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Vol. 7, #1  
 (Jan. - Feb. '90)



From Francis Baumli:  
 for friends and  
 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 know not what to think. Several months have now passed since the last two (admittedly very tardy) issues of The Aviary were mailed out. As of this writing, only one person has responded to those issues by letter, namely, my twin sister Frances. As for all those other recipients--friends, family members, scholarly brethren, devoted disciples, errant enemies--not a word. Which worries me a great deal, because having thus far heard nothing, I am not at all inclined to think that these people have no reactions in store for me. Quite the contrary, I fear that there are many, rather unpleasant, reactions lying in wait, and on blissful days, when my soul is relatively at peace with



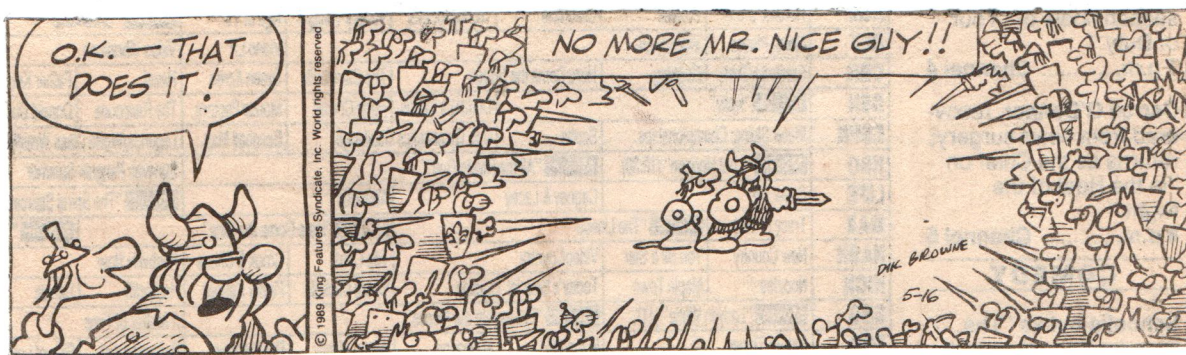
itself and with the world, there will come a letter from an angry reader, and I then will feel depressed, bewildered, overwhelmed; again, it will have happened, and I will have no idea why. The "it" to which I refer is this tendency among people I know to nurse an anger toward me for so very long. What, I ask, is it about me that evokes such anger? What is it about me that causes people, when angry with me, to not express such feelings until it all has festered, become toxic, and when at last expressed--usually in a letter--it is a veritable explosion?

Do I exaggerate? Scarcely. About two weeks ago, I received a letter which responded to my resolve to cease translating Latin so I could concentrate on translating my French. I swear that I do not even know how many years ago it has been since I wrote about this in an issue of The Aviary; I do know that it was so long ago that it would take considerable searching to find the reference, and I do not care to look that long. It was at least four years ago, perhaps five. Yet, only two weeks ago I received a caustic letter which told me that I am betraying the field of Latin scholarship, and joining the ranks of unlettered people who do not care to read the classics. This woman (who, incidentally, has a Ph.D. in classical studies and always refused to believe that I had taught myself Latin, preferring to believe that I had learned it in the course of my formal studies) ended her letter with this sentence: "You are so lewd and carnal, not to mention sexist, that I think you gave up Latin and stayed with French, instead of giving up French to concentrate on the more deserving Latin, because you figured you would be much more likely to be negotiating a blow-job with a woman who speaks French than with a woman who speaks Latin. You have always been, and remain, an incorrigible cad. I've figured you out. So--ha!"

Well ... read this sentence of hers again, and keep in mind that she, earlier in her letter, described me as becoming "unlettered." She herself uses lewd language in describing what she believes is my own lewdness. Moreover, I presume she is accusing me of future adultery since she knows that my wife (toward whom I remain monogamous and faithful) speaks neither French nor Latin.

Oh well. I suppose I should ignore such scurrilous attacks upon my person. But I can't very well do so. I suppose it is because, as I explained in last year's Aviary, I have such a low opinion of myself that when people thus attack me, however inaccurate are the details of their accusations, I find myself in full agreement with their general assessment of my personality. Those who thus agree with me unwittingly become my close companions since we thus so intimately share a most perspicacious and veridical judgement about myself. Which, however, is not to say that such judgements are not depressing.

My apologies to my many decent and chaste friends for, herein, already afflicting you with a sample of unseemly language. Please understand that I would not have done so were it not necessary for making my point. Henceforth, both in this edition of The Aviary and in future editions, I shall do my best to avoid any mention of such lewdly phrased and grammatically awkward language. I shall instead be true to my own humble phraseology, and be most effortful in avoiding reference to any untoward verbal or prosaic behavior on the part of those whose previous posturings of friendship beguiled me so utterly.



A skeptic to all ideas, including especially my own, I have never suffered a pang when the ideas of some other imbecile prevailed.

H.L. Mencken

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF 1989

January 21: I saw the play, I Never Sang for My Father. Staged by a community theatre in Carbondale, it was a terrible production. Only one actor played an even passable performance. More than a decade before, I had seen the movie version of this play, and had thought it great. I had hoped the



play would be even better, but if it is I've yet to find out.

I attended this play in Dacia's company. Abbe and I had purchased tickets, planning to go to the play on this date, our wedding anniversary. But as it was, Abbe had the flu and stayed at home, trying to keep from vomiting. I assured her, upon returning from the play, that one's home is a more comfortable place in which to exercise such continence than is a theatre.

January 23, 1989: The painter Salvador Dali died. I have long considered him to be the greatest painter of this century, and truly, this news was so upsetting I actually cried.

February 27: I attended a concert by a group of faculty members at the local Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. This group, called The Illinois Arts Trio, gave a passable performance. See notes in the music section herein.

February 28: At last, I finished the very tardy Jan.-Feb. 1988 issue of The Aviary. Truly, I had not procrastinated. What with all the many things involved with moving and such, I simply had not had the time to do it before.



February 28 to March 1: The roof of my new study, installed only about six months before, had been leaking so badly that finally, the only recourse was to completely tear off the recently installed roof and put on a new roof. It was a bit horrifying, seeing all those materials that went into that metal roof being hauled away to be discarded, all because some workmen had done a good job of convincing me they knew what they were doing, when actually they were not intelligent enough to pour piss out of a boot with the directions written on the heel.

March 4: I attended a very bad performance of The Gypsy Baron, an opera by Johann Strauss. See notes in the music section herein.

March 9 to 19: Abbe and I took a small trip, first to St. Louis, then to Columbia, Missouri, then to Minneapolis. The time spent in St. Louis was enjoyable, and Columbia was a real treat since this was the first time we had been back there since leaving. I spent some wonderful time with old friends, had some unpleasant encounters with people there who are not my friends (as was befitting, given that this experience matched my previous experiences with that place), and generally exhausted myself while enjoying myself. The trip to Minneapolis was eagerly anticipated because it had been years since I had been there, and it is, next to New York City, my favorite city in this country. While there I spent some time with old friends, went to that city's very great art gallery, heard wonderful music, and so on. For notes on the paintings seen there, see the pertinent section herein.

March 16: Per the trip referred to above, I attended a very nice performance by The Minnesota Orchestra. See notes in the music section.

March 19: As we arrived home, late at night, we saw our kitty, KimmySue, lying dead in the middle of the highway just where we turn into our street. It was terribly upsetting. We parked the car, and rushed to the highway, expecting that we would have to scrape her off. But she had only been hit in the head, and this had just happened because she was still warm. We rushed her into the house, hoping ... but she was dead. It was a terribly sad time for all of us. I had had her more than ten years, and it was hard losing her. And to think that if only we had arrived home about ten minutes earlier, she would have come to the house and avoided that accident. But then, sentences which begin with, "if only" end up being very useless.

March 27: I heard a performance by The Alexandria Quintet. Bad--very bad. See notes in the music section.

March 30: The second new roof that had been put on my study, exactly one month before, on this date began leaking--water coming directly onto my art books. I was in despair. I felt helpless. I wanted to get to work on my novel. I wanted to be done with fooling around with all these incompetent builders. All I wanted, at this point, was a roof on my study that would not leak water. In my ravings I explained, to someone--I do not now remember who--that a roof is a very simple thing. It doesn't have to fly. It doesn't have to climb mountains. It doesn't have to manufacture anything. It doesn't have to do anything complicated or fancy. All it has to do is sit there



where it was put and keep the water out. That's all. Nothing else. I was ready to kill. I was ready to kill myself. I was through with Southern Illinois. I was going to leave everything and run away and thus turn my back on it all.

After a couple of days, one of the fellows who had put the roof on came out, found that the problem was caused by one screw--the rubber washer had stripped when the screw was put in, and he replaced the screw, going to the trouble to caulk around every other screw, just in case one might be leaking.

The roof, thereafter, seemed to be fixed, and it has not leaked since. But I will never, ever trust it. Every time there is a rain, when I walk through the door of this building, my eyes go first to the ceiling, over every square foot, looking for a sign of "water incursion"--the euphemism these workers use to describe the problem.

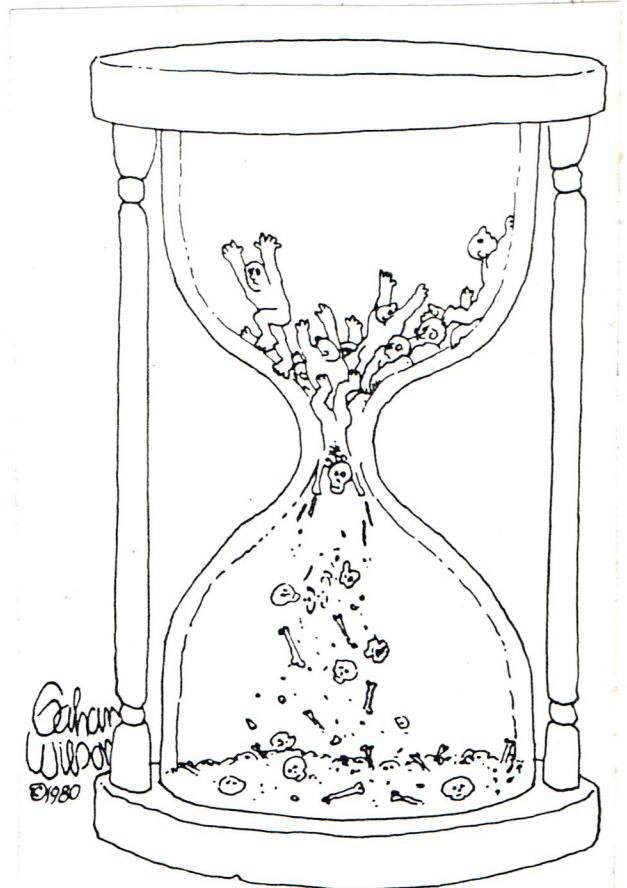


March 27: (Well; this entry is a bit out of order. I became so distraught, just thinking about the above-mentioned event of March 30, that I momentarily forgot about a scarcely trivial matter.) On this date, I at last finished the Jan.-Feb. '89 issue of The Aviary. Clearly, I was doing my best to get caught up with past projects.

April 1: The carpet in my study, which had been installed only about two months before by representatives of the usual breed of Southern Illinois workmen, was re-installed since it was all coming up. As it turned out, this time it was not installed correctly either, so the next day I learned how to put in carpet, and spent a day doing that when I would rather have been being a scholar.

April 14: I attended a concert put on by The Beethoven Society for Pianists. The results were mixed. See music section for details.

April 24: A very strange situation was finalized this date. I had long been an associate of the philosophy department at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and had arranged matters with them so that, even while living in Southern Illinois, I could continue to use their stationery and mailing address to expedite my affairs when dealing with philosophy journals--submitting papers, etc. But on this date, I was informed that this arrangement would no longer be acceptable to them. The chairman refused to give reasons, but I divined his motives from his cowardly stutterings, and I subsequently verified my suspicions when I received candid answers to my queries from another member of the department, who summed up his explanation by calling the proscription against me as "a matter of proprieties." Basically, it seems that they are wanting to solidify what the image of the department is: As a department committed to issues in language philosophy, and to issues in phenomenology or speculative philosophy only to the extent that such issues are explored within the context of the history of philosophy. They do not want anyone, who might be construed to represent the department, publishing things that are in the realm of speculative philosophy. Hence, they would no longer let me use their stationery, etc. Well; this will make it much more difficult for me to publish in the philosophy journals. Stationery which shows a rural mailing address in Southern Illinois is not going to grab the attention of those who edit such journals. But at hearing their news, this inconvenience was not what struck me. Rather, it felt like a personal rejection, and it was very painful. "Don't take it personally," one of the members of the department told me. "You expect me not to take something personally that is personal?" I asked him. "Well, just don't worry about it," he cautioned me. I did not worry. Rather, I grieved. It felt like the loss





of one's home. I am angry about the attitude of the department--of its individual members. I feel betrayed, and more than one vengeful thought has since then coursed through me.

May 2: I attended a concert by the SIUC Guitar Ensemble. Terrible. See the music section for sordid details.

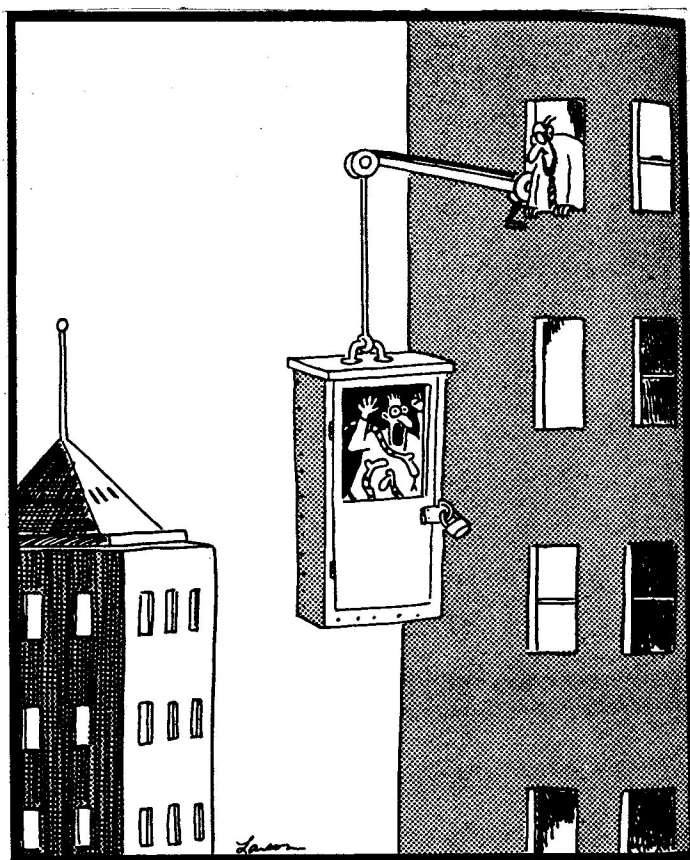
May 9: I at last obtained a drivers license for Illinois. Previous to this time, I had been driving on my Missouri license. I worried and fretted about that test a great deal. Abbe could not see why, reassuring me that people with an IQ of 80 pass the test all the time. This, I informed her, was exactly what worried me. If people like that pass the test, and I don't, then how will that make me look? So I studied very hard and got a perfect score. But I came very close to failing the visual part of the test, which was another reminder that my eyesight continues to fade. I did some serious soul searching, and resolved that I would cease driving, of my own doing, before my eyesight gets so bad that the law would prohibit my driving.

May 18-21: Abbe and I went to Cleveland for what was a wonderful trip. There we visited their art gallery (see notes in the pertinent section), heard great music, and most of all enjoyed the city which is clean, beautiful, and filled with friendly people.

May 19: I at last heard The Cleveland Orchestra in live concert. They, in my opinion, are the best orchestra in this country, and one of the best in the world. It was heavenly. See notes in the music section for details.

June 2: Dacia graduated, with honors, from the 8th grade. It was a fun day, and we did a fine job of celebrating the event with her. One thing here deserves comment, which however did not very much involve Dacia; namely, the fact that so many of the other graduates actually hired limousines to take them away from the graduation. It was obscene. But then, considering that these are Southern Illinois people, I suppose it is not impossible that graduating from the 8th grade is the highest accomplishment they will ever realize. So ... perhaps such an uncouth way of celebrating is understandable, even if scarcely justified.

July 10: A most amazing situation: I this date visited a dentist, and in the course of the visit, succeeded in getting him quite angry. My session with him lasted about one hour, during which he drilled and filled four teeth. Even though he had used local anaesthetic only, I kept falling asleep during the entire procedure. I would sit there, and begin thinking about how the grinding and abrading, plus the vibration through the bone of my head, felt so much more peaceful than the nightmares I usually have. The thought then would come to me that if I could sleep with this kind of distraction all the time, then I could perhaps sleep without nightmares. Whereupon, with this mild thought in mind, I would promptly fall asleep. The dentist at first thought it amusing, then became somewhat irritated at how he was being so inconvenienced, and finally he became quite angry, even yelling at me when I would fall asleep. He had experienced other patients falling asleep in the chair while waiting to be worked on, but this was the first time he had ever experienced anyone falling asleep while being drilled on.



Professor Gallagher and his controversial technique of simultaneously confronting the fear of heights, snakes, and the dark.

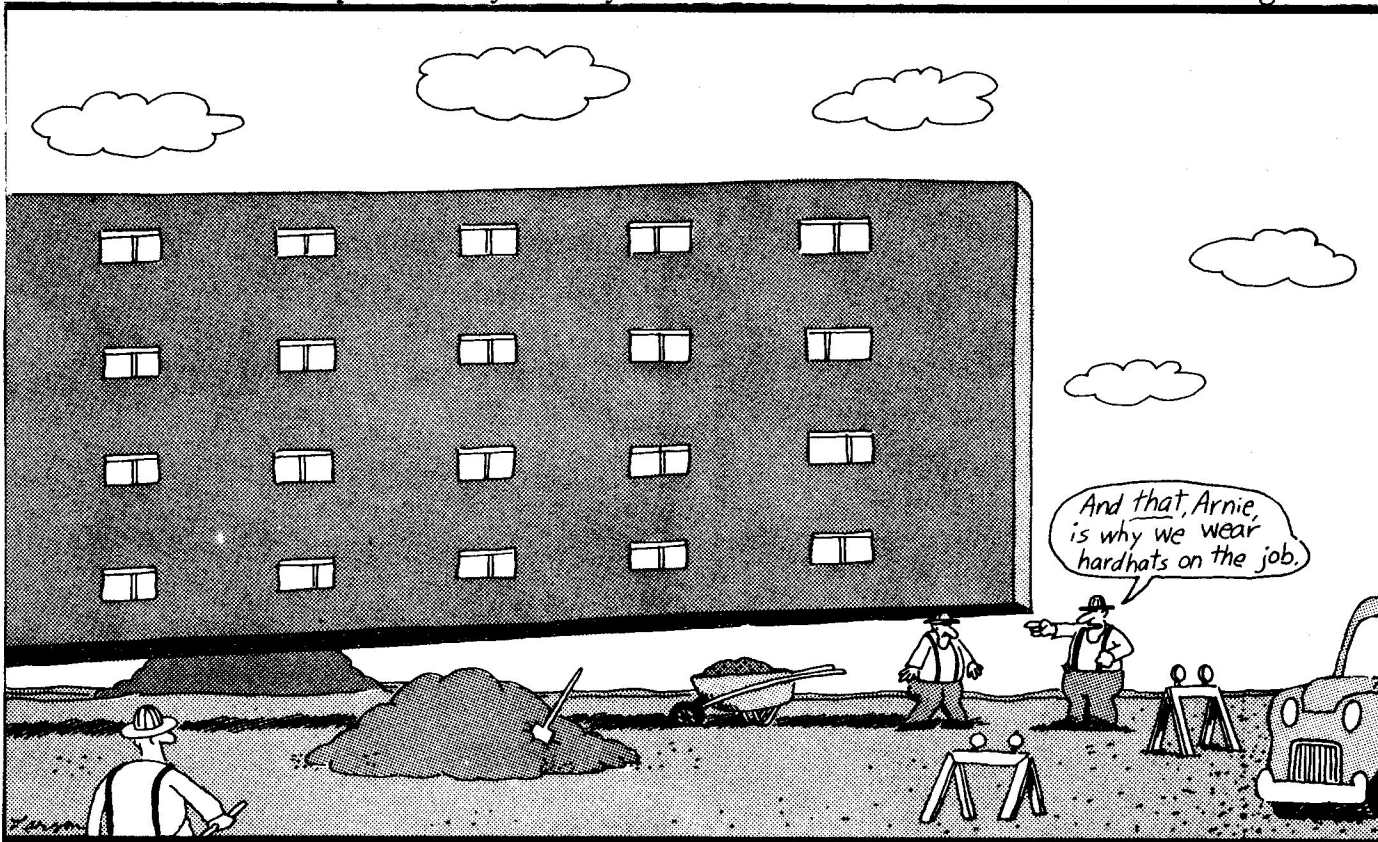
July 10: On this date, Abbe delivered the first set of twins she had ever helped bring into this world. It was an especially eventful situation, since even though an ultra-sound scan had been done (and subsequently, it was discovered, read by a very incompetent radiologist), there had been no indication that twins were going to be delivered. Abbe's telling of it was funny: The woman had just delivered one baby, and then began having contractions which seemed unusually powerful considering that only a placenta was yet to be delivered. She bent down to look, and suddenly saw a foot. Her



reaction broke the physician's first rule of conduct: Never say, "Oops!" Her variation on this infraction was, "Oh my God! There's another baby!" This baby, born breech, came out fine, even though there were some tense moments right after it came out and was resuscitated. She was justifiably proud--twins, unexpected, and the second a breech. I was proud of her myself.

July 11: At last, on this date--just a few days less than one year since we moved to this infernal place--my study was finished. Prior to its being

finished, I'd been using a small room in the house which was barely large enough to hold my two desks and one file cabinet. During this time my books had remained packed in boxes, and many was the time I had been unable



to work on certain writing projects simply because I did not have the necessary reference material. Now, at last, with room to set up my library, I could get back to work at a pace which suited me.

Meanwhile, during the course of building my study, I had endured more stress, fired more people, hurled more execrations at the heavens, and done more gnawing on my soul than I had in all the previous years of my existence put together.

July 16: The world's greatest conductor, Herbert von Karajan, died on this date at age 81.

July 24: After more than two weeks of work on the house, a bathroom upstairs was finally installed. Being one of those unfortunates who usually has to void during the night, I had, when we first moved into the house, been getting out of bed and walking to the bathroom downstairs. The problem with this was that ours is a very large old house, there are twenty steps on the stairway, and when one comes out into the house at the bottom of the stairway, the bathroom is at the opposite end of the house. Which meant that any trip to the bathroom during the middle of the night meant a trip of about eighty feet, including forty stair steps. Not, I assure you, a journey conducive to getting back to sleep. After a month or so of this, I had appropriated a cider jug with a ~~wide/mouth~~ broad opening, and began using this during the middle of the night. This apparatus, promptly dubbed, "Francis' pee jug," by other members of the family, was not an entirely convenient alternative to the nightly journey, given that it had to be washed out so thoroughly every day so as to prevent bacteria from beginning an infestation. Also, there was the night when, apparently not being fully awake, I stood by the side of the bed and used my workboot instead of the jug as my receptacle. On this date, July 24, I retired that pee jug, and thereafter accomplished those nightly voidings with considerably more comfort.

August 8: Abbe and I made a short trip to a local college--John A. Logan College--there to view an exhibit of works by Salvador Dali. See notes about this exhibit in the later section, herein, on paintings.

August 9: After considerable searching and many phone calls, I managed to put together a discussion group, intended to be philosophical in orientation. We this date held our first meeting, and the topic involved a discussion of the novel, The Name of the Rose by Umberto Eco.

It was a very good discussion, and for me it was the first intellectually stimulating experience, with other people, I had had since moving to Southern



Illinois.

August 18: I this date, after nearly 20 hours of work, finished an oil painting I was doing of Abbe. Intended for her birthday of August 22, I was proud of myself for attempting something in this medium, considering that I had never tried oils before. At finishing it, I liked it very much. However, about one minute before giving it to Abbe on her birthday, I quite suddenly decided it was of absolutely no artistic value whatsoever. An expression of love--of being in love, yes; but of no aesthetic value.

Other people were generally kind in their comments about the painting, usually tactfully describing it as "primitive." Other people, not given to gentle sentiments, said sarcastic things like, "Well, the sentiment is there," and then snickered. I hated them for saying such things, even though I entirely agreed with them.

August 30: After an absence of more than a year, I finally returned to work on the novel I had been writing.

September 2: My magnificent, splendid tommycat named Buttercup weighed in at 16 pounds!

September 2: My new neice, Erin Rose Hendry, was born. A resident of St. Louis, and the proud owner of two parents, she did not weigh as much as Buttercup.

September 12: This was the actual date on which I first found out that Herbert von Karajan had died back in July. My reaction was not as strong as when I had learned that Dali had died, but I remained depressed about it for several days.

September 26: I attended a concert by the pianist Ana Maria Trenchi de Bottazzi. It was a great performance by a bad performer. Refer to the music section for an explanation.

September 29: This date I went to hear a performance by the folk singer, Charlie King. His singing and sense of humor were nice, but since I do not particularly like folk music, I did not enjoy the concert very much. During the late 60s, I made my living playing folk music, and I tired of it. Moreover, I grew weary of the constant mourning--the complaining, the wailing, the sorrow--of all those protest songs. It seems that since the late 50s, you aren't doing folk unless you're doing protest songs. I got sick of it. I like a world in which there is more joy than that. Cavail against what is bad, to be sure. But when you sing, let something more celebratory come through.

Should I say something about the "warm-up band" that came on before Charlie King? Well; they were a bunch of local yokels who did their yodeling with an admirable lack of restraint, considering the talent they lacked. A trio of young women, they specialized in singing protest (mourning) songs about Central America, and sexist songs about those terrible men who do horrible things to saintly women in our patriarchal society. Sitting in the first row, directly in front of them, I made no effort to conceal my snickers and yawns.

You will not find a reference to this event in the later music section herein.

October 10: I heard a concert by the very fine piano duo, Delphin and Romain. See notes in the music section.

October 20: Another fine concert, by the organist Gillian Weir. Refer to the music section for details.

October: The third printing of Men Freeing Men, my book on men's liberation, came out. I do not assign a specific date simply because this sort of event is spread out over a number of days, or weeks. The book sells steadily, not as quickly as it did a year ago, but I remain hopeful that it will remain in print for a good while.

November 1: With Dacia, I attended a recital by her flute teacher, Jervis Underwood. See the music section herein.

November 5: The pianist Vladimir Horowitz died. I had never indulged the hagiographic attitude toward this man, as many musicologists have. Unlike, for example, Karl Haas, I would never have ranked him as the best pianist of this century; in fact, there are at least half a dozen pianists practicing over the last several decades whom I believe are better. Still, he was one of our finest, and it was sad to hear of his passing.



November 17: I attended a performance by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Andrew Davis. The highlight of the performance, however, was hearing Walter Klien do Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. See the music section for details.

November 18: Same as above.

November 30: I presented, to the philosophy department of the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale, a paper entitled, "Sartre's Solipsistic Dilemma (or) Not Enough Ado about Too Much of Nothing." This marks the third time I have given a paper in this kind of forum, i.e., reading a paper, versus giving a talk from notes--which I have done dozens of times. The first time I read a paper, it was at the Berndtson Symposium back in April of '83. This paper was short, especially for the occasion which marked Arthur Berndtson's retirement, and came across as an interesting work even though it was read. The second paper I gave in this way was in Boulder, Colorado at a meeting of The Institute for Advanced Philosophic Discourse. The paper had won a prize; hence, its being read. But I was not there, and someone else read it for me. So I really can not say how it came across to others although I was told that the reception was warm and the ensuing discussion lively. As for this third paper--when I prepared to give it, I intended it to be my last. I have been to many meetings where such papers get read, and I hate them. If the paper is already prepared, I do not see why arrangements can not be made to give everyone a copy in advance so they can read it themselves; the meeting time then can be devoted to discussing the paper.



Nerds in hell

I feared, given the complexity of this paper, that no one would understand it. I was probably right. Before the reading of the paper, I asked the audience how many people had read Sartre's Being and Nothingness. Eight had. I asked how many people had read his Critique of Dialectical Reason. Only two had. My paper presupposed a working knowledge of these two books. So ... the audience suffered their way through the reading. I was able to observe their suffering quite well since, given my poor eyesight, someone else read the paper for me. It was all rather ridiculous, seeing some people trying to stay awake, others taking notes assiduously, while the reader droned on and on. My resolution, in myself, was firm. I would not do this again. I would not read a paper, or have it read, when the option is there of having people read the paper before the talk. If I were asked to give a presentation of this sort in the future, then it would be a talk delivered extemporaneously, or from notes.

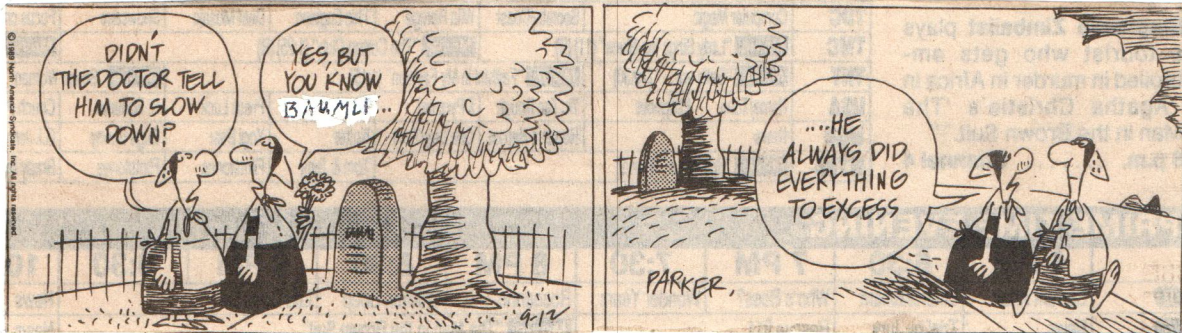
The presentation thus had a wearisome beginning, a bad middle, and a warm ending. The bad middle occurred during the discussion which followed the reading of the paper. The department chairman began trying to argue the point that there has never, in the history of Western Philosophy, actually been a solipsist--as opposed to people who viewed it as a methodological problem. I countered with arguments, and examples. He conceded that he really did not know the subject, but continued arguing. I did my best to be polite in countering. Before it was over, he was shouting, and going on about how in the entire history of epistemological idealism, there have always been assumptions about mind and--what I understood him to term--daytee. (Yes; pronounced "day-tee.") At this point I became rather embarrassed, because I had never before encountered the concept of "day-tee," and was rather bewildered by his line of argument, hoping I could pretend to be acquainted with the topic until my memory finally brought back this long-forgotten topic. At last, I realized that my memory was not at fault; that when he was saying, "day-tee," he meant deity. Whereupon I, realizing that I was not confronting a new concept but rather was stumbling up against a Southern Illinois accent, gathered myself and was able to again pursue the argument. But he began shouting louder, and then abruptly got to his feet and stalked from the room. It was very depressing for me, and embarrassing for the other members of the department. I was really stunned, in a way. Generally, I am very good at preventing this kind of exchange from happening, and I could probably have prevented this one, had I not been so discomfited by that "day-tee." But the experience did have a warm ending. As the



meeting broke up, several people came up to me and apologized for the chairman's rude behavior. This was comforting, but it did not dispell the depression I felt over the fact that, so often in academia and elsewhere, verbal machismo is just as pervasive among supposedly genteel men as are the more physically assaultive forms of machismo among working class men.

December 21 to 22: This night, the temperature dropped to 25 degrees below zero. My God it was cold. It is not supposed to get this cold in Southern Illinois. This was the coldest temperature recorded in about a century, and although the temperature rose a little the next day, it remained between 15 and 20 below, at nights, for about one week. Hordes of brass monkeys were sighted in the vicinity, all headed south.

Generally: Other things of note, which happened in 1989, but can not be so specifically dated:



You will note that in this edition of The Aviary, I have avoided mentioning birthdays, anniversaires, and such. It seems, as time goes by, that I find it more and more difficult to say something significant or clever about such happenings. So I have deleted their mention.

As for Dacia, she continues to grow, to improve with her flute playing, and at the age of 14 she is showing more and more of an interest in boys. I, meanwhile, am remembering the dissipation of my own mis-spent youth.

Abbe continues to enjoy her work. Her fellow workers are a rare lot--cheerful, competent, friendly. I am glad that she has such a nice environment in which to work, even though the work at this government site remains difficult, the hours are too long, and having only one other partner, she is on call half the time. That damned beeper she wears--too much of our shared life is ruled by that little machine.

We have experienced a very interesting twist in our lifestyle since moving to this area, which seems to be occasioned by Abbe's being a physician. Namely, because she is a doctor, people assume that we are rich. Hence, we have been invited to several gatherings of people who actually are rich. At these gatherings, the rich are very busy socializing with one another and with us. My startling realization, what I refer to as a "twist" in our lifestyle, is that the rich become friends with one another by enacting a very odd ritual: they ask each other for donations to their favorite charities, and establish, strengthen, or weaken friendships based upon how much they then agree to give to the charity for which they have been solicited. It seems that only through this ritual can one become friends with these people. Truly, it is amazing to see these people interact around this issue; grand insults are exchanged, truces worked out, treaties solidified, friendships guaranteed, all through the ritual of exchanging money for each other's charities. I, of course, being a blunt man in my dealings with most people, always turn their requests down, seldom bothering to enact any attempt at elaborate propriety, although I am always polite. When I thus refuse them, they become royally pissed off at me, although it does not seem that they then consider me an enemy. Quite the contrary, I



"I think it's his beeper!"



get the impression that these people are rather unnerved by my forthright refusals, and go away wondering if I am someone who is terribly rich--a millionaire several times over--to thus, with such self-prepossession, deny them their ritual.

Unfortunately for the state of my soul, I spent much more time this last year attending meetings of the SIUC (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale) philosophy department than I spent attending gatherings where rich people come together. I attended all those meetings--those readings of papers--because I was so desperate to meet people, always hoping to make friends. Of course, in a milieu that pedantic and intellectually constipated, I made no friends. It took me some time to realize that these were not fertile grounds in which to find friendship. Meanwhile, however, I heard very many very bad philosophy papers. The majority of them were quaint little exercises which examined the similarities between an aspect of Eastern Philosophy and an aspect of Western Philosophy, or showed similarities between an Eastern philosopher and a Western philosopher. It seemed that the Easterners giving these papers understood very little of Western Philosophy, and vice versa. But their papers, given the recent meeting of East and West in philosophy, are of course ripe candidates for being snatched up by the journals of academe. At present, I have resolved to attend no more readings of philosophy papers in a long while; I probably shall never again attend such an event at SIUC.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to find some intellectual stimulation, I made some inquiries and put together a discussion group which met to talk about Eco's The Name of the Rose. This meeting, as previously mentioned, went very well, although a subsequent meeting did not. It degenerated into a religious discussion, and I came away profoundly depressed. Another meeting, however, is scheduled, and I am hoping it will turn out better.

In other pursuits, I became a Contributing Editor to The Liberator, a men's liberation magazine published out of Minneapolis. Its general political tone is more conservative than I would prefer, but I have great admiration for its editor, and am glad that here is a forum in which I can make frequent contributions to the ideology of the men's movement.

As for writing, I finished Volume 12 of my Phenomenology of Pseudo-Sentient Aeschatology. I kept this volume at 389 manuscript pages, and I am very glad that at last I am learning how to set forth my philosophical ideas in a more terse style. Late in the year, I spent some afternoons looking over the entire corpus of the work, and after an examination of my outlines, I believe I can, with some confidence, say that I am about two-thirds finished with this work. We shall see. At present it is about four million words in length, and is not exactly your run-of-the-mill highly publishable item. I sometimes think that the main reason I keep working on it is so I won't have to one day stop and try polishing it and then look for a publisher. I am acutely aware that living in Southern Illinois is not going to recommend me to publishers any more or less than did my living in Missouri. There is so much of what I term "bicoastal bigotry" in this country, which basically is the attitude that if something is not happening on either the East Coast or the West Coast, then it is not important. This gets extended to the judgement that if you do not live on the East Coast or the West Coast, then you are a nobody. Maybe I should, for the sake of accuracy, be a bit more explicit about my observation: If you don't live in either California or New York City, then you are considered a nobody by the big publishers. So ... what is a relatively unknown writer like me to do? Well, keep writing. This is a fairly effective distraction from bigotry.

In a very different sphere, I have been working very hard at doing my small part about helping eliminate the waste that goes on in this country. I've become rather outspoken about it, letting people in restaurants, if they serve food on foam and plastic, know that I will not come back because of this. Abbe, Dacia, and I all try to produce as little waste as possible, and we are succeeding in keeping our garbage at less than one bag per week. It is a discouraging form of activism, however, when we so often witness other families of three producing twice as much garbage, in one day, as we produce in a week.

There is an event--or rather, two events--which have taken place over the last two years which herein bear comment, not so much because of what happened, but because this is a newsletter, and the events in question had



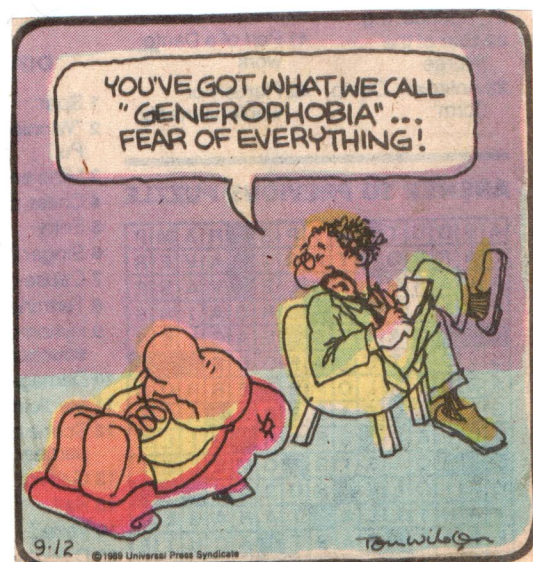


an unexpectedly profound effect upon me. Some time, in the fall of '87, my older sister and her husband split up. I did not mention this in a previous issue of The Aviary because I never really knew what it entailed. I had the impression that it was an amiable separation, but beyond this, I knew next to nothing since both people were entirely reticent about discussing the matter. Then, in November of 1988, my mom and dad, ages 69 and 71, split up after being married almost 50 years. I did not mention this in last year's Aviary because the subsequent living arrangement was somewhat mercurial and unforeseeable. As of this writing, however, my older sister and her husband have divorced; I believe the divorce took place in May of '89. At present, my parents live apart--dad on the farm, with my youngest brother, and mom in Barnard, less than three miles away; they spend some time together, occasionally attend family events together, and ... well, it's a vague situation and I do not desire to explore it herein. What I wanted to point out is that these two separations upset me very deeply, in a way I would never have anticipated, and which I still do not understand. I felt insecure about my own marriage, feeling that, well what the hell?--one can never be sure about this state of matrimony, no matter how good it may seem, or how long it may have lasted. I was quite capable of recognizing that my own marriage is vastly different, and probably better grounded, than the two that have split asunder; but still, it seems almost an act of hubris, tempting the fates and causing one's "eternal vigilance" to go lax, for me to feel confidence about my own marriage--my relationship with Abbe.

I know that during 1989 Dacia had reason to feel a similar sense of insecurity, although her reason was much more concrete. Her biological mother, Patty, with her family moved to Florida, thus effectively abandoning Dacia. Abandoning her again, as she has done so many times before. I refer to it as abandonment because this is a precise way of describing what happened. Since Abbe and I had moved to Southern Illinois, we have, at considerable expense and going to a great deal of trouble, made sure that Dacia continued to visit Patty and her maternal grandparents in Columbia, Missouri. In early spring of '89, Patty's husband had a chance to relocate in his job to one of two places--Florida, or in a community south of St. Louis. Had they relocated to the latter place, they would have been a 1½ hour drive away from where we live, and Dacia could have visited more frequently, and with much less trouble and expense involved. But because they wanted to try living in a warmer climate, they relocated to Florida. That was it--the basis of their decision. A warmer climate, Dacia has been terribly upset about it. She has been able to visit twice, once via a plane trip, the other time when she rode to Florida with her grandparents. It burns my ass (as a good Missouri redneck must put it) to think that if I did not have custody of Dacia and were the one visiting, I would make sure, no matter what the situation, that I were living close to Dacia. This, despite the sure fact that Patty would never do anything to help Dacia have access to me, and would probably do what she could to hinder or prevent it.

Other lesser traumas visited our household this last year. In late October and early September there was an invasion of mold in our house. The climate here is so humid that if one does not keep a dehumidifier running, mold begins growing on the interior walls of the house, in closets, in one's dresser drawers, and in terrible places like the interior of Baumli's amplifiers in his stereo system. It was terrible. I spent fourteen hours cleaning the mold out of two amplifiers, and still had to take them to a shop for repairs. Then, in late November, we experienced an infestation of wasps. They were coming in to the attic for the winter, but they were coming down in to the house too, where they occasionally stung us and visiting guests. They then would succumb to the cold of the upstairs rooms and would die. Dacia, one brave afternoon, picked up exactly 375 wasp corpses and put them in a jar.

But I need not go on about these mundanities. Let me go on to more lofty, or at least more disseminated, events of 1989. Shall I herein register one more attempt at a political prediction? This once was a great sport of mine--predicting winners of elections, national trends, and such. It was great sport because I could usually get people to bet me significant sums of money on such matters, and because I was, with one exception, always right. The one exception, when I was wrong, involved Richard Nixon. I predicted that rather than resign over the Watergate affair, he would fabricate a military emergency, declare martial law, and that would be it--our president a dictator. I was not taking into account Nixon's emotional instability. Also, I hated that sonofabitch so badly I, in a perverse way, wanted him to do this just so I could prove to the world what a fascist he really was. Well; I lost that one, actually I am glad I lost, and as it was, I had





mild takers on the bet anyway. As I recall, I lost fifteen dollars. A small sum, compared to the amounts I often won--but did not always succeed in collecting.

As for more recent predictions? This one is not specific enough to warrant a wager, but it involves our President's war against drugs. I tell you, it worries me to see him taking the war to a foreign country, and assuming all the powers of the Presidency necessary for doing that. It worries me because, frankly, the country of Columbia is a pretty small wargame compared to what is going on in our inner cities right now. Those inner cities are full of drugs, full of crime, and ... well, we generally pretend that the problem does not exist because we have no idea in the world as to what we would do with a problem of that magnitude. The media, too, pretends it does not exist, except to occasionally sample it for sensationalism. State governments pretend it does not exist, except when they get worried that the crime and drugs will extend beyond the inner cities to the suburban, rural, and more affluent neighborhoods within the cities. The big cities do not pretend that the problem is nonexistent, but thus far, excepting token educational programs, their only response is to fund a larger and larger (and increasingly ineffective) police force.

My prediction: With the emergence of the cheap but powerful drugs such as crack, ice, dry ice, and such, the drug problem is going to proliferate faster and faster among the young people in those inner cities. And it is going to spill out into the suburban areas, and the warfare is going to increase. Whereupon, with precedence already established for fighting the war against drugs abroad, our President--whoever that will be at the time--will have in place a tradition of taking a stand against drugs that involves the Army. It will require but a small twist of logic (a few pat speeches and a few new cliches) to take our armed forces to the inner cities, there to restore order. Whereupon we will have sections in our large cities which will be reminiscent of the fighting among sects in Beirut and other such cities. And with the racial aspects of this war, I predict that there will be a lot of bloodshed, and the institution of a political and racial policy not entirely unlike what exists in South Africa today.

I predict it will require less than two decades. But I'm not taking any bets on this prediction. For one thing, the parameters would be too vague--what exactly would we bet on? But the main difficulty for me is that the spectacle is too depressing. I do not want to be working out the terms of a wager in a joking manner about something so depressing.

Similarly, I have never wanted to wager about a prediction I made when I was a senior in high school. That was back in 1965-1966. I then predicted that within four to five decades, Brazil would emerge as a world power, with an economic and military status equal to, or almost equal to, the U.S., the Soviet Union, and Red China. The country has all the makings for it. They have a tremendous amount of land, huge reserves of natural resources, and a cohesive national identity--being the only country in Central or South America which has Portuguese, as opposed to Spanish, as its national language. It has already proved itself ruthless in its treatment of tribes who have resisted government encroachment upon its native lands. It has shown itself to be completely uninterested in its neighbors' woes, which suggests to me that when the day comes that they are interested in their neighbors' resources, they will have no qualms about expanding their national boundaries. And they have a common enemy--the United States. They see how the U.S. has exploited their economy, and they are getting angrier and angrier about this. One day they are going to kick the U.S. business interests out of Brazil and proceed with a program of industrialization and armaments which will be very like what the U.S. has done since the late 19th century. Pollution, acid rain, racial discrimination, usurpation of neighboring lands, arrogance before the World Court? They will say to hell with it, always able to point a finger at the U.S., which has already committed all these sins.

But I am, within the pages of this Aviary, speculating about problems which involve world governments, and I can not even bring any semblance of order or sanity to the local community within which I live. Rather, living in this community does such violence to my spiritual and physical well-being that there is little order or sanity left within my own soul. On this matter, Confucius is correct. We should not pretend to govern other men when we can not govern ourselves. Sadly, I must concede that when it comes to the harmony of my soul, I have regressed--I have, in too many ways, begun succumbing to the constant assaults of this community.

It is not the people only who make it difficult to live in Southern Illinois. There also is the climate. It rains here nearly every day. Most of the time it is a mediocre, uncertain, pissing drizzle with constant gray skies. The nerves grow tepid, frazzled, and one turns on the weather report, hoping for some good news, but the weatherman's voice intones, "... more drizzle for the night, with occasional clearing tomorrow intermixed with drizzle and some late evening showers followed by occasional drizzle during the night." This word, "drizzle," begins to drive me crazy--the sound of it



causes one to believe that an infestation of worms and fungus is taking over the ears. In February of 1989, it rained 7.34 inches; in March, 6.53 inches. Other months were similar, with this much rain drizzled out in more or less equal increments during almost every besodden day. One result of this, with the air being so humid, is that there is no subtlety in the odors about this place. Exquisite odors, precious odors--none of those exist in this area. One smells only strong, pungent odors, like the putrifying carcass of a dead animal half a mile away, or the cigarette smoke of neighbors three hundred yards away, or the rotting fish from the lakes five miles away, the insecticide being sprayed on fruit trees several miles to the south. All unpleasant odors.

As for neighbors--they are a motley lot too, as lacking in exquisite nuance as are the odors hereabout. Although we live in the country, half way between Murphysboro and Carbondale, we are situated on the edge of a cluster of houses and apartment buildings, all but one house owned by the same landlord. These units are rented to college students primarily, so our neighbors vary from semester to semester, and are not the type of people given to spending quiet time in the country. Instead, there is often loud music, louder cars, squealing tires, loud parties, and occasional violence. One house is situated directly across the street from us, and during the early spring and summer of this last year, we several times had occasion to call the sheriff's department, not only to quell the disturbance across the street, but also to remove hysterical people who should have been staying on their side of the street from our premises--one of them, even, in a state of intoxication and perhaps psychosis, had made her way into our house, screaming that we call the police because the fellows across the street had thrown peroxide on her hair. We did call the police (actually the sheriff), but not to protect her, as she had hoped; rather, it was to have her ass carted off to Carbondale. That bunch of people, to escape prosecution, finally moved away in early summer, and left two cats locked in their house without food or water for several days. One afternoon I crossed the street to close a storm door that was banging in the wind, and when I did, I saw a kitten pawing at the window as if wanting out. I knew no one had been there for days, so I called the landlord. He came over, we let the two kittens out--one of them so weak it could scarcely walk--and we thereupon adopted them. Now we have two more cats--initially named Goliath and Star. They subsequently were renamed Sam and Baby Star. This male and female then were again named Tiny Tommy and Baby Kitty. Even later, they were named "Sam I Am" and "Star I Are." At present, they are called all these names, and a few more. They now are nearly fully grown, but both are tiny, and will never grow up because of the starvation they endured during their early weeks.

The new tenants across the street are three young fellows who seem peaceful, mature, and they have been a breath of fresh air compared to our previous neighbors. Unfortunately, they decided to start a rock band--an optimistic decision, given that none of them could play an instrument when they made this choice. But they bought instruments, and began practicing, playing together long before any one of them could really play his instrument. To give an illustration of their cacophany: One evening Abbe and I were sitting outside, and she said to me, "They're playing, 'House of the Rising Sun.'" I listened for maybe two or three minutes before I could finally figure out that yes, indeed, this was the very song they were playing--doing only one line from the song, over and over. The main difficulty occasioned by this group is the drummer, whose commitment to his avocation is, I suppose, somewhat admirable, given that he practices several hours daily. The problem is, he always plays (or practices at) the same thing--hitting everything on that trap set at once, as fast as he can. The sound is reminiscent of the clatter of an idling diesel engine moments before its timing gear falls to pieces.

But I should not complain about these three fellows. As I said, they are quite congenial, and although there have been a few times when I feel tempted to cross the street and politely ask them to stop playing since it is after 11 P.M., I stop myself, think of how much I prefer these fellows to the ones who lived there before, and I think to myself, "Well, they're keeping out of trouble, they're committed, so let them be. Maybe it will strengthen their character." Whereupon I go into my study, sit down at my typewriter, and go to work with a patience and calm resolve that are rather unlike me.

Such calm resolve I can seldom manifest toward most of the people who live in this area. The fellows across the street are not native to this community; one can tell because they are somewhat friendly and very congenial, unlike the indigenous natives. As I said in last year's Aviary, the people in this area are for the most part extremely unfriendly, and usually hostile in one-on-one interactions of any sort. This is most noticeable when dealing with store clerks. I do not exaggerate when I say that, about half the time, if one goes into a store and asks a clerk about a matter, the response will be irritable and yelled. As a defensive measure, whenever I must conduct business with local people, I do it over the phone. Of course, they are just as likely to be hostile then, but I have learned a very effective and fun



way of dealing with this problem. When I make the call, I speak as though I am afflicted with a dysarthria occasioned by cerebral palsy. I stutter, slobber, stammer, apologize, wade my way through a thick slurry of words, and almost always evoke a very subdued, kind response from the other person. I enjoy myself hugely, and even though it upsets Abbe to hear me doing it, I assure her that I am doing my moral duty to the world by giving these people a chance to practice being compassionate. It is a difficult game for me to pull off in front of friends, but when I do, they usually think it extremely funny at first, and then become very sad because my acting is so convincing.

Perhaps even more difficult for me than people's hostility in this area is their lack of hospitality. We have been invited to people's houses but three times since moving here. None of these people are native to this area. We ourselves have invited people to our house many, many times. When they come, we usually enjoy ourselves, but what is most strange--a couple of days or so later, we almost always receive a thank-you note, or a gift through the mail from these people. I concede that such notes and gifts are a nice expression of these people's enjoyment, but somehow it takes away the sense of simple neighborliness. It injects formality in what otherwise should be innocent, friendly. And such gatherings never seem to encourage, or prompt, another such evening. There is never a sense of spontaneity, of acceptance. Never the feeling that one could phone these people and suggest getting together in a few hours, much less drop by for a five-minute visit. Rather, it all must be arranged in advance--days or weeks in advance. None of this, I assure you, fits well with Baumli's way of enjoying the world.

I have at times tried to tell people that I am upset by their lack of hospitality. In fact, a very direct opportunity presented itself in December of '88. Abbe and I went to Chicago; there, Abbe, and some of the people with whom she works, attended a conference while I spent my time at the art gallery. Abbe's conference was a gathering of Public Health Service employees, and one of the topics addressed at length is the fact that perhaps the main variable which determines whether a physician remains at an understaffed area (note: Abbe, now, is serving a four-year obligation to the federal government at an understaffed health site--Murphysboro, Illinois) is the satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, of the physician's spouse. A great deal of time was spent at this conference helping directors and administrators of these sites get a sense for how to assess a spouse's needs when selecting a physician for a site, and also giving them pointers on how to occasionally do a few things to make it easier for the spouses who are living in these remote godforsaken places. When I learned that this topic was being addressed at the conference, I told Abbe that I could easily get up in front of these several hundred people, and give a forty-five minute talk on the problems, as well as some of the palliatives, which physicians' spouses encounter at such sites. Moreover, I could do it without for one minute lapsing into esoteric peeves or blaming attitudes toward the administrators at Abbe's site. I suggested that she proffer me as a speaker, but as it turned out, the speakers' rostrum was full. So I let it go, assumming that those people were missing an opportunity. As it turned out, however, on the train back from Chicago, Abbe and I were sitting across the aisle from the office manager of the site where Abbe works. The topic of spousal involvement came up during the course of conversation, and the office manager asked me my experience. I then could have delivered a tirade. I could have pointed out to this woman that not a single member of her office had ever had Abbe and me over for dinner, or for any kind of friendly gathering. I could have pointed out that although the other physician in the practice, when Abbe was interviewing for this position, grilled me about my multiple sclerosis, wanting to make sure that it would not interfere with Abbe's duties or with the longevity of our stay, this physician, when phoning our house for Abbe, had never once even bothered to ask me about myself when I would answer the phone, instead merely saying, "Hello. Is Dr. Sudvarg there?" I could have pointed out that ... well, I could have pointed out a lot of things. But being polite by nature, I merely told this woman that indeed I was very unhappy with this area, and was surprised at the lack of a friendly reception by the inhabitants of this area. This woman became very agitated at my brief reply, and responded, "Why, we had no idea things were so bad for you here. We'll have to invite you over for dinner, or something." Yes; these were her exact words; I remember them precisely. But apparently this woman opted for the something, because she never did invite us over for dinner--even though she lives but half a mile from us, and since she never did anything else either, I must presume that the something she had in mind was nothing.

What are the palliatives I use to make this place more bearable? The main one, very simply, is to organize my life so that I need not go out. As long as I stay at home, I am relatively at peace. I suppose it also is true that I am safer at home, given the way people in this area use the streets. I do not refer to how they drive, which is bad enough; rather, I refer to the fact that these rural people seem unable to fully comprehend that a street is a place where large metal vehicles, weighing thousands of pounds, move very quickly, making it unsafe for vessels of flesh, bone, and blood to



play or loiter there. Believe me; I am not exaggerating when I say that I one day was moving down a two-lane paved street in my three-ton hearse, and had to come to a complete halt while a fellow, perhaps in his early 30s, played with his little boy--maybe one year old--right there in the middle of the street. At first I thought the fellow had seen me coming, but believed that what his little boy was doing was so cute that I would be quite friendly about it and want to stop and watch. But after this had gone on for about two minutes, and the fellow seemed entirely oblivious to my presence the entire time, I began to wonder if something else was amiss. The man did not appear retarded. Was he deaf? I shut my motor off and rolled down my window so I could hear them. No; he was not deaf. He was saying things to his little boy, and responding to the sounds his little boy was making. I waited another minute, and then started the motor, this time gunning it a couple of times. Still no response from the man and his little boy in the street. I began wondering if the fellow was doing this to pimp me. But no; he seemed to be genuinely enjoying himself. I tapped the horn lightly a couple of times. Still no response except for a brief glance in my direction. I decided to wait a while longer, just to see how long this might go on. The thought also crossed my mind that the fellow might soon be joined by his wife, and any other children they might have. Then I might have opportunity for running them all over at once, thus mercifully ridding the world of an entire gene pool. But no other people appeared, and after a couple more minutes, the little boy wandered over to the side of the street, the father followed, and there was room for me to get by safely.

Another reason the streets in this area are unsafe is because of the number of bicyclists. Realize that I have nothing against people riding bicycles, but in this area there is a very large number of such vehicular contraptions. I made inquiries as to why this is so, and as to why those riding the bicycles are always male and at least in their mid-forties--often a decade or two older. Several people informed me that it is because of Illinois' strict "driving-under-the-influence" laws. There is so much alcohol abuse in this area, and the laws against drinking while driving are so strict (one's license is taken away after a single arrest), that many people do not have a driver's license, so must use bicycles. The danger remains, however, in that there is no law against riding a bicycle while intoxicated. Many has been the time I have followed a wobbling bicycle down a major highway, worrying that the fellow was about to lose a wheel, only to realize, upon finally being able to pass him, that the problem was not with the mechanical soundness of the bicycle but with the inebriation of the rider's brain.

And then there was the time (to give one last example) when I was on Highway 13--a four-lane slab that is always heavily used--coming from Carbondale to Murphysboro. I was in a 40 mph zone, and had to bring that three-ton car to a very quick halt (not easily done, considering that there are no power brakes in that '55 Caddy), because two cars had stopped in tandem in my lane, directly in front of me. I waited, to see what was going on. The car behind me managed to stop before hitting my rear bumper, and in my rear-view mirror, I could see traffic quickly backing up. In front of me, a young woman got out of each car, and the two stood there, between the two parked cars, chatting. It seemed that, considering that the car in front must be stalled, the two women appeared to be very relaxed, having a nice time of it chatting, smiling, laughing. Neither of them made a motion to leave the highway and go for help. Instead, they chatted some more. I looked at my watch, waited patiently, and then began watching my mirror, wondering if I could pull over into the other lane and make it around them. But this was impossible; the traffic was already backed up behind me in my lane, and a steady stream of cars was going by on my right. So I waited, looked at my watch again, once again noticed that these two young women seemed very relaxed, given the predicament they were in, and I waited some more. At last, after about six minutes (I had been keeping an eye on my watch), both young women got back into their respective cars and drove off. I was so dumbfounded it took me a few seconds to put my car in gear and move it on out. I was realizing that these two women had wanted to have a brief chat, so had stopped their cars right in the middle of a four-lane highway to have it. Having grown up in the country, I have often seen a couple of farmers who are passing one another on an old dirt road stop their vehicles to have a chat. In such situations, if you come up behind one of them, it is customary that you be polite enough to let them finish their brief talk. Many is the time I have done this, and did not mind, or only minded a little. But this! My God! Have these people joined the 20th century or not?

To a great extent it is my curiosity which keeps me from going berserk because of the people around here. In last year's Aviary, I spoke of what to me is the most mysterious trait of these natives; namely, their inability to completely finish any one task, no matter how important or trivial, no matter whether it involve their own household or working for someone else. I spoke of how workers I had hired would sometimes outright refuse to finish a small detail of a job, for example, putting one last piece of siding on the house.



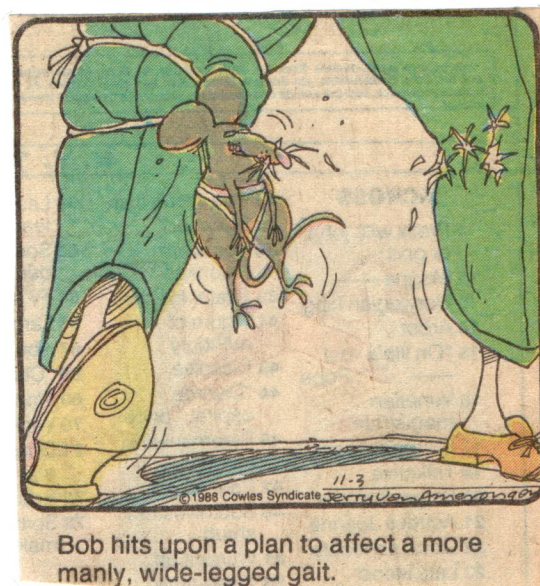
I have wondered at a plumber who would install seven screws of a bracket, but absolutely refuse to spend the thirty seconds it would take to put in the last screw. I even had an opportunity, on one occasion, for allowing that, in a particular instance, this reluctance on the part of one of these natives was not occurring. The situation involved a fellow coming over to get some large pieces of firewood which would later have to be split into smaller pieces for his stove. We loaded these heavy stumps onto his pickup and mine, and then ... there was one left. Just one. He was tired, his back was hurting, and he wanted to let it go--to pick it up next time he dropped by. I thought: Here it is. That same inability. But then no. I was going to be generous. He was hurting, he was tired, both pickups were overloaded as it was, and ... well, I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt and believe that he was merely looking out for himself. Taking care of his body. So we drove to his house minus that one last stump. But ... he never did get that last piece of wood. He stopped by a couple of times thereafter, but always had a good reason for not getting it. I would prod him gently about it, watching him like a hawk, trying to figure out this reluctance, but I never could come to understand anything about it.

In one way I have become like the natives around here. I try to do as much of the work about the house myself, so as to avoid dealings with other people. This, however, does not deter their persistence when it comes to stopping by and seeing if I don't have any "wuurggh!" for them to do. Just a few days ago I was carrying some flooring material that had been ripped up out to the yard, and a fellow stopped his car (in the middle of the street) and yelled something in my direction. I walked out to the street, and he said that he noticed I seemed to be doing some building on the house. Yes, I told him, I was. But then, knowing what was coming, I added that really I was just finishing up. He wanted me to know that if I ever had any more "wuurggh!" to be done, he was the man to do it. So I asked him what he could do--was he a carpenter, plumber, electrician, or what? His reply: "U'm uh beeyuhlderruh," he drawled, glancing about the yard. "Kund uv uh freelayunce beeyuhlderruh."

I politely said that I had to get back to finishing things up, and as he turned to get back in his car, I looked him over. He had the very physique that is common to young men in this area. A very muscular upper body--thin and marked by clear muscle definition, such that the upper body is shaped very like those of the body builders--the muscle men--one sees on the covers of the body-building magazines. Yet, from the waist down, these men all look like polio victims. It is, in fact, very sad, to watch them walk--observing how the paltry calves of their skinny legs actually flap and jiggle as they walk. I suppose this handicap occurs because they walk as little as possible, never run, and seem to consider it unmanly to be doing anything that requires any kind of strength unless it be in the upper body. It is a bit amazing, given the condition of their slight, withered legs that they can walk at all. Yet, they do walk, although in a very weird way--with knees bent, the legs never quite straightening out, the toe of each foot inclined slightly upward as though they would prefer to never walk on the ball of the foot but rather would walk on the heel only. Thus they make their way about, with boney chin thrust forward, either a cup of coffee or a beer in one hand, and a cigarette in the other.

As for the women, even my cynical rancor is not courageous enough to here dare a description. Suffice it to say that I have yet to encounter more than a dozen women who are shapely and visually attractive. But even these women, except for two, were totally devoid of sex appeal. For the most part, the women's bodies are shapeless, obese, flaccid, and infested with a variety of parasites, fungi, and vague diseases usually described by themselves as "aches and pains" and described by the husbands as "female troubles." (You see? Already, in my attempt at accuracy, I am saying things that will never be believed. Better that I halt this descriptive right now, before I have lost my loyal readers.)

My friends of yore, when I describe Southern Illinois, say to me, "But surely there is an intellectual climate." No; I explain, there is not. There are a few



Bob hits upon a plan to affect a more manly, wide-legged gait.



"One size fits all."



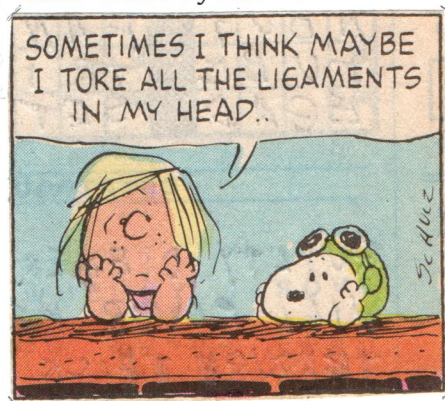
people of intellectual bent, and they are a refreshing relief from this otherwise stifling atmosphere, but intellectual climate? Not at all. One evening, wanting to follow the news of Nicaragua, Abbe, being at the big (and only) shopping center in Murphysboro, wanted to get a copy of either Time, Newsweek, or U. S. News and World Report. Not a copy was to be found in the drug store, the grocery store, the large department store, or any of the other stores which featured very large magazine racks. Inquiries were made, and it was discovered that these stores were not merely out of these magazines, they never carry them! Now be assured that I am the first to avow that these magazines can not pretend to have much in the way of intellectual content. My point is that if a store does not stock these common news items, then one certainly is never going to find the better news magazines (much less literary periodicals) in any of these stores.

Of course, with the climate this barren of intellectual stimulation, people with such inclinations who live in this area, and otherwise might contribute to the makings of such an atmosphere, instead flee from this region at every opportunity. Carbondale, like Columbia, Missouri, is a college town. Its activities and business are, for the most part, concerned with, or dependent upon, the university. But whereas Columbia would be relatively deserted by the students and professors during the lengthy holiday seasons, Carbondale is deserted every weekend. Every student and professor who has transportation for getting out of town, and some place to go, leaves. In fact, in a rather startling situation, we learned that it is assumed by any college personnel that when summer comes, you will leave and will of course know that they will leave. The situation I refer to involved Dacia's previous flute teacher, who is the wife of a professor at the university. I took Dacia to her weekly lesson in late May, and at the end of the lesson, as we were going out the door, the woman said, "See you in the fall!" That was it. Not a word of explanation. Not a word of advance notice. She just assumed that we would leave the area for the summer, and had assumed that we would of course assume that she would leave for the summer. I was rather angry about her assumption, and asked her why she had not told us in advance that Dacia would not be able to take lessons from her during the summer. She looked at me like I was insane. I then dropped my angry demeanor, and simply asked her why she had not told us during the previous lesson that the next one would be the last for the summer. She merely answered, "Well, of course we will be going to . . . ." Late in the summer, we found Dacia a different teacher--one who could not afford to be away for the entire season.

Just having read over the last couple of pages, which I have written as fast as I can type, I am appalled at how nasty I have become toward the people in this region. It occurs to me that when that woman looked at me as though I were insane, she perhaps had a point; i.e., if I didn't have enough sense to realize that I must leave this area as often and for as long as possible, then I can not but succumb to a wicked misanthropy. I do not like this about myself. I do not rest easy, thus detesting people. I do not like it that I have started noticing the worst about these people. Noticing not only the worst, but their various quirks and idiosyncracies which both irritate me and also arouse my curiosity.

For example, I was for a long time very curious as to why these people are so punctual. Truly, although I am not given to procrastination, and seldom am late to meetings, one has to be careful in this area about attending concerts or any kind of gathering. If a concert is advertised to start at 8 o'clock, if you arrive even a minute late the doors will be closed. Similarly, when a meeting or concert is over, the people rush away, in a great hurry to get home. It was not until I began trying to detain people after meetings and such that I began figuring out what was going on.

I, for example, might try to engage a fellow with whom I had conversed many times just as a meeting was breaking up, and he would become agitated, then almost frantic, virtually hysterical, then enraged. In one instance, I had a man almost in tears because I pleasantly told him that really, for the good of his soul, he must wait until we had come to a mutual decision as to what the encore was the pianist had played. Upon witnessing his agitation, and his incipient laceration, I realized that I had encountered this very type of behavior before. It was at the mental hospitals in Southern Iowa where, for more than a year, I worked in the music therapy department. My supervisor worked with autistic children, using music to try breaking them out of their self-made prisons. The therapy worked with various degrees of effectiveness, but I never ceased being impressed by the predictable punctuality of those patients. They were punctual to the second because they could not stand having their routines broken up. To be late, to break this routine, was terrifying; they felt as lost in the world as a three-year-old who gets separated from its parents in a crowded store. That behavior--it is the same here. These poor





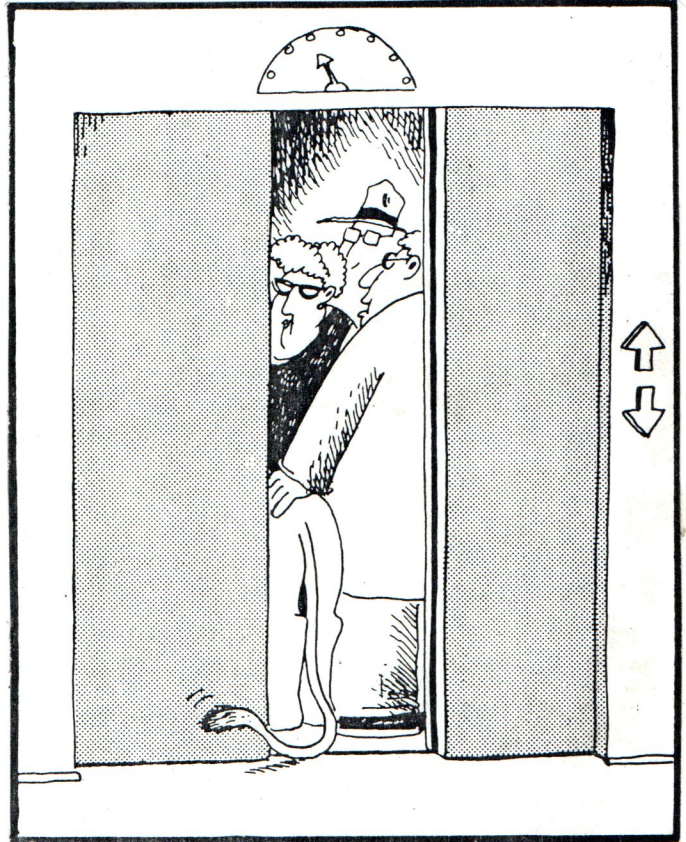
souls succumb to terror if their routines are broken or impinged upon.

Realizing this, I have begun to pity them. I even felt pity for these people when one day I discovered that, at least for those men who were born and raised hereabouts, there is something which our culture would term a deficit: when it comes to the ritual of defecation. Namely, these men do not wipe themselves after they have a bowel movement. I one day realized this when apologizing to a worker because no toilet paper was in the bathroom. I subsequently, after the most discrete and indirect inquiries, learned that this is common practice, and even later I learned that this is something the men are not at all reticent about. I thereupon asked a group of men why they forgo this act, and one of them answered, "Wayull, uh shuhr uvruh nught." (Being a gentleman, I have not made any inquiries as to whether the women in this area share this deficit; and, now, at last realizing how important it is for me to eschew making such observations, I believe I shall try and avoid finding out.)

In a discussion with some of my old friends from Columbia, I quite by accident learned something about my relationship with the people of Southern Illinois. I was talking to these old friends about how I had made no new friends, and one of these people, who knows me well and respects me mightily, quipped, "Well, I'm sure you've made plenty of enemies." I was stunned to suddenly realize that no, actually, I had not succeeded in making any enemies either! This, more than anything else I have said about this region, best describes the apathy, the barren dreariness, the truly pitiful condition of these lost, maimed souls who wander aimlessly over this Southern Illinois terrain.

Having no enemies, however, does not mean that I am incapable of getting into trouble. I came uncomfortably close to getting into trouble with the law, all because of my trying to better tolerate this area by standing up for my aesthetic principles.

The trouble began when I discovered that the state bird is a Cardinal. I tell you, the Cardinal is one of my favorite birds. It is a gorgeous, magnificent creature with a beautiful, friendly song. And I find it most unseemly that a bird this lovely should be so closely associated with Illinois and represent such a wasteland. Not one to let such matters be, I wrote the Illinois State Legislature Committee on Historical and Cultural Identity (there actually is such a committee) proposing that they change the state bird to the Dodo Bird. I received a humorous reply from one of the committee members who thought I was joking. I took offense at his presumption of familiarity, and wrote him back, letting him know that I was not at all joking about the matter, and that I thought he should take the matter up with the committee. He thereupon sent me a short note telling me that I obviously am not a Republican, and that I should move to Russia. At this point I was rather weary with the matter, and should have let it drop. But some imp of the perverse motivated me to write the governor, complaining about this committeeman's neglectful attitude toward my input as a citizen of Illinois. I then made a similar proposal to the Governor, suggesting that he put a bill before the State Legislature requesting that the state bird be changed to a chicken. I was very surprised, this time, to receive a reply from one of his secretaries, who wanted to know the reasons behind my suggestion. I replied that the chicken would be the most appropriate bird for representing this state because it is stupid, is often infested with lice, and among any flock in a barnyard there are always several with their tailfeathers all missing so that their red assholes show. I confess that this was an obnoxious letter, and I swear, I would never have been motivated to write any such thing, except that this entire matter had slowly been escalating, and for some reason I could not quite understand, I was getting angry about it and actually coming to believe what had begun as a joke only. Within four days of writing that letter about the chickens' red assholes, I received an early morning visit from a member of the State Highway Patrol and a member the local Sheriff's department. These two men, after wasting my time for more than an hour with their dull and scarcely articulate questions, departed with the warning that any more such letters would prompt a further visit by them,



"Don't be alarmed folks . . . He's completely harmless unless something startles him."

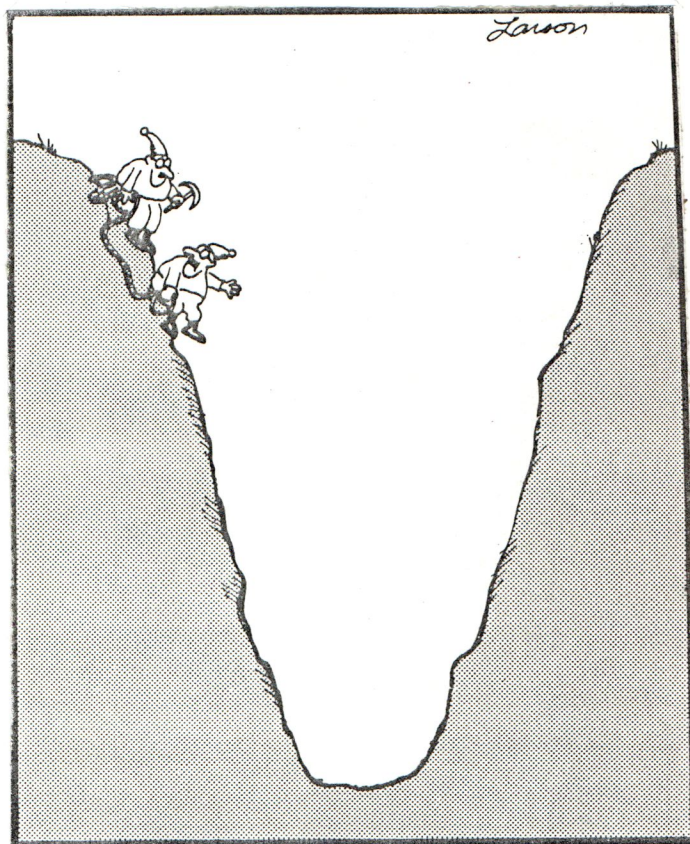


physical detention for questioning, and possible charges that my conduct is threatening to a public official. None of this scared me, at least not much, but the idea that these peasants might again come knocking at my door so early in the morning, disturbing my sleep--which is a scarce commodity in my life anyway--was so intolerable that I decided to abandon the topic. It did occur to me that I should write the Governor an addendum to my original letter, clarifying that I do not include Chicago in my blanket condemnation of Illinois, but I prudently let the whole thing drop.

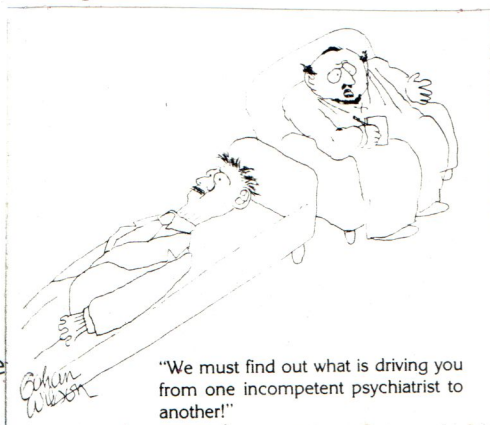
And at this point, I suppose prudence would dictate that I let the matter of my living in Southern Illinois drop. I have complained enough--probably enough to bore many of my readers, and enough to convince myself that my harangue does nothing to change the situation at all. So I will be done with it, pausing here only to register my appreciation for a couple of things Southern Illinois has given me. Namely, it has helped me sort out, and clarify for myself, a couple of philosophical questions which over the years have plagued me. First, I now understand what happened to the former working class in America; any sound social philosophy must recognize that it has disappeared in the course of being transformed into a peasant class. Second, all of the confusion I once felt with the ethical issues surrounding euthanasia have been cleared up entirely.

So ... allow me to say some words about other aspects of my life.

I am happy (and healthier) to report that the problems I have long experienced with insomnia have lessened a great deal. Now, with hindsight, I can see that one of the main factors perpetuating the problem was being in therapy for the problem. No counselor alive--whether it be psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, or whoever--really knows anything about insomnia. No one, for that matter, knows anything about sleep. Believe me, in the course of trying to deal with the very acute insomnia which afflicted me for about five years (4 to 4½ hours of sleep a night, and that very broken), I read everything I could find on the topic. It was all a miasma of speculation and disagreement. I concluded that no one understands why we sleep, no one understands what is going on when a person can not sleep (unless it is something simple, like reading before sleep, or not keeping a routine), and the very act of being in therapy was, in a way, an exercise in futility--a way of making myself feel helpless and even more despairing about the problem. As I reported in a previous *Aviary*, I finally succeeded in more or less curing myself by giving careful attention to an event, or rather, one aspect of an event, which clearly preceded and seemed, to some extent at least, to have caused the insomnia. Realizing that all these counselors were



"Because it's not there."



rather, one aspect of an event, which clearly preceded and seemed, to some extent at least, to have caused the insomnia. Realizing that all these counselors were



clearly afraid of dealing with this singular event, caused me to do some serious thinking about what most people are afraid of. Ironically, I discovered that their fear was not mine, I then ferreted out my own fear, and subsequently realized that it had been their personal fears which had for so long prevented me--distracted me--from dealing with my own phobias which were at the root of the insomnia. I will not go into the specifics of all this, simply because it would require much space, and I am not sure how clear I



could be. I have begun discerning the mystery; I have not yet embraced it.

I can, however, report on a singular event: I one day actually took a nap in the afternoon. It lasted for about an hour, and this is the first time I have been able to do this in perhaps six years.

As it was, I would have slept longer, but the woman calling was not a very considerate person, and said loudly, when I answered and said I had been asleep, "Oh! How nice that you get to take a nap during the day! Would you leave a message for Abbe. Please tell her that ...," and she thereupon launched into a ten-minute set of instructions, without once pausing to consider that I might not care to be her messenger. At last I interrupted her, suggested she call back and tell it all to Abbe herself later that evening, and ... well, I did not get back to sleep, but it was a most unusual and nice experience, albeit rudely interrupted.

I am happy to say that the problems I once had with the phone are pretty much solved. This has been accomplished by not listing my phone number, and by refusing to give it out to men in the men's movement. At present, only three men involved with men's liberation have my number, and all these men I consider personal friends, and I trust them to not give the number out to anyone else. Many people have complained, often with a good deal of anger and accusation thrown in, but I have not relented. Two years ago I was spending an average of 2½ hours a day dealing with men's issues on the phone. Now, none. That is one hell of a savings in terms of time. And it is a great diminution in stress. As for my friends, they are understanding about the phone. Some, because they are naturally considerate people, others because they have been subjected to Baumli's righteous ire. But now I know that when they call they will ask me if it is a convenient time for me to talk to them; or, if they do not ask, they are courteous enough to not act shocked if I tell them I am busy and can not, at the moment, spend time on the phone. Such a blessing it is, to not feel so tied to that damnable machine.

Another blessing: I do think I have conquered whatever strange neurosis was causing me to stockpile underwear and socks. Although family members have taken me under their wing, and have bought me several pairs of socks over this last year, I have bought none myself, and have bought no underwear at all. This resolve has persisted, even though several pairs of socks and some underwear, being worn out, have been discarded. Meanwhile, however, there is that one sock which, in the course of doing laundry, was lost back during the fall of 1988. I still occasionally make life miserable for both Abbe and Dacia, when clothes are being sorted and such, since I am sure that the missing sock is hidden in the corner of a fitted sheet, or inside the sleeve of a seldom-worn sweater, and no doubt it was either Abbe or Dacia who lost the sock, since I would never have been so careless as to allow this to happen.

There remains the issue of my health--or, the lack thereof. This multiple sclerosis continues to take it slow insidious toll. I have not as much endurance as I had a year ago, my eyesight has been absent at times; when I can see, reading is so difficult it makes me ill--I become dizzy, then nauseated, and ... I do not read as much as I used to. The hyperacousis becomes



"Tell him I'm still busy and put him on hold again with that horrible music!"





more pronounced, more painful, as time goes by. Talking on the phone, especially if the person has a very quiet or nonresonant voice, is very wearying for me. But I remain on the diet which helps control the disease, and indeed it does seem to help. I remain able to walk, and although much of a distance can be tiring, I believe I do very well with this. Considering that I was diagnosed in 1974, I have been very fortunate. Many people I have known, who have had the disease this long, are either confined to a wheelchair, bedridden, or dead. I realize I am very fortunate, and I also know that this fortune is the result of my having taken such good care of myself over the years. In small ways, I have become a bit of an advocate for the rights of disabled people. I complain to stores which do not have parking for handicapped people. I thank the managers of other stores which do have such parking. At present, the main problems I have with MS are caused by deterioration of my cranial nerves. This is why my eyesight fails. And this is why I have such hyperacusis. The difficulties with eyesight limit reading, make it such that on some days I can not drive at all, and can never drive very far. The problems with hearing are mainly pain when noises are too loud, although I do find it more and more difficult to be in a group of people when several people are talking. The din is overwhelming, exhausting, and everything sounds so loud to me that I can not very well hear a person next to me with whom I may be talking.

But in other ways I age gracefully. I have no varicosities, no major wrinkles, no hemorrhoids, nothing else that points to poor health except bad teeth and some painful scars from those dissolute days of my youth.

I have even come to realize that there is a way that MS has done me a great favor. At one time, I would become very impatient with MS patients who would say this; frankly, I think I had good reason to be impatient, because they would always come up with vapid aphorisms like, "It makes you appreciate life more," or, "I now spend more time with my kids," or, "I know God wouldn't have given me this burden if he didn't expect me to be a better person because of it." Well; the lesson I have learned is a bit more profound than these trite cliches. In my case, MS has helped me learn to fear death less. Realize that, in my saying this, I am not pointing to what I think is your ordinary mortal's fear. Mine, I confess, has long had pathological dimensions. I remember horrible dreams at the age of three, the telling of which, even today, causes adults to shudder and flee aghast. When I read The Stranger by Camus, I identified with Meursault's desperate wish: that it would be better to burn for an eternity in hell than to be snuffed out and become absolutely nothing.

Strange, that this fear has been so deeply emotional, and yet so philosophical too. I.e., it is a fear that consumes me when I reflect upon death, or when the thought of it creeps up on me unexpectedly. The times when I have been least afraid of death have been times when I have faced it--looked it squarely in the face and, at some of those times, was fully convinced that I was now, in the next few seconds or minutes, going to die. Then I was completely fearless--not, I believe, out of courage, but because in those situations a numb, arational instinct for survival takes over, and one fights to live even believing that one will die. In this sense, war has been a wonderful release from the fear of death. Just as philosophy has been little more than an exercise in how to avoid death's flirtations.

But now ... I am not so afraid. Probably I am much more afraid than are most people, but the horror is not so deep as it once was. I do not want to evoke anyone's sympathy in explaining why this is the case, but I do want to explain.

Very simply, there are frequent episodes (though not so frequent as to warrant anyone's sympathy--truly, I am not being a hypochondriac here, nor sucking for anyone's sympathy) when this MS I have makes me so ill that I, for a while, believe that death would be preferable to this. Frankly, I do believe that most people have experienced something like this. When I was seven or eight years old, I was sick from the flu and in bed for about a week. I remember being so ill during that time that I wished I could just die and be done with it. After that illness, I spoke with many people about that feeling, and learned that it is not at all uncommon. Since then, I have spoken with people about it, and I discover that many people have been very ill for a short period of time, and truly felt that, were it not for their certainty that they would get better, then death would have been preferable.

Yes; I believe it is a common feeling--a common experience. Having MS, I experience it more frequently than do most people. It is a strange

#### INANIMATE OBJECTS AND RESTAURANTS

*I don't often get out any more, so when my husband took me out for a birthday dinner last week, I was understandably excited. He had booked a table for two stating that he would like a birthday cake.*

*When we arrived, my husband pushed me up to the reception and gave our name. The young lady looked shocked and signalled the Maitrè'd. The couple stood behind the desk whispering to each other. Finally, the receptionist said, "Can we put 'it' over at table nine?"*

*'It' wheeled herself out, followed by my husband!*

*B.J., Surrey*

• • •



symptom I speak of, and no neurologist quite understands why it accompanies MS. One becomes very tired, so weary one has to fight the temptation to just lie down, wherever one is, and ignore the world for the duration of the weariness. Within minutes there comes creeping in a strange nausea-like feeling, which however is not confined to one's stomach. Rather, although the feeling is exactly like nausea, it permeates one's entire body, literally from head to toe, involving one's extremities, one's internal organs, one's tongue, the eyes, everything. It is a terrible sickness, and what with the profound weariness, it leaves one feeling helpless. Then, as if the weariness and systemic nausea were not enough, a great deal of pain sets in, although this is usually more localized in parts of the body. This general set of symptoms--I am not sure what specific term to give it--may last as briefly as an hour, or it may last several hours. When at last it passes, it is gone quite suddenly. Sometimes the entire set of symptoms is gone within a time span of no more than two minutes. Strange, I assure you, to feel so deathly ill, and then so suddenly and unexpectedly feel fine. Fine, except for being exhausted just from the experience, although this exhaustion feels quite mild and even inconsequential compared to what came before.

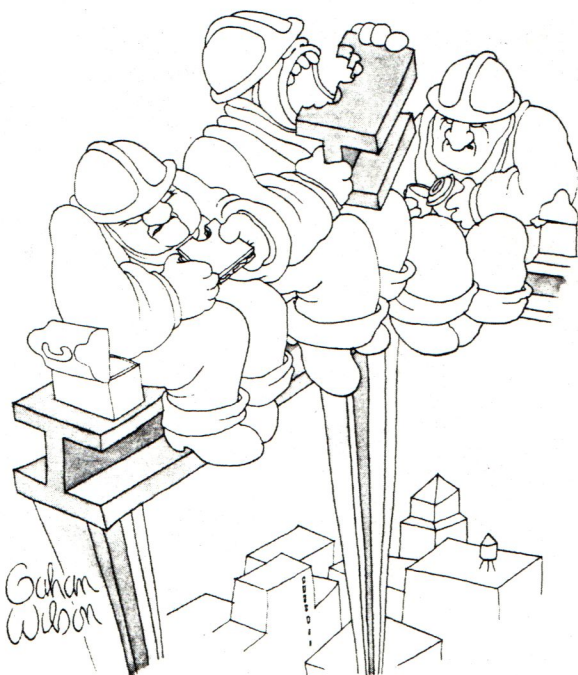
I have spoken with other people who have MS about this state, and they understand me perfectly. No one else I have ever spoken to about it seems to understand.

My point is: when I feel this ill, I truly do not at all fear death. Instead, at such times I am very aware of death as a friend. I think to myself that this will let up in a few hours, and then I won't be thinking of death. But while feeling this ill, I am very glad to know that death is a part of this world, because it assures me that it is not possible that I could go on feeling that sick forever.

It is the frequency of these encounters with this kind of illness which have caused me to take a different attitude toward death. I think merely feeling this way once every few years, because of the flu or some such, is not enough to cause one to examine mortality overly much. The illness passes, and one forgets. As it is, I reckon with these realizations maybe fifteen times a year. And slowly they are causing me to accept death as a companion who is not so loathsome, and who for most people, as well as for myself, will one day be a welcome friend.

Of course, becoming more familiar with death, being more aware of it and less afraid, does not mean I think about it all the time. Most of my life is spent grappling with the usual gamut of soul torments, and these do a commendable job of distracting me from the bigger issues.

So thus I approach the end of this section within The Aviary--the section which gives a general accounting of significant events over the past year. I note on the little outline I prepared from last year's Aviary that I have made it a habit to say something about real men. Should I again say a few words on the topic this year? Frankly, it is something which interests me very little. In fact, I suspect that the term would cease to be a part of my vocabulary, that the concept would leave my mind entirely, were it not being brought to my attention on a more or less regular basis by certain members of the female sex with whom I am familiar. They, in



their touchingly quaint way, use the term (note my grammar; I do not call it a phrase) quite frequently when comparing me with other men. Hence the fact that I am more



or less vaguely aware of the term. Given my natural curiosity about anything that is rare, I once gave a good deal of attention to what a real man is. But upon realizing that for me there was no concept to understand, since I was already embodying the concept fully, I have since lost all interest in the issue. In fact, except for those several times women have brought it to my attention, the only time I have thought about what a real man is was the day when I said to an old acquaintance from California, "No real man worth his







Well, in one place, there will be a hyphen broken, half of it at the end of one line, and half of it beginning the next line. Or there is a line typed only half way across the page. Or a line with about fifteen blank spaces left in the middle. Or a few lines single-spaced in the middle of the copy for no reason at all. Or a paragraph not indented. Or each of five lines in a row repeated three times.

So ... after finding all these errors, I sit down with the computer operator, and a very long time is spent correcting all those errors. This done, a new copy is printed out. I sit down to proof the thing again, and now there are other errors! This time, each paragraph is indented twenty spaces instead of six, and the print is running off the bottom of some of the pages. All the semi-colons are colons, and some of the lines are 1 1/2-spaced instead of double-spaced. So, we sit down at the screen again, and once more ...

On it goes, with Baumli going berserk while having fantasies about shooting word-processors while the computer operator sits there in front.

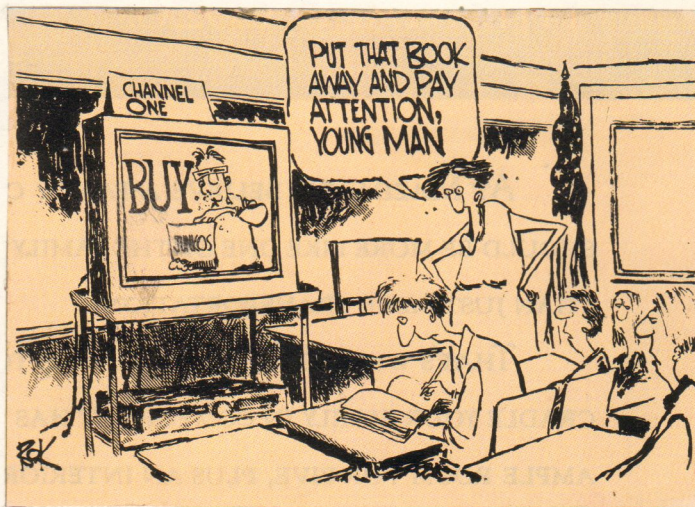
Of course, every "computer jock" reading this will tell me that I was with someone who was using the wrong kind of program, or the wrong kind of computer, or the wrong kind of printer, etc. Well; this is not the case, at least as far as I can tell. These were IBM computers, AT computers, MacIntosh computers, and state-of-the-art laser printers. The operators were using Word-Perfect and Micro-Soft Word 5.0 programs, all on MS/DOS format. All this, and they messed up so much that not only did they not save me time, they used up more time than I would have spent doing the job myself, while costing me money too.

In the midst of these trials, computer operators seemed quite addicted to the following pronouncement: "Well; it shouldn't do that!" I was never impressed. "Should" is a moral prescriptive which applies to human behavior-- or the lack thereof. But there is nothing, absolutely nothing, which a computer "should" do. Rather, a computer either does something or it does not do something. If the computer is designed to do something it does not, then the person running the computer is making errors, or the machine is broken, or it is not getting the right commands, or it is not as predictable as it was thought to be. Any of these things might be happening, none of which are at all explained by a plaintively indignant, "But it's not supposed to do that!"

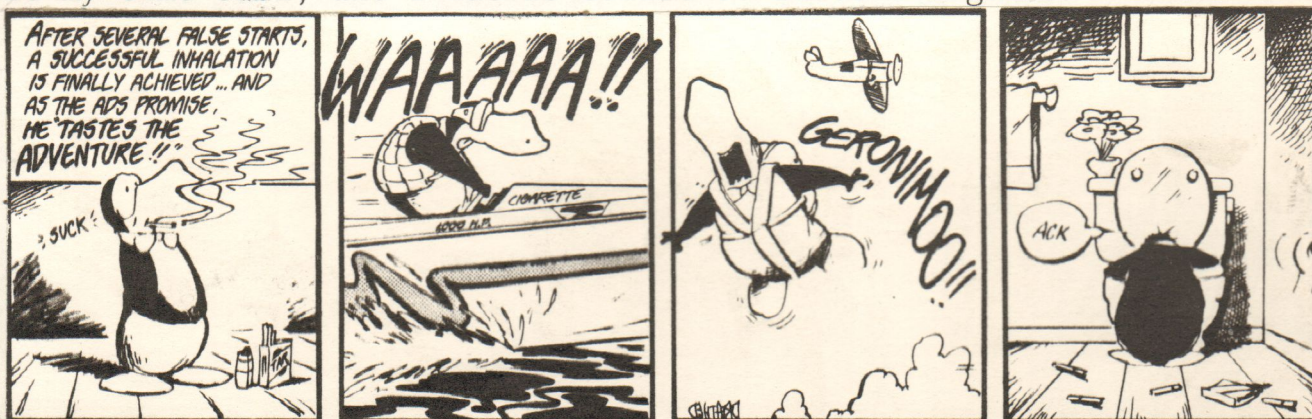
The last time I did a timed typing test, I typed 102 words a minute, for ten minutes, without a single error. I don't think I type this fast, or with so few errors, these days, but I still do pretty well. And believe me, my doing pretty well is one hell of a lot better than the results from those computers which have to be proofed, corrected, proofed again, corrected again, and so on, ad infinitum.

Henceforth, I am avoiding those damnable machines. The only time I will use one is when a publisher requires that a submission be made on a computer disc. Except for these (unfortunately increasing) instances, I will stick with this IBM Correcting Selectric II.

Another thing I will continue avoiding--during 1990--is all exposure to television. I can honestly say that, except for brief periods of voyeuristic experimentation, any one of these never lasting for more than two minutes, I have not watched a single program on a television machine since I watched one of the 1984 Reagan-Mondale debates. At the end of that experience, I was broken out in hives--they covered me from my head to the bottom of my feet. I had watched two men, one an idiot and the other a fool, mouthing platitudes, telling lies, and making accusations which had no bearing on who should or should not be our President. I had wasted my time then, and I had no desire to waste it again.



During 1990 I shall also be continuing to do my best to stay away from cigarette smoke. However,





I shall--as has been my habit over the last two years--continue to show exemplary good will toward my many friends who do smoke. Truly, I acknowledge that it is an addiction, and I must not malign other people's weakness of character in the face of their addictions, when I consider my own lack of success at dealing with my own (albeit private, and more spiritual) ones.

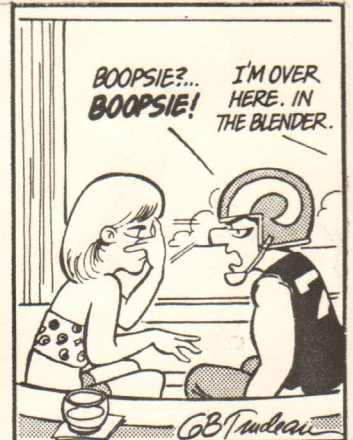
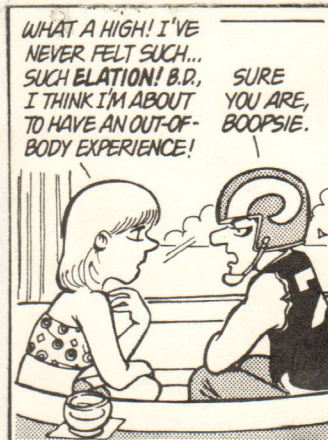
I do not, however, intend to show very much in the way of good will toward those people whom, for want of a more flattering term, I refer to as airheads.

Mind you, I am quite agreeable to people having their private convictions about those rarefied cosmological strata to which scientifically-minded people such as myself are not privy. However, I can not abide someone walking up to me and beginning a monologue about her latest encounter with the Tarot cards, or what shade of pink the crystal ball says her next baby's behind will be. I do not care about this kind of thing, I do not find it at all interesting, and moreover, I do not believe in it. If someone else wants to believe, fine. But I want them to keep it to themselves. I do not walk up to people and begin an uninvited discourse about my views on how Mahler's Fourth should be played, or why I believe Dali is the greatest painter of this century, or why I do not think Leonard Bernstein is all that great a conductor, or why I think Walter Pater's Marius the Epicurean is, next to Plato's Republic, the greatest book on politics ever written. I might offer these opinions if asked, and I might even offer these opinions unasked if they are relevant within the context of a discussion that has already ensued. But if I am kind enough to thus forego diatribes about topics which, if not interesting to most people, are at least accepted as aspects of that reality which, it seems, we human beings can agree about calling reality, then surely I have a right to expect other people to leave me unbothered by their convictions which derive from an esoteric (and perhaps most unreal) reality.

How am I going to avoid such encounters? It is not easy. If I see a young woman coming toward me, a bright smile on her face, wearing purple cloth shoes, and a crystal hanging at her neck, then I know that it would probably be in my best interests to put on a sour face and, when she approaches me, start muttering nuclear equations under my breath. This often works, but not always. Some weeks ago this approach backfired and before I knew it the young woman, this one with a baby on her hip, assumed I was "into" numerology and immediately started discoursing about a book she was reading in iridology and the numerological parameters of that pseudoscience. After hearing her out for about five minutes, I asked her to look into my one good eye (well, more-or-less good eye) and tell me, from what she could see, what was wrong with my other eye which is patched. She started saying things about unresolved conflicts from an old love-affair, whereupon I told her I believed her baby needed its diaper changed, and I cheerfully bid her a hearty farewell. Two days later, I was sitting next to a fellow in Carbondale's Federal Building, and after he squirmed and fidgeted about for perhaps five minutes, he turned to me and said, "Say! I'll bet you're an Aquarius! Is that your sign?" I was very taken aback, not so much by the topic as by his lack of a Southern Illinois accent. I



And then, just as he predicted, Thag became the channeler for a two million-year-old gibbon named Gus.



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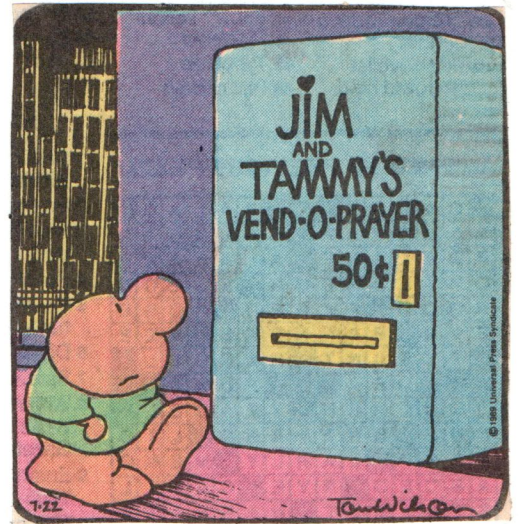


frowned, as though very impressed by what he had said, then held up a finger, pretending to be quite interested, and replied, "Wait! Wait! Before I answer, you've got to tell me! Your favorite composer is Stravinsky! Am I perceptive or am I?" The poor fellow looked at me as if I were mad. "Who?" he stammered. "Stravinsky!" I said. "He was very famous for his astrological chart and how those predictions came out. Remember the one about his forgetting his own piano concerto?" He looked toward the receptionist's desk, hoping that a name would be called and he would be saved. "Uh," he replied, "I guess I, uh, don't have a memory for details," and he looked at the floor. "Well, I do," the smug Baumli smiled. Whereupon my number was called, and I was a bit sorry to hear it, because I was beginning to enjoy this, and was fast moving in for the old one-two.

Be assured that I do not find these dabblers in the occult to be any less offensive than those who ascribe to more traditional ways of viewing the spiritual itch. Again, I do not at all find it offensive that people believe in, for example, a triune God, heaven, hell, Immaculate Conception, and such. In fact, people of such aspirations, it seems, are often drawn to me, perhaps because I provide them vicarious relief from their spiritual fixations. I find in such people a comely depth of soul, and with them I am willing to discuss theological matters as well as matters which have nothing whatsoever to do with divinity and this world's departures therefrom. But such people, many of whom I count as dear friends, show me the respect I deserve--namely, they do not presume that I believe as they do. But such people are all too rare. Too often, so often I have almost begun to dread it, someone will, in the course of a simple conversation, say, "What church do you go to?" Or, taking their leave, say, "Be a good Christian and pray for me." Or, worst of all, "We would sure like for you and your wife and daughter to come to our church with us some Sunday." Being a man with a mild and polite disposition, I do not confront such people. Whitman is perhaps right; one only makes enemies if one argues religion. So I say nothing to the religious innuendo, unless it be an express question. I politely decline the invitations to attend church, only offering reasons or argument if overly pressed. Being thus pressed happened to Abbe and me several times after our move to Murphysboro. There was a group of people who seemed committed to getting Abbe and me to attend their Unitarian church. Abbe gave her excuses, I gave my reasons. I explained that I am, if not an atheist, then a nultheist, and had no business being there. They said that one can be an atheist and attend; in fact, they pointed out that many of their members are atheists, that one comes for the sense of community and the spiritual nourishment. I could not dissuade them from their intent; it almost seemed as if they had a bet with each other that they were going to get me to attend their church. I finally resorted to Bartleby the Scrivener's reply: "I simply prefer not to." Still, they persisted. Finally, after maybe eight months of refusing invitations and refuting reasons, I, to an assembled group of three persistent husbands and three persevering wives, said, "Listen, I am one lazy ass when it comes to getting out of bed in the morning. If you think I'm going to get out of bed before noon on a Sunday to attend church, you're crazy." "Yuh're luzy un' wuh're cruzy? Nope. Yuh're wrung," one of the men countered. "Well," said Baumli, "maybe you aren't crazy, but believe me, I am one lazy asshole of a sonofabitch." Yes. That is exactly what I said. I said, "asshole of a sonofabitch." They were shocked, and after some polite conversation, they took their leave. No invitations came after this incident. I think they were afraid Baumli might again utter such profanities.

How to avoid such people? I haven't the slightest idea. If any of my dear friends can offer advice on this, I am most eager to hear it.

Meanwhile, if any of you, just for the adventure of it, want to have a psychic reading done, I today called the psychic (or whatever she is) who is mentioned in the above ad. She lives at Marion, a scant 20 miles away, and she said she would honor xeroxes of the coupon. So, for half price, you









I turned to an author I knew I could count on.

3. The Square Root of Two by Francis Baumli. Reading the above book prompted me to take out this one. It is a book of poetry which, for the most part, is an express attempt to write about topics which have nothing whatsoever to do with sex or eros. I am immodest enough to believe that most of the poems therein are excellent, although certainly of the "high literature" genre, and not fitting for those whose poetic taste never gets beyond anyone more complex than Robert Frost.

4. The Venial Venus by Francis Baumli. Having read two good books of poetry by this author, I was tempted to take out his earliest book of poetry and see how it compares. I was pleasantly surprised. The last time I had read this book, several years ago, I had discarded many of the poems which were not of a sufficiently high, Baumli-like quality. The remaining ones are not as good as my later works, but are nevertheless quite engaging and most enjoyable.

5. The Name of the Rose by Umberto Eco, translated by William Weaver. This book, surely, is the very best one I read this year. And I must say that the translator deserves special credit, because given the complexities of the book itself, and the awesome command of language which Eco has, it is nothing short of a miracle that a human being should exist who could plumb the depths of both Italian and English to render a translation this sterling.

There is a good deal of Latin, and some German, which is not translated, and this posed a problem for me. I would suspect, however, that it would prove to be a major obstacle for readers who, unlike myself, do not know Latin. The Latin was not difficult Latin, and frankly I found myself using my English dictionary much more than my Latin one during the reading of this book.

Like Shakespeare's plays, this book is a grand tour de force which can not be reduced to a single theme. It is a detective novel, a history novel, a study in such a multiplicity of themes that, fortunately, no pedagogue would ever dare to sully it by assigning it a single, all-encompassing theme.

I was, however, very struck by the book's aesthetic focus--the resolution it attains at the end. The book ended with a sense of mourning, of nostalgia--not for a better age, but for those aspects of an earlier age which now appear to be lost. Those words by Bernard de Morlaix, the 12th century Benedictine who wrote De Contemptu Mundi, "nulla rosa est," were expanded to, "stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus," with which Eco ends the book. The speaker is lamenting the fact that the purity of names has been lost, leaving us now with a confused world, a world with no fixed points of reference. That last statement--it is so rich, so pregnant with meaning, and other people who had read the book, when asked their translation, often said to me that either they had no idea what it meant, or they had translated it too simply, too literally, for example, as, "The rose remains an ancient name; we retain but bare names." A rendering such as this is not very accurate, and certainly does not contain all the meaning of the Latin. I have often said that Latin is perhaps the most fertile of all languages. It can never be translated literally, because any one word in the Latin always means so very much--and requires so many words in the English translation. As stated earlier in this edition of The Aviary, I managed to find enough people to put together a small symposium to discuss the general literary stature of the book, and also to see what other people thought of some of my translations. I found a surprising number of people at the local university who had read the book and wished to attend, although some people came from far away, one fellow from upstate New York, and one woman from India. The discussion was enthusiastic, people obviously were enamored with the book, and gave a hearty approval to my translations of the more difficult parts of the book. I here, for your edification as well as your critical judgement, present my translation of that closing statement which I above listed: "Thus it is that the ancient rose, named so long ago, even now keeps its original, self-same substance and name--pure, intact, unchanged; but we, in this day and age, must function with what has been left us--words that have been injured, sullied, perhaps even entirely stripped of their referent--words which mean anything and everything, or nothing at all."

6. The New World of Philosophy by Abraham Kaplan. I have now read this book three, perhaps four, times. At each reading, it seems fresh, vital, edifying. He covers various philosophical movements, ranging from existentialism to Zen Buddhism, and speaks (the book is based on a series of lectures he gave) with a rare eloquence.

7. For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence by Alice Miller, translated by Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum. This is one of the best books in psychology which I have ever read. It



claims that all cruelty in human beings is caused by how a person is raised, and explains how this comes about. While I do not accept this thesis, I nevertheless believe there is truth to it, and to the extent that the thesis is true, Miller has given an exhaustive, convincing, and historically thorough explanation. She herself, unwittingly, does not entirely adhere to her thesis, when over and over she makes reference to how different children respond to cruelty in different ways or degrees because of what she calls their temperament, their unique sensitivity, and such. But Alice Miller can be forgiven this inconsistency. The extremeness of her thesis is even perhaps necessary, in this study, for getting her point across. Other psychologists can take up the task of showing how what she delineates as a single causative factor is but one of several such factors.

I especially recommend the section in this book on Hitler. One begins to at last understand how such a horrible human being came about, and one even begins to appreciate something I heard Alice Miller once say in a talk given for radio, when she referred to, "poor little Adolph," truly pitying him for what he had to go through as a child. Yes; he was a child once, and whatever proclivities he may have had toward cruelty because of his temperament, one can not but feel sorry for him when reading about the milieu in which he was raised.

8. Gliding into the Everglades by Henry Miller. This is youthful work, and it does not have the power and intellectual finesse of Miller's later works, but the genius is there, in full flower from the beginning, and this book, like his many others, attests to his being the greatest writer of this century.

9. Matters of Fact and of Fiction: (Essays 1973-1976) by Gore Vidal. Vidal has been, and remains, this country's most astute political commentator. This book contains his usual keen political observations, replete with slashing wit and an awesome command of historical context. It also contains many book reviews, and while Vidal's reviews both edify and entertain, they sometimes are simply too lengthy--too involved with the author and that author's entire output--instead of focusing more upon the particular book being reviewed. Still, his reviews are always worth reading, and I still maintain that in terms of sheer intelligence he is one of the most impressive writers alive today.

I again, this year, list those books for which I had high hopes, but ended up being disappointed:

1. In Praise of Darkness by Jorge Luis Borges. I have long been convinced that Borges is one of the greatest writers of this century; truly, he is a master of the short tale, and few can match him when it comes to interweaving metaphysics with fiction. This book, however, was a diminution of his usual quality. The prose pieces were more like short speculations, usually not very profound. The poems, although fairly well translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni, did not deliver very much. But the text was a bilingual edition, and thus the Spanish could be compared to the translated English, and this made for interesting reading.

**"I try to leave out the parts that people skip"—Elmore Leonard**

2. The G Spot and Other Recent Discoveries about Human Sexuality by Ladas, Whipple, and Perry. These three authors were truly courageous in pointing out the meaning, as well as the reality, of certain sexual terrain which has been ignored by some sex therapists, and expressly denied by others. One nice thing about reading this book was the fact that it confirmed certain things about my own experiences, which I had long thought were very esoteric. However, the book was keenly disappointing because it claimed to proffer new insights into human sexuality, and all its summaries were made as though this were the case, when in fact more than 99% (I do not exaggerate) of the book was explicitly focused on female sexuality only.

**"The real purpose of books is to trap the mind into doing its own thinking"  
—Christopher Morley**

3. The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories by Leo Tolstoy, translated by David McDuff. The other stories in this volume were, "The Devil," "The Forged Coupon," and "After the Ball." Also included were Tolstoy's preface to "The Kreutzer Sonata," as well as his alternative ending to, "The Devil." Let me first say that the story, "After the Ball," was not at all disappointing; I have read this little gem several times before, and with each reading

**"It took me 15 years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous"  
—Robert Benchley**



its moral import strikes me more powerfully. As for the other three stories, I confess that I had never read them before. "The Kreutzer Sonata" is a wonderful piece of fiction, well written, set forth convincingly, with a moral content that is palatable and instructive. "The Forged Coupon," in my opinion, is too formulistic. A man does evil, other people are thereupon

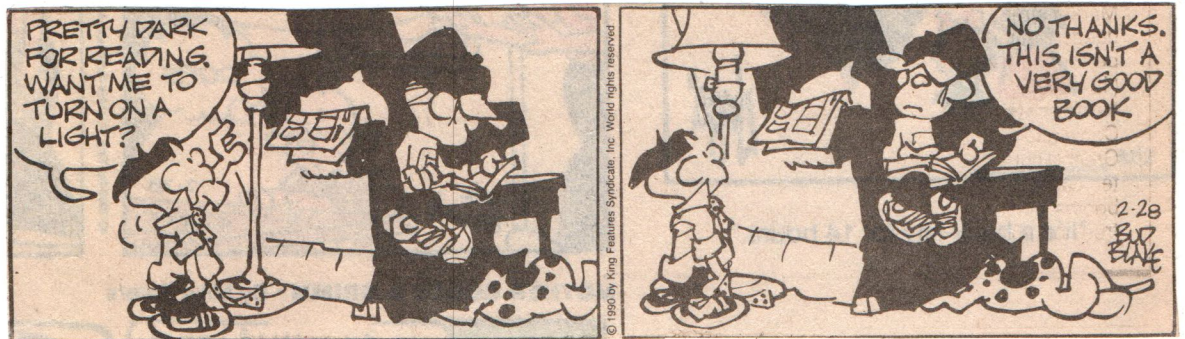
motivated to doing evil, but in the end, when certain people do good deeds, then everyone is redeemed. Well; okay.

As for "The Devil," while the story was occasionally humorous and showed certain keen insights into human nature, I soon wearied of the main character's redundant inner torments, and the ending of the story was just awful. Tolstoy's alternative ending was no better. It happened too abruptly, without sufficient preparation, and gave the impression that Tolstoy had worked with the story long enough and now simply wanted to be done with it. The end result was that the story seemed amateurish, and not at all worthy of Tolstoy's name.

I above stated that the moral content of "The Kreutzer Sonata" is palatable. I chose the word knowingly, and begrudgingly. Were this story standing alone, then the moral content would seem simply that, as is the case with, "After the Ball." But this entire set of short stories is so moralistic that by the time one has finished the book, one has wearied of the overly stern and unnecessarily grim moralizing to which Tolstoy became more and more addicted throughout his life.

With Tolstoy, I have nearly reached the point where I have difficulty reading him because of the ways his fiction mirrors his struggles with sexual

puritanism, his jealousy, his many sexual and religious neuroses. I can deal with such struggling in most writers, mainly, I think, because they are humble enough to leave their struggles at that--struggles which they must live with their entire lives. But Tolstoy can not leave it at that. He must let us know how mightily he struggles. Even more, he must pretend to have found many of the answers. As a result he struts, lectures, wears a constant scowl, grimaces in the reader's direction constantly, and tries to convince us that he is an aspirant toward sainthood when





in actuality he comes across as a man who scarcely knows his own soul. All the while he is preening his moral feathers, one can not but see him as a man with very little personal courage--a man who could not be honest with himself, who constantly lied to his wife, a man who was a craven coward when it came to dealing honestly with his sexual being. He tried to hide those needs, from himself and from others, all the while offering verbal solutions to the world's sexual problems via a repressive sexual dogma. He would have us believe that this dogma smacks of the sublime because he supposedly suffered his way to those realizations, when actually we can not but see that his dogma is nothing more than a return to the old Pauline creed of caged sexuality. His is a flight to slavery, a regressive clutching for the security of history's religions.

Better that he had crawled off to a cave and masturbated with a handful of nettles. Then he might have been able to emerge, and write about things other than timid sex, ambivalent sexuality, timid jealousy, violent--i.e., cowardly--solutions to his sexual torments.

Truly, when Tolstoy can put aside, or rise above, his own neuroses, then his literary contributions are stunning. But in this book there is, despite the perfection of, "After the Ball," and the genius of, "The Kreutzer Sonata," an overall atmosphere which detracts from Tolstoy's genius. This book too clearly illustrates that when Tolstoy puts his gonads in a vise, it puts a serious crimp in his literary accomplishments.

4. Mythologies by William Butler Yeats. This book disappointed because throughout, Yeats could not but conduct himself as an airhead. His constant dabbling in the superstition of folklore, his beliefs in witches and faeries and ghosts and alchemy--all this he was not content to use as poetic content; rather, he clearly believes all this. His forays into metaphysics did not at all retrieve him from the juvenile tone of his many mental meanderings within the occult; rather, they came across as little more than the speculations of a young schoolboy. His brilliance shone when he speculated about Christian theology, but these flashes of light were brief, and they always gave way to the tedium of overly ethereal words strung together like plastic beads on cheap string.

For those of you who have read about Yeats' life, you know that he was married to a woman who believed herself to be a medium for spirits. Yeats was a firm believer in her claims, and an enthusiastic patron of her seances. Once, when questioned by E.R. Dodds, professor of Greek at Oxford, as to whether he had ever seen any spirits at these seances, Yeats was very piqued, for a few moments was unable to reply, and then came forth with the triumphant claim that he had often "smelt" them.

Oh well.

I must say, after having read much of Yeats during my life, that really his prose is not very good. As for his poetry, I believe it to be quite mediocre. His early poems are great, but after a very few years they, in my estimation, began to fall off in quality. It is his drama--his short plays--which in my opinion show Yeats' genius.

In past years, I have listed both the book which I found most offensive for the year, and also what I believed to be the worst book I had read during the year. This year, as has happened for the two previous years, the same book receives the award for both. However, this time I will not mention the title of that book because to do so would deeply hurt a very dear friend of mine. (You see how I thus flatter my friends? They all will become paranoid now, thinking that perhaps they are the one who would be deeply hurt; but they will take comfort in those words, "very dear.") I here hasten to mention that this friend did not author this book. She, however, has personal reasons to give it value, and I simply can not bring myself to be so crass as to do violence to her convictions.

There is another reason I will not herein mention the book. Namely, I found it to be so very bad, and I was so thoroughly offended when the author put it into my hands with a declaration as to its merit, that I simply will not lend that person a vicarious immortality by mentioning that work or its author here among my own immortal words.

Shall I again this year register my indignation over the decay of our English language? I assure you that the topic is so depressing that I have begun attempting to ignore the vile habits of speech and prose I so constantly encounter. Still, I can not but notice them, and even though I attempt to forget these unseemly instances of aberrant human conduct, some of them remain stubbornly affixed within my memory.

On the subject of literary ignorance: In April, I hoped to attend a forthcoming production of Chekhov's play, Three Sisters. Having never read



this play, I hoped to obtain a copy and read it before attending the production. So I began searching for it among the many bookstores that are in the town of Carbondale--a town which houses Southern Illinois University, a supposed institution of higher learning. I ended up calling every bookstore in town, looking for this title. Not only did none of them have it, none of them carried a single book by Chekhov. Moreover, not a single salesperson I talked to had ever heard of Chekhov, or knew how to spell his name. This happens to include the trade book manager at the University's own bookstore! I do not exaggerate--he not only could not spell Chekhov's name, he had never heard of him.

On the problem of diction: I am beginning to weary of working so hard at understanding people when they talk to me. I have begun resorting to the query, "What?" so often that some people are beginning to unlimber their tongues to a considerable degree, just to avoid the irritation in my question. Of all the words I hear people mispronounce (or, more accurately, fail to pronounce) the words, "can" and "can't" bother me the most. Have you noticed that most people pronounce "can" as "cn," thus deleting that one vowel while overemphasizing the two consonants? But when it comes to the word, "can't," people behave very differently. They haven't even the propriety to give courteous acknowledge to those last two consonants; instead, they delete them while retaining the vowel and emphasizing it entirely too much at the expense of the two crucial consonants. I have pointed out this error to many people, but it seems that no matter how much I try to explain my point, few people ever understand.

As for the words "seems" and "seemed," I have given up. Virtually no one ever bothers to pronounce the final consonant in either, and I have resigned myself to the fact that not infrequently I must retrieve myself from a vertiginous verbal confusion simply because I have been following a conversation and have been misled as to whether people are dealing in the present or the past tense.

One of my main concerns about the deterioration of our language focuses on the fact that people are taking so many nouns and converting them to inappropriate verb-forms. I have in the past speculated that this may be the by-product of a more general deterioration of our language skills. When people succumb to senile aphasia, they lose their ability to use and remember verbs last; verbs are the most tenacious in the memory, and the most useful when one's faculties for speech have declined. I do wonder if, as cultural literacy declines, people are compensating both for the present and for what surely will be a worse future by now beginning a process of converting as many nouns as possible into verbs, thus hoping that as their command of words fades into blithering oblivion, that they will have postponed linguistic disaster by having laid by a store of words that will stay with them for a much longer period of time than would those many nouns which seem to encumber their memories and stiffen their ataxic tongues. I have not, this year, kept any list of such "verb to noun" conversions which offend me, but at the moment of this writing, I do recall a few uncomely examples. One such example is, "finessed," as in, "We finessed the recording until we were satisfied." Another example is, "lesion," as in, "We lesioned the brains of fifty rats to see what would happen after injection." "Message" is also now being used as a verb, e.g., "With this new modem, we can now message each other with our computers." And I thought I was going a little mad when, in a very respected academic journal, I came across the sentence, "These are the type of articles a good researcher wastebaskets." Of course, the problem is not with nouns being made over into verbs only; some of these imbeciles are quite capable of meshing words together in a way that comes up with a



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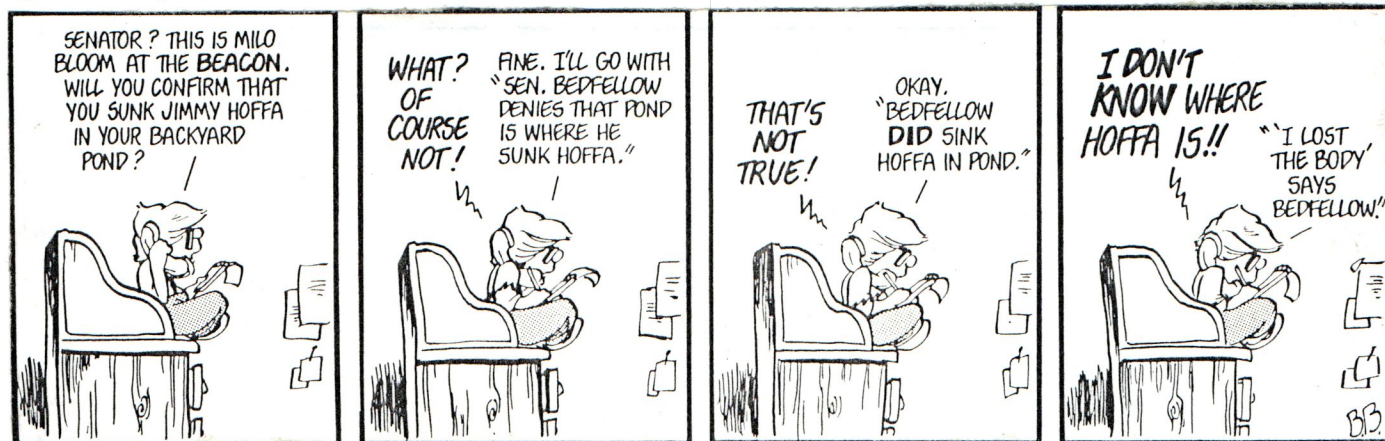
supposed pseudoverb which the reader understands even while recoiling. The most revolting example of this which I encountered this last year occurred in a letter written me by a full professor at a major university. On his Department of Sociology letterhead, he wrote to me complaining about what he considered to be the lack of good style in Transitions, which I edit. Now I concede that, during my several years as Transitions' managing editor, I have usually left style alone, believing that an authentic, if somewhat unpolished, voice is preferable to a situation whereby all authors' voices sound as though they have been processed through the same editor's mill. But it was style only which I left alone. As for grammar, I always, with authors' approval, corrected that, and frankly I doubt that any grammatical errors, except for maybe a dangling preposition or two, or some misplaced commas, ever got past me. Of course, I have not edited all of Transitions; the editor-in-chief did his pages, and certain contributing editors did some pages which I never even saw until they had been printed. A goodly number of grammatical errors slipped by those people, but as for my section, no ... someone is going to have to show me before I believe it. However, this professorial pedant directed his complaints to me, and had the goddamned audacity to, in his own letter to me, twice use the pseudoverb, "off-put." He complained about how the stylistic problems of Transitions causes the reader to be off-put, but then concluded his letter politely by asking me not to be off-put by his complaint. I wrote him a letter, asking him when it happened that "off-put" became a word, much less a verb. And I suggested that he put his own grammatical house in order before complaining about how Transitions' grammar so severely handicaps his research.

I could go on with more examples, but I tell you, something in me is becoming too nasty when it comes to the topic of good grammar. For example, it happened some months ago that I was having a discussion with people about capital punishment. There is probably no topic in the realm of morals which upsets me more than does this one. I am opposed to capital punishment, I am appalled by it, I can never joke about it, and I get so upset when reading about it that usually I can not continue. But here I was, with a group of intelligent people, and within minutes I was not even participating in the discussion. Instead, I was sitting there silently, feeling nasty and full of malice, because these people, in describing one form of capital punishment, were using the word "hung" instead of the word "hanged."

Later I was shocked to realize how callous, how perverted, how lacking in compassion I had been. All over another commission of that sin of gruesome grammar.

Maybe I should be done with these lame complainings, be done with this constant malice, and instead spend my time purifying my soul. After all, what should it matter to me that this world is populated by imbeciles who limp along with feeble, stuttering tongues? Why should I care that the prosaic norm now is dysgraphia, with grammar all but obsolete and good style almost an artifact? These questions are rhetorical; I have no intention of answering them. But they do have an answer. The answer has something to do with divinity. I do not, be assured, believe that there is a god. But if there were a god, could you possibly imagine that divinity addressing us with bad grammar? Of course not. And in a world where there is no divinity, if Zarathustra is correct, then it is the duty of us human beings to cast off the diseased cloaks of our humanity and become like unto the divine.

There is a telos here, but let us leave it be, coupled, as it is, with an enthymeme. As for the premises--let us be both humble and generous, and they will present themselves in all the splendor of their veridicality.



\*\*\*MOVIES AND SUCH\*\*\*

With failing eyesight, I see fewer movies. By this time, I would perhaps be seeing none at all, but I discovered an aid which helps in the use of my eyes. It is a small, tape-like bit of plastic, rather like Scotch-tape with adhesive on both sides, which before



viewing a movie, is placed above my right eyelid. This piece of tape does not prevent me blinking my eyes, but it does help hold the lid up and stabilize the movements of the eye. It is rather exhausting to wear, and I pay a price afterwards with even more difficulty with my eyesight, but if I am sure the movie is going to be a good one, then it is worth it. The problem is, of course, one can never be sure about the quality of a movie. Hence, I expose myself to this medium less and less often.

But, during 1989, I did take in a few movies, and I here list my impressions.

1. January 29: Rain Man: Dustin Hoffman's superb acting made a fine story into a great movie. Hoffman's acting was entirely convincing, and the other roles, if not played so well, were quite sufficient. I did have a quarrel with how the movie ended. I believe it could have ended so much more powerfully with that scene with the two brothers sitting together, their heads together. Those final scenes, at the train station, seemed to be tagged on as a rather imprudent afterthought. In other scenes, the directing was not so good. The thread of the story, especially in references to the boys' earlier life, was hard to follow, and this could have been remedied with but a few more lines. Still, these complaints aside, it was nice to see a great, great actor again carry a movie to such heights.
2. April 9: Rain Man: Same impressions as above.
3. May 20: The Pied Piper et al. This viewing involved a compendium of short, animated pieces. The first, Extinct World of Gloves, was humorous and most enjoyable. Done by Jiri Barta, a Czech film maker, it made a wonderful statement with scarcely a word--all visual, and that nicely done. His subsequent, Ballad of Green Wood, however, was of such poor quality as to cause not only aesthetic revulsion, but also a sense of pity for the man. There then followed the live-action, The Ratcatcher, by Andrzej Czarnecki which, although too dependent on stock images at first, ended up telling a powerful, if not entirely believable, story. Jiri Barta's The Pied Piper ended this quartet, and while it was supposed to be the feature--the "main draw"--of this group of animated films, it was boring, failed in its attempt to moralize, and like his Ballad of Green Wood, seemed amateurish and (for want of a better descriptive) stupid. I was attending this show with Abbe, and we both left before this final piece was ended.

I left this showing having been pleased--mildly entertained--by two of the pieces, but with the general impression that if this is what the leading edge of modern film-making is supposedly all about, then it's a damn blunt edge, and I will stick with people like Fellini and Bergman. And to think of it--the advertisement for this set of movies spoke of Jiri Barta as a genius. Well, if what I saw is the work of genius, then I'm not worth a pimple on a cadaver's ass.

4. October 1: When Harry Met Sally: It was a nice story, the female bimbo was pretty, but overall I came away with a bad feeling. That scene in the cafe, where the woman shows that she could fake an orgasm, was too out of character to be at all believable, much less fit in with the flow of the movie. And the ending: man falls in love with woman, woman by now is angry with man, he pursues her, she slugs him, he grovels shamelessly and pursues her even more assiduously, and after enough groveling and self-effacement (no; make that self-abasement) the woman finally accepts him. Take me to my vomitorium.

5. October 7: sex, lies & videotape: A wonderful movie, with a well-wrought story and impeccable acting on the part of every character; I wish I had been able to see it twice. The movie was personally startling for me, because I have known, in real life, two people who were so like two of the characters. I once knew an attorney whose personality, even speech mannerisms, was so like the attorney in the movie that it was uncanny. And the sleaze sister (I forget her name) was very like a woman I once knew rather well, although in my case, the woman was married, wanting to have an affair with me, and I, being a virtuous man and a gentleman, refused to unless her husband both knew about it and approved. So we talked to her husband, he did not approve, but damn well appreciated my having been honest with him about it. Thereafter ... the old saying, "Hell hath no fury like that of a woman scorned," was instantiated, and I'm not sure who suffered more, me or her husband.

Aside from these personal reminiscences, I was so taken with the movie that I would be tempted to say it is among the ten best I have ever seen. Regardless, I very much hope that another movie is one day produced by the same director, using a script by the same writer.

6. December 17: Dad: Was this the title? Or was it, Dads? I scarcely remember, having scarcely paid attention to the movie after the first ten minutes or so. Bad acting all the way through, especially by the male bimbo. I wanted to like this movie, given its theme, and how it relates to my work in men's liberation. But I can not put aside my aesthetic standards for a spastic attempt at pop-schmaltz.

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 \*\*\* PORTRAITS BY AN EXHIBITIONIST \*\*\*  
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The time spent at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts elicited many of those exclamations in the genre, "Oh! So this is where that picture hangs." There are many reproductions of paintings I have admired, and I think about them often, but seem to never remember, from the information on the reproductions,



where the original is to be found. Thus it is always a nice surprise to go to a gallery and unexpectedly find some of those fine originals which I have long admired, but only in copies. One such discovery was the Madonna and Child with Grapes by Lucas Cranach the Elder. As the years pass, I am more and more in awe of this painter, when I consider that he painted during the first half of the 16th century.

At this gallery, there was a special exhibit of Courbet's paintings. I have never liked Courbet overly much, and this exhibit did not change my mind about him. I did, however, find it amusing (and a bit depressing) that those who hung his showing felt obliged to apologize for what some might construe as sexism in his painting, The Origin of the World. This painting, actually in rather muted tones, of a reclining woman with exposed vulva is, in my opinion, one of his best, and the fact that someone felt obligated to apologize for it only reflects the feminist tyranny which more and more is ruling this country.

I did not, however, while at the gallery, bother my mind with such considerations overly much. Rather, I spent time with some truly great paintings, such as the 1666 Lucretia by Rembrandt. In her face is a sadness of such vast dimensions! She has just committed suicide, and in the left side of her face one views the terrible sadness she feels at her own death; and yet, on the right side of her face, there is the sadness she so clearly feels for those she knows will suffer because of her death, and who already are suffering because of her recent violation. Truly, this is one of Rembrandt's greatest paintings, and I am fortunate to have finally seen it.

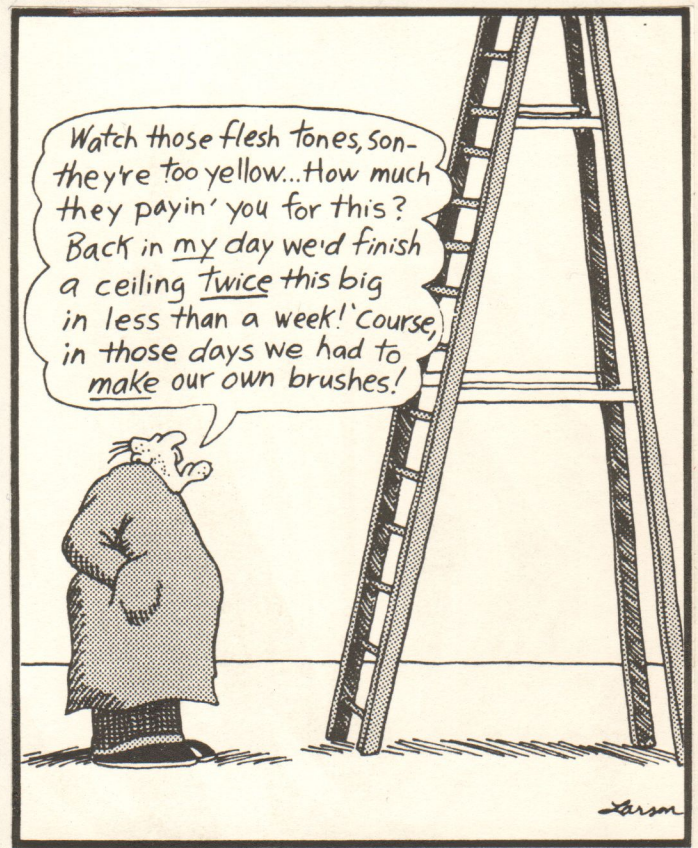
One views the Venus and Adonis by Nicolas Mignard d'Avignon from a very different perspective. The boyish Adonis, smiling directly at the viewer, seems to be immensely pleased with himself--as though he wants us to know that he just got laid and it was wonderful. The painting is delightfully irreverent, full of humor, and a startling perspective considering that it was done in the 17th century.

Perhaps the greatest work of art at this gallery is the marble Ganymede and the Eagle done in the early 1800s by Bertel Thorvaldsen. This Danish sculptor had such perfect command of overall composition in this piece, and even though it is three-quarter size, one almost is tempted to view it as larger than life. Another very fine, albeit tiny (perhaps 14 inches tall), piece of sculpture at this museum is the St. Jerome done in ivory by Adam Lenckhardt. Done in the early 17th century, it has bodily detail such as I have never seen in an ivory sculpting of a human body.

I have long coveted an opportunity for seeing a special exhibit of Bouguereau's paintings, and viewing his Temptation (Mother and Child) only whetted this appetite the more. Several of my friends criticize his paintings for being too idyllic, for, as one woman puts it, "not putting pubic hair on his women." The criticism is perhaps warranted, but these omissions I am eager to forgive simply because I believe there is perhaps no other painter of the 19th century who could render figures which are so life-like as to sometimes give the impression of being photographs.

There were other great paintings at this gallery about which I must, for the sake of brevity, avoid comment. Allow me to list a few of these delights for those of you who might consider going to Minneapolis soon. There is Titian's The Temptation of Christ, and Batoni's Pope Benedict the XIV Presenting the Encyclical to the Count de Choiseul. Batoni is a painter who, in my opinion, is not nearly so universally appreciated as he deserves, and ... but I was going to forego comment for the present. There is also The Carpet Merchant done in the late 19th century by Jean-Leon Gerome, and the strikingly powerful Bust of a Nubian done in jasper and silvered bronze by Charles-Henri Joseph Cordier. And, lest I forget, there is the copy of Polykleitos' Doryphoros at this gallery, which not only is a sublime piece of sculpture, but also is fascinating for the historical speculations it evokes.

The modern art at this gallery is not very good (which can be said, of course, for most galleries; and, for that matter, of most modern art). There was a special exhibit of German art of the '80s, which, except for a couple of pieces, was absolutely terrible. And even the four paintings by O'Keefe which this gallery has are not among her best.



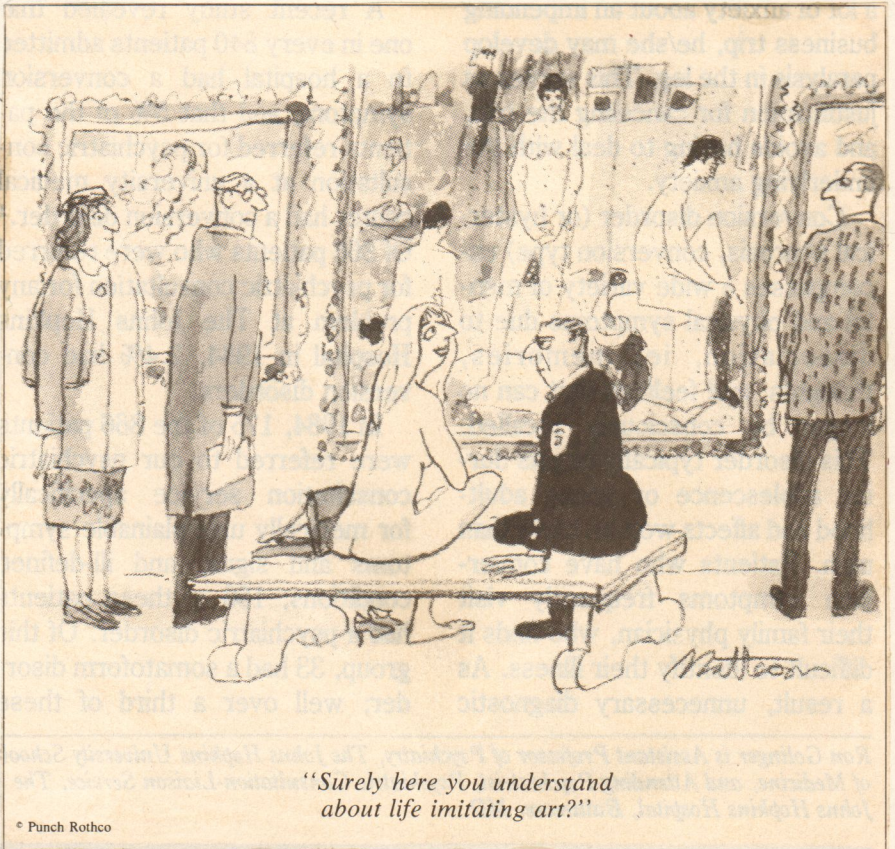
Michelangelo's father



One special note of appreciation for this gallery: the guards are friendly, helpful, and most (most unusual!) knowledgeable about the art in their gallery. My experience with guards in American galleries is that they usually know almost nothing about the art where they work; but these people could tell you where any painting in the gallery was, and also tell you a good deal about almost any of the paintings. Most impressive, and appreciated!

In May I was fortunate enough to visit The Cleveland Museum of Art for the first time. This gallery is relatively small, and yet it contains some great paintings. I will here list a few, but eschew comment. There is Murillo's The Immaculate Conception, and the magnificent St. Jerome by Ribera. Carravaggio's Martyrdom of St. Andrew done in the early 1600s reflects his usual genius, and the painting, "Madonna and Child" done about 1500 by Francesco Napolitano deserves special mention because of how its work with light and shadows is so reminiscent of da Vinci. A Bouguereau, Mother and Children, done in 1879, is most captivating, as is O'Keefe's resplendent, Morning Glory with Black which was done in 1926 and in my opinion is one of her best paintings. It was also nice to see Renoir's Mademoiselle Romaine Lacaux which was done in 1864, when Renoir was but 23 years old; in this portrait, we do not find that sweet, Renoir lady which in later years is the redundant female face that graces (and after a while, does not quite grace) virtually all of his paintings of women.

This gallery also contains some very nice French paintings, including Madame de Pompadour as Diana by Jean Marc Nattier, and Boucher's Fountain of Venus which is so subtly done it is almost a white monochrome. Other works by Boucher are there, as is the very great Jean Louis Goisard de Montsabert, Comte de Richebourg-Le Toureil done in 1734 by Nicolas de Largillierre. I must herein state that I believe that de Largillierre also is a very under-appreciated painter, and this particular painting is one of his two or three best. It alone is worth the trip to Cleveland! Another very striking painting at this gallery ... but, I pause here. I am suddenly very confounded. I have done something which happens to me several times a year. I have gotten a couple of paintings mixed up in my memory. I earlier described Mignard d'Avignon's Venus and Adonis which I saw at Minneapolis, and now realize that I was confusing that painting with the Cupid and Psyche done by Jacques Louis David in 1817. It is David's Cupid, and not d'Avignon's Adonis, who has that smug refractory smile. Or is it the painting by d'Avignon after all ... no; I am sure of it--it is David's Cupid. I hate it when this happens to me. Abbe claims that I have a photogenic memory when it comes to paintings, and she is almost correct; but for some reason, my memory every now and then lets an imp of the perverse out of its cage to thus confuse, in my memory, a couple of paintings which, for aesthetic as well as historical reasons, I should have no trouble whatsoever keeping distinct in my memory. The result is not only that I am confounded and subsequently depressed about my





lapse of memory, I am rather embarrassed about it all. Baumli, the lover of fine art, the walking encyclopedia when it comes to great paintings, thus trips himself up.

But ... yes, I am sure of it. The painting by David, the Cupid and Psyche, is the one at Cleveland, the one with the grinning Cupid, that smile that would be a smug leer were it not so friendly. And the Venus and Adonis, done by Mignard d'Avignon, which hangs at Minneapolis, that one--yes, now the image comes back to me clearly--is much smaller than the David painting, is full of sensuality mixed with terror, and although perhaps a greater painting, from an aesthetic point of view, than is the David painting, is nevertheless not so unique and hence, is more likely to waylay, and trip up, an unwary memory.



Well, my memory is not remiss regarding the Dali exhibit which Abbe and I viewed at the local John A. Logan College in August. This exhibit consisted of five lithographs and one piece of sculpture--a rather uninteresting cross. Those of you who have studied Dali know about his tendency to trust his publishers overly much. He at times signed tens of thousands of blank sheets of paper which supposedly would later receive the numbered impressions of his lithographs. (Some claim he signed hundreds of thousands of sheets of paper. Debate in the scholarly journals rages over this, but those who make a claim for these large numbers have a strong, if not definitive, case.) The result has been that many circulating lithographs are not done by Dali; they are fakes, even though they often bear his signature. Others are Dali originals, but they are not done in the limited number as designated on the prints, but rather, where the print may say that only 250 exist, perhaps as many as ten thousand exist. The result is that when viewing Dali lithographs, one often is viewing fakes, or washed-out prints which received the impression of a worn master-block. As for this exhibition? I can not vouch for the authenticity of the cross; it was a simple piece, and Dali may indeed have done it. Regardless, it was not an interesting piece. As for the lithographs, I am sure that three of them were fakes, one I was not sure of, and only one--Surrealist Clock, done in 1979--would I be willing to attest to its authenticity. It was brilliant, the colors and detail reflected the Dali stamp, and I spent a good deal of time with it. As for the others ... well, Dali has left this century a legacy which, because of his carelessness, will take a long time to sort out. We can forgive him this. His passion was for art, and he was not a good businessman. Gala took care of the business part of his affairs, but during the mid-'70s, her faculties declined, and her loyalty to Dali waned, and certain entrepreneurs moved in, slipped past her, and a lot of Dali fakes were the result. One effect of all this is that "Dali" lithographs can sometimes be bought for less than one hundred dollars. The buyer, understandably, soon tires of these prints simply because they fail to offer the constancy of aesthetic surfeit that only great art can supply, and they then donate this cheap art to a small college or art gallery. Thus, an investment of perhaps five or six hundred dollars can be donated, with a grateful institution giving that original investment an assessed value of perhaps fifty thousand dollars, and presto, the donor has just gotten rid of some boring art, and managed to obtain a very lucrative tax write-off in the bargain. Something like this, I think, happened with those Dali lithographs at the local college. I shall not bother seeing them again.

\*\*\*\*\* MUSICAL MUSINGS \*\*\*\*\*  
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On the home front, the musical milieu has been a nice one. Dacia, with a new flute teacher, is progressing very well. Abbe continues to play her piano, and at times plays brilliantly. I have been picking up my bass a bit



more, and doing some work on the guitar.

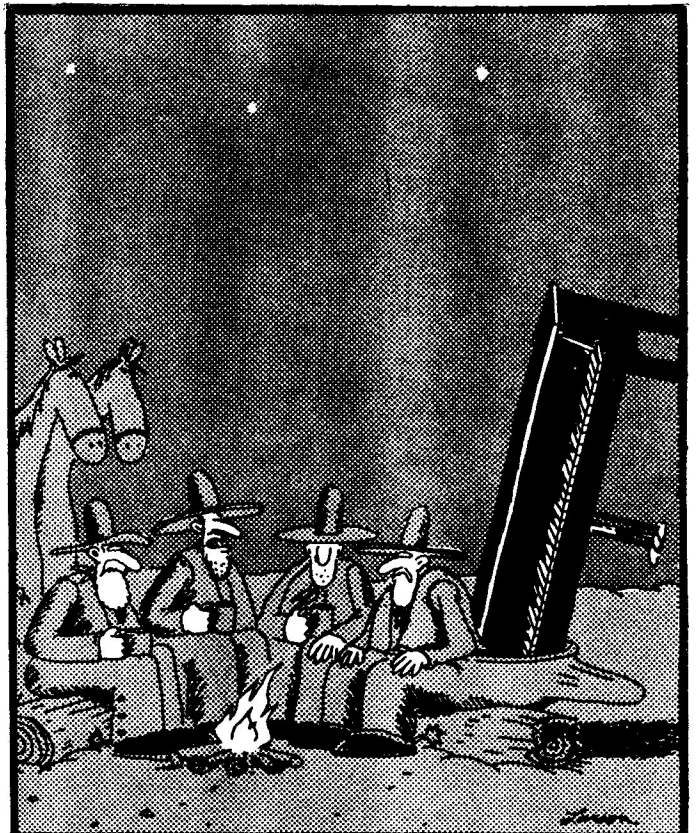
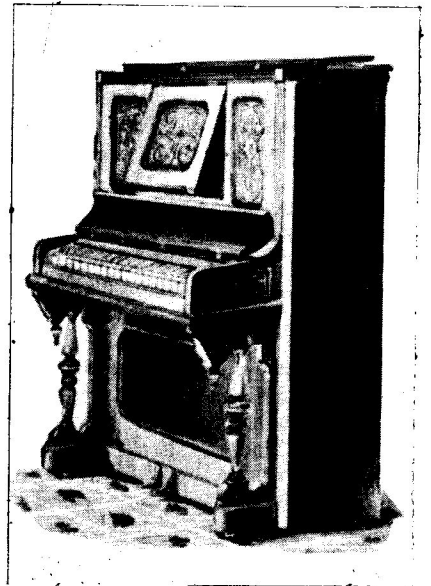
I have even taken upon myself the task of keeping Abbe's piano in tune. That Steinway, built in 1895, has a temperamental pegboard, and some of the tuning pegs slip if we let the humidity drop too much in the winter. While I have never been insane enough to try tuning the entire piano, I have become more proficient at doing touch-up work, keeping it fine-tuned between the major tunings by a professional.

One thing I must ask, of all my friends, is that they please treat this piano with a bit more respect for its fragility. Many people, when standing and conversing in the music room, think nothing of going over to the piano and leaning up against its keyboard. If the cover is up, this means that they sometimes (depending on their height) are literally sitting on the keys. If the cover is down, they do not seem to understand that that is a very old piece of curved wood which could crack under that much weight. I am being quite assertive with people when they do this, but not being around all the time, I herein ask people to show some consideration for a fine old piano and instead of leaning against that piano, lean their bodies on their feet--as my grandmother used to say.

On the music scene today, there is one thing about which I believe I must make comment. Namely, the appointment of Daniel Berenboim as the new music director for The Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He will take over in 1991 when Sir Georg Solti steps down. Of course, many people are saying that Solti really won't be stepping down; that Berenboim will be little more than his stand-in, thus allowing Solti continuing political control. Whichever is the case, I am appalled! Berenboim is one of the worst conductors in the world. He has recorded much as a conductor, and I have never, ever read a review of anything he has conducted which was even moderately approving. The same goes for his piano recordings. While I believe he can play the early Beethoven sonatas as well as anyone, there is nothing else I have ever heard him play which is even acceptable. He makes mistakes, his timing is always off, there is never a sense of emotional command, when he tries to be heroic he becomes frantic, when he wants to be subtle he is maudlin. And now, all because of politics in the music world, Danny is going to become the chief conductor of one of the finest orchestras in the world! He is, according to many who have met him, an engaging personality, and they believe he will draw support from the Chicago community for the orchestra. I am sure he will draw no support from the community at large--the world community--for this orchestra. If he remains its director for more than three or four years, I believe he will ruin it. At present they are one of the ten finest orchestras in the world. If Danny remains at the helm, they won't for long be even one of the ten finest orchestras in this country.

In an earlier part of this Aviary, I mentioned the many concerts I attended in 1989. There were 14 which I said I would describe in more detail in the music section. So here follows some notes about details, and quality of playing:

1. February 27: The Illinois Arts Trio. For a local trio, they were more or less acceptable. The cellist played very well, although his cello had a tone much too harsh for chamber music. The pianist was geriatric, and his playing was very encumbered by this, but he did do an adequate job. As for the violinist, Michael Barta, he supposedly is the "star" attraction of the music department. He was initially hired because of his supposed virtuosic powers, and his knowledge of opera. But I must say that in my opinion he is one of the worst violinists I have ever heard try to play classical music. His violin was strung with strings that must have been a year old, the bridge was much too low for the heavy strings he was using, he had not a bit of intonation, he missed notes, he had no expression, and generally he was an embarrassment to the group. Daniel Mellado, the cellist,



"Say, Will -- why don't you pull that thing out and play us a tune?"

Daniel Mellado, the cellist,



was obviously irritated by the violinist's lack of ability, and the pianist, Kent Werner, doing his best despite his age, was obviously further handicapped by this fiddle player's ineptitude. Still, it was nice to see that a local group of amateurs (albeit professors on the music faculty at SIUC) were able to produce this kind of music. They did an adequate job with Beethoven's Opus 121a, and with Brahms' Trio in C Minor, Opus 101; their best work was with a three-movement Trio (On Popular Irish Melodies) by Frank Martin. I had never heard of this work, nor for that matter, had I heard of the composer. I generally do not like Irish folk music, but when it thus was rendered into a challenging medium, I found it most pleasing. After the concert, I hoped to obtain a recording of the Martin work, but it appears that there is none.

2. March 4: Gypsy Baron. This opera was staged by a group of SIUC students and faculty. The result was terrible. There was one excellent voice, two were good, the rest were bad. As for acting, one fellow was superb; the rest were all bad. The choreography--it was terrible. The orchestra--unbearable. The above-mentioned fiddlist led the orchestra, and at one point did a solo on a Brahms piece which, in his hands, came across as a ditty instead of as one of the Hungarian Rhapsodies. The main problem with this production was that the voices were not holding up. At both intermissions, and between some scenes, one of the stage directors would come out to apologize for the fact that so-and-so's voice was giving out, and he might be replaced by a stand-in. Few voices actually did give out, but the warnings caused the audience to be watching certain singers with distracting apprehension. One woman's voice did give out. Her stand-in, instead of being present, was en route to Carbondale from St. Louis. So a young woman who was majoring in drama stood in, mouthing the words while a faculty member in the orchestra pit sang the part. After two scenes of this, the actual stand-in (a black girl) showed up and unexpectedly came out of the wings into which the drama student (a Caucasian blonde) had just disappeared. All very confusing, funny in a way, but the end result was a wasted evening.

3. March 16: A very nice concert by The Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Edo de Waart. The first, second, and fourth pieces played were: Serenade for Winds in E-flat Major, Opus 7 by Richard Strauss, Concerto in B-flat Major for Cello and Orchestra, G. 482 by Boccherini, and the Don Juan, Opus 20 by Richard Strauss. These three pieces were played well--not brilliantly, but well. The highlight was the Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 107 by Shostakovich. The soloist: Yo-Yo Ma, whom I had never before heard in concert. His playing of this piece was absolutely splendid, and even though because of some personal idiosyncrasy on my part (actually, a personal defect to which I readily admit!) I do not particularly like this piece of music, the end result was rather inspiring.

Fortunately, the intermission preceded Ma's performance, and I was able to move to a different location in the hall during the intermission. Otherwise I might not have been able to enjoy the Shostakovich work at all. This was because, during the very middle of the first Strauss piece, a woman of considerable size, coming in late, sat down next to me, and subsequently made no effort at all to conceal the fact that she suffered from an hysterical personality disorder. She would not sit still. Instead she shifted her bulk about, made little moaning sounds, patted her thighs, many times took out her hanky for a delicate little sniffle, and chirped, "Oh my goodness," and, "Oh me," in my direction at least a dozen times. During all this time I am sure she did a commendable job of permeating the entire auditorium with her odoriferous admixture of perfume, pheromones, sweat, and the transmudation of plasma across certain mucus membranes which perhaps was elicited by myself. After she, in her bustling unease, had bumped me three or four times, I was furious. After she had said, "Oh my goodness" while sniffing loudly, the sixth or seventh time, I was ready to set matters aright. We were in the balcony, front row, and I swear I was ready to pitch her over the edge. In fact, I do believe that I would have grappled with her, except that what with the heaving and awkward leverage that would be required by such a tumultuous struggle with a woman of her bulk, I feared that in the grip of our grappling she might better me and I would be the one to plummet. So I gave up on the idea, contented myself with hating her mightily, and at the intermission was off and away to a different part of the auditorium where there were empty seats.

4. March 27: The Alexandria Quintet had a promising instrumental combination: flute, harp, violin, viola, and cello. But the concert itself was very poor. The violinist, Toby Appel--who has been trying to make a name for himself in jazz as well as classical music, put on a lot of airs, but none of them were on the G string. He played carelessly, with much in the way of physical affectation, but little in the way of musical command. The cello was too weak, the viola player was quite marginal in quality, the same goes for the harpist, and only Sato Moughalian, flautist and leader of the group, was highly talented as an individual musician. But her talents never inspired the group as a whole, and I came away feeling that I had wasted my time.



5. April 5: The Beethoven Society for Pianists put on a concert which featured student winners at their competition. The third-prize winner played poorly, the second-prize winner played very well, the first-prize winner was superb, especially in her rendering of Chopin's Nocturne in D-flat Major, Opus 27, No. 2. This young woman--Jennifer Grant--may yet give us some great recordings one day.

The duo-pianists, Delphin and Romain, who are resident faculty members at SIUC, performed Mendelssohn's Andante and Variations, Opus 83a. They are a tremendously talented pair, and this work was the highlight of the evening. Donald Beattie, head of the Society, played Beethoven's Moonlight and did it very poorly, with no sense of timing and several glaring mistakes. His final piece, Chopin's Polonaise in A-flat Major, Opus 53, was much better--quite stunning, in fact.

The Beethoven Society for Pianists is a nice group, doing much to promote not only Beethoven's music, but also young students who are aspiring to careers in either pedagogy or concertizing. I enjoy extending to them my emotional support, and consider them to be one of the few enjoyable things about Southern Illinois.

6. May 2: This concert, by the SIUC Guitar Ensemble, was a waste of time. Played by students, some of whom, it seemed, had barely begun to learn their instrument, it was all an exercise in watching amateurs be amateurs. This is fine when you go to see your six-year-old child in the school play, because the little children are all so cute; but none of these players were cute.

One piece--the Souvenir of Russia, Opus 63 by Sor was played by Dave Stoecker and Robert Thompson, and they were excellent. But other than these two young fellows, the others might as well have been cats trying to climb a harp, for all the music they made.

7. May 19: At last I was able to hear, in person, the best orchestra in this country--The Cleveland Orchestra. Christoph von Dohnanyi was conducting, and their opening Divertimento for String Orchestra by Bartok set a nice tone for the evening. The next work, Stravinsky's Concerto in D-major for Violin and Orchestra, was tremendous. The soloist was Anne-Sophie Mutter, and her playing was superb. Unfortunately, the acoustics of Severance Hall, while probably the best in the nation for the musicians on stage, are not good for the audience, and hence, Mutter's playing could not be heard very well. Still, it was a commendable performance, and I am very fortunate to have heard it. Their final piece, Schubert's Symphony No. 9 in C-major was the greatest rendering of this piece I have ever heard. I was in tears at the end, and as we left, I saw that nearly everyone else had been in tears too. I have before stated that I believe only two other orchestras in the world are better than the Cleveland, and this concert certainly reinforced this opinion.

8. This concert, arranged by The Beethoven Society for Pianists, involved a performance by Ana Maria Trenchi de Bottazzi. I stated earlier that this was a great performance by a bad performer. What I mean is, her piano playing was excellent, but this is not all she did. She also spent a good deal of time at the microphone talking about how, at age 23, she was nearly killed in an auto accident, was totally paralyzed for a long time, and despite all odds came back to become a concert pianist. This is all very fine, but I soon grew tired of the evangelizing--about how her mother would always slap her if she ever dared to think or say, "I can't," and how this reflex in her--the feeling that she would be slapped if she became discouraged--was what helped her recover from her paralysis.

She then went on to talk about how she knows there is a God, and how she is convinced this God is what aided her recovery, and how she hopes that her story of recovery would aid other people in their theistic beliefs. She conveniently overlooked the idea that if this God was close beside her in aiding her recovery from that accident, then this same God very well may have been close beside her in aiding that accident to happen in the first place, but then--she was on fire with the spirit, and no epistemic murmurings on the part of a detractor such as myself would ever have curtailed her very agile tongue.

When at last she sat down at the piano, she gave a wonderful performance. She did Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A-major, Opus 2, No. 2, and it was very





unusual in the way she played so heavily with the left hand. Unusual, but quite acceptable; and it gave me new insight into this relatively simple piano sonata by Beethoven. She ended it rather too abruptly, without a satisfactory emotional preparation for the final bars, but given that this was the first piece on the program, I found it acceptable. Unfortunately, the piano's deficiencies were very apparent on this piece. The Society has a new Baldwin concert grand, which has never been concert tuned, and it not only has problems because of this lack of attention, but also is very "green," as those in the piano business say, given how new it is. The pedals are loud, the hammers squeak, the mechanism thumps, and at times it is almost as though one is hearing a very old pipe organ, with so much sound coming from the mechanical tracker action.

After the Beethoven piece, she did some charming works by South American composers which I had never before heard: Schlummerlied by Helmut Fuchs, Memories of Childhood by Octavio Pinto, and three short pieces by Alberto Ginastera. After the intermission she did Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy, and although she made a couple of small mistakes, the overall impression was very powerful. Two encores followed: the pretty Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring by Bach, and a very convincing, if somewhat idiosyncratic, playing of Chopin's Polonaise in A-flat Major, Opus 53.

I highly recommend Ms. de Bottazzi, and hope she one day does some recording, especially of the South American pieces. But as for concerts, I would suggest you attend with caution. If she plays music only, you are in for a treat; if she does her God and Jesus stint, you may end up taking a nap.

I just realized, glancing back over what I just wrote, that I neglected to give the date for this performance: September 26.

9. September 29: I went to hear the folk singer, Charlie King. I said I was not going to write about him in this section, but for some reason (perhaps my compulsiveness about keeping this list of concerts in order), I find myself listing him here. Like de Bottazzi, he also evangelized. Not about God, but about all those issues which folk singers are supposed to go on about: nuclear war, academic pedantry, rights for the handicapped, the homeless, Nicaragua, Vietnam, nostalgia for the '60s, a vociferous assertion that the 80's really does have the spirit of the '60s, the problems of the deaf, the problems of those with water on the knee, etc. I don't know why, but this preaching, in the midst of singing, bothers me. I weary of it. I want to hear a lovely sonata by Mozart. That is the kind of thing which inspires me to moral action. But then, I humbly admit that this is not how it always works. I remember those guards, in the Nazi death camps, who listened, with tears streaming down their faces, to the Jewish prisoners play Mozart; and then, the next morning, these same guards would march those very musicians to the death chambers. So ... I think people like Charlie King play a valuable function, even if most of the time they are "preaching to the converted." The fact that I could not appreciate him is my problem.

10. October 10: Delphin & Romain. These two pianists, Wilfred Delphin and Edwin Romain, are truly great. This concert was uneven; they played several things by contemporary composers which, as music, were not very good. But they did a wonderful job with Ravel's La Valse and with Liszt's Reminiscences de Don Juan. For reasons I could not fathom, they played Schubert's Grande Sonata in B-flat Major, Opus 30 dreadfully, with no expression at all. But perhaps they had not practiced the piece sufficiently. Their talent with other music, when they have enough sense to leave the contemporary composers of mediocre talent alone, is so awesome that they are definitely worth hearing. And there is humor in their playing, which is too rare among concert musicians today. Their encore, Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag, was a nice finishing touch to an enjoyable evening. These two men have so much talent that, really, I can scarcely believe that they will long remain on the faculty at SIUC.

11. October 20: Gillian Weir. She is a very fine organist, but played a program which, for me, was composed of too many short pieces, and nothing that was protracted enough to involve the emotional exploration for which the pipe organ is so suited. Her playing of the Franck Choral II in B minor was probably the best thing she did, although her playing really could not be faulted at all. I will not herein mention the many other things she played; they simply are too numerous. The audience was small, but receptive, which is nice to see, given that the pipe organ is scarcely the popular instrument it once was, and now certainly should be.



"I don't know which one of you is doing it, but at the end of the symphony, we shall refrain from playing 'Shave and a Haircut.'"



I confess to one difficulty with hearing Weir play. I have, over the years, become so enamored with the organ playing of E. Power Biggs that he is always the measure I use by which to judge other organists. And other organists, measured against this towering musician, always come up short. I do not like the fact that I do this, and am sure that one day I will break myself of this habit--this aesthetic tic. But for now it sometimes is a deterrent to my enjoying others at that king of instruments.

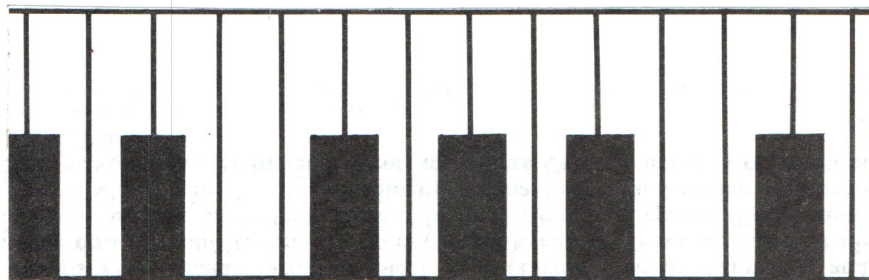
12. November 1: Jervis Underwood is Dacia's flute teacher; hence, we attended his faculty recital. He had the flu that night, and had taken medicine to hold back the nausea, so it is difficult to judge how well he can play. But from this concert, it is obvious that he can play certain pieces very well. I shall not mention them all, except to say that Schubert's Opus post. 160, "Trockne Blumen," Introduction and Variations is a very complicated and gorgeous piece of music which I had never before heard, and this was a special treat. A nice surprise was Sonata, Opus 23 by Lowell Lieberman which was a truly remarkable work; so much so that I would suggest to anyone that they be on the lookout for recordings of his music. He is a contemporary, born in the 1940s, and although he is yet to make a name for himself, I suspect he will. Other than these two works, some nice experimental pieces were played, one accompanied by a Harold Miller--head of the double bass section of the music department--who played so badly I could scarcely believe he could hold a faculty position.

13 & 14. November 17 and 18: I attended the same concert twice. Andrew Davis conducted the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. The first piece on the program was by a young Canadian composer, Glenn Buhr. Entitled, Ecstasy, its delivery did not live up to its name. It came across as the musings of a rank amateur, and I hope that a conductor as accomplished as Davis will not again waste his time with this sort of drivel. The last piece on the program was Nielsen's Symphony No. 5, Op. 50. The first night, the orchestra had not really found its stride within the piece, and it did not come across very well. But the second night they had settled in, and the result was most pleasing.

The feature of these two concerts was none other than Walter Klien. He did Beethoven's Concerto No. 3 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 37, and I am not exaggerating when I say that these were the two best performances I have ever heard in my life. Bar none. Davis obviously loved working with Klien, and Klien showed a masterful touch, drawing all the power as well as all the humor from this piece. His timing was flawless, his rapport with the orchestra intimate, and the audience response was tremendous. Klien's playing on each night was quite different from how he played on the other night. The first night his touch was more lush, opulent, with room for a good deal of humor and a broad range of dynamics. In this sense, his playing was clearly grounded in the tradition of 19th century pianistic interpretation. But on the second night, his touch was more hurried, more firm, the tempo was a bit faster, and he played, if not with more energy, then with more aggression. On this night, he played more in the tradition of 18th century classical music, i.e., more in the tradition of how Mozart is played. This time his playing was even reminiscent of Schnabel, although better. It was a bit idiosyncratic, but entirely acceptable. I suppose I preferred the approach he used on the first night, but I am glad to have heard two very different interpretations of the same piece. Clearly, this experience shows that performers do not always have one way of playing a piece of music, especially when this piece was interpreted so differently--not only by Klien, but also by Davis--on two successive nights.

I say to you, dear friends and music lovers, attending these two concerts has been one of the high points of my life. Who is this Walter Klien? I have before stated that I believe him to be the very best living pianist. Perhaps he is the greatest pianist of

this century. He once recorded a great deal; over the last few years, he has recorded very little, although some of his old recordings are being released on CD. I plan, over the next year and perhaps for the rest of my life, to do a great deal in the way of promoting his recording career. Meanwhile, do him, and yourself, a favor. Buy everything you can that he has recorded. Whether it be Chopin, Mozart, or Beethoven, you will discover





that he has no equal. I do not know what his temperament is as a person; I do know that when he is at the piano, he is a god in our midst, and we all should do what we can to make sure that his music is available to us, and is preserved before, like all gods, he departs from this earth forever.

In past years, I have tended to devote a good deal of space to analyzing certain pieces of music--usually works by Beethoven. I am finding, however, that what with the time that takes, plus the expense involved in printing and mailing these terribly long editions of The Aviary, that it would behoove me to try a different, and more compact, approach to revealing what has appealed to me by way of music.

Henceforth, I shall follow a plan rather similar to what I do with books I have read. Namely, I will list the best, the disappointing, and the worst recordings I have heard over the last year. First, let us hear about the best:

1. Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 130, Original Version with the Great Fugue, Op. 133 as played by the Lasalle-Quartett. This 1973 recording is flawlessly produced, and this chamber group is as good as any quartet in the world. Most of you are aware of the original conditions surrounding the publication of Beethoven's Opus 130. That last movement was not acceptable to the public or the publisher, and the publisher urged Beethoven to compose a different last movement. Beethoven, after initial opposition, agreed to compose a new movement, and the amiable result did indeed make the work more acceptable. Meanwhile, the original last movement was assigned its own opus number: Opus 133, and pretty much consigned to oblivion until the very end of the 19th century. It has slowly been gaining interest over the last several decades, and now and then a string quartet plays the Opus 130 with its original last movement. I have even heard that some performances have involved playing the entire revised Opus 130 and then adding the Opus 133 as a "fifth movement." In the past, I have customarily preferred the revised movement of Opus 130, but with this recording by the Lasalle-Quartett, I may be changing my mind. Now I am pretty much evenly mixed in my opinion as to which last movement is better. Another few listenings may cause me to prefer the original Great Fugue for the fourth movement.

Truly, this is a monumental recording, and should be in the library of any Beethoven enthusiast. On the DG label, it is perfectly recorded, and can scarcely cause a complaint by any listener.

2. Biber's Eight Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo. This work is on the Pleiades Record label, and it bears a reference to a Wesley K. Morgan, Musical Director of the Southern Illinois University Press. I do not know if this label is somehow connected with SIU, or what. I found the two-record set in a used record shop in Carbondale, and likely will one day make inquiries as to whether this production was associated with SIUC.

The musicians are Sonya Monosoff on the baroque violin, Judith Davidoff on the viola da gamba, and Peter Wolf on the harpsichord, all playing instruments from the collection of "original instruments" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I have heard this set of sonatas twice before, and had admired them greatly. But this playing has an unparalleled delicacy, a perfection of tone, a faithfulness to the original score's dynamic range and markings. It is two hours of pure bliss, this recording, and I recommend it highly, but I suspect it is rare and would be hard to come by.

3. Holiday for Harpsichord played by E. Power Biggs. This album contains a wide variety of music, ranging from brief compositions by Schubert and Mozart to Beethoven, Chopin, Weber, Grieg, and many others. Biggs, the consummate organist, plays the harpsichord very well too, and this recording is such fun and played with such energy that I was on the edge of my seat through my first listening to it.

4. This Is Ray Brown was a startling discovery. I found it in a used record store. It is on a Japanese label, but has enough English that one can determine who the other musicians are: Oscar Peterson on both piano and organ, Herb Ellis on guitar, Osie Johnson on drums, and Jerome Richardson on flute. Ray Brown has always been my favorite jazz bassist, and this recording (I would judge it as rather early in his career) is truly dynamic, and most enjoyable. Of audiophile quality, this vinyl pressing has tunes ranging from "Upstairs Blues" to "Take the 'A' Train."

5. Gliding Bird by Emmylou Harris. This is Emmylou's first solo album, and I had never before heard it ... or, heard of it. It is much more of a folk album than a CW album, and shows a side of her which I had never suspected. I love this woman's voice, and at one time would have given anything to play bass behind her. This is a remarkable album, very hard to come by, but for my many friends who are fans of this singer, I highly recommend they keep their eye out for a copy.

6. Glière's Symphony No. 3 in B minor, Opus 42 "Ilya Murometz" with the Houston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. I had never



heard this work, and bought it because I love Stokowski's conducting. On the Seraphim label--cheap, not well-recorded--this work nevertheless comes across with astonishing emotional impact, variety of orchestral color, and novelty of instrumental combinations. I have, over the past year, been coming across recordings of vocal works by Glière, and those are all wonderful. Hearing this album makes me determined to one day have all his symphonies as well as his string quartets.

Recordings which were especially disappointing for 1989 were few. I buy selectively, and if something does not suit me, I am not compelled to listen to it all the way through. However, certain recordings show promise. At the beginning, I keep listening, and in the end there is still something lacking. The ones which this year felt this way are:

1. The realization of the first movement of Beethoven's Symphony # 10, realized by Dr. Barry Cooper, played by the London Symphony Orchestra with Wyn Morris conducting. Dr. Cooper drew sketches, brief ideas, and such from Beethoven's notebooks for the sake of putting together this movement. Essentially, he took information, arranged it in ways that Beethoven arranged his other lengthy symphonies, embellished those sketches which Beethoven had actually written out, provided instrumentation and bridges between what Beethoven himself wrote out, and the result: a first movement, of sorts, to Beethoven's intended 10th symphony. I had read of Cooper's efforts, and while I admire his scholarship and very much appreciate this valuable contribution to our understanding of Beethoven, the result, musically, does not lend much. There are perhaps half a dozen bars where the music sounds a bit like Beethoven; the rest of it wanders, pushes ahead, wanders some more, and ... well, there isn't much to say.

I do not, like some purists, believe that Cooper was wrong to try what he did. I do, however, think it would have been better had Cooper taken his wonderful ideas to a composer who has already shown merit as a composer, e.g., Bernstein, and with the two working together, completed a first movement from Beethoven's sketches.

The main thing to keep in mind, however, is that when one looks at the sketches in his notebooks for his other symphonies, the initial ideas are vastly removed from the final product. Beethoven's genius would always inject such a sublime leap from those seminal ideas to the later, completed product. Cooper was unable to achieve such a leap, and in fact, had little material to work with from the beginning. Not being a master of orchestration, he ended up giving us little.

But I emphasize: I am grateful for what he did. I am disappointed, but then, Cooper made no great promises. He presented us a modest, and curious, gift, and we should all appreciate what he has done.

2. Mass by Leonard Bernstein. I had never heard this work before, although I own a copy of the score. The score looked suspicious, as to quality, and I had always feared, somewhat, listening to the performance of the work. At last I found a copy of it on sale, and ... well, I was disappointed keenly. There are places where the Bernstein genius shows, but it is inconsistent, and there is no fluid construct of emotion running throughout. It is a very human prayer, but it never seems to reach up toward God.

I admire this composer's symphonies greatly, and had hoped I would here find a powerful piece of music. Instead it is shallow, strained, overly discontinuous, and ... not boring, but bored. Bored music. Bernstein, it almost seems, was being lazy about putting that thing together.

3. Tracy Chapman by Tracy Chapman was a piece of tripe. I had heard the single, "Fast Car," on the radio, and thought highly of it. So I thought I would indulge myself and purchase it on CD. Little did I know that I would receive a recording with songs that were consistently boring, recorded with very poor sonics, of a misandric nature, and ... well, I tried to trade the CD at a used record store. They didn't want it. They had more than half a dozen copies in stock, and they said most people's experience was like mine: "Fast Car" sounds nice, but once you've heard it half a dozen times, it becomes totally uninteresting. And most of the other selections are uninteresting at first listening. Enough said about this waste of money.

4. Handel's Messiah--both recordings done by Sir Adrian Boult. There are some pieces of music which, almost no matter who performs or records them, they sound good. Vivaldi's Four Seasons is an example of this, or Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. Other pieces of music never sound quite right to me. An example of this is Vivaldi's Gloria, or Handel's Messiah. The Messiah is a sublime and challenging work, with so many facets--the orchestra, the chorus, the solo voices--that it is nearly impossible to find the right combination to produce a work that consistently satisfies. For example, the version done by Karl Richter with the LSO and the John Alldis Choir unquestionably has the best solo voices of any recorded version: Helen Donath, Anna Reynolds, Stuart Burrows, and Donald McIntyre. But Richter, even though he does an adequate job, never paces the work well



enough to bring off a superlative recording. Other versions have stunning orchestral work, but the soloists are weak; a good example of this failing is the recording by John Eliot Gardiner with The English Baroque Soloists.

I have long admired Boult as a conductor, and had thought both these recordings would be wonderful. They were, in fact, marginal with regard to quality. The bass voices expectorated, the chorus waxed and waned both in terms of participatory enthusiasm and volume, and the soloists were moving at such a slow pace that one heard syllables instead of words.

I will, henceforth, stick with listening to those versions I like best. It is surprising that the versions which remain, in my mind, of the highest quality are the ones recorded with a very large orchestra and chorus. I would place Beecham's recording, done with the Royal Philharmonic many years ago, as best. The performance is so enthusiastic the chorus sings sharp at times, and the overall effect is glorious. Second, I would place Ormandy's old recording with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. But in third place, I would put a more modern version: that recorded by The Academy of Ancient Music, conducted by Hogwood.

5. Mozart's Four Quartets for Flute and Strings played by Michel Debost with the Trio a Cordes Francais. I have always loved these quartets, and Debost is my favorite flautist. And although he played splendidly, the string trio was just too flawed. They were unsure of themselves, they played with a very uneven tempo, and the cello especially was so faltering, weak, and lacking in any passion that the entire recording was diminished to something scarcely acceptable.

The worst record I heard this last year was Also Sprach Zarathustra as recorded by the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra with Walter Susskind conducting. This is a piece of music I love, and I already have several versions, all of which more or less satisfy. This one, however, was done so badly I am surprised that it was ever released.

At the beginning, the organ's bass was so weak one almost had to imagine it was there. As for the timpani, one could not be sure if the percussionist was playing them, or if he had dropped his beaters and they were bouncing on the skins. Later, well into this piece, the violins begin wandering about like a drunk lost in a fog, and the double basses wheeze and groan with not a bit of sure definition.

Susskind, it seemed, had no grasp of the score whatsoever. One could imagine a rat, hanging by its tail from the end of his baton, given the complete lack of control over tempo and dynamics.

This recording was made back in 1975, before the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra was first-rate. One can take comfort in this. Otherwise, my loyalty to the orchestra would have been put severely in question by the abysmal failure of this recording.



## NOTES FROM TWIN FRANCES

My contributions to the last two issues of The Aviary were, I believe, both reluctant and timid. There had been some unseemly letters from Francis' friends, and consequently I was feeling a bit defensive. But responses to my brother's last two issues have been coming to me, and they have all been very nice. Enjoyable, stimulating, sometimes very touching.

I am resolving to myself that in this, and all future contributions to The Aviary, I shall be a kinder sister for Francis. I have used this forum to chide him, and while this is fun for both of us (up to a point), I did overstep the bounds of both propriety and familial privacy in my last two installments. All that teasing I did about Francis' jealousy when he was in London! I was merciless! Of course he had a right to be jealous, and I confess that I would have been terribly embarrassed were the situation reversed, and had Francis revealed to the world my own such weaknesses. Francis took all I said in stride; in fact, I believe he rather enjoyed the attention it gave him (addicted, as he is, to being an exhibitionist, even if it entails a blush). But I consider my friendship with Francis too valuable to sully, and even though Francis might gain pleasure from my defilements, I do not. Or rather, I do at the time, but in retrospect I am always sorry. So from now on I shall be a kinder and more generous sister.

There is one thing I must explain to Francis' friends--those who have written me over the last several years. You must write me care of Francis. He and I have an agreement, which neither of us are going to break. We absolutely will not give out each other's address or phone number. Some years ago we did this commonly, and while usually this posed no problem,



certain situations came up which were disastrous. One such situation involved an old acquaintance of my brother's; actually, Francis had not even seen this fellow in about ten years. But this fellow travelled to England, having phoned Francis for my address, and unannounced came to my apartment where I was staying for the weekend in London, and asked if he could spend the night. He seemed like a cordial fellow, and I agreed to share my quarters, small though they are. He seemed grateful, and was a quite amiable chap, so I offered him my place for the early week even though I would be back at the Isle of Man. He was to leave the key in a predetermined place, and I would pick it up when I returned in four weeks. As it was, however, I returned the next weekend, to find him still at my place. But now he was no longer amiable. Instead, he was depressed, lonely, and talked incessantly. By Sunday I asked him to leave, and although very angry and surly, he departed for rented lodgings. But then, Monday evening, he returned, using a key he had made from mine (as an "extra," he shamelessly explained, to protect himself in the event he might have lost the one I had given him). I was staying through to Wednesday, and he thought I was departing Sunday evening; hence, his return. At this point, I claimed the extra key, found him lodgings myself, helped him move there, and returned to my apartment, only to find that he had arrived back at my place first, and was waiting for me outside the door. He had returned, he explained, to apologize. So I asked him in to hear his apology. His apology, it turned out, was actually intended to be a lengthy explanation for his behavior--in other words, another long monologue about how lonely and miserable he was since coming abroad. I abided him as best I could, at last walked him back to his lodgings to be rid of him, firmly told him I had no more time for him this trip, and left him looking very forlorn and miserable. I walked the distance--likely a mile--back to my flat, and promptly phoned Francis. Francis was duly apologetic, and I soon calmed down. Actually, Francis had scarcely known this fellow. They had attended the same college, but Francis, being two years younger, had scarcely known this man, and said he had never had a personal conversation with him. So it was a mistake on both our parts.

I fear that I imposed upon Francis an even greater inconvenience. A group of young people who call themselves anarchists frequented a cafe I often choose, and I had come to know several of them. They seemed like a high-spirited bunch, young, idealistic, but very intelligent and worthy people. I had told them about Francis' work in men's liberation, so when six of them went travelling to the United States, they wanted to see Francis. I wrote Francis about them in advance, he agreed to see them, and I thought no more of it. As it turned out, these young people were absolute rogues. They all bought pistols while travelling in the United States, and showed up at Francis' door with their pieces holstered at waist. I had no recollection whatsoever of telling them that Francis shoots at the expert rank with his .44 magnum pistol, but they knew about it, and wanted him to teach them how to shoot well. Francis, however, refuses to teach anyone, and practices with nobody. He informed them of this, and this commenced a tense and unfriendly visit. This troupe spent the night, and the next morning, one of them, bragging about his prowess as a political force, began talking to Francis of his plans to assassinate certain political leaders in Canada. Francis surreptitiously turned on his tape recorder, and taped forty-five minutes of this fellow's yelling and screaming. At the end of the tape (which, Francis told me, captured only the less dramatic part of this rogue's two-hour bluster), this young man was screaming at Francis that he could assassinate him, if he chose to, and no one could keep him from it, and so on. It was chilling, listening to it.

Francis later told me that he let the fellow blow himself out, and then said that he would go ahead and do a round of pistol shooting with them. But first he would insist that they clean their pistols. They had no cleaning kits, so Francis used his kit, cleaning the pistols one at a time. He cleaned the first one, and then had each of them have a go at cleaning their pieces. According to Francis, they became bored with this, did not do a good job, and he insisted on putting the finishing touches on cleaning each gun. When at last they went to shoot, none of their pistols would fire. Francis examined the ammunition they had bought for their .38s, and declared that it was old and damaged by moisture. They needed new ammunition. So they were unable to do any shooting.

So that evening, the six rogues departed for Indiana, and Francis was done with them. A couple of weeks later, I received through the mails the cassette tape of that young man's screaming, a 45-minute lecture from Francis on the other side about how miserable my friends had made him and his family, and enclosed with the tape were six firing pins. I thought it terribly clever of Francis, to have removed the firing pins (Francis, in his letter, referred to them as "hammer rod pins") from those six pieces, and then blame the malfunctions on the ammunition.

These situations, of course, are extreme, but other unpleasant situations have also occurred. This is what motivated us to cease giving out one another's addresses and phone numbers. Since then, we have both become more guarded about our privacy, much busier, and we simply do not want someone presuming that because one of us is a friend, this friendship would easily follow with the other of us.

So please understand. If, because of what I write--or, have written--in Francis' Aviary, you then wish to write me, feel free to do so. If, after some correspondence has been exchanged, we both feel that we would like to know the other person better, then I may choose to share my address. In fact, I have done this with two of Francis' friends, and while in one case the correspondence fell off, with the other person it flourished, and we are hoping to one day meet each other.

Francis asked me, in my letter this year, to speak more at length about my peace work. Two years ago, I might have been able to do this. But this year I can not honor his request. This is because I have virtually halted all my work with peace projects. Not because I am weary of the work itself, and not because I have given up my ideals. Rather, I have grown distrustful of the people with whom I have worked. To be frank, I have grown to dislike--



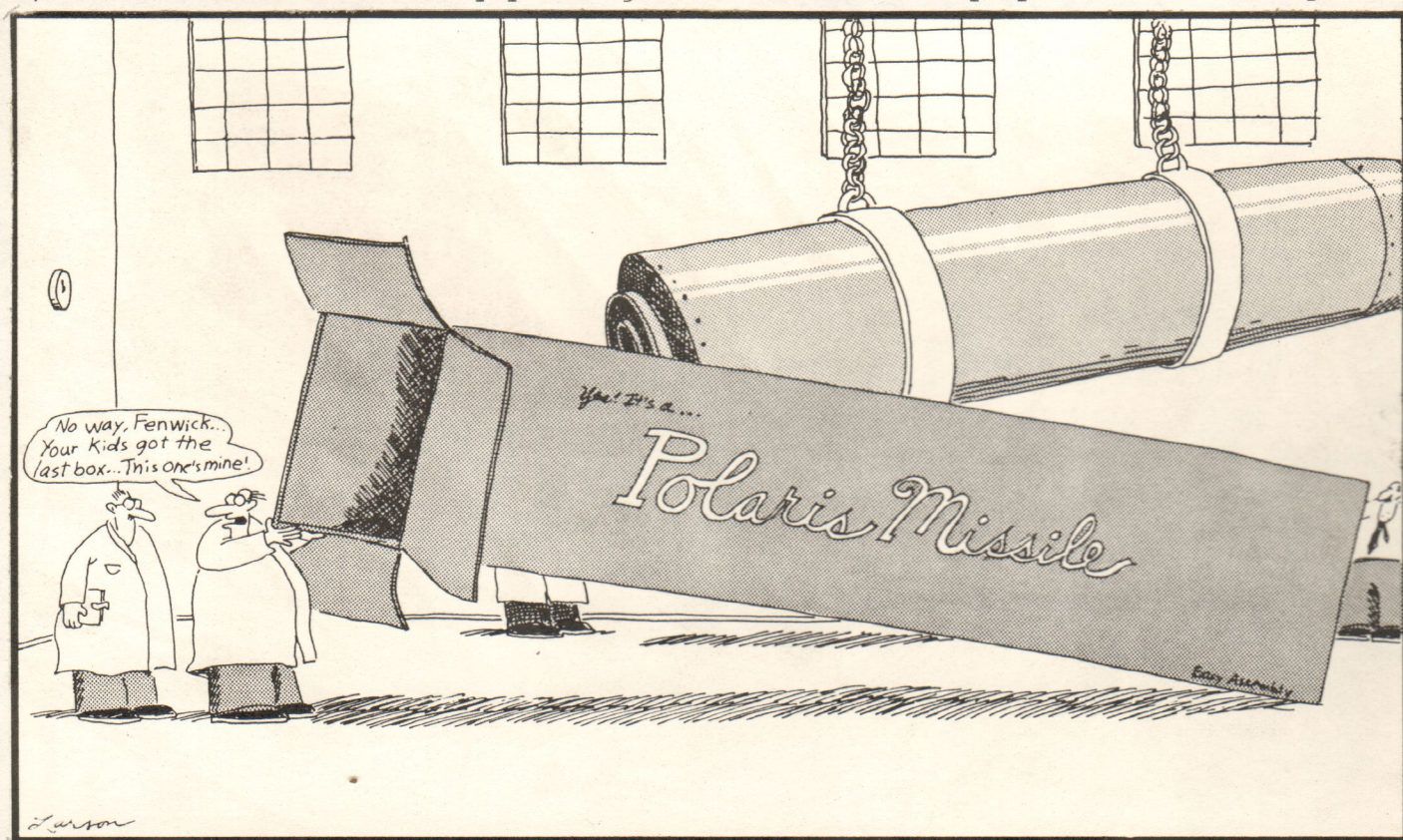
even detest--those people who call themselves peaceniks. They have very much the same emotional complexity, stature, and content of everyone else in the world. They have ideals, but often they have very perverted reasons (or motives, which are not always reasons) for embracing those ideas. They claim their ideals are peace, but as far as I can tell, they know nothing of peace. Rather, they are afraid of violence. But being as morbidly afraid of violence as they are, they do not know how to handle their own violent tendencies; instead, they fear them, suppress them, deny them altogether. But then, during interactions with other people in their interpersonal lives, these latent and suppressed feelings come forth. And then I see these people being so violent that I fear them more than I fear an armed hoodlum. When a person tells me he or she is a peacenik, I want to go dig a foxhole and hide. I swear to it, I can think of only four people, of perhaps three hundred with whom I have worked, who I believe have a right to call themselves peaceniks--persons who believe in, and have some claim to, peace. Two of these people reside in the United States; I refer to Francis' wife, Abbe, and to a fellow I knew many years ago. And two of these people live in Germany.

*"A man like me cares little about losing the lives of a million men"*

*—Napoleon Bonaparte*

*"I can send the flower of German youth into the hell of war without the slightest pity"*

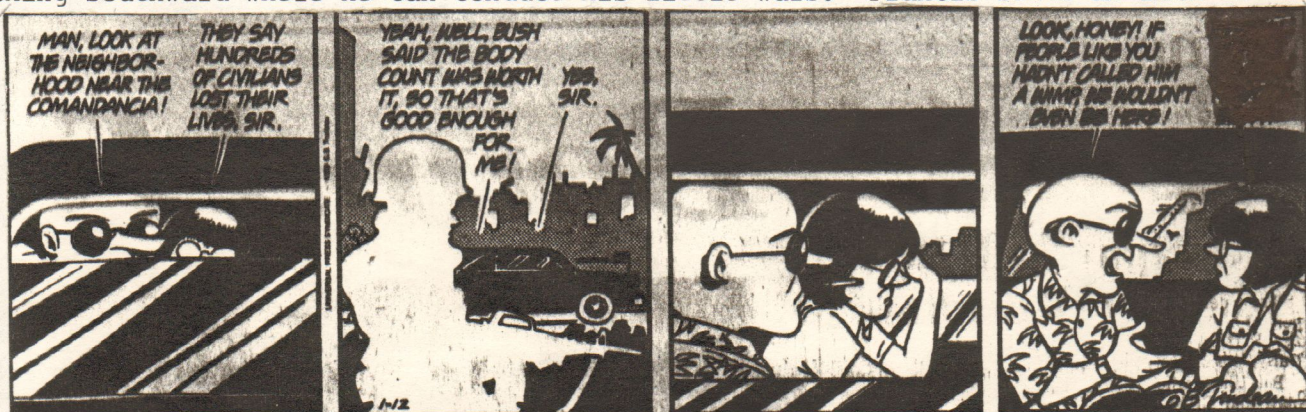
*—Adolf Hitler*



So I do not continue my peace work, because I lack a community of peace activists, and because the word itself has come to frighten me. Now I confine myself to what I call "anti-violence work", focusing my work on the abolishment of nuclear missiles. Europeans are much more receptive to this work, and much more aware of the nuclear menace. In fact, I believe that the beginnings of nuclear disarmament, which seem to be happening in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., have been motivated primarily by pressures from Europeans (who supposedly are the ones to be protected by all those medium-range missiles).

Meanwhile, President Bush continues his attempt at giving himself a "tough guy" public image by looking southward where he can conduct his little wars. Francis sends me much men's

liberation literature, most of which, I confess, I seldom have the time to read. But I did read one or two essays by a fellow



Southern California area, whose name I do not recall. These essays were written back during the presidential elections, and this author, with a good deal of alarm, was pointing out that even though he was not a Bush supporter, he thought Bush would win, and he was very concerned about people constantly criticizing Bush's weakness (his "wimpiness"--as I heard it referred to in The New York Times!) because he believed that Bush, once elected, would try and vindicate this accusation by doing the one supremely macho thing an American President can do: wage war. I had thought the same thing; I had been aware that were I, as a woman, under



those kinds of pressures, I would likely be tempted to do something drastic and violent to retrieve my reputation. And I could imagine how a man, especially a traditional man who would feel the sting of those criticisms very keenly, would be tempted to react. The alarm that writer felt seems to have been entirely justified, and his predictions, I fear, are coming true. Let us hope that Bush contents himself with small wars, and hundreds of lives, instead of going the route that Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon took.

Aside from my political work, I also work at making a living. I am doing less modelling work than before, simply because I find it too tiring. My friends always envy me this work, but when I invite them to come with me, they soon understand why I find it exhausting. The constant changing of clothes is hard work. One must hurry, the hairdressers are busy constantly, and then, after dressing, one waits while the photographers fuss, and then finally there is the lighting, following orders, photographers always getting testy, hurried adjustments of clothes, more waiting, more bright lights, popping flashbulbs, and then back to change again as quickly as one can. Worst of all, I am always cold when doing this. The dressing rooms are large, because of all the clothing, and they are seldom heated. One is cold while undressing and dressing, one is cold while waiting, and then one is in front of hot lights. Now the photographers and lighting people are complaining about it being too hot, and then one must hurry back to change in the cold dressing room. I am so tired of the damnable cold of those rooms. This is the main reason I am now doing only about three days every two months.

I continue working on the Isle of Man, at the same job, but now there is a difference. My work is no longer so secret. I think few of my friends believed me when I told them, over and over, that I could not talk about my job because it was classified but that it had nothing to do with the military. Now I can say what it was--is. It was related to working with metal alloys for coating the edges of razor blades. Yes; laugh if you must, but that is all it was. In the U.S., there is a process for coating steel with platinum to make razor blades stay sharp longer. That information is classified. Only half a dozen people in the one company that manufactures those blades know about the process. The British have been trying to develop a similar but better process, and we have at last succeeded. The information itself remains classified, but now that the goal is reached, I am allowed to at least talk about what I do, in general, even if I can not talk about what I have helped accomplish. My task, in the project, was to coordinate security measures to protect the information. I think I did a good job. The information never leaked out. And soon the manufacturing process will begin. My job remains secure, however. I will continue to help maintain security around this secret, while at the same time exploring a trade agreement to sell this blade (not the process) to the Russian government.

For me, this last year has been very relaxing. I travel less and less. Last year it was because I spent more time with friends in London. This year it is because I have been spending much more time reading--especially contemporary French literature and autobiographies. One of my favorite books, this last year, was Choices by Liv Ullman. There is a statement, on page 129 of this book, which very much describes an emerging aspect of my own personality: "A newfound ability to express firmness instead of politeness provides me with strength I never verbalized before." In the past, I have felt strong only when expressing the entirety of myself--bringing all my faculties and strength to the fore. This meant, of course, that often I felt weak, since I could not be functioning with this much preparedness at all times. Also, it perhaps meant that in occasional situations, which I engaged with feelings of insecurity, I compensated by being brazen, rigid, so polite as to be cold and unapproachable. Perhaps I am describing myself too harshly here, but I do think there have been times when something was amiss in me, especially when interpersonal situations were difficult. Now I am more sure of myself, and somewhat paradoxically, because I need not have such constant recourse to a polite facade, my firmness (I believe) has a warmth that remains inviting even as I am more confident about asserting exactly who I am.

I hope that I have satisfied Francis' imperative this year: that I say more about myself and much less about him. It seems I have succeeded. I rather suspect, in fact, that I have succeeded too well, i.e., Francis will squirm and complain that this time I neglected him overly much.

So, to make slight amends, I will comment on what I perceive to be an impressive accomplishment by Francis this last year. For his wife, Abbe, he did an oil painting of her and presented it to her for her birthday. Francis is convinced that this painting--his first ever, in oils--is entirely lacking in artistic merit. He wrote me in a letter, "It shows I am in love with her; it scarcely, however, shows a body. I have no talent in this medium, and hereby swear that I shall never again attempt a painting, of any kind. Whatever this may mean to you in terms of past plans (or were they promises?), I am sorry. But I will paint no more, and therefore I will not paint you."

Realize, dear friends of Francis, that he had promised to do a nude painting of me when next I came to visit. We had discussed this project at length, commenting on the fact that virtually all nude paintings of women are done either of an anonymous subject (a model, often depicted as an odalisque, concubine, goddess, or saint), or of a lover. We thought it would be fascinating to discover what aesthetic emotions would emerge with a brother painting his sister. Francis' painting of Abbe, in fact, was going to be preparatory work for his painting me; he even vouchsafed in a letter to me that it was, "a personal indulgence for the sake of love, but also for the sake of a more satisfactory aesthetic--and therefore higher--accomplishment." And now he has retracted his promise! Simply because he (wrongly!) believes that the painting he did has no merit. There are ways it is flawed, I suppose. But if one allows the adjective "primitive" for that painting, and uses it descriptively rather than pejoratively, then one can not deny that the painting has great, great value. In fact, if hung in a gallery amidst other modern paintings, this one would catch any viewer's eye first.



But meanwhile, Francis has lost not only his artistic nerve, but also seems to have lost his sense of obligation about promises. He has already given away his easel, and says he is going to either sell or give away the rest of his art tools. Please, those of you who know Francis well, and can appeal to either his sense of vanity or his sense of moral obligation, do what you can to convince him to make good on his promise. I am not being haughty in wanting him to paint me. Rather, I--we!--were so excited about this aesthetic experiment (Francis laughingly called it a "tryst with aesthetized incest"), and truly it seems a sin against the cosmos to thus so callously dismiss it!

Fortunately for him, Francis has redeeming qualities to which he adheres; otherwise, I might not be speaking to him because of his breaking his promise to me.

I had hoped he might have come back to the United Kingdom for another visit by now, but he has been too much occupied with other things. Besides, travelling is much more difficult for him now. He can not travel long distances alone. His difficulties seeing cause him to get lost easily (not that he hasn't always been capable of getting lost), and travelling by coach or even in a small car make him very dizzy. When last I was with him, he fell three times in the course of two days, and I fear he is going to break a limb if he is not more careful about his dizziness. When he first contracted MS, he used a cane to help himself with balance, and I wish he would go back to the cane, but he adamantly asserts that he does not need it. I fear for his health, his safety, his mortality. Francis, however, says that the only thing he fears is a slow death. Believe me, our discussions on this topic are not easy. When I voice my concerns, Francis is aloof and taciturn. But then, eventually, whether because I have voiced my sentiments or because of his own feelings, Francis does need to deal with, i.e., talk about, his disease. But then he gets so upset as to be unreachable, and no one can comfort him. On this, he is given to extremes; neither are to my liking, and in my opinion neither are healthy for his state of mind.

As to other matters: I am glad that Francis, at long last, is making a concerted effort at getting his novels published. I have explored avenues of publication in Great Britain for him, but I have no expertise in this realm, and hence have not been successful at all. I did write a description of one of his novels, hoping that this would serve as a kind of prospectus for potential publishers, but so far no agent has been willing to even look at that novel, given its length. So Francis is concentrating on his shorter novels, which in my opinion are not his best, but may be sensationalistic enough to get the attention of a publisher--and eventually, the interest of readers.

Last, I want to make an announcement. Since Francis looks upon each January-February edition of The Aviary as a report on what happened during the previous year, he absolutely refuses to tell any news about the current year, no matter how far into that year the January-February edition of The Aviary is actually being prepared. So I suppose it is my duty to circumvent Francis' compulsive adherence to his habit, and here announce what Francis (I am sure I embarrass him by saying this, but he will forgive me) described to me as "a blessed event." He and Abbe are with child. They had planned this for many years, had at last made a decision that now is the time, and the baby is expected in late November. Francis wants it to be a boy: "I raised a daughter, and did it well; now I want to do the same with a son." He is always one to present himself an opportunity for being disappointed! In a letter to me, he stated, "I know I'm supposed to take the attitude that, well, I want a boy, but if it's a daughter, I'll love her just the same. While I'm sure I'll love her just the same, it also is the case that I'm going to be royally pissed off if it's not a boy. Of course everyone will look upon this as inappropriate, and I will take a lot of heat for this attitude, but I've a right to my feelings and there you have it." It is true that Francis will "take a lot of heat" (as he puts it) for this attitude, but knowing him and his stubborn way of engaging life, he will make sure that everyone believes he is pissed off even if it should turn out that he does not feel this way. Francis, it seems, is very careful about garnering opportunities for angering the world and its populace. To this modus operandi, he is more loyal, I believe, that he is to the aesthetic realm (to return to a sore, and not overly belabored, topic).

"Keep it short, or I'll make you pay for half the printing cost this year." Such was my brother's jocular caveat. But even if he didn't mean the threat, he did intend the imperative, and I have scarcely heeded it. So I must, at last, halt this procession of too many words.

I am thankful to those of you who have written me such nice letters over the last several months, and I look forward to hearing from more of Francis' friends. We share a common trait--we all love Francis, and do so loyally, even though he is convinced that nobody actually loves him. "People are not drawn to me because they love me," he confided in a letter. "Remember why flies are drawn to a corpse."

He is a trial, isn't he!

My very best!

*Francis*

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

I intended to publish fewer articles in 1989 than the year before; as it is, I published more. In a previous issue of The Aviary, I stated that I had published 11 articles in '88; I discovered, late, that another journal had published one without notifying me until some months later. Hence, I

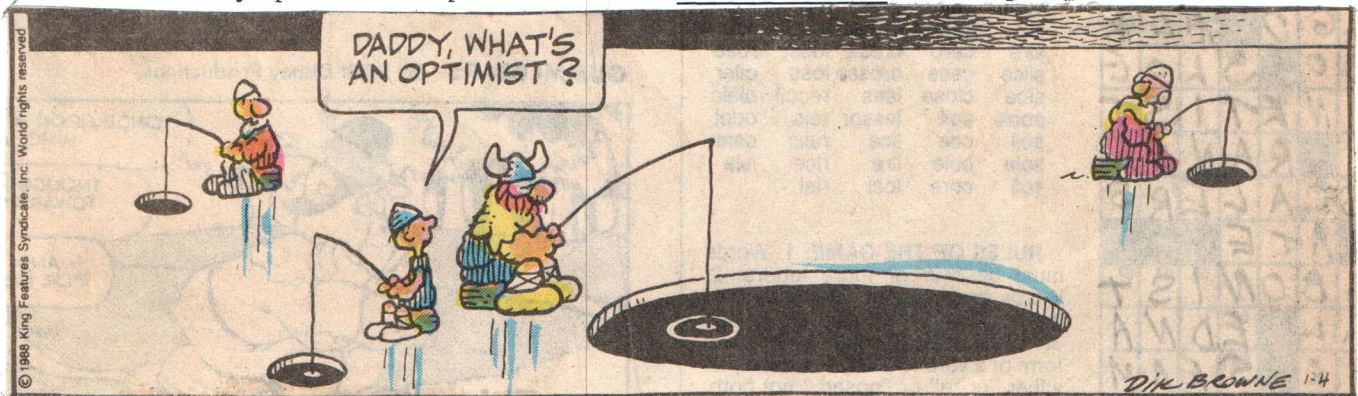


actually published an even dozen in 1988. In 1989 I published 14. This brings the number of my publications to 143. A number I might be proud of were several of those publications major works in fiction. But as it is, having published only a few short stories, a few poems, I look upon most of those articles as mere exercises--the detritus of a busy mind which is actually committed to writing more lengthy works.

I have in the past made mention of the one article I published, during the year, of which I am most pleased. In 1989, there is no question but that my best published article was, "The Men's Rights Movement and the Nurturing Agenda (versus) The Toxic Triad: Chivalry, Machismo, and Homophobia." This article appeared in the September-October issue of Transitions, and was put out in a special press run by The Playboy Foundation of Playboy Magazine. It was a lengthy, rather complex article, and while I consider it to be one of the best statements I have made about men's liberation, I fear that it was too complex for most readers to get through. I say this because while most of my writings elicit much comment from readers around the nation, this one--even though I had such a high opinion of its quality--got one response only. As it was, I was very embarrassed about this article, simply because the edition of Transitions in which it appeared contained two other major articles which were quite compromising for the men's movement. One because of its poor writing style, and the other because of its reprehensible headline: "It's Women's Turn to Die ... in the Work Force." This kind of rhetoric: "it's women's turn" is the very thing I was opposing back in the late '60s when I heard feminists saying, "It's men's turn to suffer." I didn't like their rhetoric or their agenda, and I do not like it when men's liberationists take a similar approach. Unfortunately, this article was the lead one, with the headline plastered all over the front page of that issue of Transitions. Not a very nice introduction to my article which was contained within.

Some of you may ask why I allowed articles of that sort into Transitions since I am--or was--the Managing Editor. The answer is: I didn't. But then, as Managing Editor I had no control over those things. Editing Transitions has been a democratic process, for the most part. I never saw what the Editor-in-Chief contributed to each issue until the printed copy was in my hands. It was the Editor-in-Chief who printed that lead article with the misogynistic headline. As for the other article which was written so terribly. That was sent to production headquarters by a Contributing Editor, under the auspices of the Editor-in-Chief. Hence, I never saw it either, until the final copy of Transitions was in my hands. All a very unorganized process, I concede, without enough checks and balances on the input of various editors. One more reason for my plans to pull out as Transitions' Managing Editor.

An even more pressing reason for halting my editorial work is so I can concentrate on getting my fiction published.



This attempt, my friends rightfully warn me, will likely produce nothing. The competition is too fierce, no one really wants to read good literature--much less, complex novels such as I have written. Agents do not want to market such literary monsters, publishers are not interested, the public could care less. But I've decided to give it a go anyway. I believe I'll do what I did when I first became successful at publishing nonfiction--market my worst stuff first. The public is more apt to like what I consider to be my lesser writing; then, later, I can try to publish my better progeny. I discussed this method in my Aviary of two years ago. In fact, I therein published a little story called, "Saga ...," which I readily admitted was the worst thing I could find in my files at the time. Some of you will recall that one of my reasons for publishing that thing was for the sake of throwing a bone to my detractors--giving them something to gnaw on, to howl about, so they would focus their invectives toward my writing and thus spare me the trials of condemning every aspect of my character. I did not succeed in my intent, because as it turned out, virtually everyone believed that I was only pretending to proffer what I believed to be a bad bit of literature. This I had anticipated, thinking it would cause them to criticize the little story all the more severely. They instead, however, did not more than sneer briefly at the story, and then go on to impugn my character for thus trying to trick them into abasing me. Their protestations, accusations, and execrations on this matter amounted to a considerable abasement, and thus it was that in their very attempt at denying me my masochistic tryst, they only



succeeded in making it all the more exquisitely satisfying.

In hopes of eliciting the same response this year--of causing my detractors to abuse me whilst protesting their intent to abuse--I shall do something similar. Again I herein publish the worst thing I can locate in my files. Two years ago I gave you a short story; this year it is a short article. One that I before considered so bad that, although I originally penned it for Transitions, I could not bear to publish it therein even though, as Managing Editor, I could have done so had I wanted. So here it is. You will be more bored than disgusted. But subsequently, some of you will be writhing with pleasure as you prepare to cast stones. Have your fun. But be assured: I shall have mine too.

**A NOTE ON FEMALE SEXIST PEDAGOGY:  
AS THE STOMACH TURNS**

Older women read "romance" books. Young girls read romance books too, but their books are commonly referred to (by the publishers, the booksellers, as well as by their young readers) as "couples" books. Here is the blurb on the back jacket of one entitled, You Never Can Tell, which my daughter recently brought home from school:

*"I was never the type for wild, impossible crushes . . . . Sensible Kate, that's me. There's only one guy I've ever been passionate about: Brick Preston, the hero of my favorite soap. And it was pretty one-sided, as mad passions go. Until Brick (known as Thad Marshall in real life) enrolled at North High--and asked me for a date.*

*"I just knew we were destined to embark on a lifetime of ecstasy. The only problem was, I was madly in love with a character on TV, who cast women aside like used tissues. If Thad Marshall was anything like Brick Preston, how would I ever hold on to him? And if he wasn't, would I want to?"*

Thus are our young girls--young women--taught another sexist lesson in how to glorify, objectify, and idealize male success objects.

I am, I assure you, chuckling mightily as I ponder your incipient smirking. But before you smirk overly much, keep in mind that I take great pride in contemplating how well I have succeeded in thus producing a literary failure.

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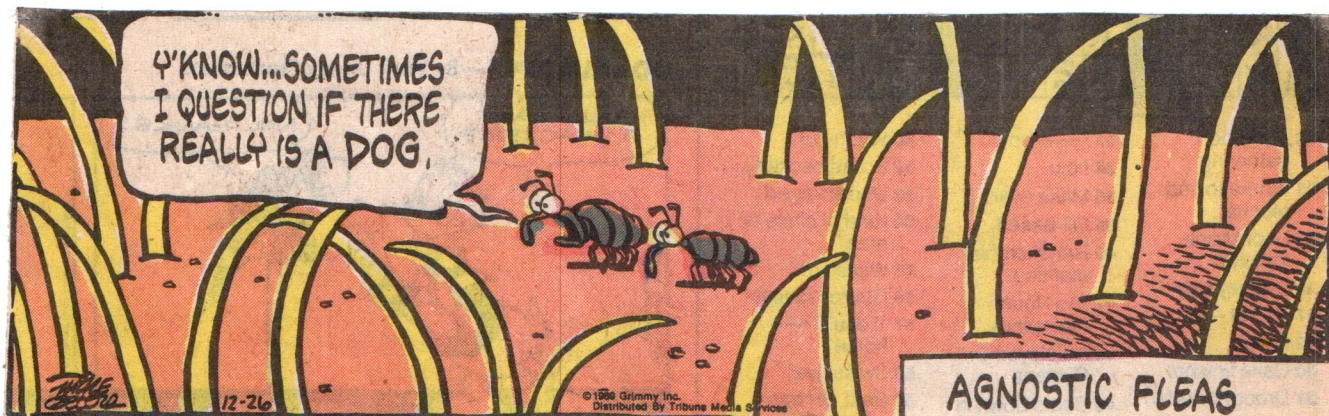
As time goes by, I find that I have fewer but better friends. Over the last two years, I have weaned myself of some rather toxic friendships. I have always been attracted to colorful people, but unfortunately along with a colorful personality there is often a great deal of destructive behavior. Hence, my relationships with such people, although very exciting, have often become quite a trial. Years ago I had learned to avoid sexual

relationships that were contaminated in this way. But I had never learned to extend such selectivity to my friends. Hence, I often paid

a dear price in terms of peace of mind. But now, with friends, I am more selective. I stay away from those people whom I do not trust, however attractive they otherwise might be. I have even redefined many of my relationships with friends over the last two years, even terminating some of these friendships--this process being every bit as painful as was the previous severing of certain destructive sexual relationships.

But the effect--better friends, and a happier Baumli. And ... a cheaper Aviary. I had only 65 copies of the last two issues of this Aviary made (as compared to 130 of all the earlier issues!). I may print but 50 of this issue. Truly I have driven away my swinish appreciators, and now cast my pearls before sterling individuals only.

I have also, over the last two years, been able to find more peace in my relationship with those old memories of my God of yore. My nultheistic horror has virtually left me, and although it is likely that I will never be free of it entirely, it certainly is

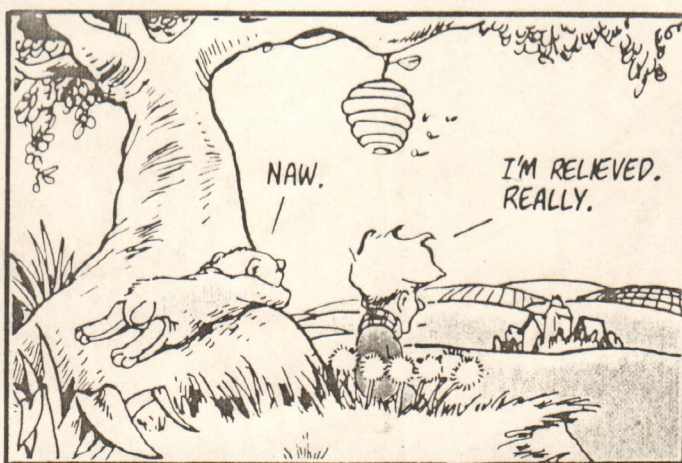
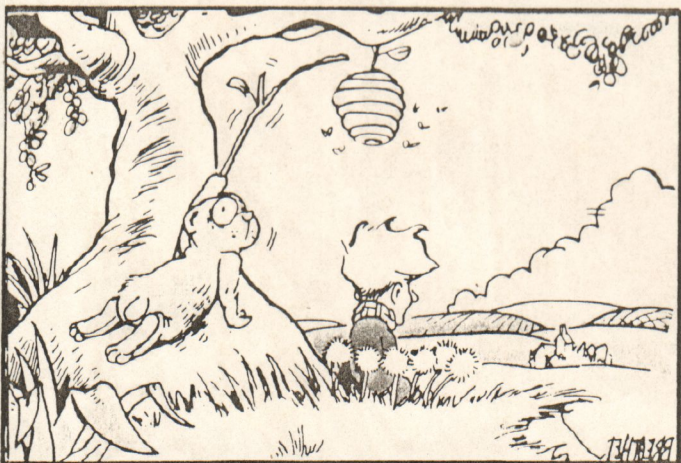
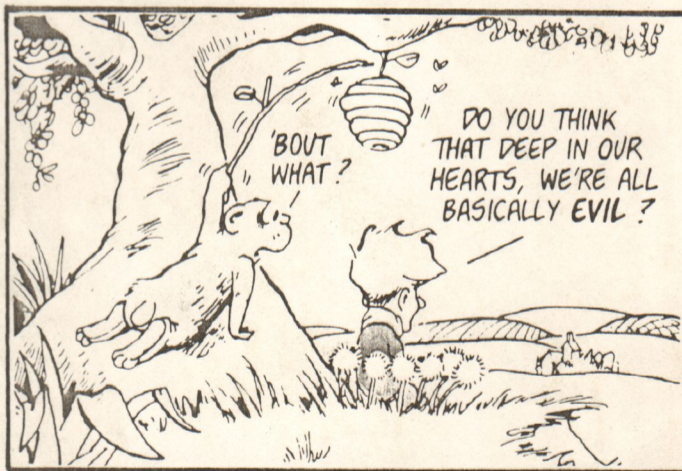
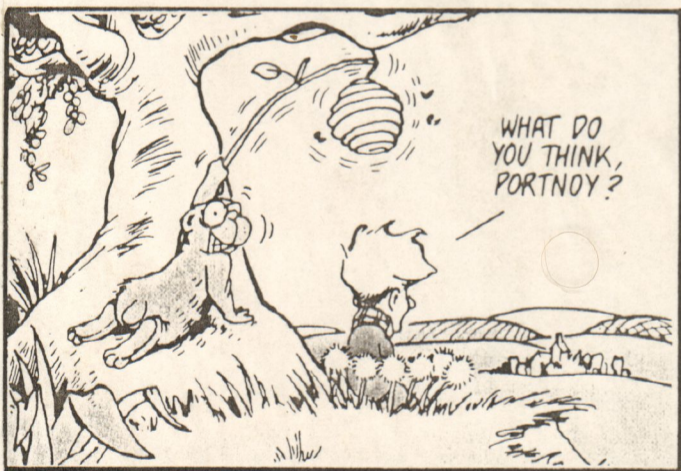
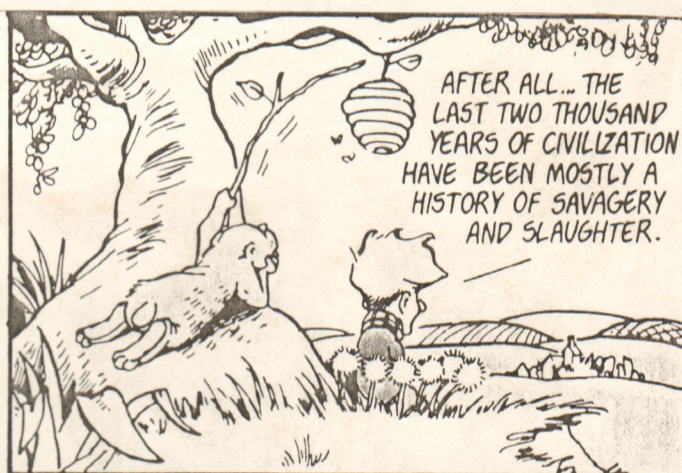
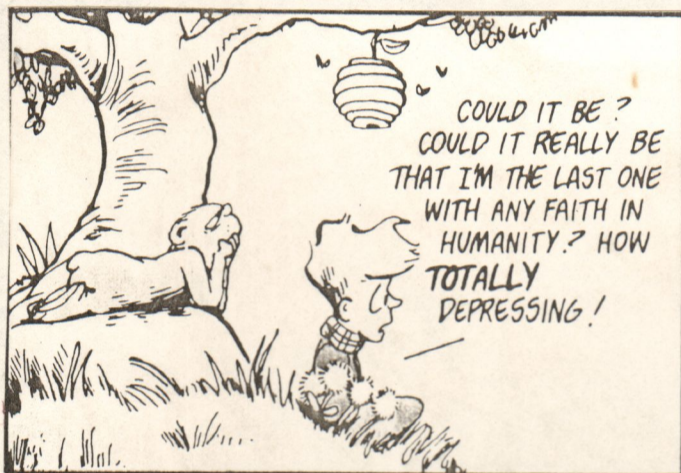




drastically diminished. Yes; I believe I have finally succeeded in grieving through much of that sense of loss--that loss of a theistic God.

Strangely, having severed that attachment--an attachment which, as grief, has perhaps been stronger than any attachment I ever held through belief--I have ceased to be as frightened of death. Many people have said that it is the fear of death which leads to a belief in a God, and perhaps this is true for savages and peasants. But for myself, I think it was attachment to a divinity which led to, or at least amplified, my fear of death. Perhaps that amplification was occasioned by the lack of clarity and the emotional confusion which burdened my formerly theistic creed and my subsequent nultheistic alienation. Now, having severed those theistic ties, I am not so confused--not so bewildered by the cosmic ambiguity. Hence, I stare more steadily into the void--the face of death--and like St. Francis of Assisi, I am able to say, "Brother Death, here you are beside me! Why have I neglected you for so long?"

Well, I am more at peace. With my friends, with God's corpse, and with death. As for achieving any semblance of peace with myself? That is a gruesome spectacle, an impossible and clearly contradictory goal, and it should not be achieved anyway! Were I to lance this cyst within my soul, and drain out the malice, I fear that nothing would be left but a hollow corpse. So, since I prefer to live a little while longer, I shall leave my soul alone and let its inner wars rage on. Besides, I have come to suspect that a soul putrescent as mine is the only thing which--terrible spectacle that it is!--can successfully impinge upon other people's deadened moral sensibilities so as to make them recoil from evil and henceforth more assiduously pursue a life that is ethically pristine. Thus it is that I am condemned to a paradoxical (and sad) lot in life--playing the role of the saint and savior by revealing my own spiritual filth--which it is the moral duty of others to renounce within themselves.



Yours, most copiously,

*[Handwritten signature]*