about a woman who is a most unsavory specimen of her ilk. She leads a parasitic existence, getting men to support her financially and emotionally. She can manipulate men into doing this because she is beautiful, sexy, and has an enticing, inscrutable air about her.



"Mr. Cummings? This is Frank Dunham in Production. We've got some problems, Mr. Cummings. Machine No.5 has jammed, several of the larger spools have gone off track, the generator's blown, and, well, eveything seems to be you-know-what."

As for Dideon's prose--I have read book reviewers who have praised her "lean and spare" style. Such adjectives I might apply to some of T.S. Eliot's poetry, but when it comes to Dideon's prose, I would call it anorexic. It lacks the descriptive power necessary to tell any tale, and it is not really a style--a voice--at all. Rather, it is a motley assortment of sentences--some cut very short, others a lengthy ragtag of drawling conjunctions and seemingly unending prepositional phrases. Mercifully, the book is out of print in this country. The copy I read I bought in England. As for what this says about the English ... well, perhaps my sister Frances, who read the book and thought it had "something to say about the plight of a tortured woman," can speak on their behalf.

3. Three Tales by Gustave Flaubert. (Translated by Robert Baldick.) I still believe that the second of these three tales, "St. Julian the Hospitator," is one of the greatest pieces of literature I have ever read. However, the other two stories do not have a quality that matches that middle piece. The first, "A Simple Heart," is trite and rather contrived--not very believable. The last, "Herodias," although brilliant when it comes to image, is too complicated in the way it is presented during the first few pages--which might be forgiven, but then it is too temporally discontiguous toward the end. One sentence covers a span of several hours, three paragraphs will then be consumed by one greedy minute within the story. Next, several sentences will describe half an hour, and then ... . I am sorry to say that I would not at all recommend this book. As for that central story, which has often been published alone, yes; it is indispensable reading! But as for the other two attempts ... well, I didn't like Madame Bovary very much either, so perhaps my opinion, when it comes to Flaubert, should not be taken very seriously.

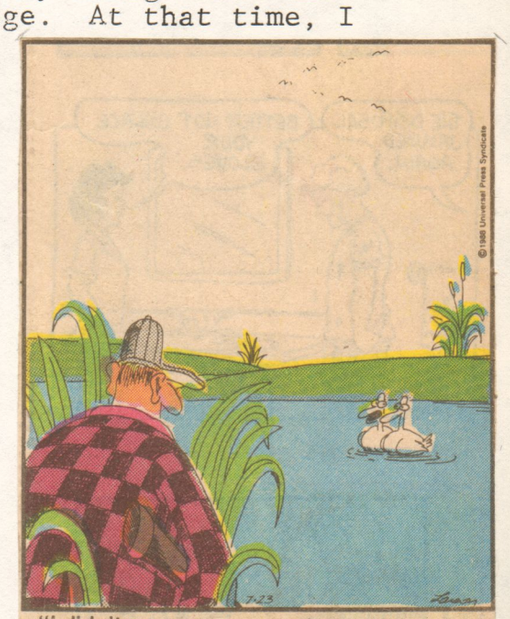
"Be regular and orderly in your life ... so that you may be violent and original in your work"
—Gustave Flaubert

4. The Vintage Mencken by H.L. Mencken (edited by Alistair Cooke). Although I have found some of Mencken's writings enjoyable, as evidenced by my above comments on The Artist, I must, on the basis of this book, speculate that the sage of Baltimore is not as sagacious as some would say. When it comes to his essays, I think he is a better stylist than thinker, and a better thinker than creator. He has more wit than genius, and not infrequently, even his wit strains and stumbles. Often he waxes momentarily eloquent, only to quickly wane redundant. He turns fine phrases, but they have too little power. He exercises fine judgement, but lacks depth: he probes, but does not plumb.

Again, this year, the same book receives the prize for "most offensive book" and "worst book." Beyond the Best Interests of the Child by Joseph Goldstein, Anna Freud, and Albert J. Solnit has enjoyed popularity for a goodly number of years among those who attempt to define issues in child custody and such. These three opinionators attempt to auction off their silliness by calling it such things as "sound psychiatry" and "theory grounded in a tradition of psychiatric study." Actually, there is very little theory, in the realm of psychiatry, which can cast light on difficult issues around child custody. But these authors are obviously blissfully unaware of what theory there is. They are content with dogmatic cliches,

hasty conclusions, and rhetorical self-aggrandizement that would put every dead logician to thrashing in his grave. The book is terribly written, bereft of reason, and an insult to my values--literary, philosophical, parental.

You may recall that, last year, I poured forth my indignation and despair over the deterioration of our English language. At that time, I was able to give a rather lengthy list of the more offensive mistakes I had encountered because I had made it a habit to write them down. But this last year, I found that the very recording of such repugnant utterances was too demeaning for a grammarian refined as myself, so this year I can not present a lengthy list of complaints. However, a few unpleasant encounters do come to mind, and I here present them for the sake of auguring the future of our civilization. One such word, which I have encountered many times this last year, is "dualty," e.g., "My astrology chart says that my personality is a dualty." To such a sentence, I must reply that a personality can not be a dualty because the proper word is, "duality." I might add that anyone willing to make such a silly utterance, i.e., who would adjudge their personality on the basis of a superstition as silly as astrology, probably does not have a personality that is worth such attention. But all this is a different issue entirely, and I need not belabor it here since, as far as I know, I have no friends who give more than passing notice to the astrological creed, and even then, are only interested in its aesthetic plumage.



"I didn't say we were setting ducks! I said sitting ducks! I know the difference, you idiot!"

Another most unpleasant misuse that is cropping up more and more is with the word, "gender," used as an adjective. Witness the following sentence which I just the other day encountered in a scholarly journal: "If our language were less genderized, maybe we could all better assess when we are dealing with gendered behavior or not." Without a doubt, the sentence itself is badly constructed and ends confusingly, but things may have improved somewhat had the author (a Ph.D. from Harvard, whose name I will not here mention because I refuse to grant her a vicarious immortality through my immortal words) been intelligent enough--graceful enough--to avoid such offensive language.

My main complaint, registered last year, is this recent tendency among my fellow citizenry (note I do not say peers) to take nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, and by rather gruesome twists of the tongue, convert them to verbs. I last year speculated that this tendency is perhaps an instinctive realization that, what with the contamination of television, our culture is rapidly losing its facility with language and, realizing this, people are converting as much of the language as possible to verbs so that when our entire culture succumbs to dysarthric senility, then verbs, which are the last to be lost in cases of senility, will remain in abundance, thus preserving for a longer while a semblance of language function within our culture.

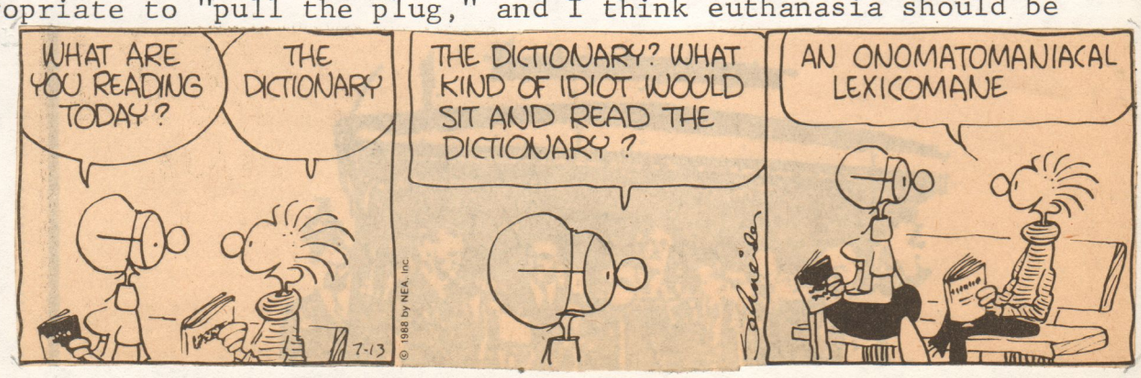
And You Thought *You* Were Stupid?

If you have the vague suspicion that doctors talk in medicalese just to confuse the rest of us, you may be only half right—they also do it to confuse and impress each other.

To prove that scientists are as susceptible to important-sounding nonsense as the rest of us, an educator specializing in the psychology of marketing conducted an interesting experiment. Dr. J. Scott Armstrong trained an actor to deliver a supposedly scientific lecture that was actually 100 percent pure "double talk, meaningless words, false logic, contradictory statement, irrelevant humor and meaningless references to unrelated topics." Then he delivered this bogus presentation to three audiences of psychiatrists, psychologists, educators and administrators.

No one detected the hoax. In fact, when they were polled, most audience members described the lecture as "clear and stimulating" (*The New York Times*, January 13, 1987).

Even if the process of converting nouns and such to verbs is occasioned by our instinct for species survival, I can not approve of such undignified means of prolonging life. I think there comes a time when, for any invalid, it is not inappropriate to "pull the plug," and I think euthanasia should be invoked before the person, or culture, has been stripped of all remaining dignity. Hence, I oppose the creation of verbal barbarisms such



such as those I here list:

Let us begin with the recent verb, "revisioning" which people are using in place of the correct word, "revising." Yes; truly, I encountered the following sentnece: "If our culture was /sic/ going to be revisioning its literature in the next two decades, instead of leaving it to stagnate as it has been, then maybe the novel might survive." Another repulsive specimen of such misuse, although not as syntactically awkward as the last, is, "I am impromptuing this editorial as I write it." Then there was this sentence, in a respected medical journal: "Without any physician backup, she had midwived more than 100 births yearly over the last six years." And this: "Our group should try to liaison with other groups." Most ridiculous, perhaps, has been the pseudo-word, "strategize," which might be used in a sentence such as,"Maybe I should strategize how to keep from vomiting so much."

Oh well; enough of such examples. I need not chafe my sensibilities, or yours, by belaboring this subject further, except to wonder if you are becoming as fearful as I am that this tendency to convert every word to a verb is going to metastasize even more. Maybe I've become paranoid, but, in the very course of writing these last few sentences, the thought occurred to me that, odd as it would be, this country's voluble mutterers may even begin converting those very modest, and quite simple, little words called articles into verbs. I can, with considerable fear and loathing, predict something like the following sentence appearing in one of our august literary magazines: "So people will know what I'm talking about better, I've started doing more theing and less aing. I'm pleased to report that, when it comes to nowing instead of latering, they seem to understand me better." Does this seem far-fetched? Indeed it is, but given the retrograde propensity of this country's stutterers' grammar, I do believe that sentences like the above will, in another two decades, be immodestly--nay, obstreperously!--proliferating. Thus it is that the world will end vaguely, not with a bang but with a blither.

MOVIES AND SUCH

They usually are so bad, those movies, and yet I keep going. I had thought, this year, that perhaps I should just drop this section from The Aviary. After all, I see fewer as the years go by, I enjoy them less, and I even come away spiritually disgusted from too many. Yet, those gems, rare as they are, seem to be worth enduring the bad ones--I speak of it this way because movie reviews can not be trusted at all, and the opinions of my friends are rarely any guidance either, when it comes to being directed toward a good movie. Hence, there is only one method: If the brief description of the movie, in the newspaper, makes it sound awful, then it probably is awful; other than that, you're on your own, and if you hope to see a good movie, then you're just going to have to attend a number of them, take your chances, and hope that you come across a good one. This, in fact, is how I discovered what I think to be the greatest movie I have ever seen, namely, The Last Movie. Two of my friends saw it, hated it, but ... it was a cold Christmas weekend,all other movies in town held no attraction to me at all, so I risked it and was enthralled. I went back the next evening, planning to view it again, only to discover that it was already gone; it had been in town but four days. So I have seen what is my favorite movie but once, and that I saw against the advice of two not unintelligent, and not aesthetically bereft, friends.

Thus it is that in 1987 I went to the movie theatre a total of 13 times. And saw the following:

Jan. 21: Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home. In some ways the story was a bit shallow, but I love whales, and hence felt quite inspired by the time the movie ended. I find great pleasure in the thought that whales may be vastly more intelligent than human beings. When I shared this sentiment to a rather malicious acquaintance, she replied, "You're just wanting us to believe that if you're reincarnated, you could come back in a form that would allow you access to your peers." Well, that was a razor-sharp barb; my riposte, if somewhat dull

by comparison, was at least truthful: "Impossible, since neither my peers nor I believe in reincarnation."

Feb. 21: Crocodile Dundee. For February, it was a warm evening, I was in town with Abbe Sudvarg, and we both were in the mood for a movie. I wanted to see a certain movie which looked like it had a serious message. Abbe protested, saying that she was not in the mood for something serious, that she wanted to see something that would be "just fun, that won't require me to think." I protested, I warned, I predicted; all to no avail. My generous sentiments won out, and I agreed to see this piece of celluloid swill with Abbe. Plot: Pretty New York bimbo goes to Australia to interview macho hero. Endangered bimbo gets rescued by macho hero. Grateful bimbo falls in love with macho hero. Macho hero goes to New York with impressionable bimbo and thrills her with macho histrionics. Fickle bimbo breaks off engagement with civilized fiance so can be the big strong macho bimbo's beloved bimbo.

At least Abbe retained enough dignity, throughout the movie, to be appalled by this bit of fun.

Night of the Living Dead Chipmunks

Mar. 7: Hoosiers. A right wholesome movie, this one was, at least for the most part. Fine acting and a true story that came across as believable. Or, I should say, most of it was believable. The part about the basketball coach falling for the young woman was not believable. She had been a bitch toward him throughout the entire story, but then, wouldn't you know, when she finally falls for him, he declares that he had been in love with her since the moment they first met. My recollection of their first meeting is that she attempted, through sheer bitchery, to relieve him of certain vital organs. But of course, being a big, strong man, he not only kept his organs intact, he actually fell in love with his attacker. Ah yes. Another yawn for the Hollywood macho.

Apr. 7: My Dinner with Andre. This one I have seen before, and it is on my "Ten Favorite Movies" list. A powerful story, wonderful juxtaposition of character and ideas, and acting that in terms of sheer quality is unremitting. Perhaps my youthful idealism is fading, but whereas, during previous viewings, I had identified more with Andre, this time I identified more with Wally. I too would rather have my electric blanket than commune with the cold.

May 29: The Name of the Rose. This one, most certainly, is going on my "Ten Favorite Movies" list, just as soon as I can figure out which of those already on the list deserves being nudged off. This movie--such historical accuracy! The faces were beyond what even Fellini can do! There was such sheer power--of acting, of story, of plot, of plots within plots, of literary inspiration! Truly, I can not describe this movie's quality, except to say that I would have viewed it nightly for the next two weeks had time permitted.

An interesting note: I saw this movie in Abbe's company, and it so frightened her that, the following night, when she went to take a shower, she needed me to accompany her to the basement where the shower is located. I sat there patiently, chuckling at her the whole time, and then refused to promise that I would not tell anyone about her recently discovered, rather hyperfeminine method for allaying her fears of scarey things in the dark

May 31: Prick Up Your Ears. I thought this one had a poor beginning, but its quality grew better, and it ended up as a very good character study. A curious thing: It had an X rating, and yet, there was no explicit sex; what sex did happen was referred to in the most oblique ways. The movie ended violently, but again, it was not portrayed graphically; one merely saw shadows. Clearly, this movie was given an X rating because it was about two homosexual men. Truly, had all the sex and violence that the movie portrayed occurred between two people in a heterosexual relationship, the movie would not have received an X rating, and probably not even an R rating. Obviously, the movie was given a bad rating only because homosexuality is considered by the heterosexual majority to be perverted. As for that 10% homosexual minority, well ... the most we can say is that certain heterosexual rhetoricians, purporting generosity, are at last willing to forgive the nasty sinner as long as they can continue to punish the sin. How it is they have figured out a way of punishing that sin, but not the sinner, is something they have never explained to my satisfaction. But then, they haven't really attained that level of axiological sophistication. Instead, they are still emphasizing to me that the only such sinners they do forgive are the repentant ones, which for that heterosexual majority poses a serious problem since they have not yet found a reassurring number of such penitants.

However, I was talking about movies ... .

June 12: The Name of the Rose. My second, and alas, last viewing. I said enough above, about Abbe being so frightened by it that I had to stay with her while she showered, etc., so I need not repeat myself here.

June 17: The Three Amigos. Oh lordy, this one was bad. It was a Dacia indulgence, so I suppose the sacrifice of my aesthetic sensibilities was merited. Even though this movie had an acceptable rating for children, there must have been at least 100 killings in it.

But then, all those killed were men. So I suppose this means that society supposes there is nothing overly wrong with it.

June 30: The Man Who Knew too Much. Oh mawdy o' de lordy, this one was bad too. And to think that my goodly wife, who shares my admiration of artists such as Rembrandt, Bronzino, O'Keefe, had the nerve to enjoy it because "those old movies have a saving charm." But I suppose I should not feel my aesthetic lonliness too keenly, considering how contrite she was at having insisted we see Crocodile Dundee.

June 30: Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home. Enough said above, except to here add that one of my greatest fantasies (goals?) is to someday be in the water, with the humpback whales, when they are singing.

July 18: Spaceballs. This too was a Dacia indulgence--because it had a rating acceptable for children. And I do not exaggerate when I say that I found it to be one of the most perverted, violent, and sexist movies I have ever seen. It is not unusual for a movie to use scenes where a man gets kicked, or somehow injured, in the groin. In fact, such scenes have become, it would seem, a rather indispensable staple for comic relief in movies. This movie, however, did not merely utilize a few such scenes; instead, men getting zapped in the balls by a space-gun (of sorts) was a common motif throughout the movie. In fact, the very first scene involving people depicted several men being punished by this method. The audience (mostly children) thought it tremendously funny. A fine education, what?!

I do think I am capable of setting my moral objections aside for the sake of making a judgement about the movie's quality as a whole. My judgement: It is probably the worst movie I have ever seen. To their credit, many of the kids left during the movie,having become so bored they seemed scarcely able to stagger out of the theatre.

August 16: Who's that Girl? Abbe and I took Dacia to this one, and I must confess that I rather enjoyed it. Maybe because it is something of a relief to at last see a movie in which the bimbo doesn't pretend to be anything but a bimbo.

December 23: Nuts. Barbara Streisand's acting was great. But her directing was not. The story line dragged, and at times was scarcely plausible. The courtroom scenes were too, too long. And at the end, when the accused murderer(ess?) was allowed to go free on her own recognizance--well, that was just stretching reality too far. Sorry, Barbara; but you're going to have to do it more credibly, if you want me to willingly suspend my disbelief. But I did like one thing about the movie: the portrayal of lawyers, judges, and psychiatrists was very accurate.

PORTRAITS BY AN EXHIBITIONIST

It was a wonderful year for viewing art, and I have already despaired of conveying even a fraction of my enthusiasm, much less giving a summary list of the paintings and sculpture which I most enjoyed. Nevertheless, I will list some of the individual pieces which struck me most forcefully, and in a few places proffer a bit of analysis.

Curiously, I came across a truly great work of art at, of all places, the airport terminal of Jacksonville, Florida. This piece of laminated wood sculpture, entitled Descent, is perhaps fifteen feet long, and likely weighs as much as two tons. Sculpted by David L. Engdahl in 1980, it has a very pure, somewhat abstract form, which represents a dolphin or porpoise. It made a very powerful impression on me, and I would suggest to any of my friends who are traveling across Florida to make a detour and spend a couple of hours with this work.

I also, one day in April, spent a few hours at the Museum of Art and Archeology in Columbia, Missouri. Sad that, as close as I live to this very fine museum, I spend so little time there. Although much of its art interests me not at all, it does have some works which truly are world-class, i.e., any museum in the world, even The Louvre, would exhibit these pieces with pride. I refer to The Sink, a piece done by the American, Simon Dinnerstein, in 1974. More classical works include Sophonisba (1647) by the Swiss painter, Matthaus Merian the Younger, David with the Head of Goliath executed in the early 17th century and attributed to Giovanni Battista Caracciolo. And then there is a very fine sculpture of two female figures entitled Bathing Nymphs done in 1867 by Johan Von Halbig, a sculptor whom I believe has been too much neglected in this century.

But of course, it was the art in England and Scotland which I enjoyed most this year. I have already mentioned the delights of which I partook when

in Leicester. We also spent a day at Bath, which did not impress me overly much. I enjoyed seeing the ancient system of plumbing, but as for the extant ruins of the baths themselves, these scarcely interested me. York, however, was a much more enjoyable experience. Its small art gallery had several world-class paintings, along with several works by William Etty, who was a York native. Several of his paintings there were not very good, but others were of very high quality. I was stunned by his Study of Mlle Rachel, a portrait with a quality I had never realized Etty was capable of. And I especially liked his Venus and Cupid--the one that was done around 1830. This theme, of which artists never tire, is treated by Etty in a most unusual way. Whereas most artists treat them as two autonomous, perhaps conflicting, deities, Etty emphasizes the tenderness of the mother-child relationship. The fact that Cupid is portrayed as a baby--almost an infant--is also most unusual and charming, as is the fact that Venus' averted face is hidden by Cupid. Overall, it is a most unique painting, from a thematic and formalistic view, and its sensuality was so striking as to almost detract from the disinterested aesthetic attitude.

York Minster, too, was most wonderful. Although its interior is clearly middle Gothic, it retains a great deal of Romanesque influence on the exterior which, despite its size and the flying buttresses, appears to be unusually square and bulky.

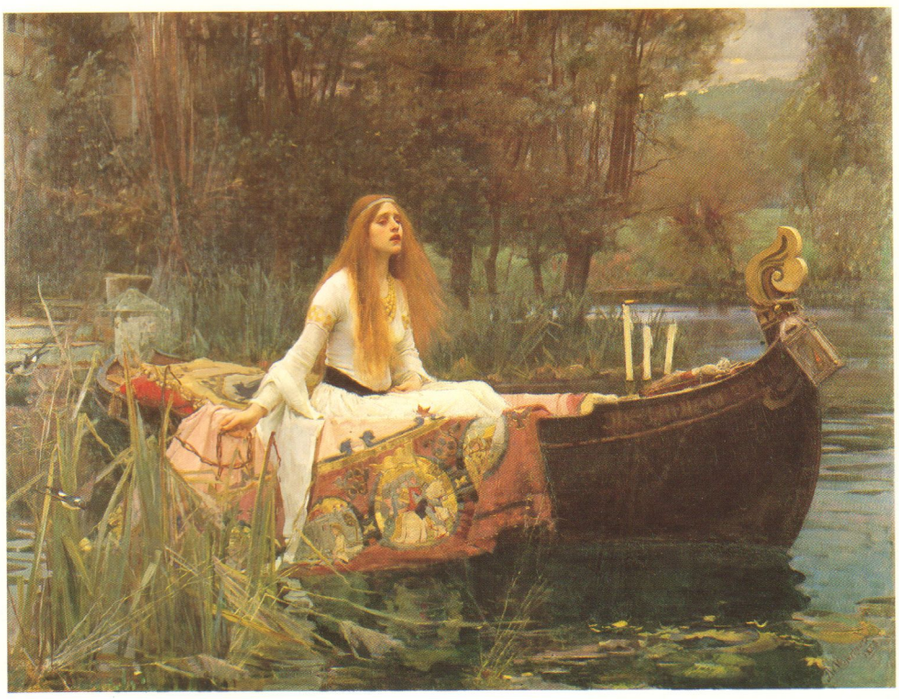
We spent most of our vacationing time in London, and while there, spent most of our time at the National Gallery. Over the last few years, I have tended to value my visit to a gallery in terms of the novel, totally unexpected experiences it affords. One of these, at the London National Gallery, was viewing Botticelli's Venus and Mars. Of course I have seen this work reproduced in many art books, but the reproductions had never impressed me very much. But this painting, in a large room containing perhaps one hundred paintings, stood out like a sun. Its brilliance, its use of color, and the soft beauty of the figures were simply stunning. And to think that this painter was working in the 15th and early 16th centuries! Another wonderful discovery at this gallery were paintings by Bronzino, whose works I scarcely know. His An Allegory of Venus and Cupid is somewhat famous, and seeing the actual painting, as opposed to reproductions, allowed me to appreciate better what it is that makes his paintings so unique. His surfaces are so smooth, so evenly textured, that the effect is almost one of monochrome. Yet the subtle shadings of different colors are there, and the nuance of emotion unerringly announces itself. As for other works: How much should I say? The da Vinci's there are sublime, as are the many Titians. A piece of sculpture, Bust of Herakles (a Roman copy of a Greek original attributed to Lysippos), was truly beautiful--so nice to see a male subject treated with such power. And then there were the Raphaels, paintings by Tintoretto, the Correggios, The Supper at Emmaus by Caravaggio, the Tiepolos, the Batoni entitled Time Orders Old Age to Destroy Beauty, and ... an unexpected discovery, The Arnolfini Marriage by Jan van Eyck. This latter painting, like the Botticelli, is one I had often seen in reproductions, and had not appreciated overly much. But in the original it contains so much detail, and mastery of color, which reproductions never capture; now, at last, I can understand why so many art books include it in their illustrations. In this gallery, there are many Rembrandts, my favorite probably being his 1669 self-portrait. That was the year he died, and this portrait contains an awesome blend of sadness, bewilderment, and cheerful good humor. Perhaps the greatest experience, for me, at that gallery was Rubens' Samson and Delilah. This is a huge painting, in excellent condition, with compositional dexterity and a massive coloration which I have never before witnessed in any painting. Rubens, truly, is one of my very favorite painters, and the gallery contained many of his best, including The Brazen Serpent, but the Samson and Delilah is so great that it actually tends to eclipse his other paintings. As for the Spanish, French, and English painters, I enjoyed them too, but there were too many great paintings to here mention. I might, however, state that I was grateful for the opportunity to come to a better appreciation of both Gainsborough and Reynolds. I have always loved Gainsborough's paintings, although I must confess that this love persists most strongly when I avoid reading about his life. However, I had never been able to appreciate Reynolds, because, compared to Gainsborough, he always came up rather short, in my opinion. I came to see, however, that Reynolds is to Gainsborough much as Franz Hals is to Rembrandt. Reynolds and Hals do not have the finesse that the other two painters have; they apply their colors thickly, almost garishly in certain paintings. But if one stands back, perhaps 15 to 20 feet, then the colors blend, and one sees a more striking image from a distance than one can ever discern from that distance in either Rembrandt or Gainsborough. I must say that I still prefer these last-mentioned painters to the two afore-mentioned ones, but I am grateful to better understand, and appreciate, two painters whom I before would too often dismiss.

I spent a few hours with the Impressionists at the National Gallery, but I shall not go into that here; there are better things of which to speak, which were discovered at the Tate Gallery.

One discovery involved a disappointment--a huge disillusionment of sorts. At the Tate is Rodin's marble Kiss, which I had long admired in reproductions. In the actual piece of sculpture, I saw many, many major flaws. I was forced to at last admit that, many of the variations on the human form, which I had perceived in many of his other works of sculpture, were not just variations occasioned by the sculptor's whim or inspiration. They are, for all of Rodin's capacity for capturing emotion, artistic flaws of form. The Kiss, if photographed from certain angles, appears very powerful; but viewing it in the round is difficult, and truly the piece seems so bad, in a way--or, in many ways--that one does not wish to think of it as having been done by Rodin. Or, at least one does not wish to think such, until one begins taking a less generous attitude toward some of his other pieces. The poet, Rilke, would of course have us believe that Rodin was as great a sculptor as ever put chisel to marble; but then, Rilke's poetry I can not stomach, and I have never found anything of value in his essays. So my deminished generosity toward Rodin is not likely to be revived by that sculptor's chief literary exponent.

I did enjoy the pieces of sculpture by Henry Moore, whose work I often do not like very much. The Picasso paintings at this gallery were very pleasant. And I especially enjoyed three paintings by the greatest painter of this century: Dali's Autumnal Cannibalism, his Mountain Lake, and the Metamorphosis of Narcissus were all there. These delights were especially savory, given that I had not realized any of these three paintings are at the Tate. Other great paintings, which I had not expected to see, were Stanley Spencer's Double Nude Portrait: The Artist and His Second Wife, and the truly sublime paintings by Meredith Frampton, Portrait of a Young Woman (1935) and her Marguerite Kelsey (1928). I had seen reproductions of Frampton's paintings many times, and absolutely could not see anything of value in them. But in the actual viewing (in the flesh?) these paintings have a brilliance, and a realism, that are matched by no more than two or three painters of this century.

I went to the Tate, expecting to see 20th century art primarily. I don't understand why I had never realized that the Tate houses so many of the works of the Pre-Raphaelite school. This school of painters--of paintings--has long been one of my favorites, and I was ecstatic to enter a huge room and immediately find myself face to face with so many of their greatest works! There was Burne-Jones' King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, with a brilliance I could never have realized was there; the beggar maid's eyes glow with an irridescent sheen that is striking from a distance of even 100 feet. And there, housed in that same room, is my favorite painting from the Pre-Raphaelite school: The Lady of Shalott done by Waterhouse in 1888. Here, at your right, is a very small reproduction of this unbearably beautiful, richly symbolic, and gorgeously erotic painting. Previously, I had only seen it in a black and white reproduction, and I had never been aware of how colorful it is, nor of how large it is. If it were possible that I could fall in love with a figure in a painting, it would be with this Lady of Shalott.



This collection also included four paintings by Rossetti, Edward Poynter's A Visit to Aesculapius, and three paintings by John Singer Sargent, including one of his studies of Mme. Gantreau. But I must tell you that the greatest discovery during this trip was of a piece of art, a work of sculpture, by an artist I had never even heard of. His name: Harry Bates; the work of art: a three-quarter size piece of sculpture, done in marble and bronze, entitled Pandora. Kneeling, this marble figure holds the bronze box which she is about to open. And truly, this piece of sculpture is the most perfect, the most aesthetically sublime, original (sic) work of sculpture that I have ever viewed in my life. I know nothing of this Bates, except that he is associated with the Pre-Raphaelites. I do know that I was privileged to view

a work of art that, even after about four hours viewing, brought me no closer to aesthetic surfeit, and yet aroused in me such an aesthetic lust that it was with a marked sense of physical pain that I departed from the figure. Here, at the right, is a very small, most inadequate, picture of that work of marble. Of course the picture does not do it justice; after all, your own viewing could never hope to do it justice--could never hope to attain a sense of satiety in its beauty.

It happens frequently, when leaving an art gallery, that I experience a sense of acute grief at realizing I am leaving these beautiful things for a long while, perhaps forever. It is rare, however, that this grief takes up abode within me, and persists--chronically, sometimes acutely. But such has been the case with this statue, and I deeply hope that I will be able to again view it before I die.

There were other great works of art at the Tate which I enjoyed immensely. Luke Fildes' The Doctor was there, amidst the collection of Pre-Raphaelites. Also, there were works by Whistler, and there is the large collection of Turner's paintings. I especially enjoyed his, Rome, from the Vatican, Raffaello, Accompanied by La Fornerina, Preparing His Pictures for the Decoration of the Loggia. In this painting there was a classical motif very unusual to Turner, and a sense of spaciousness greater than that in any of his other paintings, of which I have seen many.

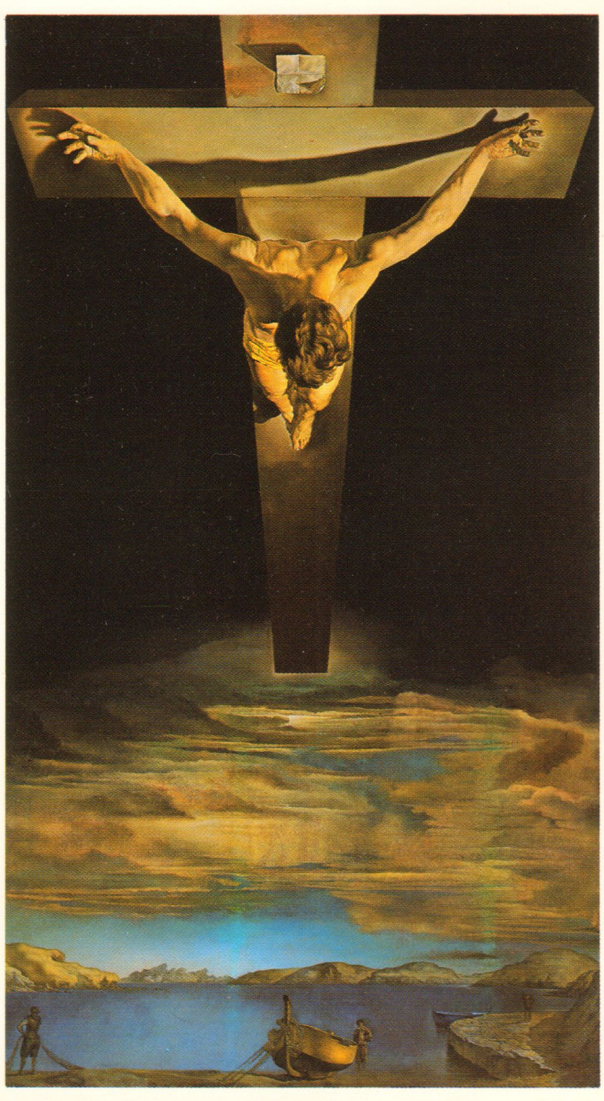
But I must move on to a description of the National Gallery of Scotland at Edinburgh. Here, superlatives fail me; I must be content with saying that, of all the great art galleries I have visited in this world, this one is the best. I rank it such because of the quality of its collection; but I also give it this accolade for other reasons: the personnel at the gallery were more knowledgable of art than the people in charge of any gallery I have ever visited. Moreover, they were friendly, helpful, most enthusiastic, truly in love with their work and inspired by their surroundings. As I say, the art collection at this gallery is awesome; but what is just as important is the way it is displayed. The attention to symmetry within each room is meticulous, the lighting perfect, the general atmosphere warm and almost womb-like. To enter that building was to enter a true sanctum for the arts, where beauty is held holy, and the priests are truly devout.

As for the art that is there: The several Raphaels are most lovely, and one is overwhelmed by the number of Poussins and the paintings by Gainsborough, Rubens, Watteau, Van Gogh, Monet, and many others too numerous to mention. The many portraits by the great Scottish painters deserve a full week's viewing time by themselves. El Greco's St. Jerome in Penitence, a truly sublime painting, was shown to us even though it was in storage. Another painting, of which I had never been aware--either through reproductions or in literary references, was Tiepolo's The Finding of Moses. At this gallery, I gained new respect for Titian, and was privileged to view his Venus Anadyomene, which has an almost impressionistic quality even though it is as starkly realistic and formalistically exact as anything he ever painted. I was especially enamored by Reynolds' The Ladies Walgrave. Viewing that painting brought me to a new level of appreciation for Reynolds. I realized that the secret to appreciating Reynolds is to put aside expectations for subtle shadings of emotion such as one might see in a Gainsborough. Rather, one must look for how he intentionally depicts the intellectual temperament of his subjects, their thoughts, and the active liveliness of their individual personalities. There were some powerful van Dykes there too, and as always, I went through something of a struggle with his paintings. Without doubt he is as masterful as any painter of the first rank; yet, I always have difficulty with his subjects--or, with the way he paints his subjects. The facial portraits, even in the full-length depictions, are truly great; but as for the rest of those people's bodies--they are too severe for me. The men are so often encased in armor. The women seem to be even more securely enclosed

in their voluminous black clothes. One wonders if these people ever hold intercourse with one another--verbal or otherwise. Do they make love with teeth clenched and eyes averted from one another? Why would an artist want to paint such subjects? They are not quite morbid, so one can not place them in the category of the horrible; and yet, there is so little in the way of human loveliness to draw one to the persons represented in van Dyke's paintings.

Fortunately, I could put my obsession with this painter aside, and concentrate on Sargent's Lady Agnew of Lochnaw. You should be informed that this great portrait, although considered by many to be Sargent's greatest painting, was temporarily in storage because there was not room to hang it. The director of the gallery was kind enough to show it to us, and I was deeply grateful, because no reproduction I have seen begins to capture the admixture of rather frightening emotions apparent in this beautiful woman's gaze. Here, at right, is a small reproduction of that great painting. Those of you who love Sargent, I tell you, spare nothing when it comes to seeing this painting. It will reward you like no other Sargent you have ever before plundered with your eyes. And oh; there were other beauties! Rembrandt's Young Woman with Flowers in her Hair is one of his loveliest paintings. And this gallery houses Rembrandt's 1657 self-portrait. An interesting side-note: An American lady, with a Texas drawl, came walking by, read the placard by the painting, turned to me and asked, "Is this that painter who's so famous?" "Yes," I replied. "It's Rembrandt's 1657 Self-Portrait." "He doesn't look very happy for someone so famous," she said. I thereupon gave her a brief account of his life at that time, and told her of the misfortunes that were fast accumulating for the man, and which would culminate in such disaster two years later. "Well," she said, quickly losing interest and moving on, "I guess that explains the worry lines in his forehead." (One learns to forgive such things.)

But the best painting at the Edinburgh gallery, in my opinion, is The Sacrifice of Iphegenia by Batoni. Batoni's paintings do not reproduce well; they are so colorful, so full of drama, and yet contain so much detail that small reproductions squeeze out much that they contain. This painting--such sorrow, such physical vigor, such eros even in the face of death! It was painful, leaving this one.



The highlight of this trip to the United Kingdom involved a side-trip to Glasgow to see what I consider to be the greatest painting in the world: Christ of St. John of the Cross by Salvador Dali, here reproduced at right. There was considerable drama involved in my seeing this painting. It is with some small embarrassment that I here describe it. You see,

I had never before viewed this painting. But, from reproductions alone, I had given it the rank just mentioned. Having bestowed such praise upon this painting, never having seen the original, required no small courage on my part; I was justifiably afraid that I might be very disappointed on viewing the actual painting, and realize that it does not deserve a superlative so singular. So ... I had long wanted to go to Edinburgh to see Dali's painting, and finally arriving at the city, I felt like I was at the end of a very long, and long anticipated, pilgrimage. That anticipated moment--first viewing the painting--felt so precious to me that I asked Abbe and Dacia to do something else the first morning of our stay in Edinburgh, and let me go alone to the gallery so I could submit my soul in private. That morning I arose early, I ate a good breakfast, I meditated to open and purify my heart, I examined and preened my aesthetic sensibilities, and I arrived at the gallery like a virgin abed the wedding night. After a few minutes of looking for the painting, I asked a guard. He knew nothing of it. I asked other guards. The same shrugs of shoulders. I finally went to the person in charge of the gallery. He informed me that the painting is not at Edinburgh but is at Glasgow, where it has always been. My God! I was stunned! After all these years, this long and expensive trip, and now--how would I ever be able to arrange for a side-trip to Glasgow to see the very painting that had motivated this trip in the first place?! I was crushed. Tears were in my eyes, and I hurried to the men's bathroom, sat down in one of the stalls, and, I do not exaggerate, this real man sat there and sobbed bitterly for a full ten minutes. My God it was painful! But at last I roused myself. No; this would not do. There was other great art in this gallery, and I could not let myself be entirely undone by this disappointment. My glass may be half empty, but it also is half full, etc. So I went out, began looking at paintings, and, yes, I am embarrassed, I could not entirely control my tears. I did think I was concealing my tears, my disappointment, but I realized that I was walking through a great gallery, looking at paintings, but not really viewing anything. Only later did I find out that I was not being successful at all in concealing the expression of my sadness. But then, after perhaps 20 minutes of thus wandering about the gallery, two of the guards I had earlier asked about the Dali painting came up to me, accompanied by a younger guard. They introduced us, and then the younger guard told me that I really did not need to worry, that Glasgow is only a one hour bus ride from Edinburgh (one forgets how proximal are the cities in Europe!), and that indeed the painting was presently in Glasgow and not away on loan (something I had worried about before ever making the trip!),and that there was a bus which ran several times daily between Edinburgh and Glasgow--a trip of less than an hour! Truly, it took extreme forbearance on my part to not fall at his feet. I was so grateful, so blessedly grateful. The young man immediately became my friend for life!

So, it was arranged that we would go to Glasgow for a day. And there I was able to do one of the things I had, for many years, most wanted to do in my life. I witnessed Dali's great Christ of St. John of the Cross. And I was not at all disappointed. I could not retract the ranking I had assigned it from reproductions alone. My joy was boundless! I shed tears of joy when I saw the painting. I cried--yes, I admit it. And when the gallery closed and I stepped outside, I sat down on the steps and sobbed openly. I was not ready to leave it, and would never be ready. And although, upon returning to Edinburgh that evening, I contemplated returning to Glasgow the next day, I did not want to go simply because I felt I could not bear the pain of again leaving that painting. Oh my God it is beautiful, it is sublime, it is perfect, and it probes dimensions of space never imagined by any other painter, and it has colors that even Botticelli could never have imagined, much less painted! An artist great as Rubens would have swooned before this painting! Tiepolo would have prostrated himself before it for all his life rather than daring to put brush to canvas! Even a painter great as Dali would have ... but I am getting carried away. Dali, of course, painted it. And to think that there are those who sneer and say that Picasso is a greater painter than Dali! Yes; Picasso affords great joys! But he never bestows an ecstasy conjoined with bliss.

*******MUSICAL MUSINGS*******

Music continues to be not only a most integral part of my artistic and spiritual life, it has become a more established part of my household. In fact, there have been times it seems like a bit too much of a part. For example, one evening in early March, feeling a bit out of sorts for reasons unknown to me, I rather abruptly became aware that, in her bedroom, Dacia was playing "Scarborough Fair" on her flute, and Abbe, in the living room, was playing Mozart's Viennese Sonatina. Meanwhile, standing in the kitchen, I had been running Widor's Eighth Organ Symphony through my head. Now, the first of these pieces is in E-flat Major, Mozart's piece is in C Major, and the symphony by Widor is in B Major. Three scarcely proximal keys, three different kinds

of music, and three different instruments--the flute, the piano, and the symphony orchestra (well; actually the mind). No wonder things were becoming difficult.

But I complain more for the sake of injecting humor than anything; actually, experiencing this much music in the household has been a true joy.

And this last year I have been blessed by having been able to attend so many wonderful concerts--the best of them in London. Which puts me in mind of a certain peeve of mine. Namely, why is it that London, but one city, can by itself contain so much that is great in the way of orchestras, whereas in this country, a city as large, i.e., New York, has so little? Stop to ponder the matter. In London and its close vicinity there is The Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, The English Chamber Orchestra, The Philharmonia Orchestra, The London Symphony Orchestra, The London Philharmonic, The Royal Philharmonic, The Academy of Ancient Music, The English Baroque Soloists, and ... well, I have here listed eight world-class orchestras off the top of my head. But as for the one city, in the USA of comparable size, there is The New York Philharmonic--which is certainly not a world class orchestra, although it does deserve being called a first-rate orchestra. Why such a difference? Why does New York City have so little, in comparison? Likely much of it is because, in this country, there simply is too little support for the arts--either in the private sector or in government. But I rather suspect that there are other problems too, endemic to New York City itself. After all, relatively smaller cities are able to advance world-class orchestras--Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia. (Note I say "relatively smaller"--as compared to New York City.) Why is it a city as big as New York, with so much cultural admixture, so much talent, is not capable of producing better orchestras--better music? I sometimes wonder if this results from the fact that residents of New York City are, for the most part, so damnedably provincial. Yes; I use the word provincial intentionally. True, it may seem that the city is not at all provincial; it is so large that it indeed does give the illusion of being cosmopolitan. But despite its size, it takes on a provincial attitude because its citizenry are scarcely aware that there is much of anything else in the U.S. They know about Washington, D.C., because they watch the evening news. They acknowledge the existence of a tiny dot of a city in the Midwest called Chicago, and far away, on the remote West Coast, there is San Francisco and L.A. As for anything else, they either prefer not to think about it, or they actually can not comprehend it. I tend to believe that this is part of the reason New York City does not have better music. New Yorkers tend to think they have everything, and, as a result, they gauge themselves against nothing. Thus lacking critical comparative standards, their quality deteriorates--and, has been deteriorating for the last several decades. Although The New York Philharmonic has had many fine conductors over the last two score years, the orchestra itself has been slipping ever since Bruno Walter left them.

"They really need money. I think there should be a rock concert to benefit the symphony."

Another peeve: the very pervasive machismo among men--between men--who are lovers of classical music. I suppose this bothers me so much simply because, in a realm so sublimely beautiful, I can not tolerate its purity being contaminated by an attitude that is both so very incongruous, and so boring. In a past issue of The Aviary, I have mentioned my repugnance at seeing men play their game called, "drop the needle," which involves several men listening to music, one of them begins playing a piece of music somewhere in the midst of it, and they all see who can first guess what it is. This way of experiencing great music certainly is not very relaxing, I myself do not find it fun at all, and from the strutting of egos, the mutual chiding, the snide remarks, the bruised pride, I find it difficult to believe that other men enjoy it. Yet, so often, men who, because they enjoy classical music, are the type of men I otherwise would seek out for company, end up being the very men I find intolerable--whose company I can not abide at all. This game of "drop the needle" I have experienced among acquaintances, and at a different, and perhaps harmless, level, in the monthly radio show which Karl Haas does called, "Can You Name Him?" However, I did not realize how pervasive is this game, until on March 8, I tuned into a radio program, which I had never before heard, called, Texaco Metropolitan Opera. I gathered that this show has been on the air for some time. Its format: a moderator gathers three opera buffs/experts, plays drop the needle, and we see which of the experts can first identify the piece. Upon its being identified, they each are invited to say a few words about it--partly to reveal their unique perspectives on the piece, and partly to prove that they really do know the

piece they claim to have identified. And how do they initially indicate when they have identified the piece? According to the moderator, "Oh, here we go! X is putting up his hand!" Yes; they would actually raise their hands. Like little boys in grade school asking to go to the bathroom. I found this program, which I turned off after fifteen minutes, positively revolting. The experts were all talking over each other, each trying to prove that he knew more about the piece than the others. And the moderator was doing his share of gloating, always making it a point to show that he knew so much more about the pieces than even these experts. I can not stand it when I witness my beloved music being subjected to such squander. And I detest those people who try and inflict upon me the game. So often I have been introduced to a man, being told that the two of us will have so much in common, that we really must get together and listen to music. So it is arranged; we do have much in common, we get together, and if it is at the other fellow's house, it almost invariably happens that, at some time during the course of an evening, a record is put on, a smug smile spreads over my host's face, and then comes the challenge, "Now, let's see if you can identify this piece!" And he smirks, grins, glows, chuckles, all the while waiting. At one time I would identify the piece, or guess at it, just to get the tiresome game over. But I have quite abandoned this approach, because I found that it seldom stops the game. If I get it right, my host must challenge me again. If I get it wrong, then he must give me another chance to salvage my ego--or rather, preen his the more, since the next piece is always presented in the guise of, "Now surely you can identify this one. It's a much better known piece." Which allows him, if I can not identify it, to crow the more. So now I simply say, "No; I just want to listen, and enjoy." Does that stop them? No; they strut, exclaim, chide, drop hints, get insecure, drop more hints, and soon enough the evening draws to a close.

But, enough with peeves; I must not complain about others' squalid habits with music, when there are so many kind things to say about music itself.

Shall I, in this edition of The Aviary, join the audiophile throngs in registering my opinion of the merits of compact disc versus audio? Well; I prefer analog. I confess to its drawbacks, and I concede that the CD solves many of the old LPs drawbacks. With the CD there is no problem with wear, fewer (although some) problems with skipping, wow and flutter are absent, dynamic range is much more impressive, there is longer playing time on a CD than on an LP, and, a very important point, a cheap CD player costing less than two hundred dollars can certainly out-perform any turntable within that cost range. In fact, to get a turntable that will play a digitally recorded LP as well as the same digitally recorded CD, you will have to spend at least two thousand dollars on the turntable and cartridge. In all these ways, the CD is superior. But still, it has its drawbacks. It does not contain as much musical information as a well-recorded analog LP. This means that if you have a good turntable, playing LPs that are in good shape, they will, despite their limitations, generally (there are exceptions--poorly recorded LPs, just as there are poorly recorded CDs) sound better than a digitally recorded CD or a digitally recorded LP. Why can't the CD sound as good as the analog LP? Well, it could have, had the engineers only applied what they knew--namely, that 44 thousand bits of information per second is not enough to capture all the musical detail. Had they marketed a CD that would capture about 200,000 bits of information per second, then they would have had as much musical information on the CD as is on the analog LP, with all the CDs natural benefits, and there would have been no reason whatsoever to ever again prefer analog recordings to digital ones.

Of course, some people say that a person can not hear the difference. Well; I can, and the best proof for me is that I hear the difference when I am not expecting it. For example, I have bought digitally recorded LPs and, upon playing them, and believing that there is something missing, I examine the LP more closely and discover, somewhere in the fine print, that indeed it is digitally recorded. In one situation, this difference was impressed upon me most clearly. Let me explain. I usually use a high quality tube amplifier to drive my speakers, but sometimes, when I am dubbing or doing unusual things with my system, I hook up a solid-state amplifier, which does not sound nearly as good as the tube amplifier. This fact no one who has heard my system would argue; the tube amplifier sounds better than the transistor one. So, one day I was listening to some of Beethoven's piano trios, performed by the Beaux Arts Trio. I had just acquired this set of LPs, and was most impressed by the sound. The playing was excellent, the fidelity impressive. But then, the piece I was listening to ended, and the next one began. Something was wrong. The fidelity had dropped out. It sounded exactly as though the music had just been switched so that, whereas before it was running through my tube amplifier, it now was running through my solid-state amplifier. But how could this be? There is no switching mechanism; I have to unhook things, and change cables around, to switch amplifiers. I got up to see what was wrong. My tube amplifier was on, doing its work. Was the pre-amp stage going sour? It sounded sour, at least compared to what I had been hearing. I shut off the turntable to

investiate, But first, I would put the LP away, since I did not have time to examine my system, and listen to more music. As I took the LP off the turntable, I saw the word "digital". I looked carefully. Yes; this LP contained one piece which had been recorded in analog, and then another that had been recorded digitally. Could this be it? I put the LP back on. Yes; with the first piece, the fidelity sounded like my tube amp. But when the digital piece was sampled, it sounded like my transistor amp, even though it was being run through my tube amp. I tried it on other LPs in the set, which were similarly mixed with regard to analog and digital recordings. The same symptom showed up.

Clearly, I was able to tell a difference between the sound quality of analog and digital. And the fact that I discovered this difference, and was able to so markedly discern it when I was not expecting it, tells me that indeed there is a difference that is audible.

Meanwhile, analog recordings are being re-mastered to digital, and LPs are disappearing from the stores. So this year I have been doing my best to buy as many analog recorded LPs as possible, knowing that soon they will be a thing of the past. Being on a limited budget, most of what I have bought has been from the cut-out bins or the used record stores. But even with these drawbacks, I have been able to listen to some wonderful new acquisitions.

"All right, all right. There's no need to laugh just because Mr. Shea's tube amplifier is stereo and not dual-mono."

For one thing, I obtained a new copy of the best recording ever made of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, namely, the one done many years ago by Eugene Ormandy with The Philadelphia Orchestra. Actually, for those of you who collect these bombastic Russian pieces, be aware that Ormandy recorded this work two times with the Philadelphia. One of the two recordings is very, very bad. The other--the best, is on the Columbia label, #M30447.

The recording I was most grateful to find was the version of Britten's Opus 15 Violin Concerto recorded by Ida Haendel and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paavo Berglund. Truly, there is no other recording of this work which compares to this one; and overall it has such quality that, if ever I compose a list of my ten favorite classical albums, this undoubtedly will be one of them.

A great discovery was a recording by Martha Argerich of some of Bach's keyboard pieces. I do not like admitting to it, but on this one LP, Argerich plays Bach as well as, perhaps better than, Glenn Gould. The only problem is the usual one for Argerich. She recorded but one LP. Thus she so often frustrates. She brilliantly plays a part of a composer's repertoire, causing one to lust for more, and then seems to abandon that composer for other things. Witness her recording of the first two Beethoven piano concertos--whatever happened to her promised recordings of the other three?

And I have discovered a pianist I had never before heard: Paul Badura-Skoda. The man's playing is sublime, and I managed to obtain an LP on which he plays Beethoven's Moonlight and Appassionata on a period piano. Listening to this man's masterful playing, on an instrument that does not have the sustain or the power of modern pianos, gave me new insight into both works. Although I prefer the Appassionata on a modern instrument, I was able, in Badura-Skoda's playing, to appreciate the Beethoven humor, as well as the storm and suffering. But as for the Moonlight, I rather prefer it on the period piano. Listening to this recording, I for the first time was able to understand why Liszt's referred to the Moonlight's second movement as a rose between two abysses. That second movement is indeed a reprieve, and in this recording, the first and third movements seem to have more in common, both thematically and emotionally, than in any other reading I have heard.

Another recording on a period, or original,instrument which I obtained was one of three Mozart sonatas for violin, played by Kuijken on the violin, accompanied by Leonhardt on the pianoforte. This recording did not impress me so much. Some of these players of original instruments seem to be making a reputation for themselves more because of the novelty of their instrument than because of the quality of their playing; I think this, to some extent, is the case with Kuijken. He is very good, but not virtuosic.

And a wonderful discovery was the Quartet in G Minor by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart the Younger! Truly, a sublime quartet, which causes me to want to obtain more recordings of works by this composer.

Speaking of quartets, I also obtained the quartet version of Haydn's The Seven Last Words of Christ. This is a work I had heard about for a long time, but, perhaps because of the religious motif, it had not interested me. This first exposure was most wonderful. As was listening to the complete recordings of the Beethoven quartets, performed by The Cleveland Quartet.

But I must not go on for too long, or I shall weary myself before I tire my eager reader. To list but a few of the major recording "finds" of this last year: Michelangeli playing Brahms and Schubert. Several recordings by Walter Klien, one with his wife Beatriz. Ashkenazy doing the Hammerklavier. Several works by one of my favorite composers, Padre Antonio Soler. The complete Piano Sonatas by Schubert, performed by Kempff. The Bernstein symphonies. Beethoven's 5th Symphony, performed by George Szell and The Cleveland Orchestra; this version ranks third, in my estimation, of all the attempts made at this wonderful orchestral piece. Toscanini's recordings of the Beethoven symphonies! His version of the Third Symphony is the best I have heard, and his version of the Ninth is good enough that it ranks just below the version by Bruno Walter and the New York Philharmonic in terms of quality.

Also there was ... but I am getting ahead of myself. In early '87, someone asked me who I believe is the best musician of this century. "You mean composer?" I asked. "No; that's an issue that always comes up, and it never gets resolved. Who is the best musician?" I surprised myself, truly, when without pausing for reflection I replied, "E. Power Biggs." Now I admit that the moment these words had left my mouth, I did some serious reflecting. On the violin, there is Heifetz; does he not reign supreme? And on the guitar, Segovia! On the flamenco guitar, Montoya. On the piano, Schnabel, Klien, Michelangeli. But no; upon further reflection, I had to say that, in my careful opinion, there is no musician of this century who, in terms of virtuosic ability, breadth of repertoire, interpretative power, discernment of musical emotion, who can match E. Power Biggs. Realizing the force of my opinion, I this year went to great lengths to obtain more of his recordings, and although they are becoming quite scarce, I was fortunate to find several.

What else was there? Britten's own recording of his Sinfonia da Requiem. Brahm's Piano Concerto # 1 by Schnabel and the Londone Philharmonic conducted by Szell. Albert Schweitzer performing Bach on the organ; his readings are very idiosyncratic, very slow, but most impressive. And there were some CD purchases, such as the von Karajan recording of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis (an excellent performance, but a good example of how even a CD recording can have a great amount of hiss). Also ... but no. I will desist. Writing this makes me want to leave the typewriter and go listen.

But I earlier promised a few words about the concerts I attended this last year. They were generally quite excellent, although there were glaring exceptions, the saddest being the March 1st concert by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. They played two works, the first being Mozart's Symphony # 40. The orchestra did a fine job with this symphony, and could not have been faulted in any way. The problem with this concert was the second work, which was performed with the UMC (University of Missouri-Columbia) Choral Union, directed by Duncan Couch. The second work, Mozart's Requiem, I had never heard live, and I had looked forward to this concert for months. But its performance was a disaster. An utter disaster. Why? Well; it was the UMC Choral Union's fault. Or Duncan Couch's fault. Regardless, I am sorry to have to report that Duncan Couch's UMC Choral Union ruined this performance of Mozart's very sublime work.

What was the problem? Well; the main problem was simply that there were two many voices--some 480 in all. They were positioned behind the orchestra, which is one of the smallest symphony orchestras in the land; in fact, the St. Louis Symphony has often been likened to a large string orchestra. As it was, one scarcely heard the orchestra above the din of all those voices! Occasionally the third strings, and horns, came through. The soloists did their stint, although they seemed to quake in terror at the presence of all those voices behind them, perhaps worried that their ears--and subsequently, their musical careers--might forever be ruined by a sudden blast from that wall of vocal sound behind them. There was a pipe organ on stage, and I very much wanted to hear its voice in the Requiem, but I never knew if it was even played. 480 voices! What the hell was Couch trying to do? Dacia, who attended the concert with me, had her hands over her ears much of the time. At times, being more covert about it, I did

the same. The poor conductor, Jere Lantz, kept trying to lower their volume, looking up at the array of full-throated bodies and putting his finger to his lips. But did they lower their volume? Of course not! They had the rare opportunity of singing Mozart's Requiem and they were going to lustily take advantage of this chance of a lifetime! That intake of air, four (?) bars before the end--it was a hiss like unto the cauldrons of hell, and I still hear it in my nightmares! I state my uncertainty as to whether that last breath was four bars before the end because, at this point in the performance, the piece was going so slowly one could scarcely count the time. Lantz' efforts at shushing the chorus had had one effect only, and that was to curb the orchestra and chorus to a lumbering, graceless, awkward pace that, like a wounded dragon, drags its slow length to the slough.

Was timing the only problem? No. These people could not sing. They pronounced the "Dies Irae" as, "di-ŭs ir-uh"--a diction that certainly has nothing to do with the Latin. And, the way they sang the "Dies Irae" was truly astounding! I suppose Duncan Couch told these people to smile as they sang, because smile they did. Even during the movement which prefigures the day of God's wrath and judgement! I feared I would go mad, watching all 480 of those well-scrubbed, glowing faces--mouthes opened wide as possible, eyes agog--as they smiled radiantly, wagged their heads with fervor, and even rocked their bodies as they sang that "Dies Irae". I assure you that the spectacle, rather than suggesting terror before the divine, put me in mind of cheerful peasants chewing hog fat at a hog-killing.

To the right is a letter to the editors of one of the local newspapers. It seems that one of these peasants was so inspired by the volume of that performance as to gush a bit volubly, if vacuously, at Duncan Couch's patronage. As for my own opinion, I fervently hope that someone in a position of authority has the good sense to remove Dr. Couch from his post and assign him other duties--say, judging the annual Alabama hog-calling contest. But if this does not happen, then perhaps an opposite approach should be taken. Namely, if the Columbia public desires such a spectacle, why then, let's do it even better! We could have a membership drive, and make the chorus even larger. Think of it. If the chorus' numbers were increased by a mere 50%, then Dr. Couch could boast, at his next performance, that his chorus contains a full one percent of Columbia's population! And surely there would be no problem recruiting this many new members, if only a small bit of effort were put forth. After all, one does not have to be a good singer to join this chorus. I have it, on the word of one of this chorus' members, that one does not even have to audition for this chorus! Instead, as my conversant subject described it, "You jus' go over there and you jus' sang. You jus' sang!" Her eyes took on a starry look as she gushed these words, while my soul took on the look of a nasty, hairy beast as I pondered her diction, noting that she pronounced "sing," as "sang." Not, however, "sang," as in the past tense of "sing;" not "sang" as it would rhyme with "rang" or the first syllable of "mangle." Rather, she pronounced it "sāng" as in "lame" or "shame." "You jus' sāng!" (this last word drawn out for several painful seconds, as though she must savor the sound of that last "ng" morsel).

OPEN COLUMN

Choral Union director deserves our applause

Editor, the Tribune: As a regular member of the UMC Choral Union, I wish to express my gratitude for the opportunity to associate with Dr. Duncan Couch. His direction is outstanding because of his respect for the great composers of choral music as well as his appreciation of the 500 or so who make up the chorus.

The chorus comprises students and community people from all backgrounds. They are all bonded together by a unified love of significant music directed by a sincerely dedicated hard-working leader who gives and gives to perfect what the composer intended.

If you were fortunate enough to attend the performance of Mozart's "Requiem," you know that the means justify the end result. Three cheers for Dr. Couch and his staff for allowing us in the Choral Union another sensational happening.

Mathilde Berkley
1606 Wilson Ave.

Freedom is moving in harness. **Robert Frost**

Columbia Daily Tribune, Columbia, Mo., Sunday, March 15, 1987, p. 42.

Allow me to leave off with this subject, and go on to generously state that I do not think it wrong, per se, that a community work together to perform a piece of music as difficult as Mozart's Requiem. In fact, I think it quite wonderful that a university chrous, in a small midwestern college town, work so hard and be so devoted to the arts. It is just that I don't think it appropriate that a bunch of people who, "jus' sāng," should attempt to accompany, and thereby assault, a first-class orchestra such as The St. Louis Symphony. Moreover, I think that the predictable mediocrity of such a performance should be advertised, i.e., I think one should be forewarned about the size, and practice, of the chorus, so that the ears of an aesthete such as myself are given due consideration.

A second concert I attended was that performed by one of the world's truly outstanding orchestras: The London Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Leonord Slatkin--the Missouri maestro who directs the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. I was surprised that Slatkin, a conductor I have heard many times, would be conducting the LSO at my first hearing of them, and I

confess to feeling a bit disappointed. I had hoped to hear Claudio Abbado conducting them. But my disappointment disappeared with their first work: the overture to Mozart's The Magic Flute. It was very well played, as was the next work on the program: the Piano Concerto # 25 in C by Mozart. Christian Zacharias was at the piano, and although the orchestra played superbly, his rendering was less than satisfactory. He did not seem to have an emotional command, his technique suffered from the broad flourishes he used to impress the audience, and he tended to roll his hands on the chords, causing them to have a disjointed sound--each chord being too welded into one unit, but overly separate from conjoining chords. The last work on the program was the evening's highlight: Mahler's Symphony No. 1. The LSO has the best horn section of any orchestra in the world, and the tempo and interpretative dynamics provided by Slatkin were perfect. Unquestionably, it was the best performance of Mahler's First I have ever heard. There was one ~~blaring~~ glaring mistake at the very end, when one horn came in too early, but the climax of the piece quickly left that flaw behind.

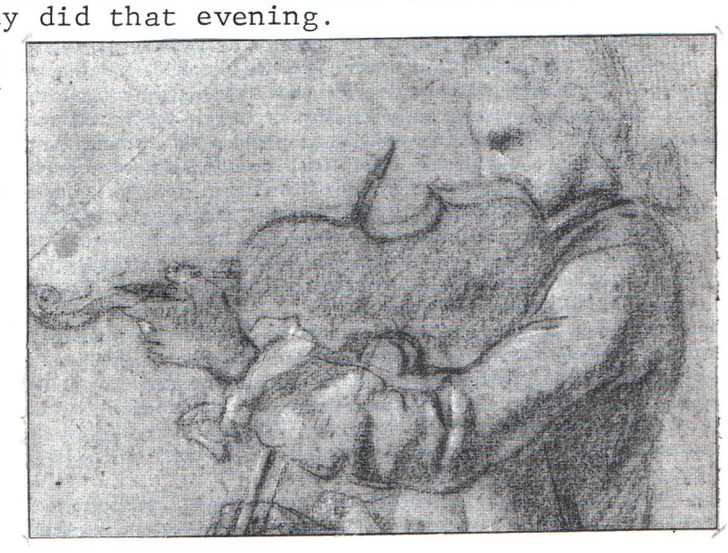
On June 26, we heard Vladimir Ashkenazy do a solo performance. The program included several short piano pieces, from both Schubert and Schumann, Schumann's Sonata No. 1 in F sharp minor, Op. 11, and Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy. This last-mentioned piece, the third on the program, was the highlight of the evening, and was the best version of this work I have ever heard. Unfortunately, Ashkenazy's recently recorded version is not as good. Sviatoslav Richter's rendition of this work remains the best available in the recorded repertoire.

Judging from Askkenazy's concert, I must say that his playing is getting better as he ages. His touch is stronger now, he is more sure of himself, and he seems to have a better grasp of the total emotional meaning of a piece of music. I rather suspect that the conducting he has been doing has helped him along in this.

It was on June 27 that one of my life's dreams came true. I got to hear the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields play. They were not conducted by Sir Neville Marriner, which was okay, although not my preference. I am sorry to say that, although I consider this orchestra the greatest in the world except for The Berlin Philharmonic, that there were disappointments during the evening. Their first piece was Mozart's Quintet in E flat Major for Horn, Violin, Two Violas and Cello; this is a very unusual work, with the two dark-toned violas juxtaposed to the two horns, and I was looking forward to a brilliant rendering. It did not happen; the Academy was using a stand-in horn player who did a fine job of messing up the piece, as well as putting the other players off balance. It was rather embarrassing, hearing an orchestra so great play so awkwardly. When the players returned to the stage for the second work, the miscreant carrying his horn was very red-faced, as though he had just received a good ass-chewing.

The second piece, Mozart's Musical Joke, although perhaps fun for members of the audience, was simply not something I had patience for when at last getting to hear such a great orchestra play. They played it well, I suppose; although part of the work's intent is that it be played rather badly.

Fortunately, the final piece, Georges Enesco's Octet in C Major Opus 7 for Four Violins, Two Violas and Two Cellos was positively brilliant. Unburdened of the wayward horn player, the orchestra did a gorgeous interpretation of what is a brilliant work of art. And I came away from this last piece feeling that, there, I now have heard The Academy play. Truly, I believe that there is no other orchestra in the world which could have played this Enesco piece as well as they did that evening.



It was on Sept. 23 that I attended a concert by the Royal Philharmnoic Orchestra conducted by Andre Previn. This orchestra is undoubtedly a world-class one, and they played flawlessly. However, I experienced two problems with their playing. I do not particularly like either of the two pieces they played: Debussy's La Mer, and Brahms' Symphony No. 4. It's not that I dislike these pieces; rather, they simply leave me rather unaffected. The second problem was with the orchestra; not only myself, but nearly everyone who attended the concert, had the same verdict: perfect playing, except there was no passion. I don't know if they were tired, bored, or simply feeling somewhat oppressed by the terrible acoustics of UMC's Jesse Hall. But all in all it was a rather disappointing concert for everybody.

The last concert which I attended in '87 was on October 11. The St. Louis Symphony, conducted by Slatkin, performed in Columbia. It was an impassioned and impressive concert. They did two works by Copland: The Cortege Macabre from Grogh, and the Appalachian Spring. Generally I am not very fond of Copland, but I enjoyed the first piece, and found the second one absolutely delightful. It was played with an unusual combination of sensitivity and passion, which seemed just right for Copland, who often does not come across very well in the bombast of the larger orchestras. They also did Tchaikovsky's Suite from Swan Lake, Acts II & IV. This was unquestionably the most masculine performance of this piece I have ever heard, and the best. There was a great deal of emphasis on percussion, cellos, and the double basses, and this piece of music, which before I had never very much liked, became very much alive and very profound. If the St. Louis records this piece, and the recording is anything like their performance, then it will be the best I have ever heard.

Leaving the subject of concerts behind, let me go on to say a few words about my favorite composer, Beethoven. You will recall that, two years ago, I took upon myself the formidable, but very enjoyable, task of analyzing, in The Aviary's pages, 15 different recordings of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto. Since this last year I have acquired two more recordings of this august concerto, allow me to herein register my remarks on these versions.

First, let's look at one by Maurizio Pollini, with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Karl Bohm. Here, I assure you, is a very fine version. Although in the first movement the piano takes the solos a bit too fast, the interplay between piano and orchestra is remarkably good, and when orchestra and piano play together, there is a virtual fusion--in terms of not only emotional interpretation but also in terms of tonal quality. I am tempted to criticize by saying that the double basses are a bit too conservative, but I think it would be more accurate to state that they are, in this recording, very smooth and mellow. I like hearing a more aggressive approach in the string bass, but this approach has its merits and does not, in and of itself, deserve criticism. The woodwinds do an especially good job in the first movement, and toward the latter part of the movement, Pollini's piano playing on the upper registers is perfect--better than that of anyone I have heard.

These musicians take a very unusual approach to the second movement of the concerto. It is played so very, very sadly; it sounds so plaintive, so full of grief, and I had never realized that it could be played this way. In fact, the melancholy, in both the piano and orchestra, is so infusive that one would be glad to leave this movement forever, were it not for the fact that both the piano and orchestra achieve such a flawless blend of virtuosic perfection with the sadness.

Unfortunately, the transition to the third movement does not go well. Nothing is fluid, the entire orchestra sounds percussive, hesitant; and immediately, after having heard such a perfect rendition of the second movement, one can not help being put into a terrible frame of mind. After a few bars, when the piano announces itself loudly, then things smooth out, but the memory of that difficulty is not entirely erased.

As for the coda, Pollini fumbles the timing of a couple of notes at the beginning, and the orchestra does not assertritself with sufficient power. But it does come off fairly well at the end, and one is left with a good feeling about the performance.

Overall, Pollini's subtlety is amazing, and the orchestra, although not overly powerful, is very precise. If I were to rank this version among those I ranked in the 1985 edition of The Aviary, I would place it between that by Alicia de Larrocha/Zubin Mehta/The Los Angeles Philharmonic; and that by Rudolf Serkin/ Leonard Bernstein/ The New York Philharmonic. In terms of the notation used in that 1985 Aviary, I would give this recording a + mark, but not the *+.

The other recording I obtained of The Emperor is by Anthony Newman, with Philomusica Antiqua, London, and Stephen Simon conducting. This performance is all done on original instruments, and hence has a very different sound to it than other versions I have reviewed. I am happy to report that this unusual interpretation can hold its own with the best. In fact, to rank it with the others, I would put it just above the Pollini version above discussed, but still below the version by Alicia de Larrocha. But this version I would assign the *+ rating.

Newman's interpretation does have a few problems: his timing on a few individual notes is a bit off, but this is a very infrequent problem. The main problem is that the piano seems to be unevenly strung, as though

"We haven't had a contract since 1742!"

the middle register utilizes a very different kind of string than the upper register, resulting in a marked difference in tone as the chords stride up and down the piano. Yet, I must say that in the upper register, this piano has an unbelievably pure tone, which makes up for any reservations one might have about the instrument as a whole.

One of course must adjust one's ear to the warmer, less sustained tone of the original instrument. Also, one has to listen to each individual note differently; this is because any vibrating string goes slightly sharp--the physical movement of a string naturally makes it more taut, i.e., causes its tone to go up ever so slightly. (Double bass players, such as myself, are especially aware of this, given the size of the strings we use.) Because of the power of sustain on a modern piano, any individual note, when struck, goes slightly sharp and stays sharp for a longer period of time than it does on an original instrument. Hence, one has to adjust one's ear so that one does not believe, when listening to an original fortepiano, that it is slightly flat. This adjustment is necessary, along with adjusting to the fact that compositions are played in their "original" key, i.e., half a note lower. But ... back to the recording at issue.

Newman's playing, with the exception I above pose, was for the most part spectacular. I, at first hearing this piece, felt that he was playing it too fast; admittedly, the precise definition was neither slurred nor lost, but I preferred a slower pacing. On second hearing, however, I rather liked this pacing--which is allowed by the lesser amount of sustain on the pianoforte, i.e., a modern instrument, with more sustain, would cause the notes to blur were the piece played as quickly on it. As for the orchestra, it was more than adequate for the job. At times the pacing was a bit uneven, with several rather abrupt shifts. And although the string section is very strong, the woodwinds were weak, the horns were very weak, and the volume of the percussion was too muted. Still, despite these several limitations, the orchestra gave a splendid reading, and I must say that the matching of the piano with the orchestra was better, in this recording, than in any I have heard. In this version the coda is most interesting since the timpani, which prepares the temporal pacing--and space--for the piano, sounds more like a snare drum than a true timpani. I do not know what drum was actually used, i.e., I do not know how an "original" timpani is supposed to look, or sound, but this drum was very nice--it accomplished its purpose--both with regard to making its own music and preparing for what was to follow, and the piece ends with a very satisfactory sense of aesthetic resolution.

I highly recommend this version of The Emperor. I concede that it is the only version I have heard on original instruments, but I rather believe that any other version done on early instruments is unlikely to surpass or even match it, given its quality. Anthony Newman, more and more, impresses me as the years go by. I prefer his work on the piano to his technique with the organ, but on either instrument he is among the best, and we should be hearing a great deal more from him over the next few decades.

NOTES FROM TWIN FRANCES

(Be kind enough to first hear the male twin on a related subject. As I said in last year's Aviary, two of my siblings were demanding equal time, claiming that if I could be so generous as to allow my twin her say herein, then they should have their space too. Well, after strong objections on my part, and even stronger replies on their part, I at last relented. They were invited to contribute as much as two pages each. And what has been the result of this concession? Well; neither of them has sent me a word, and even though I have prodded them about it, they seem to have lost all interest. I am forced to conclude that they were more concerned about my generosity, than with promulgating themselves.)

Dear friends,

I was amazed at the response from what I wrote last year. More than thirty of Francis' friends wrote me, and each of them had something kind to say about my poem. A couple of you had rather unkind, or at least unpleasant, things to say about me. I did not appreciate getting sexual proposals based upon a poem I wrote about my body. Certainly I am no prude, and appreciate forthright communication about sexual feelings. But surely I have a right to make my objection! My objection is that no one could be desiring the real me based upon an image they glimpsed in a poem. Desire your fantasy if you must, but don't ask me to be a stand-in for your fantasy. And please do not be so insulted over the fact that your liking my poem, and wanting to frolic with me, does not elicit a sexual fantasy from me. My libido, if lubricious, is so only because it has been aroused by someone whom I have at least met in the flesh. What then happens of the flesh--this is determined by how we interact. Not by how we dream.

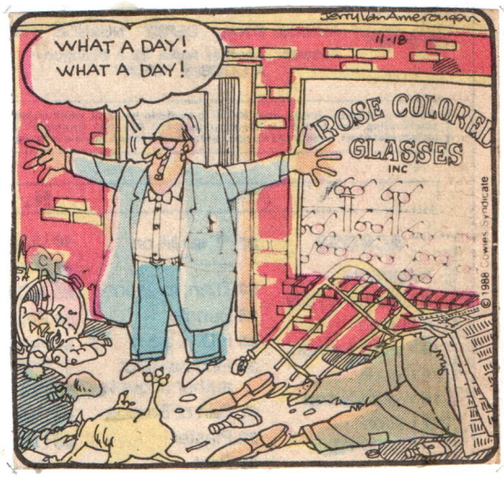
Francis was perhaps less grateful than I was over the opinions proffered about our poems. Everyone who wrote (Why were they all men?) said that he liked my poem better than Francis'. It's nice to know I can please people. And so easily. I suppose that my poem tells a nicer story than does my brother's. But when the story is judged, qua poetry, it hasn't that

defining character that makes words cavort, blossom, contain more than they can contain. Francis' poem does have this defining character. However, the story in his poem may be most effective in detracting from that character. Thus Francis indulges his penchant for undoing himself, even in his art.

He asked me, this year, to again send him a poem, and let him print it alongside one of his. I believe he planned to write a nice, inoffensive poem to go along with mine, hoping to this time receive a more favorable vote. But our purpose, last year, was not to compete before others. So, in the same spirit, I this year must deny Francis a chance to compete with me. Or with himself. This is why I am denying his request.

In terms of my relationship with Francis, the most important aspect, this last year, was his trip to Great Britain. My brother, although having traveled to many parts of the world, had never been to my country--had never come to see me. He always said that he feared he would find England uninteresting. When I reminded him that he could at least come and find me interesting, he would protest on grounds of expense, reminding me that when I come to the States, I do not come to see him only. He has a point, but after these several years of living abroad, I did think it was his turn to visit. And at last, in company with his new wife, and my beautiful niece Dacia, he came to spend some days with me.

I should have predicted what would happen. After all his complaining. After getting angry with Abbe and me because, at first, we did not communicate very well, Francis ended up being the victim of his own demands. He had wanted Abbe and me to be friends,and was understandably burdened by the jealousy we felt toward one another those first two or three years. But then what should happen? At last, a barrier miraculously disappears, we find ourselves enjoying one another immensely, trusting each other too, and poor Francis can not endure this new turn of events. Now he is the one who succumbs to jealousy. And when Francis succumbs to jealousy, the farthest dungeons of Hades will quake with terror at the expectorations of his unseemly soul. Of course, given his pride over the matter, Francis at first did his best to pretend that nothing was bothering him. In fact, I first sensed that something was wrong because he, contrary to his usual intermittent depressions, was so chronically cheerful. But soon enough his true feelings began coming out. At first he claimed to be angry with me because I was becoming so British. What he meant by this was that I am becoming cold, haughty, lacking in emotional warmth. Well; we went for a long walk, arm in arm, and I soon enough (with no false feeling in the process) deprived him of this perspective. He toyed with others, but at last gave up the struggle of repressing so much. And then! I must say, it was brazenly awful! Francis, a man of such self-possession, a man who is worldly, witty, and often wise, was soon reduced to a cringing, groveling, pathetic mess. He was angry, sullen, ashamed of himself, beseeching our sympathy one moment, and the next driving us away from him. We all were entirely consumed by his emotional altercations during this time, and yet, sadly, we were constantly engaged in doing our best to comfort him because his painful soul could not but evoke our sympathy. Looking back now, some months later, it is all understandable, but at the time none of us knew what to do. We tried reasoning with him, I even tried spending more time with him. But this seemed to make things worse. Abbe was probably more tolerant of it all than any of us, including me, and when at last it seemed that there would be no way of working this problem through, I, at least, decided that it would have to be "waited out"--as the Americans say. Things did get better, after a very few days; Francis was feeling better, although still he was given to occasional writhings, and our spirits had lifted. But then, just as Francis was beginning to seem healthy again, he foolishly stole that bobby's hat. (He now insists that he did it "cunningly" and that the only thing foolish about his misdeed was his feeling guilty about it.) But Francis' guilt was more than foolish. I do not know why it was so extreme; perhaps it was because his soul was still so raw from the jealousy, but Francis went through torments of the spirit that would have mortalized a lesser man. He fairly shrieked with terror when I told him that I did not want him keeping the hat in my apartment. The British police do not go easy on a thief. He wanted to know what I expected him to do with it. I simply suggested that he discard it--throw in in someone's trash can. But no; even though he scarcely slept for three nights in a row, he would not throw it away. Now that he had stolen it, and since he could not expiate his guilt, he would attach himself to the external, concrete manifestation of his guilt and cling thereto. It was ridiculous, his sneaking the hat down to the train station and locking it in a box-keep. He then went and checked on the box-keep daily, sure that the police would have been looking for that hat so assiduously that by now they would have checked all the keeps at the stations. Fortunately for us all, his guilt lifted after about three days, and in fact seemed to evaporate quite suddenly. When he left the country, he packed the hat in with his clothes, not at all worried that it might be discovered by the inspectors, and departed for the States in a clean frame of mind. By this time, I had lost my own worry about keeping



the hat myself, and asked him to leave it with me. But no; he would have nothing to do with this. He was going to show it off to his friends back in the States. Then, to top off the whole fiasco quite nicely, he sold it before he got back to the States. When I chided him for doing so, he concernedly replied that he did not want me to get caught with it. Oh; the tribulations I endure, all because I've a twin who is irascible, impossible, and lovable.

It occurs to me that I am, within these pages, chiding Francis for what persists as a grudge. This is most unfair of me. I did enjoy him immensely. Abbe is a good friend to him, a good mother for Dacia, a good wife even though she might not like this description, and she has become a good friend to me; I now quite understand why Francis married her. Although usually I do not frequent art galleries, I spent a good deal of time at the galleries in London with Abbe and Francis. I do not share Francis' love of the Pre-Raphaelites; I find them overly sentimental, too unreal. But his other tastes are in keeping with mine, and it was lovely sharing this passion. When I tired of the galleries, I went about town with Dacia. She calls it "shopping." I think of it as strolling about. She is a lovely young girl, fast maturing, and I am glad I was able to better experience her in her youth before she becomes a woman.

As for my own work, there is little to say beyond what I related last year. I am still on the Isle of Man, but working intermittently in London. It seems my reputation as a model is growing; I turn away many jobs. I find that I am traveling less, even though I now have considerably more money. This is because of my friends, I think. With more friends, there is more to do, both on the Isle and in London. And I've been traveling so much the last few years I think I need a change from it.

This said, I take my leave from these pages. Despite my cavailing against my brother, I assure you (actually, I here assure him, not wanting to again arouse his jealousy, his guilt, or any other hell akin to such!) that he remains my best friend. He is assuredly the most loyal person one could ever have for a friend, or a brother. Despite his idiosyncracies, despite my deficiencies, we share a bond that unites us as strongly as we were united in the womb.

I do enjoy hearing from you--Francis' friends. Or, at least I have enjoyed hearing from most of you. As before, I shall reply to any letters you send me. But you must send them care of Francis. Like him, I've my privacy, and there is too little of it as the years go by.

Fondly,

Frances

*** ARTICLES ***

For the last several years, publishing articles--short nonfiction--has been a big part of my life. Now and then I manage to get a short story, or a poem, into print, but it seems to be my nonfiction which is most successful. Now, looking back over the last few years, I realize that I have published much. Perhaps too much, considering that I haven't been able to publish what I most want, namely, my novels.

I have just finished a count of what I have published. Frankly, I had thought the number of my publications would be larger. The number is:

1966-1983:	43 publications
1984:	17
1985:	23
1986:	20
1987:	14

This makes a total of 117 publications. And still, no novel. I am going to cease concentrating on writing nonfiction. In fact, I have virtually stopped already. There is enough, in that genre, already written, that I will likely have a goodly number published over the next few years, but I think it is time to begin concentrating on making my fiction known.

As for this last year's publishing, I am rather proud of much of it. I think that my best article was a thing called, "On Men, Guilt, and Shame," which was published in the Nov.-Dec. '87 issue of Transitions. A close runner-up would be my article, "A Meditation on Minds and Bombs," which won a commendation award from The Institute for Advanced Philosophic Research, and was published in the Sept. '87 issue of Contemporary Philosophy. This latter article was considered important enough to warrant a special symposium (which unfortunately I could not attend), after which members of the symposium sent copies of the article to various peace groups in this country. A copy was also forwarded to Gorbachev, although I do not know if anything ever came of this.

In past issues of The Aviary, it has been my custom to print a few very short articles of mine. Because of space, and monetary, limitations, I this year print but one--which went in to The Monist. May it provide some meager edification for those friends of mine who yet pursue esoteric

studies in philosophy.

But no! I have just now taken the article in question out, and have read it. What insanity was possessing me to think that most of my friends would be at all interested in an article about the solipsistic and axiological implications of Sartre's ontology? Frankly, I doubt that more than half a dozen of my friends would find it at all worth reading, and probably not more than two or three of these people would understand it.

"What I don't understand is what ever prompted you to buy a book called 'Being and Nothingness' in the first place."

Moreover, I shudder to think of what might (no; surely would have been!) the repercussions of my publishing, herein, an article entitled, "Sartre's Solipsistic Dilemma: (or) Not Enough Ado about too Much of Nothing." Many people, on reading such an essay, would have hurled back at me the accusation that I was trying to come off as a pristine and superior intellectual. Which would not have been the case, but then, I am never able to sufficiently calculate the consequences of certain people's feelings of intellectual inferiority. Hence, I am fortunate that I gave the matter further thought, and have been prudent enough to eschew printing that scholarly treatise.

Instead, I shall take an entirely different approach. I shall, herein, print something I have written that is very, very bad.

But let me go easy on myself. I do think every writer has the right to write a bad sentence now and then, or a bad poem or even a mediocre tome, and one or two incoherent letters in the space of perhaps a year or even a bit more, i.e., longer. (See?) But still, there is the embarrassment of writing something that is bad. Which is why I herein print a short story I wrote some years ago that has virtually no quality.

Why did this short story even come to mind? Well, I have been trying to publish fiction of late, and not having been successful at publishing my best short stories, I thought I would try a technique I have used with my nonfiction. This technique: When a period of time has gone by since I have published something, and my better nonfiction has been being rejected, then I have always found that if I carefully select the very worst thing I have written but not published, and submit it somewhere, then it always--yes, always--gets published. Why this is so, I shall leave to the speculation of others. But it occurred to me that perhaps I should follow this route in trying to publish my fiction, since I have been so unsuccessful. So I searched through my files, pulled out what I truly believe is the worst story I have ever written, and sent it off to a small but respectable literary journal. Well; it got rejected. So there it was, at a far corner of my desk, and now, upon deciding against publishing my Sartre article, I have here, before me, something I am ashamed and embarrassed to put in The Aviary's pages. Why do I nevertheless print it, if I am rather embarrassed about this little short story? Certainly not because I believe that if I don't publish it in The Aviary, then it will never publish at all. I am not that greedy about publishing everything I have written. In fact, I was ready to discard this short story--actually, I had discarded it; I had pitched it in the wastebasket, but then mentioned it to Abbe, whose curiosity was roused. She wanted to read it, did, said that no, it certainly is not the best thing I have ever written, but still, she thought it, "sweet," and she asked me to keep it. So I shoved it to a back corner of my desk, and there it has laid idle (would "lain idle" be more appropriate grammer when speaking of a work of art, even if the art in question is of mediocre quality?) all this time.

But I have deferred the question as to why I would embarrass myself herein. Well; really, I believe the piece should not be published at all. But I am also aware of how close I came to angering my friends and readers, by almost choosing to publish that article on Sartre. Such awareness called to mind the howls of execration that many of my friends hurled at me because of what they perceived to be my very negative attitude in last year's Aviary. Not wanting people to remain angry at me, and yet realizing how too often I am an elusive target for people's anger, I have decided that it would be best if, in these pages, I give people a chance to expiate some of their anger by heaping ridicule upon me. So thus, I print something bad, as a kind of public penance. (What better way for an author to do penance, and do it so sincerely?) Thus, I shall give my angry friends a vehicle for achieving a catharsis, a purgation, a purfication of the rancor I so crassly roused in them.

But just now, in writing this, I received a phone call from a friend. This friend has forgiven me my sins of last year, so I felt I could discuss with him my contritional purposes herein. He warned me that people would think that I am being facetious, that I am actually publishing something that I believe is very good, but pretending it is bad, as a way of intentionally

rankling people the more. Well; this is not so. Really, I do think the story is quite bad. However, if indeed people think I am pretending to publish something bad when actually I believe it is very good, then all the better. Because then they will believe I am deceiving myself, they will think I have lost all ability to judge the merit of my works, and they then can be even more enthusiastic with their ridicule. Which is all to the good, because, after all, my only purpose for publishing the following piece of drivel is to allow people a chance to feel better by mocking me.

SAGA OF THE SELF-NAMED SHRIMP, THE CARNIVEROUS BAT, AND THE TWO-LEGGED PORPOISE

There once was a self-named shrimp who lived in a vessel of water. With her there lived snails and crabs and eels and tiny octopii, all of them gentle creatures, glad to share their lives with the self-named shrimp. These animals were nurtured by the gods, who gave them a special food scraped from the deepest cleft at the bottom of the last uncharted ocean.

All would have been happy, had there not been a carniverous bat perched on the rim of the vessel, a bat who muttered in the midst of his nightmares, dreaming of the day when he might have all these creatures pinned beneath his claws and would no longer have to worry about catching them.

One day a large shadow was thrown over the surface of the water, and the gentle creatures all swarmed about in alarm, afraid that the carniverous bat had finally decided to pounce. But no; it was the shadow of the two-legged porpoise, come up from the sea to rest from its labors, for it was this gentle animal who did as the gods bid, and daily went to the deepest cleft at the bottom of the last uncharted ocean, there to collect the dark mud which contained the food for these small creatures.

The small creatures were delighted to see that the two-legged porpoise was not afraid of the carniverous bat. And they could see that although the carniverous bat pretended to ignore the two-legged porpoise, he nevertheless twisted and stretched about, strutting stiffly to mask his fear.

In one united plea, the small creatures lifted up their voices and begged the two-legged porpoise to join them. The two-legged porpoise bent over the vessel of water, but was not able to see them since the water in the vessel was shallow, and it was accustomed to the deeper shadows of the oceans. Nevertheless it heard their voices, and saw its own reflection in the smooth surface of the water, marred only by the shadow of the carniverous bat who pretended to preen himself. The voices pleaded with the porpoise, prayed that it hear them; and for one moment, seeing its own reflection, the two-legged porpoise feared that perhaps the narcissistic reckoning had finally come, that it could no longer delay the task of finding and then diffusing its own self in all that is the self-same universe devoid of selfhood. The two-legged porpoise was afraid of this task, and perhaps would have gone away, had not the self-named shrimp raised up her voice once again, this time in a language that it could not help but harken to.

Coaxed and promised by coos and soft words and impassioned declarations, the two-legged porpoise leaped. And then it exulted, for at the moment it entered the water its mirrored image was truly shattered and diffused throughout the new kingdom; and the self-named shrimp, speaking a language that the two-legged porpoise could not help but harken to, had promised that this kingdom was the last to be inhabited before passing over into the self-same universe devoid of selfhood.

The small creatures all came to greet the porpoise then. The crabs told their wisdom, the eels told their visions, and the tiny octopii spoke of their untouched memories. And then the self-named shrimp came forward and promised the greatest gift of all, for she promised the two-legged porpoise the gift of her self. And the two-legged porpoise was filled with joy, for whoever has reckoned with the narcissistic stance knows that no gift is more worthy than the self, since no other offering can be both a transcendence and a consummation.

But in the very midst of its joy, the two-legged porpoise heard the voice of the self-named shrimp crack and grow shrill. Above them, the carniverous bat still preened and strutted, bending far out over the water, as if to make the self-named shrimp believe that he might actually be capable of diving in after her. If it had had feathers, it would have seemed that the carniverous bat were acting out a mating dance, but as it was, its dry skin cracked and oozed, and the irritation only made him more angry and

threatening.

The self-named shrimp turned away from the two-legged porpoise, afraid for herself more than ever, wishing she had never coaxed this two-legged porpoise to join her, wishing it would go back to the ocean and not goad the anger of the carniverous bat any longer. And then the two-legged porpoise grieved, and in one declaration told the self-named shrimp of its sorrow, told her to fear only for herself and be true to herself, told her that only then could she be worthy of the self-same universe devoid of selfhood.

But although no one knows for sure, it would seem that the self-named shrimp was not yet ready to be true to herself, and was therefore not yet worthy of the self-same universe devoid of selfhood. It is said that the self-named shrimp raised up her voice again, but this time to the carniverous bat, and not to the two-legged porpoise. And to the carniverous bat, she promised the gift of self also. But this time the promise was not given freely, for it was given in sorrow. Hence, the self-named shrimp had not even the strength to fulfill this promise, small as it was compared to the promise she had made to the two-legged porpoise. Her gift then was not worthy of the two-legged porpoise, nor was it worthy of the self-same universe devoid of selfhood, and it therefore could never be worthy of herself. Her sacrifice, let it be known, was worthy of none other than the carniverous bat, who received nothing except the knowing that the self-named shrimp had succumbed to fear, and had therefore made a sacrifice that gained nothing except to contradict her soul.

And it is said, although no one knows for sure, that the two-legged porpoise thought mightily and long, until it seemed as if it had pondered for eternities without end. And then it bestirred itself and went back to the last uncharted ocean, there to see if it could find a being equal to its vision and visage, so when it should again attempt to become one with the self-same universe, it might this time succeed.

Well; you were forewarned.

Was my story intended as a fairy tale? Yes; of sorts. But surely you can tell that it contains a goodly bit of rancor too. This story was penned, by hand, as I was riding in a car across Ohio. I wrote it in about twenty minutes while conversing with a friend, who was driving, about Trotsky's concept of the permanent revolution. You may think this odd, as many people do, but I have always found it easy to talk about one thing and write about another at the same time. I used to do this frequently when doing my radio show, to the amazement of other people in the studio. (No, I am not bragging; just illustrating the fact that sometimes my mind can be two places at once, and stating that this was the case when writing the above short story.) I was aided in my brief artistic foray by a sullen anger I had been nursing for a good while. I was angry at a woman, for very good reasons, and angry at her husband. She, the self-named shrimp, had been in the process of leaving her husband, the carniverous bat, for a long while. I, the two-legged porpoise, had waited too long, and I had found out that the wench had been less than truthful with me about her wifely sentiments. So on my way to the East Coast, I wrote a lame story about my anger. Yes; very lame it was, because it solved nothing. The solution came when I returned to Columbia a week later. There, I met with this woman once again and, believing that this time she was about to leave her husband, I bedded her. But she did not leave her husband. And I became more angry. I was angry because of the games she was playing with me. But I was even more angry because she had driven me to write a bad short story; and while I might have endured further insult to my romantic inclinations, I was not about to tolerate someone doing violence to either my aesthetic sensibilities or my creative integrity.

But ... you have read the story. Not much, is it? Just words, and space--not enough space!--between the words. Truly, I hope this story has achieved its purpose: to serve as a vehicle for allowing some of you to feel, if not better about me, then at least less troubled by my chronically abrasive personality.

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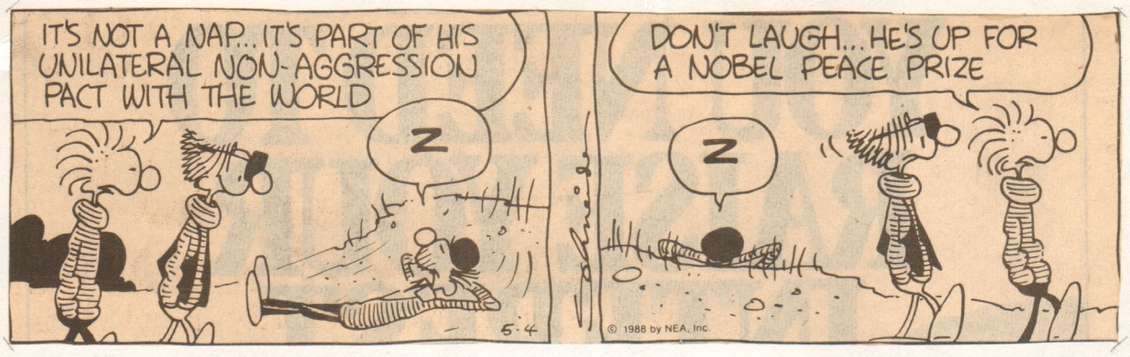
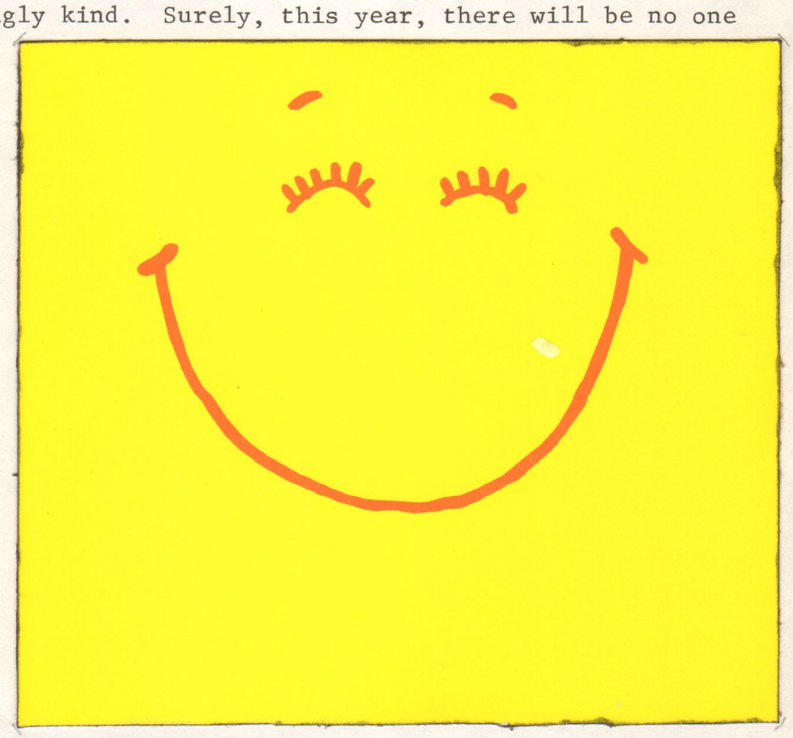


Haven't I been so very nice, so pleasant and serene, this time? Thinking back over what I have written, I remember not a single caustic word. True, I was critical about certain things, and critical of certain people, but even with my criticisms I do believe I was consistently fair, unfailingly kind. Surely, this year, there will be no one who will take offense at what I have said in these pages.



As for the state of my soul, trust that, reclusive as I have been, I nevertheless am assiduously pursuing creative health. This task, in fact, has become easier as time goes by. The older I become, the more convinced I am that I shall never attain even a modicum of emotional health. Thus resigned, my struggles, although not less frantic, are less distracting; hence, I am able to write--to bring into being the creatures of my art--with, if not more joy, then certainly with less painful laboring.

For those of you who are my dear friends, I apologize for having been less a correspondent, a less frequent visitor, this last year. Something in me is changing, and it is for the good. Edward Weston, in Michael Rubin's anthology, Men without Masks, says, " ... though my friends mean very much to me, I have grown away from any need of their presence--indeed to be alone is a condition I welcome, greatly desire. To know that my friends love me and I them, to see them at rare intervals, is enough. More and more I am absorbed in my life's work." Weston's statement very much describes why I have chosen such solitude, although it is not entirely accurate. Not accurate, because I do very much need my friends' presence; but sometimes this presence is one that is internalized, which I carry inside of me, and need not be nurtured as frequently by our physical contact. I am working, writing, creating, and like all of us, I am dying. This is why I am attached to my life's work with even greater commitment, an even more profound fervor, than I have ever before known. Allow me this attachment for now. Knowing my character--my habitual proclivities--I shall not be one to neglect my friends; perhaps you may even discover that as my satisfaction with my life's work increases, then too will the communions we share grant us a mortality that abides beatitude.

Yours, most cautiously,