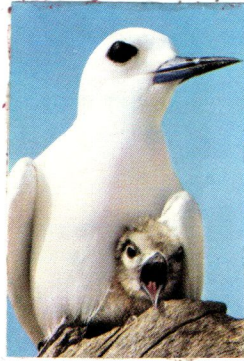




THE AVIARY



Vol. 8, #1  
(Jan.-Feb. '91)



From Francis Baumli:  
for friends, associates,  
and beloved enemies.



" ... 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)

Bluntly stated, the task of doing this Aviary becomes more and more onerous with each passing year. It takes me about two weeks to do each issue, the expense of having it printed and mailed is not inconsiderable, and what is most discouraging, it seems to serve no useful



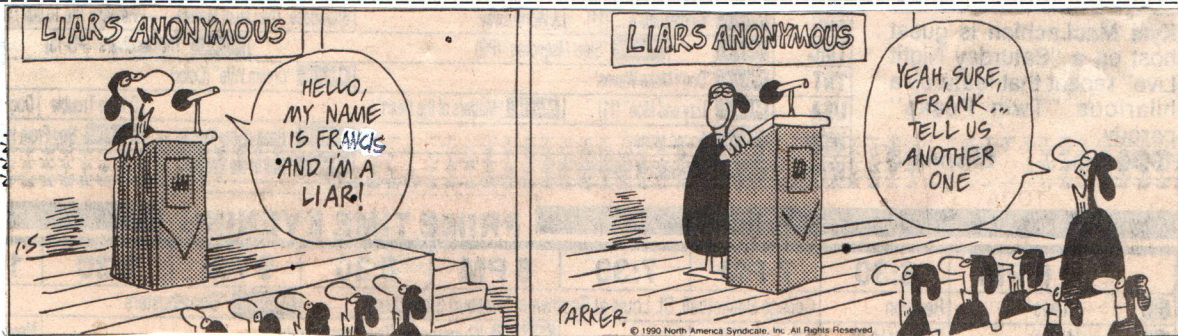
purpose. When I began doing these issues some years ago, I hoped that they would accomplish a very simple task. Namely, to serve as a yearly form letter to my friends, imparting all the news, so that I would not be wasting my time going over the same specifics with each of my dear friends; this way, I could concentrate my time upon those topics specific and unique to each of my friends. The problem is, The Aviary has never been received as a letter. In early years, people seemed to look upon it as some kind of literary attempt. I might see them a few weeks after having mailed them a copy, and they might say something like, "Say, I really liked your Aviary." That would be it. The sum total of their response. In later years, it did seem that people were taking it more personally. However, the only times they ever responded (at least by letter) were when they were angry about something I had said. In fact, the only two written responses I have received to my Aviary during the last twelve months have been from writers who did not at all bother to respond to the specifics of its content. Rather, they attempted to be critical of the entire effort. The effect of ... but here, I will quote two salient sentences from each of their letters:

*Only an egomaniac would assume that people would read something as long as your Aviary. It took me three whole evenings, and I barely finished it then!*

*Who wants to read about paintings and music? Please write more about why people hate you since that is something I can identify with.*

I hope there will be some of you perspicacious enough to realize the irony of the above statements. And ... I hope you can begin to realize why I feel so discouraged about writing this letter. I am weary of the terse responses. I weary of the anger. But most of all, I am frustrated that people do not look upon this Aviary as a letter. Herein I give a great deal of news about myself, my family, my whereabouts, the world, the state of my soul, the proximity of hell, the maniacal thrashings of my libido, the scarcity of sleep, the elusiveness of hylomorphic repose. I concede that, in these pages, there has been some tendency (only in the distant past) to at times cavail against my friends, chiding them for their foibles and imperfections, hoping desperately that thus rousing their ire might be a means for getting them to at last vent their anger toward me once and for all. My hope has been that they thus might achieve a thorough and lasting purgation, and henceforth confine their letters to genteel exchanges of ideas and the loving bestowals of affection which I would prefer to share with my friends.

Well? I shall, I promise, keep this Aviary short, fun, and unremittingly benevolent--especially toward those who most deserve such kindness. Perhaps, in this way, it can serve its original and humble purpose: to simply be a vehicle for news, and serve to elicit from other people cogent responses to my news, along with revelations about what is happening with their own attempts at leading the nonboring life.



Of course everything is fluids--kissing is fluids, babies are fluids, having a baby is fluids

The Lapping, Itchy Edge of Love by Edward Hoagland

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF 1990

Jan. 5: I this date submitted my resignation as Managing Editor of Transitions. There were many reasons for finally giving up this very rewarding and influential post. I was tired of the responsibility and time involved. Editing other authors' works is not to my liking, especially considering that I would rather be spending that time working at my own writing. But the main reason I finally stepped down was because I was sick of constantly battling it out with the President of The Coalition of Free Men (for which Transitions is the official newsletter). His approach to questions about the newsletter was always aggressive, often dictatorial. A terrible procrastinator, as are most people with a passive aggressive personality disorder, he was constantly angry at my meeting deadlines; this meant that he could not blame my tardiness for having caused him to miss his own deadlines. Stated in a more civil way, the organization's President looked upon Transitions as a newsletter; I looked upon it as a journal of theory directed toward issues in men's liberation and



men's rights. Viewing it as a newsletter caused the President to believe that it should present recent events, which would mean that the newsletter would have to include content that would be dated precariously close to the publishing deadline. The President's general view about this arrangement was that if a recent event which he deemed important were to occur, then it should go in to the newsletter, regardless of how much work I might have already put into it. As for myself, I made it a policy years before that I wanted guidelines from the Executive Board as to what they would sanction and what they would prohibit in Transitions. They did not want to formulate such guidelines, claiming that they trusted me. I thereupon made one stipulation, namely, lacking such guidelines, and apparently possessing their trust, I would put in Transitions material which I deemed to be sympathetic to the men's rights point of view. But ... once such material was in, no one on the Executive Board, i.e., Board of Directors, and none of the officers, would have the right to make me remove any of the material. This twice caused extreme problems between myself and the President. He did not like what I had put in; I dug my heels in and said that no one had ever given me guidelines, and I would, under no circumstances, go back and do an issue over. I was too busy to do the work twice.

Well ... his aggressive approach, and my stubbornness; these did not mix well. Add to that his occasional dishonesty, and my refusal to ever enter into complicity with him--whether it be against or for someone--and the whole process of editing Transitions became an unpleasant political exercise instead of a literary endeavor.

I this date resigned. The Jan.-Feb. '91 issue was already prepared, thus bringing my tenure as Managing Editor to four years. I felt a keen sense of loss--loss of purpose, of commitment to something I had come to love. But it was time to move on to something more fulfilling, less stressful.

Jan. 9: In a previous issue of The Aviary, I have spoken of how we bought our house but then incurred extensive, and unanticipated, expenses. These should have been avoided, given that we hired a professional inspector to go over the house carefully before we ever bought it. As it was, his report was wrong on many accounts, and it was even obvious that in some instances he had fabricated parts of the report. We believed he was liable, and should be held accountable, for the money he had cost us. But being civil persons, we were willing to sit down and talk with him about it. He initially agreed to do so, but then refused to, and avoided our every overture toward such. So we sued him in small claims court.

As it turned out, there were kangaroos hopping all over the room. The judge accidentally let it out that he had conversed with the attorney representing the defendant before the trial. But since we were representing ourselves, we could not very well use this against the defendant since actually it would have been an argument directed against the judge.

The judge told us, after five minutes of jocular talk with the defendant's lawyer, that we did not have our case sufficiently prepared, he would have to see expert witnesses to verify the mistakes the inspector had supposedly made, and he would advise us to go home and think over whether we actually wanted to pursue the case.

This judge--Watt was his name--did his best to come across as the asshole he succeeded in being. Abbe and I both went home, feeling whipped and defeated.

Jan. 13: My Aunt Opal Dowden, my mother's eldest sister, died. I had always been fond of her, but over the last 22 years during which she was widowed, I came to respect a certain very unique quality about her. After my uncle, her husband, died 22 years ago, she went into a deep mourning from which she never really emerged. Some people had been critical of her for this, claiming that she should do something for her depression. I suppose they were right. And yet, I had admired the marriage she and her husband had had. Unlike virtually every married couple I knew, this pair had fun, they were deeply in love with each other, and theirs was obviously a good marriage--something I accurately perceived to be a rarity, even when I was as young as five or six. Hence, even though my aunt was very depressed for so many years I knew her, I somehow respected this depression. She was not merely a widow; there were a lot of such woman I knew, and frankly

### Opal Dowden

MARYVILLE, Mo. — Opal Lorene Dowden, 71, Maryville, died Saturday, Jan. 13, 1990, at a health-care center here.

Mrs. Dowden was born in Barnard, Mo., and has lived in Maryville since 1976. Prior to that she lived in Hopkins, Mo. She was a 1937 graduate of College High School of Maryville. Mrs. Dowden was also a graduate of Northwest Missouri State College in 1966 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education.

She worked as a teacher for North Nodaway R-VI School System of Hopkins, and was a member of the Maryville First United Methodist Church.

Mrs. Dowden married C. Delbert Dowden on May 19, 1943, at Wathena, Kan. He died on March 15, 1968. She was also preceded in death by a brother, William Walden, and by a sister, Wilma Walden.

**Surviving:** three daughters, Cheryl Dowden-Parrott of Ocoola, Iowa, Barbara Pettion of Maryville, and Debby Dowden of Newton, Iowa; three sisters, Jean Tindall of Maryville, Evelyn Baumli, and Roma Dobbins, both of Barnard, Mo.; and six grandchildren.

**Services:** 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Price Funeral Home, Maryville. Burial, Miriam Cemetery, Maryville. Friends may call anytime at the funeral home.



it seemed to me that their eventual good cheer was often more the result of having been released from a difficult marriage than the result of having thoroughly grieved a loss. My aunt had lost a fun-loving, beloved husband; he was her lover, her friend, and a friend to many other people. As a result, given the magnitude of her loss, I always respected her constant mourning. Perhaps it meant that she did not get on with other, important aspects of her life, but then ... maybe there was more of value in that crucible of memory she was mourning, than there would ever be in the lives of those who effectively moved beyond mourning.

Jan. 13: Before learning of Aunt Opal's death, we attended a concert by The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. See the music section herein for particulars.

Feb. 2: Abbe and I had discussed the matter, and decided that despite the judge's sneering attitude, we would go back to court and present our case along with the witnesses he had stipulated. Abbe would have given up at this point, but I reasoned that this judge was such an asshole toward us that I could not but believe that he would use another appearance by ourselves to also be an asshole to the fellow we were suing. I was correct. The judge found against us, stating that there is no Illinois statute under which the inspector could be held liable for expenses we had incurred because of the inspector's faulty inspection. He conceded, however, that the inspector had done a poor job, chided him from the bench, and then ordered him to pay court costs and refund us the \$175. we had paid him for doing the inspection. This, plus the fact that the cowardly inspector had had to fly back from Colorado for the court date, gave me the definite feeling that we had won something.

Feb. 10: In my last Aviary, I spoke of how the second meeting of the philosophy discussion group I had begun was such a disappointment. Well, on this date the group met again. A local fellow who had retired from the religion department at the University, and who had headed a church for some time, had shown evidence of being a highly intelligent man. I invited him to head our next discussion, asking that he present to the group one idea which he believed he had himself contributed to the world. I stressed, both verbally and by letter, that this should be unique, unprecedented, truly something he had come up with himself. I told many people about the projected meeting, they were excited, and attendance was heavy. The fellow, who had promised to rise to my expectations, entered the meeting room with a great show of grandiosity, and ... he proceeded to read a six-page paper he had written twenty years ago. He admitted he could not even recollect why he had written it. It was about why this particular preacher boy became a preacher boy. It was all so trite, sophomoric, narcissistic, and boring that everyone--excepting the speaker with his meager message and copious words--was upset. The discussion soon turned to the topic of God, and, as before, the philosophical intent faded into oblivion.

Feb. 14: I attended a concert by the harpist Harvi Griffin. I especially liked his first two pieces: Handel's Harmonious Blacksmith and Greensleeves. His approach to jazz was especially nice, as in a piece called Lotus Bud and Take Five. He showed a fine sense of humor, combined with elegant self-prepossession. I did not like his amplifying the harp, and I was especially irritated by his use of echo effects through his amplifier on certain of the pieces. Still, it was a most enjoyable concert, and unique--given the instrument, and its use in some very unharplike compositions.

Feb. 25: Once again I became an uncle. Born to Marcia Charney (Abbe's older sister) and Gil Charney was a splendid little fellow named Jason Evan. Much ado was made in the family over this new addition. And much speculation was heard as to why Baumli's presence in the extended Sudvarg family has caused so much ~~breeding~~ fertile propagation.

Mar. 2: At long last, more than 1½ years after we had moved to this area, the company which moved us--and destroyed so many of our goods--paid us on our claim (or, to borrow their euphemism, they "settled"). The government had paid for this move, and was our advocate in making the company pay our claim. Still, despite their advocacy, there had been required several hundred phone calls, about eighty letters, and a delay of 1½ years. I have no doubt but that had the government not been on our side, the company never would have paid without there being a lawsuit. We had explored this route, but had not pursued it given that the way lawyers work these things, we would have had to pay about half of what we were trying to recoup to a lawyer. The company's name: Allied. If you are ever hiring a moving company, avoid them. The people who work for them are vile, unethical, despicable creatures.



Mar. 14: I at last printed two tardy issues of The Aviary, namely, those issues which cover the years 1987 & 1988. This time I only printed 65 copies of each issue. I am being more selective about who I send them to.

Mar. 26: We had made the decision some time before, so weren't exactly caught with our pants down when the news came: we this date discovered that indeed, as we had suspected, we were pregnant. I am a person who goes through the agonies of a decision thoroughly, but once the decision is made I am quite sure of it; hence, I took the news with exemplary equanimity. Abbe, however, was not entirely composed. We did, however, soon settle into a continuum of glad expectancy and occasionally anxious uncertainties.

Why had we made this decision? Well; we both wanted to have another child. It was this simple. Also, I felt it my duty to do my part

about improving our species' existing gene pool. Furthermore, Abbe and I very much wanted the experience of sharing a child we both have conceived.

The pregnancy thence proceeded, with occasional concerns by Abbe about her bodily self-image, many a gallant declaration from Baumli that she had nothing to worry about, some concerns about the baby's health when Abbe was accidentally exposed to a small dose of medical radiation, and ... a thousand details which I need not here list.

There were several humorous interchanges with certain innocently obstreperous people (Why were they always women?) who, upon hearing that we were pregnant, would ask, "So how long have you been trying to get pregnant?" The response I always wanted to give was, "Why don't you just go ahead and say it? Why don't you just ask how long we've been fucking without birth control?" Of course, being a perfect gentleman, I never allowed myself the exquisite pleasure of such a reply. Instead, I usually countered with, "What exactly do you mean by trying?" Whereupon they would say something like, "Heh-heh. Well. You know. Uh. Heh-heh-heh." Certain more eloquent conversationalists were able to manage something like, "Oh, heh-heh, you're being a jerk. Heh-heh." Occasionally someone would have the gall nerve to persist with this general line of questioning, and I would respond truthfully with, "Since when do real men have to try?"

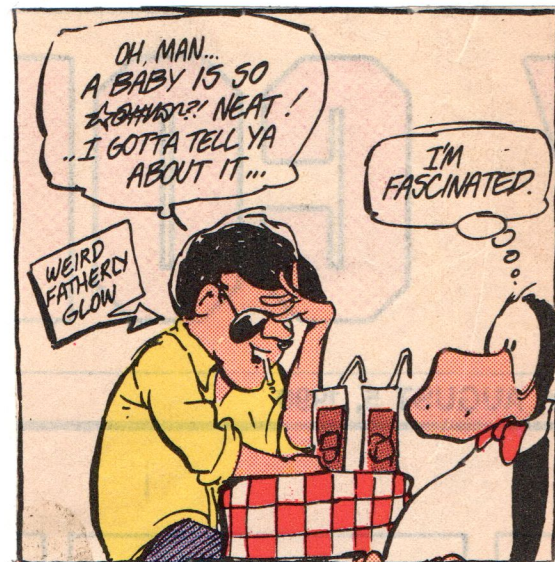
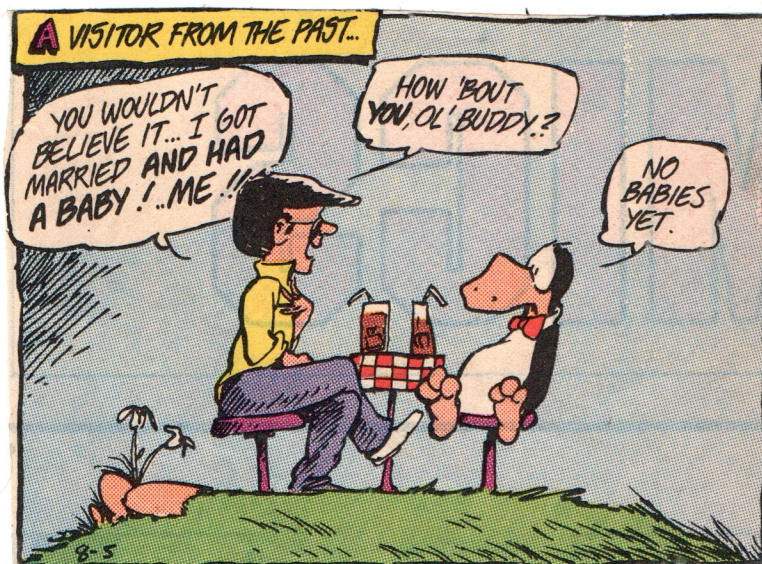
Apr. 2: I attended a delectable concert by the pianist, Klara Wuertz. See the music section for details about this superb performance.

Apr. 4: I obtained a new set of speakers: JBL 4406 Studio Monitors. Although some people, especially those of the audiophile ilk, demean the sound of James B. Lansing speakers, I have always loved their sound, even if they do have a distinctive coloration. I bought these little heavy-duty gems to improve the high-frequency response of my system, and to aid in stereo separation at the midrange levels. These speakers are added on to my current system; they do not replace any speakers. The results are much more pleasing than I had ever expected. The stereo separation is exactly what I wanted, and the frequency boost is easy to control.

These little speakers each have a ported 6½" woofer (which in my setup serves as midrange, and a one-inch dome radiator as tweeter. The tweeter is made of pure titanium, and to give you some idea of its capabilities, keep in mind that this little tweeter, only one inch in diameter, has a voice coil that is one inch in diameter and uses a two-pound magnet. This is because, at the higher frequencies, the dome radiator must withstand forces of over one thousand Gs! (A not inconsequential fact I learned when deciding which speaker to buy.) The woofer uses a 1½" voice coil, and has a three pound magnet. And ... well, it all sound wonderful. Not as fine as certain systems which have blessed my ears, but still, it is a new level of ecstasy.

Apr. 6: I attended a very fine concert by the pianist Sylvia Kersenbaum. See the music section herein for details.

May 4: The third meeting of the philosophy discussion group, wherein the





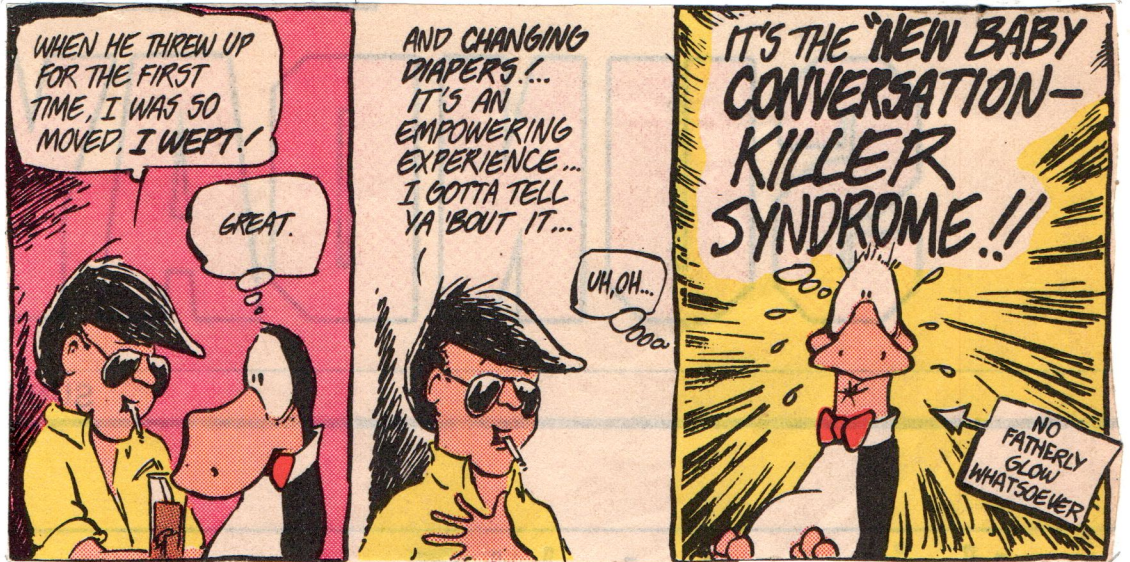
preacher boy's tongue waned lame and clumsy, should have been the last. But never one to leave bad enough alone, I went ahead with a fourth meeting. This one would involve myself, and one other fellow, reading aloud certain poems which we found especially powerful, and inviting people attending the meeting to discuss the poems. Again, as before, the discussion steered toward religion. By now it was obvious to me that these people simply could not engage a philosophical topic without clutching to themselves the secure cloak of religious certitude. And it was clear that no amount of cajoling on my part, no regimen of metaphysical calisthenics which I might put them through, would ever cause these people to patiently abide their religious concerns and wait until Sunday morning to plumb that shallow abyss.

As the people left this meeting, two informed me that the poetry I read had simply been too "scarey" for them to deal with. Well; I had read poetry which dealt with the body, corporeality, sensuality. These people could not handle such things.

I resolved that this would be the last such meeting.

May 12: Attended another concert by the St. Louis Symphony. See music section.

May 18: On this day we heard our baby's heartbeat for the first time. It was a very moving, and very endearing, experience.



May 30 to June 3: Abbe and I, with Dacia and a friend of hers in tow, went to Chicago. Dacia and her friend were able to go sight-seeing and shopping while Abbe and

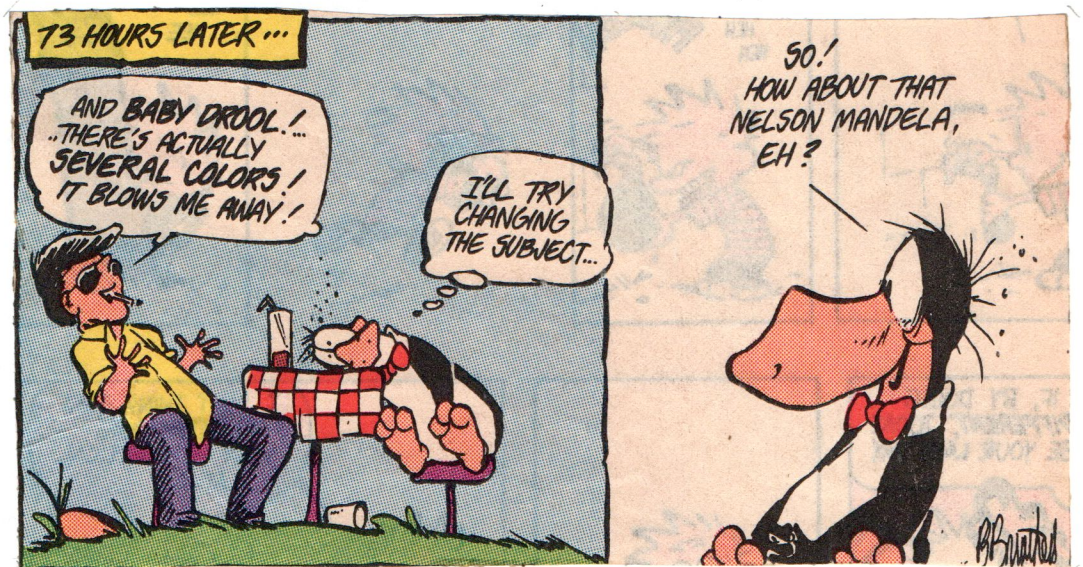
I spent most of our time at the Art Institute. Thus we all got to do the things we enjoy the most on such a trip, without being encumbered by each others' preferences. See the art section herein for a few notes about the viewing at the Chicago Art Institute.

June 7: We had a sonogram done of our baby. The results indicated everything was normal, that the baby was healthy, and that there was some reason to suspect, even at this preliminary stage, that it would be a boy. I was ecstatic on hearing this. I had made it clear to everyone that I wanted a boy; I had already raised a daughter, and now I wanted the

experience of raising a son. Everyone kept saying, to my declarations, "But if it's a girl you'll love her just the same." They were right; but they were also, in saying this, reassuring themselves. In doing so, they were not willing to give much credence to my sentiment: that I was going to damn well be keenly pissed off if I did not get a boy. I was not going to be merely veresimilitudinously pissed off if it were a girl; I was going to be royally upset, probably rather depressed, and definitely angry at the cosmos and at my loins.

Thus, from the sonogram, I was somewhat assured that I would get what I wanted, although the doctor warned me that it was really too early to be sure. People of course asked us what sex the sonogram indicated. To their question, "Is it going to be a boy or a girl?" Abbe came up with the sufficient and entirely truthful answer, "Yes."

June 19: The neurologist I had seen, by way of treating this multiple sclerosis I have when it flares up, had arranged for me to have an MRI done. This Magnetic Resonance Imaging (also called an NMR: Nuclear Magnetic Resonance),





which is a frightening test for many people, considering how loud it is, caused me a certain difficulty. As happened with me in the dentist's chair last year, I found the loud hammering noise of this test to be so relaxing, compared to the nightmares I have, that I became very relaxed during the test. As a result I kept falling asleep. The result: blurred images caused by myoclonic reflexes as I would be falling asleep. The test had to be run again a few days later. This time I managed to stay awake by thinking about a certain woman I had dated when I was a sophomore in college.

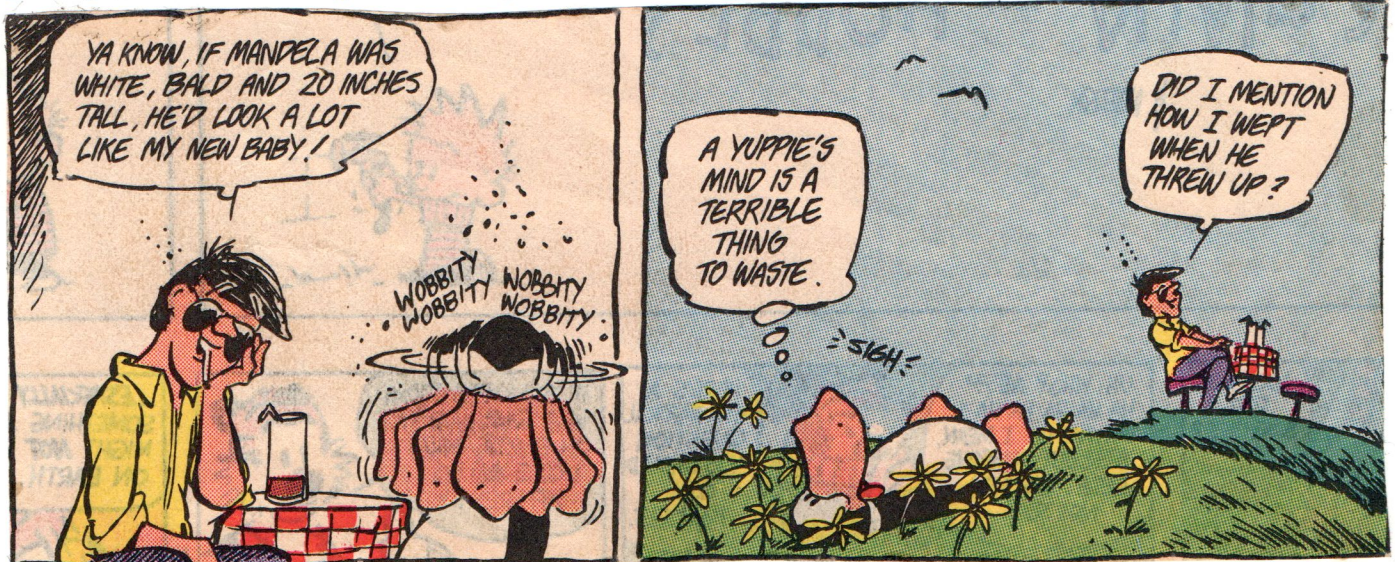
The results of this test: entirely negative! I could scarcely believe this. I had been told by some neurologists that an MRI seldom detects MS lesions, but I had seen the results of some MRI tests which showed lesions on the brain the size of one's fist. Given the exacerbations I had incurred in the past, it was difficult to believe that the lesions would be invisible, but my neurologist opined that the nerves had remyelinated. Repair myelin is not nearly as efficient as original myelin; hence, the persisting symptoms. But still, the results of this test were encouraging. I had long harbored the fear that my brain might be riddled with huge holes--lesions--and that the day would come when my compensatory circuits would all be used up, and then, quite suddenly, I would become terribly debilitated. The results of this test gave me much hope that I might progress into old age with, if not great health, then at least not a vast debility.

June 20: Bowing to pressure from our veterinarian, Abbe, and Dacia, and also aware that the life my tomcat Buttercup was leading was fast killing him, I consented to having him neutered. My principles (the two between my legs) had long prevented my agreeing to such a dastardly act, but I changed my mind when it occurred to me that inflicting such injury on my manly, splendid, powerful tomcat would surely not be permanent. I reasoned that, after all, given the dissoluteness of my youth, and my persistent inability to stay away from toxic debauchers, there are probably more than thirty women around the country who have my balls hanging as trophies on their walls. How could this be possible? Thirty or more sets of those precious organs? It is very simple. I had mastered the art of growing them back. I suspected my virile tomcat would soon do the same, and all indications--both behavioral and organic--are that he did just that.

June 25 to July 1: In an attempt to get in as much traveling as possible before that baby should come, Abbe, Dacia, and I went to the Grand Canyon. This was the one tourist attraction I have always wanted to visit. And I must say that even though it was an enjoyable trip, I was not as impressed as I had thought I would be. We flew in to Phoenix on June 26, with a record high temperature of 120 degrees. From there we drove to the north rim, where the weather was considerably cooler. My general impression of Arizona is that it is bleak, dry, and dusty. I can not for the life of me understand why people would go to this region to escape hay fever caused by pollen, given how dusty it is. I did more sneezing while there than I've ever done during Missouri's ragweed season. I am sure such sneezing would have given an older person an acute case of hemorrhoids, and I therefore think that the Arizona Tourist Agency should issue a warning to this effect so that elderly people would be less enthusiastic about retiring to this state.

Exhibitionist that I am, and always one to enjoy things on a grand scale, my first act, on getting to the Grand Canyon, was to walk up to the edge of a precipice and announce to all within earshot that I was going to piss into it. People tittered, Abbe and Dacia promptly left in search of a restroom for themselves, and I let it fly. Other people seemed to think it funny, although I suppose I would not have done it had there been rangers close by.

For the next several days I enjoyed the scenery, despite Abbe's constantly driving me crazy by sitting on the very rim of jutting rocks with her legs dangling over the edge. To my worried nagging, she would merely smile and





tell me that I should not be so afraid of heights. Maybe I am a little afraid of heights, but this was not the reason for my objections. The fact is, out of a class of about 470 students when I was a student at the university, I scored highest in geology. Over the next few years I came to be a strong believer in geological forces--weathering, erosion, avalanches, and such. Who knows what forces--water erosion, cracking caused by freezing and thawing, gust vibration--had been conspiring for the last many millenia to cause one of those potentially lethal projections to suddenly lose its jut and collapse into the chasm, causing my dear wife and unborn child to plummet to their deaths? I reasoned such with Abbe, but she only laughed and pointed out to me that these particular rocks had been there many millions of years, and would be there for at least a thousand more. I pointed to the many chasms where rock, not very dissimilar to the material she was sitting on, had not withstood nature for the last million years, but instead had worn away in some places more than a mile deep. She laughed more, I worried more, and finally we compromised by doing most of our viewing separately.

I came away aware that indeed the Grand Canyon is a wondrous hole in the ground, and a wonderful work of nature and art, but not as impressive as certain other holes I have gazed into at length.

July 3: For years Abbe and I had avoided getting credit cards. So many people we had known became addicted to them and ended up paying usurious rates of interest. Besides this possibility, their very existence had always signified to me something decadent, irresponsible, cravenly dependent. Some years ago when I was doing a great deal of traveling, I realized that it was becoming very inconvenient to not have a credit card, so I applied for one. But even though at the time I owned my farm, my pickup, and two cars, and owed no money on anything, they refused me on the grounds that, not having borrowed any money in more than ten years, I was not a good credit risk. Thereupon, with no small amount of disgust, I gave up on the idea of carrying plastic, even though it might mean carrying considerable sums of cash when I traveled.

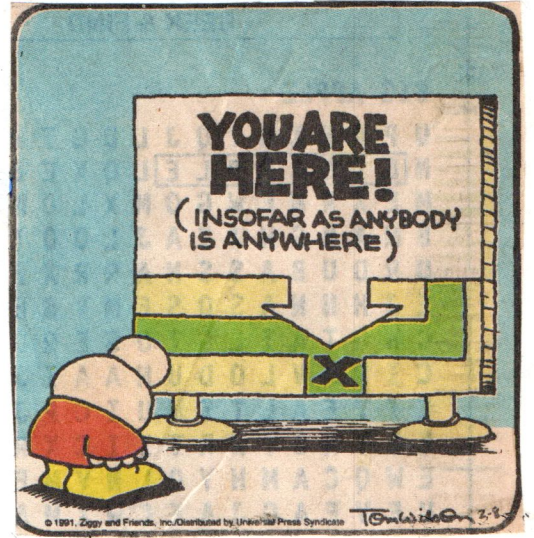
But during our early summer trip to Chicago we got into difficulty as we were boarding the train from Carbondale. In the past, the train station had taken a check; this time they would only take a check if we had a credit card for identification. No amount of wheedling or bitching would change the seller's mind. So we ended up cashing all our traveler's checks to pay for the tickets, hurrying to not miss the train, and arrived in Chicago virtually sans cash or traveler's checks. Fortunately Abbe found a nice lady at a small bank who phoned the nice loan officer at our bank and arranged for a cash transfer.

Upon getting back from Chicago, we applied for credit cards, and again were rejected, on the same grounds. So we asked the people at the bank to vouch for us, etc., and lo ... now we carry plastic. I admit, these little things are immensely convenient at times, and yet, whenever I pull one out I wince. Something in me cringes a little, and I recall the good old days when instead I carried cash and a pistol.

July 24-29: Abbe and I went to New York, and even though the transportation was very difficult for me--the rough taxis and loud traffic making things difficult in terms of my MS--I came through it much better than I had anticipated. I got to meet some people I had not met before, we ate Indian food at the second best Indian restaurant I've ever eaten, at (and the best I've eaten at in this country), and we saw some wonderful art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. I should, for my gourmet friends, mention the name of the Indian restaurant I so enjoyed. Called The Great India Restaurant, it is located at 1586 2nd Avenue, only a few blocks from The Metropolitan Museum of Art. For my friends who enjoy paintings, there are further comments about the art viewed in the appropriate section herein.

I love, I dearly love, the city of New York. Other people may dismiss it with the usual, "It's a nice place to visit but I wouldn't want to live there;" I, however, am either more tolerant or more foolish or simply more enthusiastic. I would enjoy living there, and were it not for a reluctant wife and daughter, I would be making plans in that direction.

While in New York we spent a most enjoyable evening with Ted Stevenson, the head of New Atlantis Press--publisher of Men Freeing Men. A very reasonably-priced bed-and-breakfast place served as comfortable lodgings. And all in all it was a very affordable, splendidly enjoyable trip. The only drawback to the trip was the fact that, in order to fly cheaply, we were able to be in New York itself but 3½ days, which was not much considering that we were gone from home about six days.





Sept. 12: We attended a concert by a raggaie group, including two supposedly big names in raggaie: Tony Bell and Kutchie. I thought the playing rather mediocre, and it was so loud as to be physically painful, even though we were sitting at the very back of the hall.

Sept. 21: We attended a very fine concert by The Chicago Symphony Orchestra. For details, see the music section herein.

Sept. 26: An earthquake, at 8:25 A.M., awoke me. I knew immediately that it was an earthquake. I took cover, then when it seemed no more tremors were happening, I hurried outside. This quake registered 4.6 on the local Richter scale, and 5.5 at Cape Girardeau.

One thing I had never realized about an earthquake--the tremor, if near the epicenter, travels faster than the speed of sound. Hence, there is a sonic boom with each major tremor; in this case, there were five, very close to each other. This, added to the shaking of the house and the worries about what might be happening to Abbe and Dacia, who were away, caused it to be a very terrifying experience. Terra firma didn't feel very firma anymore.

Oct. 4: We attended a concert by The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Refer to the music section herein.

Oct. 14: On this date, our nation's musical treasure, Leonard Bernstein, died. It was very sad to hear of his passing. Truly he was a wonderful human being and he probably did more than any conductor of this century to make the remote emotions of classical music accessible to children and to the working-class person.

Several times, when commiserating about Bernstein's death with friends, I found myself in a rather awkward position. I could mourn his passing, and state my admiration for the man, but I could not do so without making exceptions--something I would rather not have done on this occasion. But when people would say to me something like, "I wonder if somebody will perform his Mass as a requiem for him. That Mass is, after all, a true masterpiece," I had difficulty holding my tongue. I never liked Bernstein's Mass at all; in fact, as classical music, I have always thought it terrible. As for his many lighter things--they are enjoyable, not great, but not intended to be great. As for his conducting, I have never admired him. To be truthful, I have yet to hear one thing he has conducted, other than his own symphonies, that I find truly impressive. I know that many people have long believed that his Mahler cycle represents a pinnacle of Mahler interpretation, but I have never agreed with this at all. In fact, I believe Bernstein's Mahler recordings are not very good, and are so far removed from, for example, those by Bruno Walter (who preceded him as director of The New York Philharmonic) as to be an embarrassment.

What I have always admired about Bernstein's work is his three symphonies, especially the first two. But during the many conversations about Bernstein after he died, I could not discuss this aspect of his work simply because it seems that so few people know his symphonies. Which I find odd, since I consider them to be among the finest examples of orchestral music composed during this century. But that he had written more music in so serious a vein!

Oct. 18, 20, & 21: I attended three performances by the Kooper-Beohm duo, during which they played all ten of Beethoven's Sonatas for Violin and Piano. The playing was terrible. See the music section herein for the sad details.

Oct. 28: My very dear, long-time friend, Dennis Wilson, died. He had been bedridden, completely paralyzed and unable to speak, for about ten years. His affliction was multiple sclerosis, and he succumbed to its initial damage very quickly. A few years ago, his wife, who had cared for him in their home, died and thereafter Dennis had to be cared for in a resthome. His mother, Frances Stone, was with him every day her own health would permit. But in the end (and in his case one can not but wonder if he was fortunate that the end at last came), he succumbed. He would have been 66 years old on Nov. 13. His mother, Frances, at age 87 years, survives him.

Dennis and I became friends through music. I was working at a music store in Maryville, Missouri, and at the owner's request Dennis came in and did some work on a particularly recalcitrant piano. He sat and played after the repairs were





finished, and I picked up a double bass and joined in. We enjoyed one another this way for a while, and he invited me to come play with him at his next engagement. Soon I was playing with him on a regular basis, and he gave me the finest introduction to jazz playing, and the scope of jazz, that one could ever hope to get from another person. Dennis also worked as a music therapist in mental hospitals, and in this field was among the best. We enjoyed a long and fruitful friendship, and those last years, during which he became so helpless and lonely were very painful for me. There were intimations of my own mortality, given that I saw, there before me, a man I loved succumbing to the same disease I have. But there was, even more, the simple pain of wanting to communicate with a man, to give to a helpless individual, but never being able to give very much, and never being sure that what I could give was what he wanted. But I remained loyal, and I cherish the music he and I shared together. Of all things earthly, the one I most associate with eternity is music. And when musicians play together, it is a communion--together we partake of eternity. One does not forget such sacraments.

Nov. 14: We attended a solo piano recital by the German pianist, Stephan Möller. It was unquestionably the finest solo recital I have ever attended in my life. See details in the music section.

Nov. 16: We attended a solo piano recital by Russell Sherman. Its quality left much wanting. See the music section herein.

Nov. 19: We attended a concert by The Gary Burton Quintet. Burton, whom I had heard more than twenty years ago, played very well. It was difficult, however, to hear him since his four companions played so loudly. His backup men were kids--youthful and unschooled in jazz. They played maniacally, and often it was difficult to believe they were doing anything more creative than using sheer volume to shove their way from one song to another.

I am glad we were given free tickets to this supposed concert. We left at the first intermission, with no desire to attend any of his next several "sets."

Nov. 26: At last, on this date, at 11:25 A.M., the grand and blessed event took place. After about seven hours of labor, Marion Baumli Sudvarg came into the world. With a physician nearby in the event a Caesarian might be necessary, I delivered that little boy and ... well, thereupon our world changed drastically. He came into the world alert, healthy, weighing six pounds, twelve ounces, and twenty inches long. We remained at the hospital most of the day. Dacia, who had gone to school that day, came out for the evening, and then late evening we all came home.

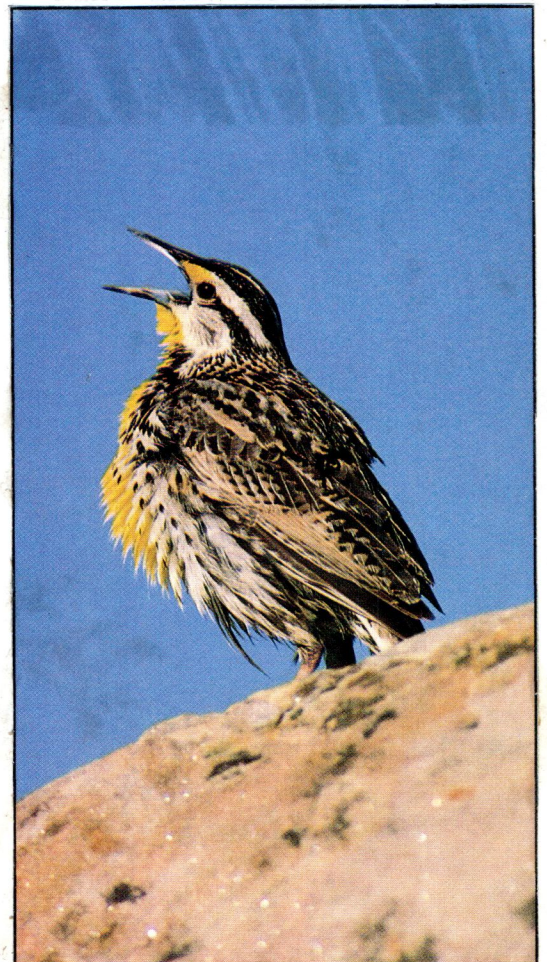
My God it was a lot of work! So many things we thought were all prepared did not seem that way at all. Routines were not established, Abbe was very sore, I was exhausted, Marion had a thousand demands, and ... but within about three weeks it was becoming easier.

The name: There is no hyphen between Baumli and Sudvarg. Marion is my first name, Baumli my last name, and Sudvarg is Abbe's last name. We have tried to have an equitable marriage, and at Abbe's request I had to concede that fair is fair--there is no reason why our child should have my last name as opposed to hers, and since we already have one child with my surname, the next could have hers. This is difficult for me. I think a man's claim to progeny is somehow more tenuous than a woman's, simply because he does not have that physical contact during gestation and lactation. But

I am in every other respect an equal parent, and ... well, it was difficult, but I agreed to it, and I could not argue with the fairness of it all.

So here, in our lives, there came out of Abbe's belly a twenty-inch-long baby boy named Marion.

The name was not easy to come by. After having spent a good deal of my life making sure that people called me by my middle name, Francis, instead of by my first name, Marion, and also literally coming to blows at times when people tried to pin upon me the nicknames Frank or Fran, I did not want my child to be in the same position. We therefore needed to come up with a name that would repel a nickname. If the child were a girl, we would name it Elizabeth. Yes; there are Beth and Betty and Liz and Lizzy and such which





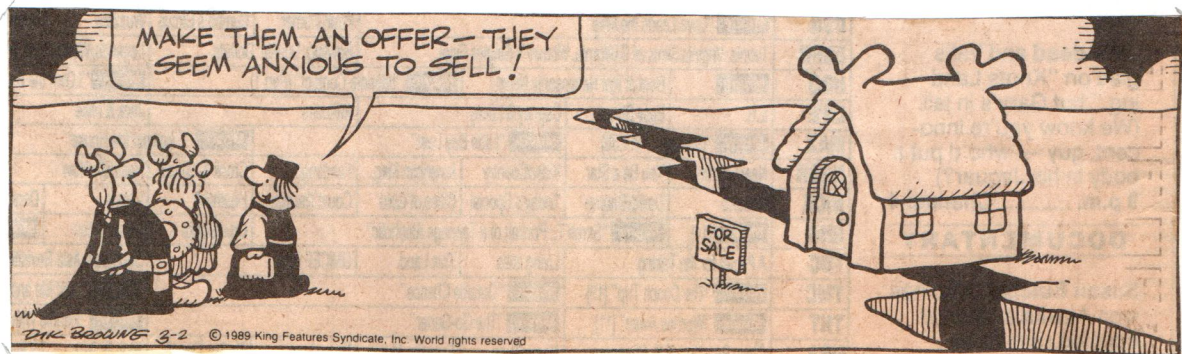
could result from the name Elizabeth, but we believed that with a girl the chances of such could fairly easily be prevented. As for agreeing on a name for a boy, this was not so easy. I knew Abbe would be difficult on this one; I wanted to name our child Marion if it were a boy, and I knew she would not like the choice. Indeed I was correct. She worried that, what with all the other unconventional things about our household and marriage, our boy would be teased if he had the name Marion. Also it sounded too old fashioned and Catholic to her. Moreover it simply did not appeal to her.

Having anticipated Abbe's reluctance about the correct name for our son, I had plotted my strategy accordingly. I would bargain hard, and begin by demanding names which Abbe would find shocking. I then would slowly compromise, and in the end my stubborn nature would cause her to see, if not the light of reason, then Baumli's wisdom pointing the way thereto. So ... I began by pointing out to Abbe that since she is Jewish, and a ~~tabid~~ devout peacenik, it would be a nice gesture of peaceful reconciliation toward the German people if our child were named Adolph. Abbe was horrified at the idea. I nagged, Abbe refused to relent, so I suggested our compromising with a name that would offer a similarly reconciliatory gesture on behalf of my own Catholic background; I proffered Herod as a worthy name. Abbe thought this one not so bad, but then believed that choosing such a name might be considered as a side Jewish comment about Christianity, so she rejected it on grounds of peacenik diplomacy (persnickety peacenikiness?). I thereupon suggested Lazarus, but for reasons Abbe could not verbalize, the name revolted her. So I suggested Ludwig. This, Abbe was sure, would be seen as too odd, too Austrian. I reminded her that the name is not Austrian, but rather, is German. Abbe still rejected it. So I suggested Wolfgang. I even could admit to myself that this is one name I would feel fine about being shortened to a nickname such as Wolfy. But no; Abbe thought this too odd. So, I countered, if not Adolph or Wolfgang, then why not Marion? Abbe remained stubborn; she just did not like it. I pressed: either Adolph or Marion. We were still at this stage when we went to the hospital to deliver that little baby.

Actually I had been mulling over several other names, more or less holding them in reserve, in the event Abbe should so succumb to dementia as to never see the light of reason. I considered Isaac, Walter, Ryan, Ian, Stephan, Stefan, Justinian, and Justin. I favored Justin and Stefan, but no, I was not going to give in without more of a battle. Fortunately for our son, Abbe at last, moments after he was born, had a moment of generosity (and lucidity), finally agreeing that Marion could be the only proper name for this splendid little boy.

So now he is a part of us. Sometimes he is a squirming, fussy, pummelling little ball of discontent. Other times he is a wonderful bundle of joy, busyness, and lovely mortality. Always a tyrant, always a joy, he is said by everyone to look exactly like his daddy, and indeed he shows every sign of already being a real man. Of musical styles, he prefers jazz; he enjoys playing with his big sister, Dacia, and is a very social little fellow. And as it is, he already has two nicknames which, however, are of the benign variety and will in no way interfere with his true name being used. Sometimes he is called "merry Marion" and more often "daddy's glory boy." But most of the time he is simply Marion--which, given his personality, is not simple at all. Abbe is nursing, being the wonderful mommy she has already been for many years, and both of Marion's parents are doing their best to combine careers with not only parenting but also a modicum of both self- and mutual indulgences.

Dec. 1-5: We fled. Dacia went to Columbia, Missouri, where she stayed with grandparents; Abbe and I, with little Marion only five days old, went to a Holiday Inn at Carbondale where we stayed 4½ days. Many of our friends found this quite amusing; we felt very ambiguous about what we were doing the entire time. But there had been predictions of an earthquake which supposedly would take place on December 3, plus or minus 48 hours. I am very thorough when it comes





to researching these things. I read everything I could about and by Iben Browning, the fellow who was making these predictions. I even watched about three hours of video to get a sense for what other people were saying about him, and to try and see if people were exaggerating his claims. Indeed they were exaggerating; but nevertheless, he was predicting an earthquake for this region, and I will put myself on the line by stating that, after doing all that research, I came away with one primary impression: that Iben Browning may be a little cockeyed in some of his political thinking and such, but when it comes to climatology and geology he probably knows one hundred times more (I do not exaggerate) than the average climatologist or geologist or seismologist and other scientists of this ilk. I felt that he might be wrong, but on the other hand he might be very right. And if he were right ... Well, the house we live in was built in 1855. It is a three-course brick building, very tall, with no steel reinforcing whatsoever. In all those videos I watched, there were a lot of houses on the ground, and every one of them was a building of solid stone, brick, block, or masonry. The wooden houses, and the concrete structures with reinforcing steel, usually withstood the quakes. The stone and brick structures, especially the old ones, virtually never did. There also was the fact that whether or not one believed Iben Browning's prediction, all seismologists were in agreement about one fact: namely, that there is enough energy stored beneath this area for an earthquake of 7+ magnitude on the Richter scale. They were not predicting the quake, but they all agreed that there is enough energy down there stored up for an earthquake the size of the one Browning was predicting; they stated that they did not know what it would take to release that energy, nor could they predict when. Browning believed he knew what the trigger would be, and he believed he knew when it would happen.

So for 4½ days we stayed in the only motel in this area which is made of steel-reinforced concrete. We felt a couple of small tremors during the night it was predicted--December 3--but that was all. When we came home on Dec. 5, we were very glad to be out of that stuffy, confining motel room. But we had no regrets. Browning had predicted the earthquake, giving it a 50% chance of happening. It did not happen. Maybe next time it will, but I hope to the heavens that by then we will be away from this area.

Strange, that I had always said I would never move to California because of the earthquake menace, and then, unwittingly, I moved to what is considered to be the most dangerous region in the world in terms of vulnerability to a highly destructive quake.

That quake which came through on Sept. 26 only registered 4.6 on the Richter scale. A quake of 7.6 being predicted? Why the worry? The 4.6 one, after all, did no great damage. Well, people forget that the Richter scale is logarithmic. Those who do think it is logarithmic generally believe that each number increases over the last by a factor of 10. They are wrong. It increases by a factor of 36. This means that a quake of 7.6 on the Richter scale would be 3,504 times as strong as the impressive series of tremors that gave this house of ours a good shaking, broke plaster in many wood-frame houses, knocked pictures off walls, groceries off shelves, and sounded like five huge jets moving at supersonic speed. I was upstairs in bed when that 4.6 quake came through, and the whole house was shaking and rattling. I know fully well that our house would never withstand a shaking 3,504 times as strong as the one it got on Sept. 26. In fact, I don't think it would withstand a shaking 50 times as strong. It is old, the three-course brick is solid and massive, but the masonry holding those bricks together is old and crumbly. I have these after-quake visions of our house being a pile of rubble about four feet high.

Unquestionably there was a lot of unnecessary hysteria over the possible quake. People were, for example, coming up to the uninitiated and handing them a slip of paper with the numbers: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0, and saying, "What do these mean?" Of course no one, including myself, could hazard a guess. They then would take the slip of paper back, put in a few markings so that it read, 12-3, 4:56, 7.8, 90, and explain that this was a numerological endorsement of Iben Browning's prediction, namely that indeed the quake would happen on December 3 at 4:56 at a magnitude of 7.8 in the year 1990. My question, of course, was 4:56 a.m. or p.m.? No one knew. Silliness, all this. When a good friend of mine pointed out that he believed the predictions were a fraud since the insurance companies were selling earthquake insurance, this made much sense to me. Insurance companies are not going to lose money if they can help it, and they have the investigative resources to fully appraise a situation such as this before taking a financial risk. They were selling insurance; hence, their very thorough investigations must have concluded that the prediction was either fraudulent or wrong. I, however, followed this matter up by contacting our insurance agent who, unlike most people of his vocation, strikes me as a very honest man. He said that the insurance companies were not believing Iben Browning's prediction, but they did believe the seismologists' predictions: that there is a 60% chance of a 7+ earthquake happening in the next 20 years. He further pointed out to me that they are refusing to insure houses such as mine. Ours, in fact, had only been insured against earthquake

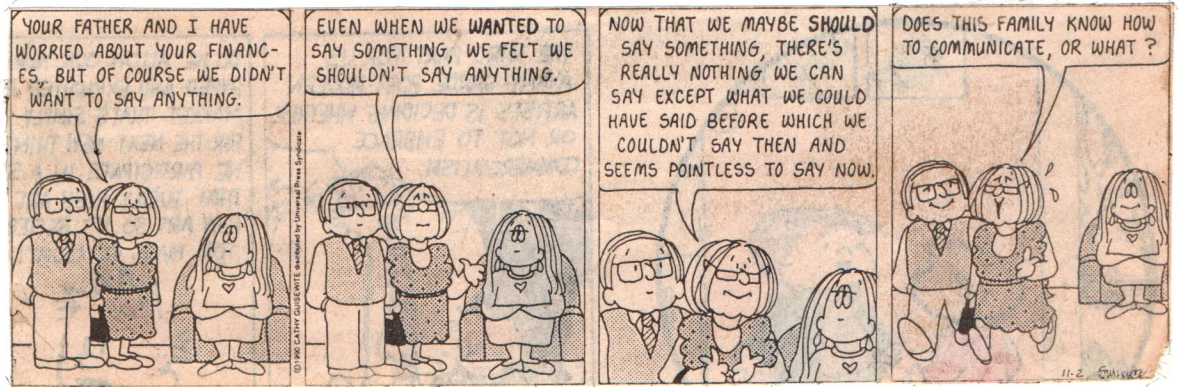


damage since the earthquake "rider" was on our insurance policy when we first purchased the house, and the company could not legally remove it. However, were we today buying earthquake insurance for our house, no company, I was informed, would touch it, given the house's age and construction material.

So it seems that Iben Browning's prediction was not instantiated; this does not mean he was wrong. The possibility for a major quake in this region is still very high. One more reason for getting the hell out of Murphysboro, Illinois.

Dec. 22-31: We embarked on a long, exhausting trip to Northwest Missouri. The roads were terrible, the weather inclement, the driving dangerous, and we were very foolish to have little Marion out in such dangerous driving conditions. I have perhaps driven in worse weather, but I have never for so long ridden in weather that bad. Those first 400 miles of driving probably ate up 12 hours. It was an exhausting trip, little Marion caught a cold which would have seemed quite mild had it not made it so difficult for him to nurse, and ... we decided that we never again would make the trip to Northwest Missouri in the winter as long as we live this far away.

But I am not sorry we made the trip. There were good times spent with friends, some very worthwhile time spent in the area where I grew up--time attendant with the usual gamut of familial



neuroses along with unexpected blessings, personal and spiritual. I learned much about myself, understood more about my past, and made some healthy resolutions about the future. All this is too complicated to go in to at length, and frankly I do not care to put it all into words. Sometimes such things are best carried in silence, and translated not into words but into action.

But it was a lot of driving. From here to St. Louis, on to Columbia, Sedalia, Kansas City, Northwest Missouri, Southern Iowa, and then back again. Abbe and I, what with Marion's needs, averaged about four hours of sleep per night. We returned home weary to the bone--suffering from the usual vacation syndrome: now needing a vacation to recover from the vacation.

GENERALLY: There are many things of note which happened in 1990, but which do not warrant being specified by date. So I list them as follows:

1. The very best thing about the trip to Northwest Missouri was finding out that I was never breast-fed. This has afforded me so much satisfaction, so much corporeal relief, that it has truly been a boon to my physical health and emotional spirits. To think that I was spared this kind of proximity--(accuracy would suggest I use the word "intimacy" but I can not bear the thought!)--to that vessel I already loathed even before I had left the womb. I believe this is one of the more convincing proofs of God's existence!
2. Volume 13 of my Phenomenology of Pseudo-Sentient Aeschatology was finished in due course and the next volume begun. It is good. Very good. And it gets better. But now--I suspect it is about 15,000 pages long, at 250 words per page. The idea of ever going back and reworking it for publication is truly overwhelming. Methinks that as long as I keep writing, I won't have to worry about publishing. This affords me comfort, and engenders even more words.
3. We had expected it for some time, but at last, in early January, saw the visual evidence. Our house was infested with rats. Huge, fat ones which were so big they could scarcely run on the kitchen floor. We hired an exterminator to be rid of the rats. But meanwhile--and over the last many years--the rats had chewed up the wiring in the house. The entire house had to be rewired at considerable expense.
4. In February and March, a very dear friend of mine incurred a brain aneurism, and my eldest nephew, after having had surgery some months before on a coarctation of the aorta, some months later was found to have a huge aneurism emanating from the original repair and running several inches along the aorta. Both of these people recovered from consequent surgery very well, but ... we are all so very mortal. There was much worry during this time.



5. In early May, the March-April issue of Transitions arrived through the mails. This was the first one I had not edited in four years, and getting it was something of a shock. The articles were not very good. The cartoons were gone--there was no sense of humor in the entire issue. I thought that, well, this is the first issue for the new editorial board; the newsletter will get better. But it never did, and this is sad, seeing my creature, once so healthy, atrophying before my eyes. Also, I realized that, rather unconsciously, I had been serving a valuable function in the movement as Managing Editor of Transitions, namely, keeping away the "crazies"--those who are really off the wall, full of malice, venom, and completely unable to articulate a thought without alienating many people who would be sympathetic to their views. These people were filtering in to Transitions, and as the year proceeded, they came aboard in droves. Sad. Sad.

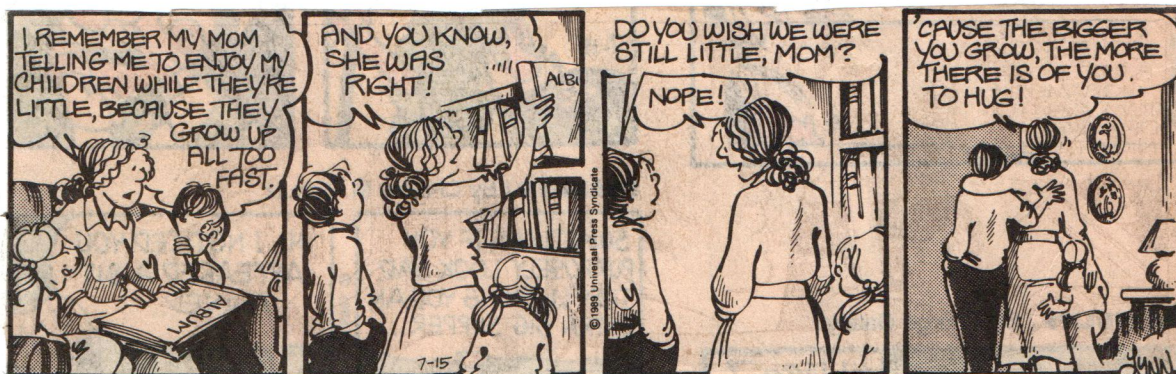
6. In late May, the roof on our house, only 1½ years old, was leaking in two places. It required many different trips by the people who had installed the new roof to finally fix the leaks. One more example of why I can not wait to get the hell away from Murphysboro, Illinois.

7. In the late fall of 1989, a huge infestation of wasps had come into our attic, and were getting down into the house, especially into one upstairs bedroom. In late 1989, Dacia picked up the dead carcasses of 375 wasps. In the spring of 1990, she picked up 275. That is a total of 650. We called in an exterminator for the wasps too.

8. My own health held up fairly well throughout the year, despite the many stresses, worries about the quake, and Marion's being born. There were some setbacks, but they were transient, and my eyesight has remained pretty much stable.

9. In late August, my dad, in his early 70s, suffered a mild stroke and was diagnosed as having diabetes. He still works more than 16 hours a day, and will continue to do so until something fells him. Yes ... mortality lurks, and we have not befriended it.

10. Much has been said of Marion and the many mundane details of our lives. Thus far, little has been said about Dacia. She is growing, and at the age of 15 is nearly as tall as I



am. She is turning into a stunningly beautiful young woman, and is taking some interest in boys, although at this stage not very much. School remains difficult for her. She struggles with algebra, geometry, and Spanish. The other subjects come fairly easily, but what with all the time Dacia puts into the more difficult subjects, she seldom has time to enjoy the ones that are easier for



her. One certainly can not fault her for not trying; in fact, I wish she would relax and try less. It is not uncommon for her to put in five or six hours of homework every evening for weeks in a row. She struggles, she does well, and continues to do better.

She is much more social now, and continues to enjoy relationships with older adults. She has always been adept at making friends with elderly people, and her relationships with them are always replete with a good deal of spiritual depth. She has made some excellent and admirable friends over the last year. And she continues with studying the flute. She does well, but given that her teacher does not look at music as being fun (he played flute in the army, and once told me that Dacia is not in his studio to learn music, she is there to learn technique), practicing and such are difficult. We would like to find her a different teacher, but ... again, this is Southern Illinois, and we know



of only one other teacher. We tried her; she is worse. Maybe one day we will be able to find Dacia a worthy and enjoyable teacher. Meanwhile, she learns quickly and enjoys her instrument, but I do feel that too much of her talent and enthusiasm are being wasted.

Dacia has benjoyed being the beloved big sister to Marion, and is full of affection toward him. We hope she lives with us many more years, but already she is thinking of college. (Quite obviously, the front cover of this year's Aviary reflects the most momentous event of the year. The baby cardinal in the upper right is intended to depict Dacia--young, still dependent, yet all too soon prepared to fly away.)

11. The problem with insomnia is very different now. Sleep comes more easily for me. I no longer suffer from that horrible, soul-killing insomnia that

afflicted me for so many years. Now when I go to bed I usually fall asleep promptly. I no longer awaken



with a horrible fear that will not allow me to get back to sleep. But it seems that I am even more likely than I once was to be unable to sleep because of relatively minor things.

If something is worrying me, if I am angry at someone, unsure about myself, then that is very likely to keep me awake. In fact, the one thing which is most likely to assault and obliterate my sleep is if I have recently tolerated someone's presence when I would rather they never come near me. (A situation, given my rather uncompromising attitude toward most people, which happens with increasing frequency as the years go by.) Small noises awaken me. A foul odor drifting into the house from outdoors awakens me. Sunlight coming through a window with the shade up makes it so I can not get back to sleep. And now there is little Marion, the little boy with the very big, resoundingly tumultuous voice. Sleep is a scarce commodity in this household now, and I am not the only one afflicted. There are times we are almost hallucinating from sleep deprivation.



12. On the status of my mental health, and that old fixation I once cultivated, i.e., my tendency to hoard socks and underwear, I can honestly report that it is under control. I do not believe I bought any underwear during 1990, and as for socks, I bought two pairs only, and these were needed--a certain color to match a suit I sometimes wear.

13. I believe I can also claim that, with very rare exceptions, the phone has ceased to be a problem. For the most part my friends are considerate about when they call, and about asking me if I've the time to talk when they do ring me up. As for what once was the main difficulty, the men in the men's movement who would literally take up hours of my time every day, that is no longer a problem because my number is unlisted and they do not have it. Strange, it was, how those men would indulge a perverse kind of machismo--always calling me up with what they believed to be an emergency on their minds, and then doing much strutting and posturing about how important and pressing was the issue they absolutely had to discuss. Strange, too, that now, unable to reach me by phone, many of these men indulge the same posturing and swagger by using the mails in a way that would appear to add to their self-importance. For some time there, it seemed that nearly every letter I received was sent either by express, or at least was certified--which meant that I had to sign for it. But since I was seldom available to sign for certified mail, I would have to go to the post office the next day to sign for it there. This meant an extra trip by car, time wasted, and money wasted too. Always over a letter





which contained news so impressively bland that it could have waited a month to make its way to me.

I finally began responding to such letters with a note stating the difficulties involved in my making a special trip to the post office for such mail, and letting people know that I would no longer receive such mail. Indeed this is exactly what I did. I would get a note from the mail carrier telling me to report to the post office the next day after such-and-such a time to pick up a piece of certified mail. I would call the post office, find out who the letter was from, and if it was--as usual--from one of these frantically hurried men's liberationists, I would simply inform the postoffice to return the letter to the sender. This stopped the flow of certified mail. But now I get letters complaining that I do not have a FAX machine, and scolding me for not being accessible through a computer modem. These complaints I blithely ignore. The main advantage to having a FAX machine, as far as I can tell, is that it allows procrastinators (keep in mind that I work with editors and other writers, a breed of people addicted to procrastination) to prolong their procrastinations since they can now, literally, wait until the last minute to get something to someone on time. As for being on a computer modem? Part of the whole modus operandi of my life is to become inaccessible to people who do not know me. It would be rather foolish of me to thus begin participating in another forum which would give people access to me. I do not need such. There are already enough people crawling into my soul, there hoping to seize me by the spiritual gonads.

There does, however, remain one problem with the phone, and this is people's tendency to use radio phones. Hearing through the phone, for me, can be difficult enough. But when people add a radio phone, that often makes it all but impossible. If I complain, they seem to think I am insulting their lifestyle or something. So I do not complain; instead I struggle through the conversation, and get my small revenges now and then since people, with radio phones, always seem to think they can use the bathroom at their convenience. They forget that my problem with hearing is not deafness at all; quite the contrary, I hear things much, much louder than most people do. Hence, I have trouble hearing in situations when there is more than one noise, e.g., having a conversation in the kitchen when the refrigerator is running, or talking on the phone when there is interference on the line. But, since I do hear so well--too well--I can always hear the sloshing tinkle of urine being deposited into a stool. I have, on occasion, upon hearing the sound terminate, interrupted the topic at hand to say mildly, "Do you feel better now?" occasioning in my conversationalist considerable discomfiture, no small embarrassment, and a profusion of awkward explanatory apologies. Being a perfect gentleman, I accept their apologies and over the next several minutes assure them repeatedly that I have forgiven the impropriety.

Why do I hate the phone so much? It is most intrusive. I have trouble hearing many people over it. (Curiously, people who are singers have voices I can hear perfectly when conversing by phone.) Finally, it becomes an easy, not to mention expensive, substitute for letter writing--an art which is fast disappearing, and which I miss very much.



14. As for that aspect of my personality which people, sometimes with awe and always with spiritual avarice, refer to when they say, "Baumli, at least, is a real man," I have little or nothing to say. The only aspect of this descriptive about which I remain curious is with regard to other men; namely, I can not for the life of me understand why there are not more real men in this world. It seems to me that this state of composed but graceful masculinity is eminently

desirable, and it is so easily attained (all one has to do is be fully oneself), I can never for the life of me



understand why there aren't more men exactly like Baumli. Aside from the aesthetic and sexual advantages which accrue from being a real man, there are many practical advantages. For example, when not long ago a fellow in downtown St.



Louis tried to mug me on a dark street shortly before midnight, he failed in his attempt, and I didn't even hurt him very badly when I bounced him off a brick wall. A real man has the added advantage of seeing his children grow up in his image and likeness. My little son Marion, just born, was given a Craftsman toolbox for his birth present, and I predict he will be needing another one by the time he is one year old. A real man also is eminently considerate of his wife's needs and feelings. For example, when Abbe learned that I was going to do this Aviary, she slipped this fortune cookie message, here, to the right, in my pocket and smilingly asked that I put it in. I of course did not read it until just now, since real men do not waste their time with such trivia. But out of considerateness for Abbe's momentary bouts of self-indulgent romanticism, I here print her touching little prize. (I think she retrieved it from a fortune cookie I rejected at a restaurant in Cleveland.) Two nights ago, after supper, Abbe asked me if this year I was going to write about my real man personality in The Aviary, and I replied, "What's there to say that isn't obvious?" "Tell them how hairy your back is getting," she replied. "No," said Baumli, always the considerate gentleman, "right now you think it would be fun if I mentioned that, but later you would get jealous." Abbe was rather taken aback, and asked, "Jealous? Why?" "It might bring more bimbos by." "You're right," she said, and apparently attempting to pre-empt a burgeoning bout of imminent jealousy, she promptly took me by the hand and ... but as I have already said, I am a perfect gentleman.

YOU ARE DOOMED TO BE  
HAPPY IN WEDLOCK.

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

1. A small matter, but I suppose it deserves mention so that people will understand and no feelings will be hurt. In the past I have usually remembered my friends' birthdays with a gift. I'll probably be doing this less often in the future, simply because with the influx of so many new friends and young relatives into my life, so often coming up with an appealing gift is getting to be rather difficult. I also think there are times that giving such gifts has caused others to feel obligated to me on my birthday, which I have never intended. So, for the future, I'll give birthday gifts less often. If I see something I believe someone would especially like, then I may get it and present it on that person's birthday. But I'll be inconsistent about doing this, and generally, in the future, I hope that everyone will allow me my whims and leave it at that.

2. I shall be continuing my usual mission: hating smokers and avoiding TV. I mean, hating TV and avoiding smokers. I have said a great deal by way of vilifying

smokers, and it seems, as the years go by, that I am not confining such comments to non-smokers only. Not



that I have become obnoxious. If anything, I have become even more considerate and generous toward these addicts. For example, if I walk into a store and a clerk, sucking on a cigarette, approaches me, I simply smile and say, "Why don't you finish enjoying your cigarette, and yes, then you can help me." Or to a friend who smokes, I might say, "I'm sorry, but I really can't stay overnight. The odor of old cigarette smoke is so pervasive that even when you aren't smoking in the same room I'm in, I can't bear it for very long." I am being honest in saying these things, and yet am recognizing that smokers, for the most part, would quit immediately if they could. Theirs is a painful and powerful addiction. I should not be cruel about their weakness, just because they began something they now regret. A woman I have known, who has a physical aversion to cigarette smoke just as I do, has gone to the extreme of saying to smokers who step forward to give her a hug, "Please don't hug me. Your clothes are saturated with cigarette smoke and your skin is greasy. I don't want any of that on me." Baumli,





being a compassionate man, would never be so gauche. But meanwhile he remains on the lookout for new and more effective ways of keeping cigarette smoke at a distance.

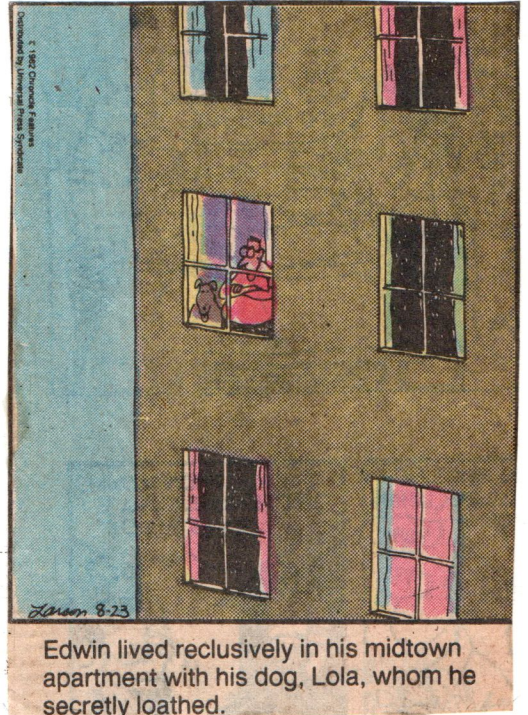
As for TV; I have not had the privilege of mortalizing a single set for some time now. But except for those hours I exposed myself to television programs about the predicted earthquake, I avoid them, malign them, and do my best to warn other people that here, too, is an addiction--a weakness of the flesh, a cancer of the mind. They should avoid such machines, flee from them, and instead imbibe a few things that are, as the Little Prince would say, "less ephemeral."

3. I shall also, for the future, continue with plans for getting away from this area as soon as we, as a family, are ready, i.e., as soon as Abbe has fulfilled her obligation to the federal government, and as soon as Dacia has finished high school.

My friends of yore, i.e., my long-time friends, upon hearing me complain about this area often ask me why we ever consented to come to Southern Illinois in the first place. I have the truthful reason: Abbe had to work as a physician for four years in an underserved site. This was her obligation by way of paying back the federal government for putting her through medical school. But I don't often give the truthful reason anymore. Instead, I often answer with something like, "I don't actually live in Southern Illinois. I just came here to shit, and I'm having a hard time getting the job finished."

Has it become any easier, living here? Yes; but only insofar as now, with the house more or less in good repair, we do not have to deal with the local peasants so much. In other ways it is worse. I've still made not a single close friend. The people hereabouts are still extremely unfriendly, and there is this constant pissing rain which would cause even a devout Christian to believe that God has an infected bladder.

I have, I assure you, been making an effort to change my relationship with this place. It one day occurred to me that if I have a right to expect something from this community, i.e., if I have a right to even be an integral part of a community, then the community has a right to me. They have a right to partake of my talents, my generosity, my participation, and such. So about a year ago I began trying very hard to participate in the finer things of this community. I became an avid supporter of The Beethoven Society for Pianists. I have worked with one of the local charities, lending my time, giving some money, offering advice. I have worked with the local hospital on helping them set up a recycling program at their facilities. I have worked with local merchants to help ensure the safety of children who frequent their parking lots. What have I received in return? Well; thus far a few people appreciate my knowledge of music. That's about it, as far as I can tell. Other than this I remain pretty much cast in the role of the doctor's wife. When I am out and about, people come up to me quite often and, not bothering to introduce themselves, begin telling me what a wonderful doctor Doctor Abbe is, and telling me that I am very lucky to be married to a doctor. Similar exchanges happen when I am with Abbe. Now that she is becoming well known in the community, it rarely happens that we are out and about without someone coming up and accosting her for medical advice. In one instance, Abbe and I were on a grocery store parking lot, walking toward the store, and we heard a car honking behind us. We quickly moved over out of the traffic lane to let the car by. But the honking continued. We at last turned around, to see a car full of waving hands. The person at the wheel continued honking, and was motioning for us to come near. We approached, and Abbe realized that it was a patient of hers, with baby and family. Still inside the car, the mother explained to Abbe that her baby had a diaper rash, and she was wondering what she should do. She pulled the baby's diaper down and held the little person's bottom up to the window for Abbe to see. Well, yes; it was a diaper rash, and what was Abbe to say except to use a bit of lotion and keep the baby changed more often. Other times such encounters have been, if less humorous, more irritating. At the county court house one day, Abbe was





approached by five different patients of hers. Another time, at the local Wal-Mart, we by chance ran into a couple we met three years ago and have become friends with. (These people do not live in Murphysboro; they live a goodly distance away--so far that we can see them but rarely.) It was such a pleasure to see these people, and we stopped to talk for a bit. In the course of twenty minutes, our conversation with these people was rudely interrupted five times by patients wanting to talk to Doctor Abbe about their symptoms. Two people interrupted once each, and one persistent person, although repulsed the first time, came back two more times, each time more intrusive and demanding. It would be inaccurate to say that at her third interruption Abbe was shouting, but it would not be inaccurate to say that she had raised her voice to the loudest volume that is possible for it to not quite be yelling. My God! Our friends were truly amazed, to thus witness, in the short span of twenty minutes, five interruptions from patients. I was disgusted and embarrassed, and found but small comfort in entertaining fantasies about these patients' imminent mortality.

One more example: This time I was alone. I had gone to the local copy place--a Kinko's--and was just coming out the door when a young woman, in her early twenties, came up to me. She asked me if am Doctor Abbe's husband, and I told her I am. Her face brightened, she flung both her arms out, and then told me she had seen my pickup from her apartment above Kinko's, and had seen me walk to the copy place. She was sure, she said, that I am Abbe's husband because she had seen Abbe driving this pickup. I smiled pleasantly, nodded a polite farewell, and began walking toward my pickup which was parked about 100 feet away. And then ... truly, I am not exaggerating when I say this, but this young woman began dancing around me in a circle as I walked, yelling out, "Ductuhr Ubbuh's muh ductuhr!! Ductuhr Ubbuh's muh doctuhr!!" at the top of her voice. Yes; yelling, not just saying it in a loud voice. And then (Yes; there are times I exaggerate a bit in The Aviary, but I swear on my progeny that I am not exaggerating this time!) this young woman, displaying a remarkably athletic physique, began doing cartwheels around me as I continued walking toward my pickup! I hunkered down, walked more quickly, tried to appear as inconspicuous as I could, and she kept at it. She must have done a full circle of cartwheels around me four times before I made it that short distance to my pickup, pausing when she would come upright, directly in front of me, to yell, "Ductuhr Ubbuh's muh ductuhr!! Yaayyy!!!" I hurriedly unlocked my pickup, shoved my papers inside, and climbed in, closing the door behind me. Whereupon she came up to the door and pounded on the glass. I rolled it down about four inches and she shouted, "Tell Ductuhr Ubbuh uh said hulluh!" I nodded, told her I would, started the pickup and began backing out. There was the screech of tires on the street behind me. I had nearly backed right into a car. As I slammed on my brakes, the young woman ran up to me again and yelled out her name. "Ductuhr Ubbuh'll know muh! You tell Ductuhr Ubbu uh sud huh!!" Well, Doctor Abbe was not sure who this person was; the young woman had only given me her first name, and Abbe had several patients by that name.

Well ... do you begin to see what a dismal scene it is hereabouts? I even discovered, quite by accident, that there is a club in this area which at one time was called The Doctors Wives Club. The club, moving into the modern age, has changed its name to the Jackson County Medical Auxiliary. One day there came through the mail an announcement addressed to Ms. Francis Bombley. The announcement listed their board of officers, eight no less, and extended an invitation for me to attend the five programs they would be putting on over the next eight months. I will not take up space by herein reproducing the entire one-page newsletter, but here, for your edification, is about one-fourth of that newsletter's single page.

Gruesome, is it not? I was tempted to go ahead and attend the second meeting, but Abbe, knowing how ~~obnoxious~~ blunt I can be at such things, managed to dissuade me.

Meanwhile, the most difficult thing about living in this area is having to listen to these people's

#### JACKSON COUNTY MEDICAL AUXILIARY 1990-1991

"As your new president, I'm looking forward to an exciting year with the Medical Auxiliary. Some very interesting and informative programs have been planned. It would be great to see an increase in our membership this year- so come join the group and the fun!"

Fran Mings

#### PROGRAMS FOR THE COMING YEAR

SEPTEMBER 20, 1990 (11:30 am) at the home of Jeanette Miller. #19 High Forest (Heritage Hills). "Taste and Evaluation Luncheon" - A unique opportunity to taste and evaluate the recipes going into Jeanette's new cookbook. A \$5.00 donation is requested to help support Hospice. RSVP TO 457-6299 NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 14, 1990.

OCTOBER 18, 1990 (7:30 pm) at Dr. Leland Stalling's office. 301 N. Robinson Circle. "A Night of Fashion" - presented by HECHT'S.



slovenly speech habits. There are even times when Abbe begins to take on their way of speaking, which is quite understandable; she works among these people nearly every day, and has found that unless she adopts certain of their oral mannerisms, they can not understand her. I do the same thing myself, when dealing with these people, but since I interact with them less than she does, and also because I am naturally more inclined to repugnance when exposed to what is loathsome, I shed such verbal vulgarisms immediately upon absenting myself from these creatures.

What I would not give to take a trip to central Scotland, where the English language is spoken so well! It is a veritable craving I have, this need to interact with people who speak the English language instead of some strange atrophied dialect in which all vowels are muted into one and consonants have virtually withered away.

But, my dear friends, fear not. I am a man of fortitude, and you know as well as I do that the day will come when I will have managed to surmount all these difficulties with Southern Illinois and the tiny city of Murphysboro. Yes; I am sure the day will arrive when I will look upon Murphysboro, smile, and think to myself that I have never in my life seen a finer sight. This will happen, I believe, when I look upon it for the last time through the rear-view mirror of my car.

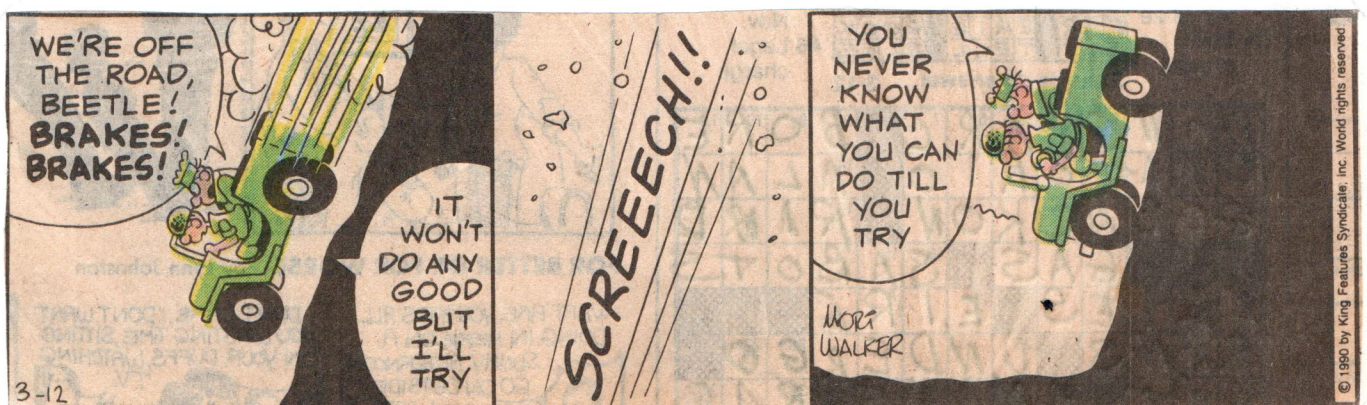
### \*\*ON-GOING WORK\*\*

With the passing years, I find it less and less productive to talk about my work. Talking not only delays it, talking also seems to somehow distant me from it, and consequently make it even more difficult to take up. So ... I will only say that I am doing my usual. Studying, writing articles, working on my Phenomenology, and other various and maudlin works.

In a different vein, I am working at changing the appearance of my body. I am overweight. I am solidly built, and hence never seem to weigh as much as I do. But in 1989 my weight had reached a record 193. By the end of that year I was down to 183, and in 1990 I have continued trying to lose weight. My low for the year was 177, and I am hoping to lose another twenty pounds or so over the next two years. I am losing it slowly, trying to change my eating habits, and such. I want to lose it once and for all, and never have to go through this agony again.

What finally prompted me to begin dieting--to begin obliterating this burgeoning bulk of a belly that is gracing my previously svelte frame? Well; nothing is ever simple in Baumli's private cosmology. It often seems that whenever I am motivated to accomplish a certain task, I must have at least three strong reasons for doing it. Plus, beneath these three reasons, there must be another, bigger one, which more or less provides a foundation for the initial three. My reasons? The first is quite simple. I want to look better and fit into all my clothes. A second reason is that Abbe said she thought I would never lose my excess weight, so I, of course, have to prove her wrong. A third reason was occasioned by one of Abbe's nurses having a nearly fatal heart attack at the age of 37. Heart disease is rampant on my mother's side of the family, especially in men. I do not intend to be one of those who succumb.

But as for the major, underlying reason? I here confess to a very private and very horrible fear. You see, I have always felt that the most horrible thing about death is the fact that, once dead, my flesh will rot. When I look at my body, and think of its flesh--this flesh--succumbing to the final putrefaction, the horror is almost unbearable. One night the very simple realization came to me that if I were to lose weight, then I would have less flesh, and hence, upon dying, there would be less of me to rot. When I realized this, I knew that I would have no trouble going on a diet and losing these excess pounds. The pounds are shedding, there is less flesh on this frame to rot, and I even enjoy my hunger at times, given that it provides me some release from the horror.





## READING FOR 1990



My eyesight is taking a heavy toll. I read fewer books in 1990--only 97, which may sound like a lot, but given my addiction to reading it is but about two-thirds as many as I usually read. I skipped about a good deal this year, doing a good deal of reading in physics, psychology, musicology, and fiction. Never enough fiction.

As is customary, I here list the best books I read during 1990:

1. The Year Bukowski Didn't Get Laid by Francis Baumli. Yes; again I say it. When I want to read a good book, I pick up one of my own. This is one I intend to try publishing soon. It is relatively short, rather scatological, and lies somewhere between the genre of "meat poetry" and "Baumliesque esoterica."
2. Dangling in the Tournefortia by Charles Bukowski. I keep trying to convince myself that I have read enough Bukowski. That he is repetitive, too narrow in his subject matter, too given to posturing about his personal life. But then I begin reading him, and again ... there it is. For all the failings, it is the work of genius.
3. You Get So Alone at Times That It Just Makes Sense by Charles Bukowski. I stopped trying to convince myself that I should be reading Tolstoy instead. Tolstoy is better, but Bukowski becomes an addiction.
4. Querelle by Jean Genet, translated by Anselm Hollo. I now have read all of Genet's novels, and every one of them is a work of pure genius. In exploring the phenomenological approach to literature, his novels, along with Dylan Thomas' short stories, are truly our most valuable point of reference. This novel, however, almost strained Genet beyond his abilities. His approach became so rarefied at times as to move beyond impressionism into abstractionism, which seemed to not only lose the reader but also elude the author. Still, he did hold it together, and presented some powerful and convincing characters. The cruelty and lurid masochism in this book were, at times, almost too much for me. More than once I put it down just to get away from it for a while because it was too difficult to ingest.  
Unfortunately Genet's style was compromised by a poor translation. Witness the following, on page 196: "Querelle scored a humdinger on Mario's chin. Happy to be fighting (with his bare hands), he knew for certain that he would not have to get the better of anything but what could be beaten to submission by fists and feet." Such elusive sentences were quite copious in the novel, causing me to try and find a copy in the original French, but I was not successful.
5. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey. Not the first time I have read this book. This novel is pure genius, and it follows the tragic form as surely as do any of Sophocles' plays. In terms of quality, it ranks with Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky. Scoff if you will, but being a man who never suffers amnesia about his own mortality, I believe that I can recognize immortality when I behold it.
6. The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, translated by Katherine Woods. This little book is a pure gem, delightful for child or for the child who persists in the adult. I have read this book several times, both in the French and in the translation. I this time used the translation, spending an afternoon reading it aloud to a woman while we nestled in the back of my 1955 Caddy hearse.
7. Sweet Thursday by John Steinbeck. Curious, that I had never read this one before. A short novel, it is amazingly complex, and each character is so perfectly presented with so few descriptives. This, I must say, is probably the funniest novel I have ever read, even funnier than Catch 22. There were many times when I would have to put the book down and allow myself the pleasure of laughing hysterically, for as long as a couple of minutes, before I could



continue with my reading. It has motivated me to go back to Steinbeck and read several other of his novels which I've never before read.

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As in previous years, I here list those books which were disappointing:

1. Seven Nights by Jorge Luis Borges, translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. Although I think one of the great sins of 20th Century letters is that Borges was never awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, I will readily concede that he is an uneven writer. Some things are sterling every word of the way; some books, like the present one, although they contain his graceful and luscious style, simply do not contain enough that is profound. He gropes for concepts, using books and experience as his ladder thereto, instead of more confidently relying on his pure creativity. Do not get me wrong; this is a worthy book, but it does not live up to the expectations Borges engenders.
2. Hollywood by Charles Bukowski. This is a novel about his experiences while writing the screenplay for the movie Barfly. Bukowski would do well to let his ideas ferment a few years before putting them to paper. This book was shallow, completely lacking in the creative genius Bukowski otherwise possesses, and was very burdened by Bukowski's constant attempts to reveal exactly who he was talking about while at the same time camouflaging them by changing the names, places, and such just the tiniest bit. Boring. Yet, it perhaps gives as accurate a description of the business dealings involved in movie making one could ever hope to read.
3. The Quiet Rebellion: The Making and Meaning of the Arts by James K. Feibleman. I have read several of Feibleman's books, some in aesthetics and others in ontology. They are not brilliant, but nevertheless are very informative, even provocative. This one was not. It was a compendium of essays on aesthetics which he had published in various scholarly journals. The main impression this book leaves is that the scholarly journals of his day (and today) are neither scholarly nor readable.  
As for style, although Feibleman never shows extraordinary skill, one comes to expect from him an adequate approach to words. Not so in this book. Witness the following, typical example of Feibleman's prose in this work. I take the example from page 109: "Philosophy as a starting point is a matter of getting back to very small beginnings, to a presuppositionless first move. The ideal of course would be to start with nothing at all, a thoroughgoing standpointlessness."
4. The Music School by John Updike. This collection of short stories was truly painful to read. Updike is a brilliant stylist, but his topic--divorce, marriage, adultery, the emotional cruelty that metastasizes in a bad marriage--becomes boring because it is so repetitive. The book did have certain brilliant stories within it, e.g., "Giving Blood," "The Family Meadow," and "The Hermit." But the others all tended to be little exercises in one more look at the world through the bile-colored glasses of a bad marriage. And even the three stories I mention as being good were each marred with a very clumsy ending.

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The book which this year takes the prize for being the most offensive one I read is Daddy: The Diary of an Expectant Father by Dennis Danziger. Danziger is a script writer, who whores himself out for any TV project that will pay him money. He wrote the book as a kind of diary during pregnancy, thinking that it would be unique enough to sell. He strains to be funny, but only proves that the best way to get the members of an audience to laugh is to first bore them. The book, to a great degree, is a long lamentation about what a boorish chauvinist he is. He and his wife get into the most childish fights, with him breaking up her prize furniture and her throwing pages of his manuscripts into the fire. In one incident, she punches him in the back of the neck when he is lying in bed, and he responds by slapping her. The end result of this tiff involves him deciding that he is the culprit since he did the most dastardly deed of all: he hit a woman. He groveled for her, and forgot all about the fact that she hit him, as the two of them went through their ritualistic flogging of the male before he could be forgiven. He even confessed, in the midst of the book, that his wife would not allow him to write certain sections of the book, i.e., the ones depicting their angry exchanges, without her giving final approval to his version of what a terribly bad boy he had been.

I read several books on fathering, given that I was wanting to prepare myself for the experience in as many ways as possible. With the exception of one, they were all bad--trite, sentimental, simplistic. But this one was the worst of the lot, what with being so thoroughly offensive to men.

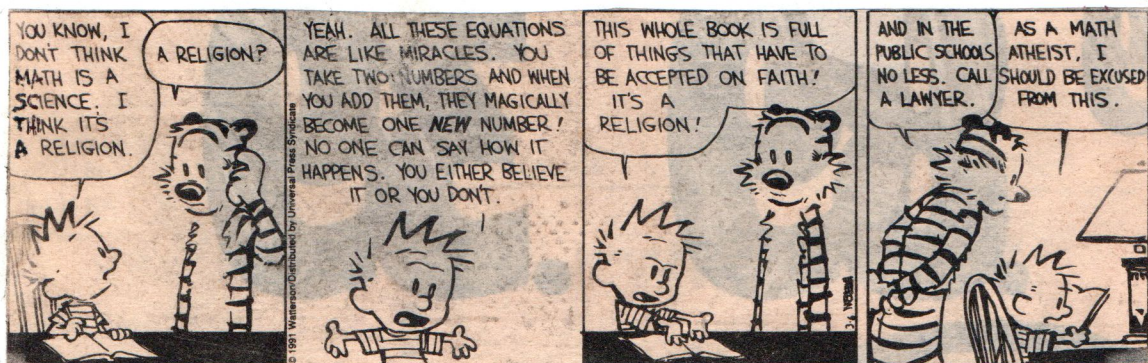
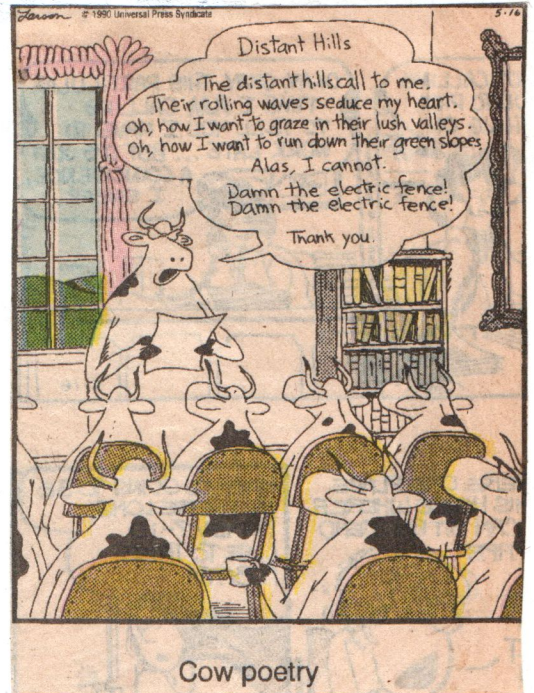
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The above book almost took the prize for also being the worst book I read



during 1990, but it was edged out by Between Two Gardens by James B. Nelson. Perhaps you will recall my writing, in an earlier issue of this Aviary, about a religious discussion group I attended--I believe it was three times--when I first came to Southern Illinois. I joined up with this group because I do have a strong interest in medieval philosophy, and hence, despite my nultheistic stance and atheistic aspirations, I remain drawn to Christian symbiology and am interested in the various debates that remain enjoyable if one keeps in mind their contingency on fictions. This group was using Between Two Gardens by Nelson, and I tell you, it was but one step above the born-again writings of Johnny Cash. I could scarcely believe that any author could be serious about such superficial things, and when, at the third meeting, we gathered to discuss the second chapter, and a former priest there said, "Wow; there's enough in this chapter to keep us trying to figure it out for months!" I decided that not only was this book not for me, neither was the group. I politely resigned from the group and put the book aside, thinking I might one day donate it to the dyslexic ward at a mental hospital. But compulsive person that I am, I could not rest easy with a book lying about half read. One evening I picked it up and finished it in a couple of hours. It was all an exercise in how to be a Christian while taking an oh-so-teensy step toward being less shackled by Christianity's oppressive views toward sexuality. For the sake of bringing things to proper closure with this book, I thought of sprinkling it with my semen and then donating it to the local convent. But, prudent man that I am, I thought better of it. Besides, I was sure I could never follow through with the deed since every time I looked at that book my penis shrunk up like a prune.

It was shortly after resigning from this group that I started the philosophy discussion group. As I have said, it fell apart because everyone wanted to talk about religion and God. I thereafter thought of starting a group devoted to topics in physics and mathematics only. But I could not find a single person who was interested. It's probably just as well, since I'm sure these Southern Illinois people would have found a way of bending even those topics to the service of their false idol.



Given my usual obsession with keeping language pure and graceful, I have not, over the last year, failed to note those many instances when this country's peasantry has assaulted my ears with their many verbal inanities. You see, it has always been the case that in Baumli's world a grammatical solecism is a moral solecism, never to be tolerated. I have done my best, over the years, to promulgate this modest axiology, and yet it still happens that I almost daily encounter the most garish instances of gruesome grammar. For example, a psychologist I know in California phones me, complaining that even though he has published five books, his publisher has turned down his latest. This book writer describes the rejection as follows; "It was a real bring-down for me," and I bite my tongue to keep from informing him of one very possible reason as to why his publisher rejected his latest book.

But as time goes by, I try to pay less attention to the conversational errors my friends and colleagues make. Focusing on the failings of their language may cause me to overlook their good traits, and might even cause them to become nervous and unsure of themselves when speaking to me. So I try to be tolerant with my friends about this matter, and save my gnashing of teeth for what I encounter in the printed media.

As for such encounters; yes, indeed, they are painful. Note the following, which I read in a description of a famous singer: "Those earrings accessorize her face very well." While this last piece of offal was found in a popular magazine, where one might expect to encounter such things, the



following sentence was found in a scholarly journal, "He devoted a good part of his life to biographing William James." I can put down the scholarly journal with a grimace of disgust, and open a piece of mail, which tells me that my credit card application with the such-and-such company has been "pre-approved." This one, I assure you, I pondered a good while, and even translated into modal logic using temporal predicates, hoping that I could make sense of it. I couldn't. But thus playing with modal logic caused me to open a philosophy journal just to see what kind of symbiology the printers are asking for when one prints articles using logic symbols. My eye falls on a short article which is intended as a rebuttal of another. Its last sentence: "He inarticulated his position, and as a result, had to leave the problem unresolved." A few months before, I had encountered "unresponded" in a shallowly written popular psychology book. The sentence, which I can not here bring myself to repeat, given that it was replete with many other grammatical errors, went something on the order of, "I told her, in the most flowery language possible, that I love her, but when she unresponded I didn't know what to say next." There you have it. One person inarticulates. Another person unresponds. If we could only put those two people together, we might come up with a mutant creature that would impress even the likes of Empedocles.

Aside from these specific words, so inaccurately used, there is a growing tendency in modern-day journalism to bastardize words by stripping them of consonants, setting them alongside words that really are not words, and dribbling them across the page in a hapahazard attempt to make the writing easy and humorous. The end result of such efforts would be catastrophically dull, were it not for the fact that one pays somewhat less attention to the pitiful words since one is searching for substantial content which is seldom there. Shall I illustrate? I take the following, written by the editor of Male Health Call, which was printed on the last page of their July 1990 issue:

Another issue of our newsletter come, done, and gone! Whataya think? Be sure to write and let me know!

Meanwhile, hows about lettin me tell ya about the latest hot topic! Gettin tired lately? Haven't been makin it with the chicks like ya used to? Maybe ya need to get your calcium level checked. Howabout it bub? Can ya handle one more trip to the doctor, and that trip to the laboratory, then maybe a second trip to the doc for a consult? Lissen up fella. If ya wanna feel up to par, then you're gonna have to face it like a man and let em up the needle to ya again. Course, you're thinkin, why not? It'll be a cute young nurse and that wouldn't be so bad now would it? Guess again. Yup, my experience was with a tired old woman who looked like she needed her calcium levels checked! But did I complain? Nope. Not me. But hey! I'm a liberated man of the '90s! I care about my bod. Didja hear that? I care. Anyway, if you're sluggish and tired all the time, then take this to heart. But if you're stressed at the idea of another test then chill out. Take it in stride. Get down to that clinic and go for broke. Are you thinkin you'll meet me there? Nah. Not a chance. Hey, I already had my test run and mine was fine. And wow! Lemme tell ya something. If anybody tries to tell ya this test's cheap, then zow! Tell him to zip his yapper because this here fella told ya you're gonna spend alot before you're through. But it's worth it. Get your calcium up and you'll feel like a new man. And hey, watch out for those women comin at ya!

Next on the agenda? Zinc levels and the prostate. Ever had your prostate checked? Yow! More about this test next issue. For right now I'm outta here!

I'm sorry to ruin your aesthetic sensibilities for the day, but hey! You didn't have to read it!

Seriously, how many times have you encountered that pesky little "hey!" that keeps showing up in contemporary writing? And does the above put you in mind of this new tendency, among aspiring but failing writers, to underline certain words for emphasis--thus giving words importance through artifice instead of craft?

Of course we all have the option of putting aside articles such as the above, and refusing to read them once we realize the thicket they are leading us in to. It is not so easy, however, to avoid such prose when we encounter it in, for examples, letters we receive. The following letter was sent to me by a literarily forlorn member of the men's movement to whom I had sent an article I had written. I give you approximately half of what he wrote, doing my best to leave his prose, misspellings, grammar, and such exactly as he wrote it:

I received the monograph and appreciate the opportunity to access it's content. Your intrusting me with such a task has elevated my sence of self-worth and fostered an acute awareness, in antisapation. This is something I feel privileged and interested in doing, not just a task at hand.

....

I simply feel that by the time the reader gleens through all of the CARTOONS, that persons initial intrrest factor would be deminished, ever how slight, to the point of possibly viewing the reading material as less desireable than when first apprehended.



One must view this is the full human aspect to be able to see that my corrective criticism is honestly in the form of constructive criticism rather than an attempt to undermine the original concept of the writers writ.

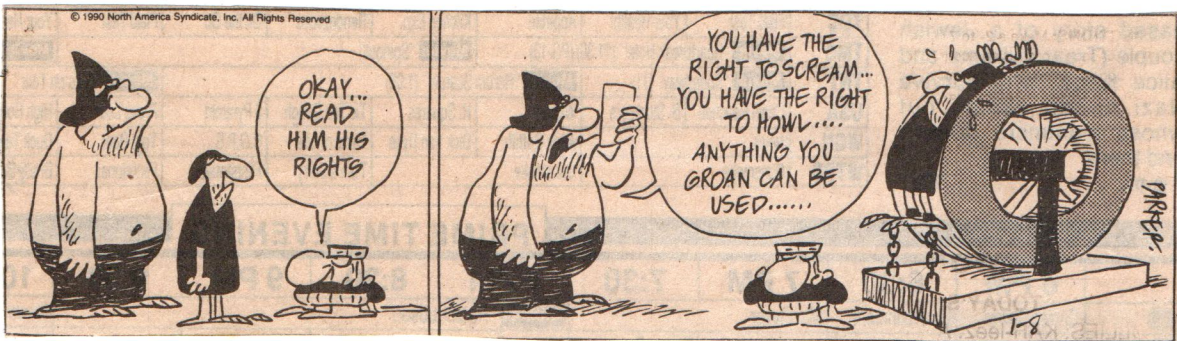
To employ the jist of my conclusion, I would make this sudjestion, if I may....

.... If reference is mandated to a specific page or part of the reading material, simply use number or letter references to the seperate section, respectively.

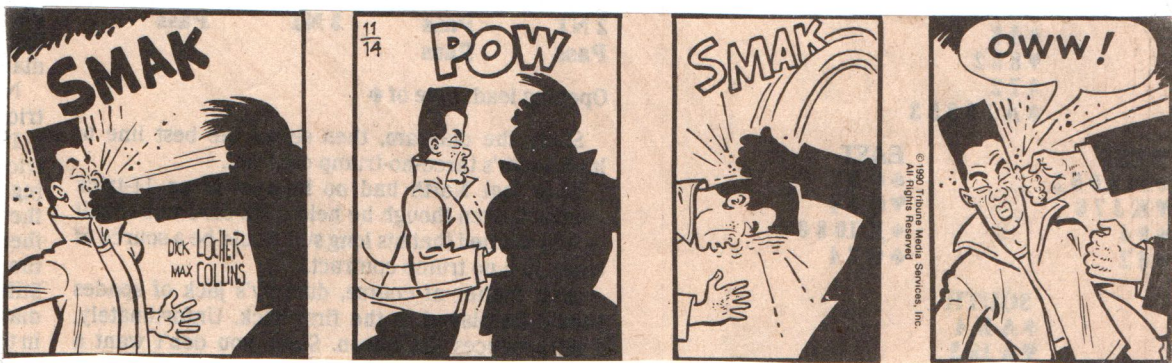
I find the initial screenint in a favorable light and will comment upon a through second reading. I pray that this prepatory statement will not be viewed as too harsh or anything other than a sincere attempt to opinionate in a terse and succinct manner, for the best intrest of all mankind!

Respectfully,

I will not list the name of this literary wretch. He never did write me again; for that I am grateful. But several people who receive The Aviary either know him or know of him, and it is not impossible that someone, upon espying his name, might send him what I have above printed. Then he would likely be motivated to write me again, and that I can not abide. There is enough pain and suffering in this world without my subjecting myself to another assault such as the above. And of course, were I to receive another letter from that fellow, I would probably need, for the sake of purging myself of it, to put it in a later issue of The Aviary, thus assaulting your own aesthetic (and visceral) sensibilities. So let us hope his dysgraphic brain rests in peace. Meanwhile, we can enjoy the repose that is only possible when the likes of him remain silent.



\*\*\* MOVIES \*\*\*



Movies do teach us a good deal about life. In my case, bad movies teach me more than do good movies. From bad movies, I have come to understand something crucial about how I relate to life; I refer to it as "the bad movie syndrome." By this I admit to what happens to me when I am seeing a bad movie. I am there in the theatre, often in company with other people, and the movie is bad, bad. But because there is nothing else to do, and I am entrapped there in the dark, with all that screen in front of my eyeballs, the movie gets my attention. Half way through the movie, or thereabouts, I begin liking it a bit, then thinking better of it, then even enjoying it. At the end the thought comes to mind that, well, it was not so bad after all. But then, just as I am stepping outside the door of the theatre, I realize that, oh my God, it really was terrible, and the only reason it became at all enjoyable was because that was all there was.

As for movies, the feeling of having had one's aesthetic sensibilities sullied usually passes fairly quickly. But as for people ... one's sense of having wasted one's soul does not pass so quickly, and it is helpful to keep



in mind "the bad movie syndrome." If one's experience of such people, initially, is that they are complete bores, then one should beware of beginning to tolerate, even like, them. Too often, one becomes somewhat accustomed to their vague presence, and lacking more stimulating company at the moment, begins to lower one's expectations. As in a bad movie, one is soon thinking to oneself that, well, really, come to think of it, what with my now being in a less critical mood, and less agitated about something I surely was not understanding, this person is not so bad after. I decided to make the best of a worrisome situation and perhaps it was in my best interests to do so.

But then (a dreadful word, given the context!), that person leaves, or you leave, and ... the realization hits like a ton of grenades. It was a boring, soul-killing nullity. Why in all living hell did I not get away from this person sooner?! And now, unlike a bad movie which one can avoid for the future, this thing will come back!

Yes; it happens to all of us, and as the years go by we learn better how to avoid such people. I have learned better by keeping in mind "the bad movie syndrome." A trite observation, all this, I realize, but ... sometimes even from simple things, there are profound lessons.

But let us turn to the topic of specific movies. During 1990, I saw but four movies. Eyesight continues to weaken, and movies are one of the most difficult experiences for me.

The movies I saw, listed by date, are:

1. Jan. 14: Sidewalk Stories. It was a wonderful exercise in the glory of childhood, and the infinitude of human compassion. A simple, poignant story, it is difficult to sum up. The use of black and white for the movie gave it added impact while at the same time allowing comic relief when appropriate. But the showing I saw was constantly out of focus, done on what appeared to be poor quality film; as a result, viewing this movie was so exhausting that I, and the other three people with me, were reeling when we staggered from the theatre. Still, when I realized that Charles Lane not only starred in the film, he also wrote and directed it, I was able to forgive the poor showing. The film won the "Best Artistic Contribution" prize at the '89 Cannes Film Festival, and it certainly was deserving.

2. May 9: Wings of Desire. This is a visual cornucopia of gorgeous phenomenological complexity (and perplexity). The kind of movie that needs to be seen several times, it saturates the viewer with the world's mystery, but then leaves us with the feeling that there is not so much mystery after all. I did think the movie was mildly flawed by a somewhat formulistic ending, but then ... maybe the movie was spoofing such endings. I am not sure.

3. May 18: The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover. I saw this movie with Abbe. She left about midway through; I stayed to the bitter end. On a big screen this movie is visually stunning. The acting was excellent, and the story gripping. But my God. I have never in my life encountered a work of art which came as close as this one did to making me believe that perhaps there are times when indeed art should be censored. I did not make this judgement, but ... that movie was so assaultive to my every moral sensibility. I concede that artistically it was brilliant, although even on this plane it had faults. The imagery at times was overly stilted, too blatant, so literal as to be sophomoric even when the director was doing his best to make it subtle.

I really do try, as the years go by, to not look at movies too carefully through the eyes of men's liberation. But this one left me feeling queasy, not only because of the mutilation and the cannibalism, but also because of the way the writer and director had so shrewdly realized exactly what kind of violence society would and would not tolerate. And of course, as often happens in movies, the message came through that society's tolerance of violence toward men can be exploited. We saw men being beaten, having human feces smeared on them, a man being tortured and then killed on the screen (It was as close to being a snuff film as one can get via celluloid without the person actually being killed!), a man's body being cooked, and then eaten by another man, and so on. I pointed this out to several people, and they replied that the wife was not portrayed as a very likable character either. True. But before the movie was over she was excused. After her lover was killed, and she found the body, she, in an insane delirium, told the dead man how she had been abused by her husband, and how his cruelty and complete control over her had made it impossible for her to leave the relationship. Thus she was exculpated of her former misdeeds; and everything she then did--forcing her husband to commit cannibalism, and then killing him--was his fault, caused by the insanity he had driven her to. Thus it was that violent scenes toward women were utilized only for the sake of making women look less culpable, and men more beastly. Note too, that in the one scene where a child was about to be tortured, the child fainted and thus was not tortured. The director knew that whatever the rating of the film (As it was,



the producers of the movie had opted to not have it rated.), no community would tolerate seeing an innocent child tortured on the screen.

Do not abuse children, society does not like that; society does not like the idea of women being abused either, but it believes it happens, and will tolerate seeing such on film as long as the women are innocent and the men are to blame; as for abusing men, well me lads and lassies, have a merry go at it and leave no soul unsullied! Such was the axiology (admittedly, scarcely blatant) which affected me so adversely.

But aside from such concerns, the film was an exercise in terror, horror, nullity. In this it succeeded, and hence must be praised for its brilliance, even as one vomits.

Dec. 30: Graceland. I had already heard the album, and had pronounced it one of the finest I have ever heard. The video augments the music with stunning depictions of the countryside, and excellent selections of the performers doing their music. The dance scenes were among the finest I have ever viewed in any genre. The kind of movie to see when you want to feel better about all of humanity.

Only four for the year; clearly, viewing movies is something I will not be doing much longer. With this in mind, it occurred to me to glance back through previous issues of The Aviary and take stock of the movies I have seen over the last several years. My glance became a time-consuming perusal, but it was fun. I was especially struck by that list of favorite movies I made back in 1984. For those of you who never saw it, my list of ten favorite movies was:

- |                                |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <u>The Last Movie</u>       | 1. <u>Five Easy Pieces</u>   |
| 2. <u>Scarecrow</u>            | 2. <u>A Clockwork Orange</u> |
| 3. <u>Face to Face</u>         | 3. <u>L'Etranger</u>         |
| 4. <u>Midnight Cowboy</u>      | 4. <u>Ordinary People</u>    |
| 5. <u>Heavy Traffic</u>        | 5. <u>Taxi Driver</u>        |
| 6. <u>Hara-Kiri</u>            |                              |
| 7. <u>My Dinner with Andre</u> |                              |
| 8. <u>Satyricon</u>            |                              |
| 9. <u>The Clowns</u>           |                              |
| 10. <u>All that Jazz</u>       |                              |

(At that time I also listed five movies which almost made it onto my list of ten favorites; they are listed above, on the right.)

Now, with further hindsight, and after having seen more movies, the above lists have changed somewhat, although surprisingly not so very much. I've made new lists. Below, on the left, are my ten favorite movies. I list them in order of preference, although I readily concede that, with the exception of the first two, that order could change within a week. On the right is my list of movies which almost make it to the list of ten favorite. Note that Heavy Traffic is now entirely gone. It was an immensely enjoyable movie, but it did not stay with me--in memory, much less, aesthetically. All other movies that got nudged off the list of favorites remain on the list of those which, still, almost make it. It is here, below, on the right.

- |                                |                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. <u>The Last Movie</u>       | 1. <u>Five Easy Pieces</u>           |
| 2. <u>Scarecrow</u>            | 2. <u>A Clockwork Orange</u>         |
| 3. <u>Hara-Kiri</u>            | 3. <u>L'Etranger</u>                 |
| 4. <u>The Name of the Rose</u> | 4. <u>Ordinary People</u>            |
| 5. <u>Amadeus</u>              | 5. <u>Taxi Driver</u>                |
| 6. <u>Face to Face</u>         | 6. <u>The Clowns</u>                 |
| 7. <u>All that Jazz</u>        | 7. <u>My Dinner with Andre</u>       |
| 8. <u>Satyricon</u>            | 8. <u>sex, lies, &amp; videotape</u> |
| 9. <u>Midnight Cowboy</u>      |                                      |
| 10. <u>Autumn Sonata</u>       |                                      |

Such lust I experience, just looking over these two lists! They are all worth seeing many times over!

Curious, is it not, that the above lists contain several movies which are themselves about movie-making? The Last Movie, All that Jazz, and The Clowns all have movies within the movie. My Dinner with Andre and sex, lies, and videotape are similar in that the former has much to say about acting and drama, while the latter is laden with home movies which are a pivotal part of the movie's subject matter.

Well; it is time to bring this section to a close, once and for all. I see no reason to include it in a later issue of The Aviary, since it will be populated so sparsely. I take some comfort, albeit small, in knowing that

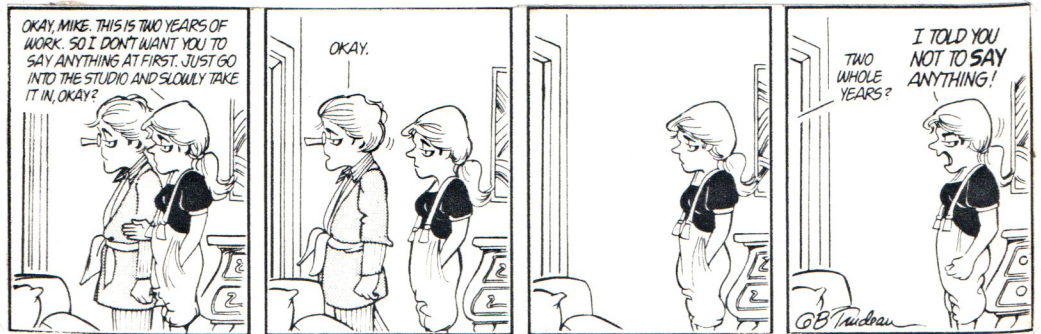


even though I shall not be seeing many more movies, I won't be missing much. The quality of movies has fallen over the last few years. People settle for less because the visual media is so saturated they have, I believe, become a bit catatonic. If something is there for them to look at, that is almost enough. A bit of quality? That is an indulgence, which too few members of the audience really appreciate. I do feel sad, however, that there are many great movies of yore I shall never see. Those great Russian films, other films by Bergman and Fellini, Indian movies I've been told about but have never been able to see, and ... . Oh well. I can spend the time reflecting upon my mortality.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\* PORTRAITS BY AN EXHIBITIONIST \*\*\*\*\*  
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The trip to Chciago, in late May and early June, afforded good viewing at the Art Institute. Previous visits have usually been somewhat disappointing because too often it seemed that repairs were being made, or something was under construction, and as a result, too much of what I wanted to see was inaccessible; I then would spend more time than I otherwise would have with the modern things. However,

this time the entire gallery was open, and while I saw much art at the Institute I have never before viewed, I nevertheless spent most of my time with certain works I had seen there before. The



Bathers by Bouguereau, for all its idealization of the human form, is nevertheless so realistic as to tempt one to try and organize an exhibit of his paintings. To my knowledge, there has never been such an exhibit, and I swear, I love Bouguereau so dearly I would travel many miles to view an exhibit that would show many of his paintings at once. (Meanwhile, I wish someone would come along and solve for me, once and for all, the question as to exactly how his name is to be pronounced. Dictionaries and various reference works do not agree, and it seems I am always getting into a running argument with people as to how we, in our private ignorance, are sure the name should be said.)

The Odalisque by Lefebvre, at this gallery, also affords delectable viewing, being one of the most stunningly erotic paintings I have ever seen. As the years pass, I have come to at last give Turner the admiration that is his due, and this art gallery has one of his finest: Dutch Fishing Boats, which is a painting so brilliant it would cure any but the most psychasthenic of depressives. This time I again spent a good while with Francisco de Zubaran's early 17th century painting called The Crucifixion. It continues to remind me of Dali's Christ of St. John of the Cross, which I believe to be the greatest painting in the world. Either Zubaran influenced Dali, or both were influenced by that sketch attributed to St. John of the Cross. Regardless, Zubaran's painting, even though it is not of the first order, is worth viewing because of the unusual way the figure occupies more than one plane in space.



Over and over, while moving through the gallery, I would stop and hurry back to that painting by van Hemessen. I refer to his Judith, which was done about 1540. I know little about van Hemessen, but this one painting is, in my humble opinion, probably the greatest at this gallery. Judith is painted with such masculine power, while at the same time fully feminine and alluring; yet she holds the severed head of Holofernes, and a raised sword, and her ears are almost drawn to a point--as would be the devil's. It is an overpowering admixture of eros and gore, and it is to this artist's credit that the eros eclipses the horror and allows a beauty to pervade the painting that, at the culmination of aesthetic viewing--noetic saturation--one forgets that the painting contains anything but the power of sexual flesh.

There was one other painting at this gallery which kept drawing me back also, and this was Botticelli's Madonna and Child with an Angel. It is one



of the "lesser" Botticelli works, but even so, it is sublimely beautiful, and is worth a couple of hours all by itself.

But that van Hemessen--it is worth a trip to Chicago all by itself. Trust me. If you go to that gallery, you will spend hours with this painting, and it will never fade from your memory at all.

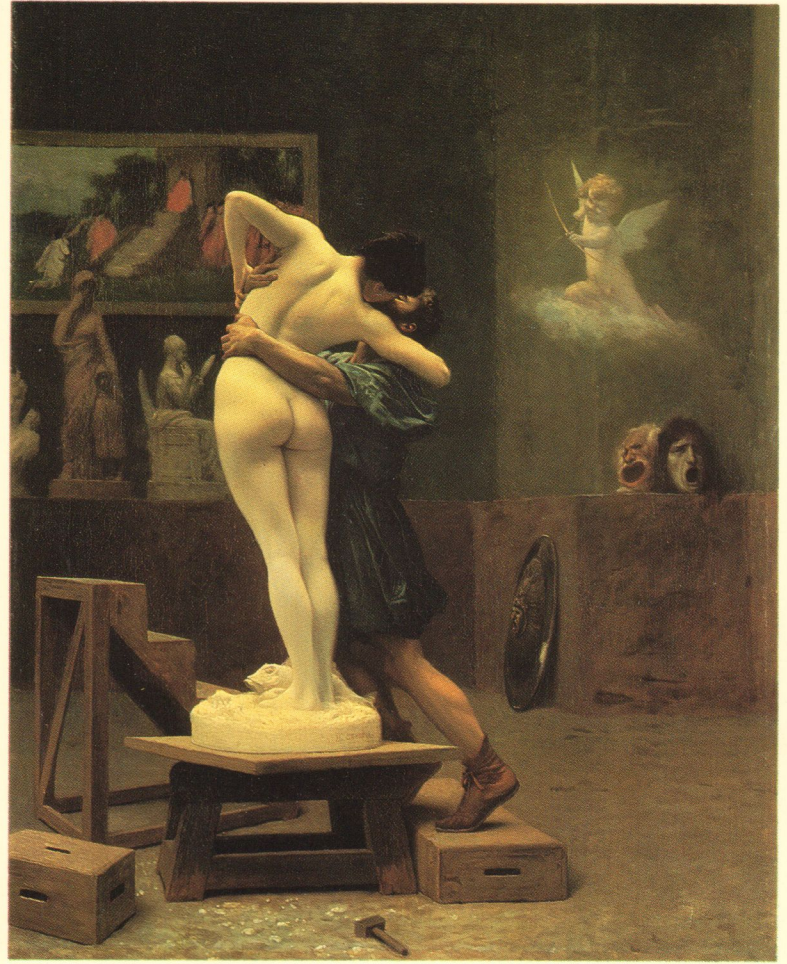
The late July trip to New York also afforded good viewing. I have, for some years, been embarrassed to admit that despite all those trips to New York of yore, I never once made it to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is one of the best galleries in this country, and certainly deserves being ranked as a world-class gallery. This time we went to New York especially to spend time at the Met. Unlike most trips to art galleries, we prepared for this trip. We spent a good deal of time with a couple of art books which contain reproductions of works at the Met; as a result, once there, we spent little time wandering about looking for what would please us most, and instead went right to the paintings we most wanted to see. Dali's Madonna, I am sorry to say, was a keen disappointment. Done in 1958, it was one of those works which he dashed out for the sake of appearing modern--overly flippant--and the result is boring, even shoddy. Rubens' paintings, however, were not disappointing. If I had to list the five or six greatest painters who ever lived, I would count Rubens among them, and this gallery has several of his paintings, the Venus and Adonis being the best there. Van Dyck's Self-Portrait, which he completed when he was about twenty years old, gave me new perspective on this great, and often neglected, painter. Murillo's Virgin and Child is both exquisitely beautiful and replete with the holy, while Bronzino's Portrait of a Young Man attests to the power of this genius--whom I discovered only about four years ago. At this gallery I finally viewed a painting I had admired in reproductions many times, namely, Rembrandt's The Toilet of Bathsheba. His Self-Portrait of 1660 is there too, as is Boucher's The Toilet of Venus. This painting is my favorite by Boucher, and although I had seen it before, at a special Boucher exhibit in Detroit, it was wonderful to again see it at its home. Lorenzo Lotto's Venus and Cupid was a curious one for me. It depicts the baby Cupid peeing through a wreath, with the urine landing in his mother's pubis. According to a note by the painting, this is a conventional symbol of fertility; yet I have never, ever encountered it before, and I do not understand how a symbol this seemingly incestuous, and involving urine rather than semen, would have come to be associated with fertility. If any of my friends can enlighten me, then please send me a letter! It was very nice, too, seeing The Sorrow of Telemachus by Angelica Kauffmann. This woman, Swiss born, who later settled in Rome, was accepted into the intellectually elite circle of Winckelmann and Menos as a very young girl, and I had long been curious about her work. The painting I was able to see has a definite resemblance to works by the Pre-Raphaelites, and is one of the finest paintings at the gallery. Lord Leighton Frederic's Lachrymae, also very like the work done by the Pre-Raphaelites (in this case most resembling Burne-Jones), is at this gallery and it was a special treat. The Death of Socrates by David, which had never interested me much in reproductions, is overwhelming given its massive dimensions. Perfect symmetry--what Berndtson the aesthetician would have termed axial balance--pervades the painting by Ingres entitled Virgin with Chalice which was done in 1841. Most paintings, which aim at symmetry, can easily bore; or worse, they can lead the viewer to believe he is seeing symmetry, and yet confuse him because the balance is not perfectly axial. In this case the balance remains true throughout the painting, and from a formalistic view the great Berndtson would likely have judged it the most perfect example in existence. Several very large paintings by Sargent are at this gallery also, and being such an admirer of Sargent, I had long looked forward to seeing them. They were not disappointing, although I confess to a bewildering reaction to Sargent's completed painting of Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreux) which is there. I had seen the uncompleted version at The Tate in London, and had admired it greatly. That version whetted my appetite for seeing the completed version in New York, and at last ... there it was. Stunningly beautiful, yes. But as for Madame X herself, I simply could not like her. Sargent may have been in love with her, and he may have captured all her beauty, and I concede that his painting surely succeeds for most viewers insofar as it translates her difficult features into an aesthetic experience which culminates in taming those features. But I could not quell certain negative feelings in myself about those features of hers. One sees duplicity, vanity, a facility with contempt. They can become material for the experience of beauty under the brush of a great artist, and I am sure Sargent found aesthetic beauty in all this. I could not, however, simply because that painting of Madame X reminded me so much of a woman I had known intimately some years ago. That woman--very lovely too, full of sex, mystery, and the sacrament of the flesh. But very dishonest, lacking in friends--especially female ones, and with no small amount of malice in her dealings with other human beings. I could not shake the sad, and threatening, memories, and as a result came away from that very great painting too contaminated to have experienced beauty.

It was nice going through the collection of musical instruments at this gallery, although here, too, I confess to a certain confusion. Among the



violins, there are three Stradivarii, an Amati, and a Guarneri del Gesu. I suppose I am being overly picky about such things, but it does offend me a bit that these instruments are there for viewing, when they were made to be heard. I can certainly anticipate what the arguments would be by those who would defend their being there, but still . . . .

As was the case when at Chicago, in this gallery too there was one painting which I kept coming back to. I refer to Gerome's painting which is entitled Pygmalion and Galatea which was finished about 1890. I had long admired reproductions of this painting, and on the basis of that exposure alone I knew that my seeing it would be a sublime experience. The painting, although smaller than I suspected, is very powerful in its use of white with colors, and truly I find this to be one of the two or three most erotic paintings I have ever encountered. Here, to the right, is a small reproduction. When you make it to the Met, plan to spend a long while with it. It will soon befriend you, and you will sorely miss it when you leave.



One does not, of course, always have time to travel and view great art in the finest galleries. Also, such traveling is not inexpensive; that poses limits too. It therefore is nice to own a collection of fine art books, and also keep in one's home some fine works of art.

Abbe and I are fortunate enough to own several very fine pieces of art,

but owning them is becoming more and more difficult. When one owns a work of original art, one becomes something of a curator--the work of art demands protection and care. This is what is becoming difficult about the art in our home. It happens too often that people come into our home and damage our works of art because, for some reason I will never understand, their peasant-like mentality causes them to behave like children and they must, they absolutely cannot resist, touching those works of art! Some years ago a family visited and their children threw their coats on the large sculpture which occupies the living room. That piece of sculpture sustained damage some years earlier when it was transported for viewing at another location, it was damaged when we moved to where we now live, and just a few months ago it again was damaged when a fellow seated in a chair scooted back toward the sculpture and then tipped his chair back into it. I could not believe it! The piece now has a large abrasion which will require probably 15-20 hours of repair work.

My Monaghan triptich. About three years ago a peasant came into our house and, dripping words of gush, walked directly to this invaluable painted panel of three pieces of wood and, with both hands, picked it up and said, "Uh, huh nuce!" Just a few days ago, a fellow walked into the room where that piece sits and set down a glass of apple juice not two inches from that work. About four years ago, a friend of Dacia's knocked the Donze sculpture I have on the wall off when she reached up to touch it. The repair work consumed about ten hours. Truly I do not know what to do! I have considered putting signs up in front of the more valuable works saying DO NOT TOUCH! This does, however, seem very inhospitable. I have thought of having a glass case built for the triptich, but that would be very expensive, and then it would be difficult to view the work. I have thought of putting a barrier around the big sculpture in the living room, maybe something like one sees in movie theatres--a colorful rope attached to small stands, forming a barrier





that seems more like a friendly reminder than an actual deterrent. But this, then, would take up even more space in the living room, and I can not but think that it would detract from viewing the work itself.

Truly I am not sure what to do. Signs that say DO NOT TOUCH may be the solution, but again ... our is a home, not a gallery with guards. Such signs might even encourage some people to touch the pieces. One thing I am rather sure of. I shall purchase no more works of art unless they are already under glass, or can fairly easily be put under glass--as a painting in a frame can be. Sad, that one must impose such measures on oneself, and worry about visitors in one's home, but ... these works of art, aside from their monetary value, deserve my care, my protection, my guardianship. I must take pains to preserve them, and if drastic measures are called for, then so be it.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* MUSICAL MUSINGS \*\*\*\*\*  
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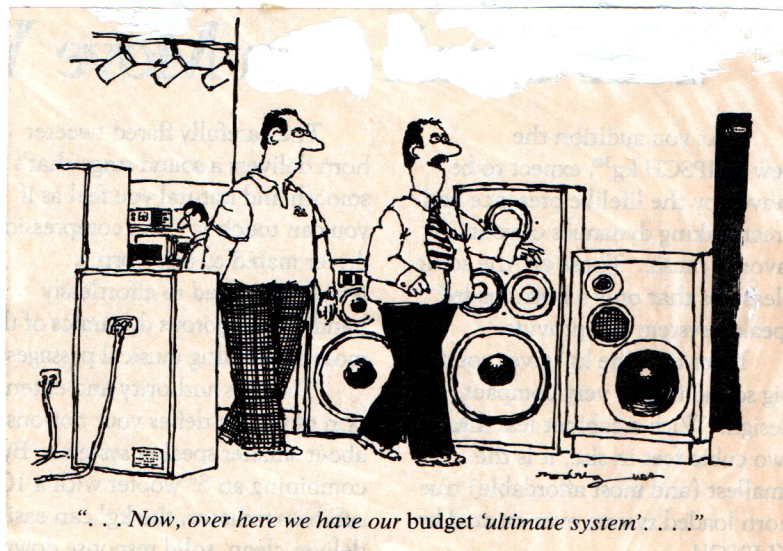
It has been a good year, not only for hearing music in concert, but also for listening at home. I obtained the set of JBL Monitor speakers, earlier described, and this improved the sound quality of my system significantly. I also made another addition to my listening system, this one quite unanticipated. While playing the Dohnanyi/Cleveland recordings of the Beethoven symphonies, I discovered that there was a high-pitched whine coming from my player when I was playing the fifth disc in this set. I called Telarc and they stated that they had had this problem before, and only with this one disc of the five-disc set. They had tried to solve the problem, had been unable to, and wanted my CD player so they could play the supposedly defective disc on my player

and be able to hear exactly what was wrong. In trade, they gave me a brand new CDP-970 Sony player. Not a bad deal, considering that I bought my Magnavox for less than \$200. several years ago, and this player retails for \$500, has remote control, and many other features which I shall never use. I do think my old Magnavox sounded a bit better than the Sony (and still believe so as of this writing, even though the trade took place back in late May, i.e., my thinking the Magnavox sounded better surely was not merely a matter of having been accustomed to it, given that now I have had

plenty of time to become accustomed to the Sony); but still, the Magnavox was old, I think its transport system was giving out, so I am not unsatisfied with how things ended up.

But ... I am talking about sound equipment instead of music. Does this mean that there lurks the danger that I might be on the way to becoming one of those strange people called audiophiles--people who rave about equipment, sound, etc., but never really seem to enjoy the music? I doubt it. My love is of music, and the fact is, I can scarcely stand being around audiophiles--those people who never play a piece of music all the way through, but rather, simply put on a recording and play a few seconds of it--at times a few minutes--for the sake of illustrating how it sounds over their "system." Unfortunately for my aesthetic sensibilities, there have been several times when I have attempted to enjoy music with audiophiles. On some of these occasions I took along one of my most prized LPs: an early '60s recording of the Kodaly Sonata for Cello as played by the Brazilian cellist, Aldo Parisot. The performance is powerful, impeccable, unequalled. When I play it for music lovers, they are enthralled. But when I have played it for these audiophiles, they are utterly bored. I have asked them why they do not like the recording. Their answers vary along the lines of, "It's just one close-miked cello; how can you get a soundstage out of that?" or, "It isn't any real test for what my system can do," or, "I'm hearing sound that never plays my tweeters, so how can there be any three-dimensional spaciousness?" I let them continue with their esoteric lingo, while I carefully sleeve a rare record which I would not part with for a thousand dollars. And then, in a depressed frame of mind, I take myself home, and for a few days I mope about, feeling depressed that I can not share my enthusiasm about music with these people. Fortunately this feeling subsides, if not quickly then completely, and soon I have forgotten about that breed of people, and I am able to go to music with ears still pure and virgin.

This last year I spent a good deal of time listening to music played on



"... Now, over here we have our budget 'ultimate system'..."



original, or authentic, instruments. I was very drawn to this new (sic) mode of playing at first, but after a few months the novelty wore off and I found myself becoming more critical, and sometimes less tolerant. At this point, I think I can say that the aspect of this movement which I most appreciate is its attempt to adhere to original tempos. From this alone I have learned a great deal about the great classical and romantic pieces. But as for the instruments, my early appreciation has worn thin. There are some things I like to hear on the fortepiano, as opposed to on the piano, but the number of such pieces grows smaller. Modern woodwinds sound better to me, and as for horns--I do not see how anyone could make a case for claiming that the original horn sounds better than the modern, valved French horn. To hear a player wheezing through the four Mozart Horn Concertos on an original unvalved instrument, shoving his fist into the bell to change the pitch of certain notes, is a torture that should be reserved for wayward ukulele players. In most applications, especially the playing of early classical music, I do prefer the original or authentic string instruments--the tuning, the gut strings, the lower bridge, and such. It is in this medium that the original instruments deliver all the subtlety and tonality of the original piece, without being handicapped by the instrument itself.

Still, my overall interest in original instruments is decreasing, and I rather think that in another five years or so I shall have reverted back to my old, i.e., more modern, standards for virtually all listening.

1990 provided many opportunities for hearing concerts--both good and bad--and as is customary, I here provide a brief description of each concert I heard, failing to mention only those which, not having been devoted to classical music, do not evoke from me extensive commentary. The concerts I heard were as follows:

Jan. 13: The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra played a varied program, beginning with a contemporary piece entitled Three Occasions for Orchestra by Elliott Carter. The piece was a dud, and I do not understand why Slatkin chose it for the program. The second piece was Bartok's Concerto for Two Pianos, Percussion and Orchestra. On percussion were Richard Holmes and John Kasica; on pianos were the famed Labeque sisters: Katia and Marielle. This piece is seldom performed live, and when it is, it rarely comes off well. The pianists have usually performed it several times, so they have the piece down well. But the two percussion players are virtually always local people selected for the occasion. Hence, they are not accustomed to playing the piece as are the two pianists, they have not had time to rehearse it very many times with the pianos and orchestra, and as a result their participation in the piece is usually too timid, uncertain, restrained. This was the case in this performance, although I must say that it came off well given the understandable limitations the percussionists encountered. It was nice seeing the Labeque sisters perform. Katia had all the enthusiasm I have heard attributed to her, and Marielle is an equally fine, if somewhat less kinetic, pianist. The highlight of the evening, however, was Mahler's Symphony No. 4 in G Major. The orchestra played flawlessly, Slatkin took an expansive opulent approach to the piece, and Sylvia McNair--probably the finest young mezzo-soprano on the scene today--did the final song with sublime but intimate tenderness.

Apr. 2: The young (25) Hungarian pianist, Klara Wuertz, gave a wonderful recital in Carbondale. Her rendering of Schubert's Impromptu in F minor, Op. 142, No. 1 was a bit too harsh for my taste, but it was well done nonetheless. She went on to play Mozart's Sonata in F major, K. 332, and this was played flawlessly all the way through--with great attention to detail and a velvet touch matched only by the likes of Schnabel or Klien. She then played Schumann's Sonata in G minor, Op. 22, and while her rendition did not match Richter's, it nevertheless was very well played. When, after the intermission, she turned her attention to Schubert, I heard sublime playing that was truly world class. She did two excerpts from his Drei Klavierstucke, D. 946, the No. 1 in E flat minor, and the No. 2 in E flat major. I had never before heard these works, and I must say that hearing her play them constituted what was one of the two or three musical highlights of the year. She then went on to play Liszt's La leggerezza (the piece from his Trois etudes de concert), which I have never much liked, so I can not very well comment on the quality of her playing this piece. She ended with Chopin's Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23, playing it with a very powerful touch--almost too much for what one would look for in a piece by Chopin; yet, her rendition was fully convincing, and thus ended a very fine concert. I say "ended," given that the bored peasants attending this concert lacked the presence of mind (not to mention the requisite aesthetic capacity) to provide anything in the way of enthusiastic applause. This exquisite performer had scarcely left the stage when the applause ended. As for an encore? Not in Southern Illinois, dear Klara.

Wuertz is a fine pianist, young, with promise. She is not bold enough, but experience will teach her this. She plays with a very lush, rich, vivid



intonation, and this quality puts her on a scale above several of the "main-name" virtuosic pianists on the scene today. If she can survive the rigors of touring--of making her name known--she will be recognized the world over as one of our finest virtuosos.

Apr. 6: In Carbondale, The Beethoven Society for Pianists brought Sylvia Kersenbaum in. At this concert, the three award recipients among university students also played. The students played well, and Kersenbaum gave a very fine, although most ordinary, rendering of Beethoven's Hammerklavier. I left feeling rather empty. There it was. One of the finest pieces of piano music ever written. And ... well, she just played it. That's all.

May 12: We heard the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra perform Britten's War Requiem. Although the audience, including the people I was with, loved Slatkin's interpretation, I felt rather unmoved. I have listened to Britten's own version so many times that no other way of approaching it seems to work for me.

Sept. 21: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under the flaccid baton of Daniel Barenboim, gave an all-Strauss performance in Carbondale. The first piece, the Don Juan, Op. 20 was played very well. The Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op. 28 was truly a world class rendition. And the final piece, the Don Quixote, Op. 35, was also most impressive. The orchestra gave its usual fine showing as a well-balanced ensemble, with a strong percussion section and an overall balance of power. This orchestra, in my opinion, has long had the best cello section in the world, with a horn section second only to the London Symphony Orchestra. It was nice to see that they continue to maintain such a high level of excellence in these two sections.

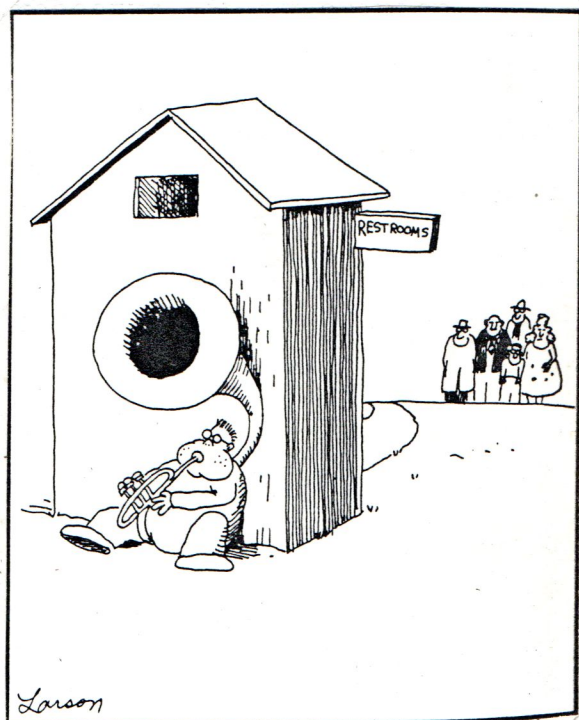
It was also nice to see that this orchestra is one of those which can play splendidly even when the conductor contributes little or nothing. Barenboim is, in my opinion, probably the most over-rewarded musician in the world. He is a consistent failure as a pianist, and as a conductor he could use a mannequin as a most effective stand-in. On the podium, this night, he was all busyness and flamboyance, strutting about on that small stage with all the grace of an aged, drunken whore on a dance floor. He worked with the orchestra when the going was difficult, and thus he at least confined his attention to the music at hand, even if it did elude him. What was

most startling, and funny, was how he broke from his usual style of conducting when the music became easy. It was as though now he did not have to give the music much of his attention and he could concentrate on the histrionic choreography of his conducting. It was hilarious to see how, at those very moments when he had nothing to do--moments when many a great conductor would have put both hands down and, out of respect for the orchestra, would have let them proceed without him, Barenboim would suddenly begin hopping about, both arms flailing wildly, randomly cuing members of the orchestra for nonexistent nuance, legs askew and both hands flapping like a granny chasing snakes out of the henhouse. Even the Carbondale audience, who can not be expected to know much about music, found his conduct inappropriate as was evidenced by their tittering during these times.

But the orchestra played wonderfully. They are one of the finest orchestras in this country, indeed, one of the best in the world. They are so well synchronized, so well guided by their principals, that you could put even someone such as myself, who knows nothing about conducting, up there and they would play as a great orchestra.

So ... my judgement about that evening: A wonderful concert by a great orchestra. But it could have done just as well without the distracting floor show.

Oct. 4: The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra played so well that this night I finally conceded to myself that they are beginning to edge out some of the stiffest competition in this country. Some years ago, when someone asked me to rank this country's orchestras, I placed the Cleveland first, the Philadelphia second, the Chicago third, and the St. Louis fourth. I would still place the Cleveland first, but over the last few years the Philadelphia has fallen in quality. At present I would place the Chicago ahead of them, but I am not sure I would place the Chicago ahead of the St. Louis. They now are maybe the second best orchestra in this country. No small distinction for





the Midwest.

On the program, this night, was Mozart's Symphony No. 38, the "Prague." It was played only moderately well. One had the feeling that the orchestra was not warmed up. Thereafter, with John Browning on piano, they did Barber's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 38. We were sitting front row center, and that battered Steinway Browning was playing (Horowitz' favorite recording piano, which had been trucked in from the East Coast for this occasion) was so loud it sounded as though it had a speaker in it. But Browning played flawlessly, the orchestra responded enthusiastically, and the result was great music. Which fortunately for us all would be recorded in the next few days. Thereafter, with equal finesse and power, the orchestra played Barber's Symphony No. 1, Op. 9. They then ended with Ravel's Rhapsodie espagnole, giving it the best blend of strings with woodwinds I have ever heard in this piece.

Oct. 18, 20, & 21: On these three nights, I heard all ten of Beethoven's Ten Sonatas for Violin and Piano. The wife and husband team, Mary Louise Boehm on piano and Kees Kooper on violin had the honors of going through the motions. The playing was terrible. Only the No. 7 was played moderately well, with some precision and interpretation. Other than this, these two geriatric players fumbled and groped their way through to the end of each one. Boehm is not so old as of yet, and she played adequately most of the time. But poor Kooper simply could not play his instrument. There were many notes missed, more were played flat, and with all these impediments, there certainly was no room for interpretative nuance. As I said, Boehm was adequate, but she had no power at all, and her left hand was very weak. The end result was three wasted evenings. Most startling of all was the fact that I went back, not once but twice, to hear such wretched playing. I swear to you,

when they began playing the No. 9, the very famous "Kreutzer," I did not even recognize the main theme until it had thrice been stated!

Most difficult about these recitals was the attitude of other members of The Beethoven Society for Pianists, which had brought this duo in. They were enthused, they thought the duo had played wonderfully, and they wanted to bring them back. They gushed their appreciation, and asked for my agreement as to their judgement, but I could not extend such. The only musically impressive thing about those three concerts was the tone of Kooper's Guarneri del Gesu. It had a dark, well-dispersed resonance which gave it a tone not unlike that of a viola. Given the value of this rare instrument, and the fact that Kooper could scarcely play it, I think it is time he gave it to a promising young violinist.

Indeed it may happen that these two aging artists will come to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale for a one-semester residency. They loved this area, gushing volubly about the hospitality in Carbondale--about how they are so much more appreciated here than they are in New York where they live. Well, of course they are more appreciated here. Their artistry has succumbed to their bodies' inertia, and in New York, where great artists abound, people recognize this. But in Carbondale, where even mediocre artists rarely appear, the audience does not recognize this. They are like peasants who would be so awe-struck by a visit from the king they would run and hide. But to a mediocre emissary they will flock, and heap upon that person (or, in this case, persons) a great deal of undeserved praise.



Southern Illinois Plus photos by CURT TRAMMEL

### Squeezebox duet

Raymond Schwebel, 79, and Opal Howell, 68, played an accordion duet at the recent Senior Citizens Talent Show at the Murphysboro Senior Citizens Center.



The director of The Beethoven Society for Pianists does his best, but he is trying to persuade pianists to come to the remote and forsaken hinterlands of Southern Illinois. And usually they must come for no money; except in rare cases, their expenses are paid and that is all. So it is understandable that most of the people who come are either besoddenly geriatric, or they are washed-out performers who never quite succeeded in accomplishing a performing career, so they took a position at a university where their musical abilities subsequently atrophied in the stultifying confines of academia. While the geriatric performers who do make it to Carbondale do have the best of intentions, their enthusiasm simply does not make up for their lack of musicianship. They are not, except in one or two instances, as geriatric as the two people depicted on the previous page (Am I being unkind, thus printing a picture of two old people who, in their declining years, are doing their best to enjoy life?), but not infrequently their physical limitations--both ambulatory and at the piano--are sufficient to evoke one's genuine pity.

Nov. 14: There are exceptions to what I above described. Not quite all the performers for The Beethoven Society for Pianists are so limited. On this date, in fact, I heard what was unquestionably the finest solo recital I have ever heard by any musician, on any instrument, anywhere. A young pianist from Germany, named Stephan Möller, played in one evening Beethoven's Sonatas Nos. 30, 31, & 32. He proved that one need not be at a forte piano to play these compositions according to their original tempos. He also proved that speed does not cancel or even diminish a work's emotional content. These three sonatas, you will agree, are sublime works. They are among the finest in the piano literature. And he played them better than I have ever heard them played by anyone: Kempff, Schnabel, Brendel, whomever. The few--very few--other people at the concert whose opinions I would trust were of the same opinion. Here, with us that evening, was a young man who saw through to the heart of Beethoven and revealed to us the Beethoven blood.

Keep his name in mind. Stephan Möller, it is, and I swear, I will do a good deal over the next few years to advance his recording career.

Nov. 16: Another performance given by The Beethoven Society for Pianists. This time it was another of those washed-out professors. From some reports, one might think that he was a very fine pianist at one time, but on this evening Russell Sherman made a very poor showing. Before the intermission, he played Schumann; after the intermission, he played Beethoven. He first did the Arabesque in C Major, Opus 18, which was done quite well. Next he did the Fantasie in C Major, Opus 17. Here he played poorly, made at least one hundred mistakes throughout the piece, chopped it up emotionally, and made two false starts for the final movement before he could remember where he was going. I felt sorry for him on this; that is embarrassing, and supposedly it occasionally happens to even the best of pianists. I would gladly have forgiven him his lapse of memory, were it not for the fact that after he had failed in his two false starts, and was sitting there, staring off into space, a woman in the audience rustled a program and he turned and glared at her, as if to imply that her mild impropriety had occurred a minute before also, and had been the distraction which caused him to forget the work at hand. After starting the third movement a third time, he managed to wander into the eighth bar and thereupon he found himself and managed to finish it. After the intermission he first played Beethoven's Sonata No. 9, and did a passable job--it was good, but not spectacular. He ended the program with Beethoven's Appassionata. This is a fine piece with which to please a crowd and get requests for encores, and indeed this is what happened, despite the fact that he played it very poorly, made many mistakes, and throughout the piece substituted volume for drama.

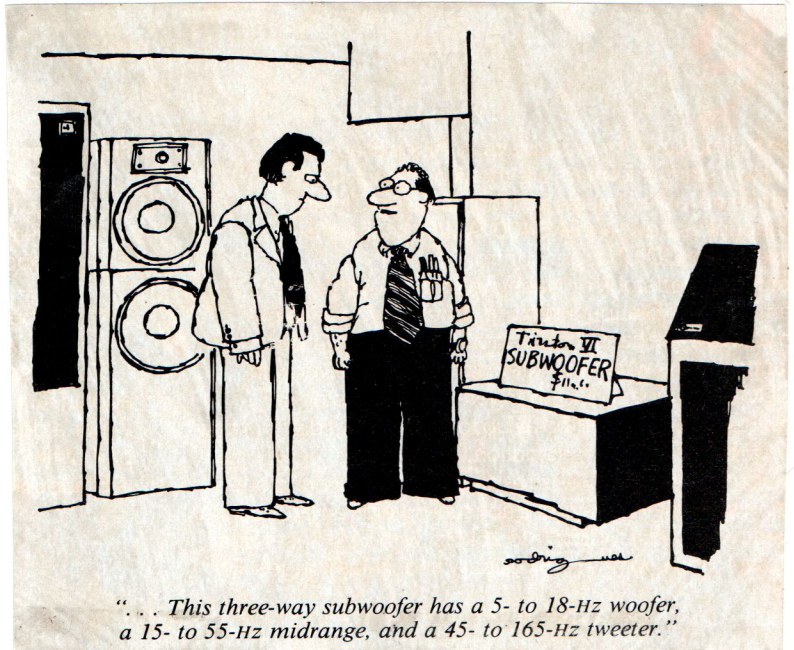
But the audience of Southern Illinois peasants loved that Appassionata. They yelled, yelped, and drooled as they asked for more. They got more. He did Liszt's Petrarch Sonnet # 104 from Annes de Pelerinage, and he played this better than anything else he had played that evening. For a second encore, he did one of Chopin's Nocturnes, but I have forgotten which one. (I suppose I really should begin keeping notes for this Aviary; it would help with both overall organization as well as with detail.) Nevertheless, the Nocturne too was played well. Had he given us the main program with the same confidence and skill with which he played the short encores, his would have been a memorable evening. But as it was, I came away with the feeling that I had been spat upon by another dowdy old professor.

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I look forward to another good year for music. Some promising concerts are scheduled, and I have been playing my bass more. Meanwhile, although I am finding less time to listen to classical music, I am taking in more jazz because of Marion's current preferences. Although I love classical music more than jazz, it is refreshing to thus experience a change of direction.



Over the next year I am going to obtain a new turntable. The one I have is old, and not the kind that can be counted on to hold up for many more years. Moreover it is too noisy, given that it has a direct-drive motor and also because the small spacer motor which moves the tangential linear-tracking tonearm makes a small bumping noise which comes through the system as a record is being played. Also I am going to be trying, again, to get my subwoofer hooked up properly. It is hooked up already, but something is not grounded, and there is too much hum in the system. I have enlisted the services of two peasants from this area in trying to correct the problem, but so far the problem remains. But I am being patient. At one time I would become positively obsessed with trying to get my system corrected if something was wrong. These days I am more tolerant. This is something I have learned from living in this area. When one practices the three cardinal virtues of patience, contempt, and hope (for one day living in a different area), then one can survive in this region without the soul putrefying more quickly than does the body.



In the past, I have made it a point to, in the Aviary, comment on certain recordings I have listened to over the year. But I have generally been frustrated by my inability to impose some sense of organization upon this commentary. So, this year, hoping to achieve some kind of order as I write about recordings, I shall comment in much the same way I comment on reading for the year. I shall give a list of the best recordings I have heard, a list of those that were disappointing, and also note the recording which I found to be the worst, and the one which I found to be the most offensive.

So, here follows, first, a list of the best recordings I heard this last year. (Note that I shall use the word "record" to refer to LP, cassette, or CD.)

1. Jazz à la française by The Claude Bolling Trio. I like small combo jazz, where the piano dominates, and the drums with bass serve as a solid backup. In this recording the combo works tightly, the interchanges seamless, the music with drive but not with the tendency, among jazz musicians over the last decade, to substitute volume and bombast for passion. Smooth, creative, complex, and supremely satisfying, this record.

2. The English Orpheus: John Dowland: Songs for Voice and Lute. Anthony Rooley plays lute and orpharion with Emma Kirkby singing. Kirkby's voice has her customary, and famous, pure and almost vibrato-less quality. Rooley plays the lute as well as most virtuosic guitar players play the guitar. These songs have folk roots, but achieve a soaring expansiveness which moves them beyond the folk plane. Strictly in terms of engineering, this record is one of the best I have heard in a long while. Pure, sweet, this wonderful effort reminds us that music, more than anything, is simply to be enjoyed.

3. Watermark by Enya. This record is an audiophile's dream. Enya's voice is pure, powerful, and seems to breathe an air of a higher instrument even as she sings. Her work on various keyboards of the synthesizer variety are unusually creative for this medium, i.e., she is not content to let the capabilities of the machines eclipse what she demands of them, and the result is truly sublime. This, in fact, is probably the single best recording I have heard this year, and it has drawn me back to Celtic music. As "modern Celtic" it may be too experimental for those who like the traditional roots, but in terms of sound quality it is an audiophile's dream, and as a cosmic lullabye it has more to offer than any of the New Age or Minimalist music I have heard.

4. Marilyn Horn by Marilyn Horn. This selection of operatic arias shows Horn at her best, and what is especially impressive is the perfect synchronicity of the orchestra with her voice. Conducted by Lawrence Foster, the Orchestra Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo (?) plays perfectly. Which is rare in this kind of situation, i.e., when individual selections from longer works



are played, the orchestra is beginning and ending "in the middle" of so many works, and as a result, they have a difficult time defining the emotional nuance that is called for. Not so this orchestra. If you want to hear the female voice at its best in operatic selections, this is the one to reach for first.

5. Monk Suite: Kronos Quartet Plays Music of Thelonious Monk with Special Guest Ron Carter. It really isn't popular among classical circles to like the Kronos Quartet, but for all their many musical sins, I am constantly drawn to them. They are not among the best quartets in the world, and their cellist, Joan Jeanrenaud, is especially weak, but ... they are one of the few groups to play modern music and employ sufficient discretion as to generally present music that is good. Which in itself is quite an accomplishment, given that most so-called modern music is not even listenable.

On this record they turn to jazz, and although Thelonious Monk is a person I always approach with ambivalence, given my repugnance for some of the values he personally held, I found this treatment of his work to be especially creative. Kronos would have been better off had they used a better bassist--unlike most people, I do not like Ron Carter except when he is working a solo riff. But overall this record is excellent jazz--creative music--with the added creative increment of some very nice arrangements for string quartet.

6. Hiding by Albert Lee. This guitar player has done a great deal for other musicians by playing in their bands. In this album he strikes out on his own, and while I am not usually drawn to rock guitar, this one is a very inspiring exception.

7. Mingus Plays Piano by Charles Mingus. I had difficulty believing it too, but yes, on this album Mingus goes solo with an instrument I didn't even know he could play, and he does it well. Some of the selections are his own, others are old standards. He plays with force, a unique style all his own, and although there are times he seems to grope, he soon finds his groove and lays down a line that makes one wish he had done a few more of these things. One of my favorite bass players in jazz, it is nice to see such a consummate musician show fine facility with another instrument.

8. Beethoven: Four Great Sonatas by Anthony Newman, fortepiano. Paul Badura-Skoda has long been my favorite performer on the fortepiano, but on this album Newman leaves him in the dust. The four sonatas played are the Moonlight, Appassionata, Pathetique, and Waldstein. Certainly a nice selection. Newman's command of the fortepiano's abilities, as well as his awareness of what he can not expect of this instrument, allows him to give a well-balanced rendering of every sonata. Even the Appassionata, which I before had thought would never succeed on this weaker instrument, comes across most convincingly. If you are of a mind to invest in one recording which utilizes original instruments, then this is the one to choose.

9. Grievous Angel by Graham Parsons. This album has just the right amount of country twang and unerring backup provided by Emmylou Harris. These two were a great duet, and this is a great album for music appreciators who are not ashamed to admit they like country.

10. Coloratura Spectacular by Joan Sutherland. For years I did not like her voice. A wonderful command of the entire range, yes; but there was a husky resonance which bothered me. And to watch her sing--that jaw put one in mind of a horse chewing on rock salt. But over the last two years I have come to hear that added resonance as augmented richness of tone, and now when I see her sing her face seems divinely beautiful. This album contains a selection of soprano arias that are especially challenging. Sutherland sings them as well as any voice in the world. Unfortunately there is no mention of the orchestra or conductor, although one might assume ...

11. Solo by Rob Wasserman. This recording, with Wasserman working his soul as hard as his fingers, is the finest presentation of solo pieces on the double bass I have ever heard. The acoustics are excellent, and the album maintains a very high quality all the way through. Ranging from blues sounding pieces to very complex experimental works, this album shows Wasserman as not only a fine player but also an ingenious composer.

12. Duets by Rob Wasserman. On this one he teams up with various singers and instrumentalists--people as diverse as Aaron Neville and Stephane Grappelli. The most riveting performances on the album are "The Moon Is Made of Gold" and "Autumn Leaves," both done with Rickie Lee Jones. This last piece is available on the CD version only, so even though it is an analog recording, it is better to buy the CD since it is worth this one song alone. Jones sings better on these two songs than she does on any tracks she



puts down on her own records. Truly, this record was perhaps the single most enjoyable discovery of the year.

As for disappointing records, keep in mind that I am not necessarily saying that these recordings are terrible. I am stating that given the pieces of music, or the performing artists, one should have had every right to go to these recordings with high expectations. But the results were less. Here, my list:

1. Richard Wagner: Tannhauser, Siegfried, Idyll, Tristan Und Isolde with Jessye Norman, soprano voice, and the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Here we have the world's greatest conductor during the last two decades, one of the world's finest orchestras, and one of the world's finest sopranos. Yet this live recording left me cold. The orchestra played like The 101 Strings. Karajan lent nothing by way of inspiration or pacing. Norman's voice was somewhere back there a very long ways away from the microphone; at times one could scarcely hear her above the orchestra. I listened to this disc once and gave it away.

2. Paul Simon: The Rhythm of the Saints. I admire Simon greatly, and his album, Graceland, is one I value most highly in my entire collection. But this album, intended to be "world music" as was Graceland, scarcely warrants a second listen. Those Brazilian drums become very monotonously repetitively redundant, Simon seems to wander about aimlessly as he tries to give focus to his songs, and all the while his voice is so buried somewhere beneath that ongoing monotony of redundantly repetitive drumming that it can scarcely be heard. He would have been better off teaming up with Garfunkle to produce some elevator music.

3. For pure, spontaneous enjoyment, Padre Antonio Soler is probably my favorite composer. He is simple, very baroque, not a genius of the highest order, and yet he is always delightful. Hence, whenever I see any recording of his music, I am tempted to buy it. I gave in to the temptation with the CD entitled: Padre Soler: Fandango, 9 Sonatas. Scott Ross does these works on the harpsichord, and he plays it with no gusto at all. He chops away at the keys, sometimes trying to play the instrument as one would a piano, but generally doing little more than managing to work his way through the notes. These pieces are rather simple and straightforward, and yet, some of them I did not even recognize at first. If you want to enjoy Soler, go to Igor Kipnis, or Alicia de Larrocha.

4. Also Sprach Zarathustra by Richard Strauss, played by The Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by William Steinberg. Steinberg is, in my opinion, one of the least appreciated of this century's greatest conductors. The work he did with The Pittsburgh Symphony was tremendous. Hence, when I saw this album in the bins at a used record store, I snatched it up. The Zarathustra, despite its overuse after having appeared in that movie, remains my favorite of the works by Richard Strauss. But this recording was lifeless, too slow, with much emphasis on the strings and too little attention given to the woodwinds. Even the percussion was weak. I will stick with my favorite version: that done by Karl Böhm conducting the Berlin Philharmonic.

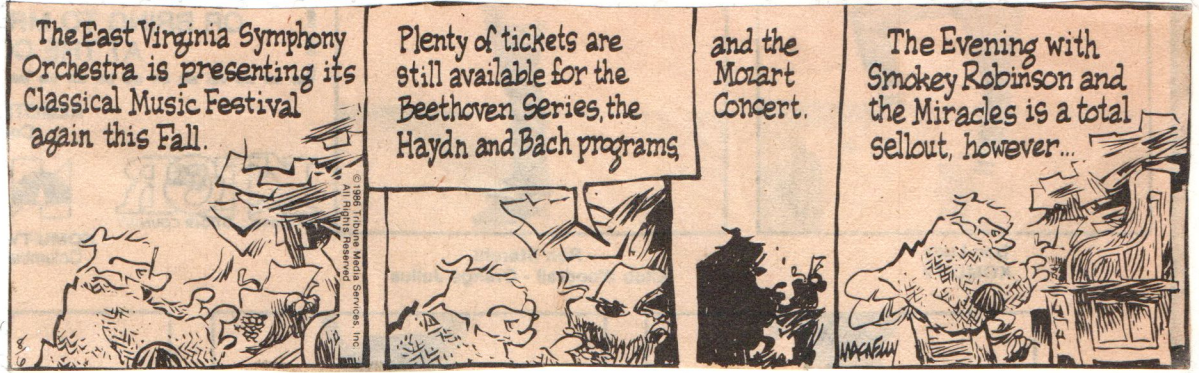
I spoke earlier in this Aviary about the concert I attended by the harpist, Harvi Griffin. While his music did not have great depth of emotion, it certainly was very enjoyable. I bought an album which was being sold at the



concert. On this record he enlisted the aid of a bassist and a drummer on some of the pieces. I was especially looking forward to hearing the recorded versions of "Lotus Bud" and "Take Five," which were probably the two best pieces he did in concert. But I listened to this recording once, was quite justifiably appalled, and traded it away. The two backup men he had picked up added nothing to his playing; they were just reading a score. The album was recorded in Lawrence, Kansas, which actually is a nice little town but to my knowledge has never made a name for itself in the recording industry. The whole thing sounded like something done on a cheap tape player in someone's living room. This, I am sorry to say, was the worst album I heard this last year.



As for the most offensive recording I heard this year, there is no question as to what my selection is: The album by Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg with her playing Brahms Violin Concerto in D and the Bruch Concerto No. 1 in G Minor for Violin. A friend of mine on the East Coast had heard Salerno-Sonnenberg play, and thought very highly of her. I had never heard her, either in concert or on



recordings. But she had been making quite a reputation for herself. In fact, the album listed above moved to the list of "Top Ten Classical Record Albums of the Month," and stayed there for some months, even for some weeks being at the very top of that list of top ten. So I went to this album expecting something inspiring, and inspired. I did not get it. The Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Edo de Waart, provided orchestral accompaniment. They added nothing unique to the piece, played adequately but not well, and might as well have been enjoying a dreamless slumber considering how little they actually accompanied Salerno-Sonnenberg. But then, considering how badly she played, it is understandable that The Minnesota Orchestra would have preferred to ignore her. Her rendition of Bruch was unbearable. She tried for a gypsy lilt, but ended up coming across as careless. She often played flat, and made many blatant mistakes. The Brahms was a bit better, but there was absolutely nothing interesting emotionally about her interpretation, and I could scarcely keep my attention on the music.

Although it seems stylish, these days, to gush over this attractive young violinist, I am not going to join those whose tongues are dangling. If I may be blunt, I think part of the reason that album sold well is because of the picture on the front. We see a sultry Nadja, dressed in evening gown, leaning forward, her weight supported by her arms which rest on a table. Her tits are virtually hanging out, and yes, she is an attractive young woman. I hate to admit it, but I suspect this album sold because of its sex appeal. Men browsing through the racks liked the picture, thought to themselves that, well, she does have a reputation for playing well, and here we have both Brahms and Bruch, so why not? It might get me through a lazy masturbation.

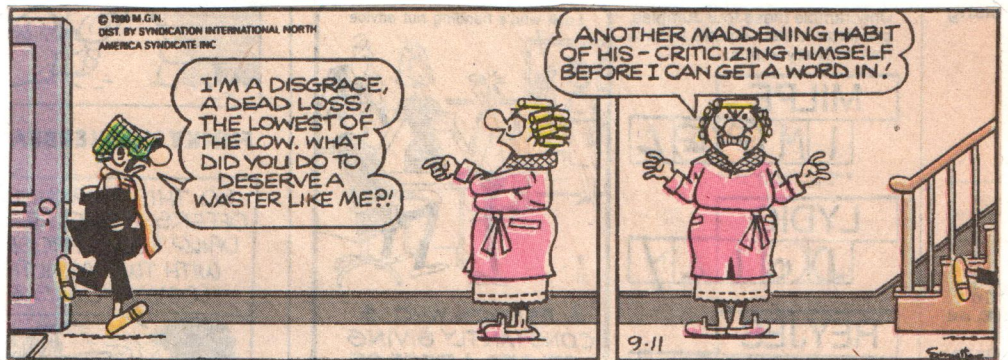
Well, there are many young women who are more attractive than Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg. And, judging by pictures I have seen of her over the last year since that album was recorded, she is already losing her youthful good looks. As her looks fade, I suspect that people will hear her violin playing for what it is. An instrument putting forth a sound that makes one think they forgot to kill the cat.

### NOTES FROM TWIN FRANCES

This year I've little to say. As usual, my brother gives me no forewarning. He had told me he would likely not do an Aviary this year, so I need not think about making my usual contribution. But today a letter arrives, all urgency and frenzy, requesting an immediate reply. Francis has changed his mind; if I am to be a part of this year's Aviary, then I must send him something by air-

post today, and this year he wants it shorter, and more to the point. He did not specify the point, although I suppose he meant himself, gluten for attention that he is. I say this in jest, unable to sharpen my tongue as I've done before (too many times before!). My mood with my brother is easier these days. We have not, I am sure, quarrelled in more than a

year. This, I confess, is more Francis' doing than mine. He continues to hold a low opinion of himself, and whereas there have been times when I have suspected he does so only to prevent others from criticizing him, I have come to believe that he really has no ulterior motive for his self-abasement. I have always claimed that, for all his hedonistic indulgences, Francis is at heart an ascetic. Now an atheist of sorts, he yet carries within him those once-powerful religious convictions. They have atrophied severely, but not wanting to lose them entirely, he daily inflicts upon himself a spiritual flogging, thus to re-experience the religious symbiology even if he can not believe its reality. He suffers, he says, from the absence of a





God he no longer believes in but still loves. There is a sad irony in this dilemma, along with profound poetry, and somewhere within this entangled mystery--Francis' atheism, his grief at the Divine's absence, and his low opinion of himself--there needs be room for more compassion from those of us who love my brother's barren soul.

Perhaps appealing to my new-found generosity, Francis has been asking me to interest English editors in his fiction over the last several months. He believes the time has come for him to publish those monsters--his novels--and he wants to begin in England. There is a bit too much drama in this approach. Francis claims pompously that in America he feels like an alien, and he wants his children--his books--to be nurtured in another country. (Why does he not, with his family, move to the United Kingdom, then, so he would no longer be in a land so alien? I believe he likes the drama of his complainings!) I have taken it upon myself to approach some editors for him, but I have had no luck whatsoever. The English have the attitude that they are more literate than Americans, and indeed this is true. They read more, and they write more. Hence, English editors will not look at the works of American writers. Here, I believe, they carry their generalization too far. I say this because, in my opinion, even though American soil is less friendly to letters, it has, over the last few decades, produced better writers--novelists, poets, dramatists. Why this is, I have no idea. Maybe writers flourish best in a land where there is less posturing, less pomposity, less literary elitism. Unencumbered by contempt for writers of other English-speaking countries, American writers, it seems, are less self-conscious. This makes for candor, spontaneity, and unmeasured devotion to the craft of writing. I admire the likes of Kesey, Updike, Steinbeck, Faulkner, much more than ... but let me desist before I begin. Francis said to keep it brief and to the point. The point being, in this case, that he is trying to publish his fiction, I am being no help at all, and I fear he is going to meet with much disappointment before he ever (if ever!) meets with success.

Meanwhile, Francis surprised us all, this last year, when he announced that he and Abbe would be having a baby. Little Marion is born, I have not yet met him, and I look forward to coming to know my ... I started to say "nephew," but Francis is my twin, and thus the word seems a bit unnecessarily remote! Maybe this feeling comes from being childless myself. There are, I confess, times when I wonder about my decision not to have children. I have never been sure of it. In fact, this moment I sense my own confusion, because I spoke of it as a "decision" and it never was that. Rather, I simply had not done it, did not do it, kept on not doing it, and so it went. Now I am keenly aware that this next May 31 both Francis and I will be 43 years old. Do I regret my decision to not have children? No. But I do sometimes fear that I shall regret that decision one day in the future, when it would be too late to do anything about it. But it is a mild fear, and infrequent at that. For the last 15 years or so, my life has been much as I want it. I am very unusual in such fortune; most people I know are most dissatisfied with their lives. My work, my lifestyle, my freedom, have all been possible because I have not had children, and also because I have not married. (As for matrimony, the sacrament came perilously close several times, but was always held at bay.) My preference is for intimacy of a different kind, and ... but again, let me desist before I begin. Once more, I am wandering away from the point at hand.

Francis, you realize, is not in the best of health, and I fear that having a baby, with all the work and added stress, may debilitate his physical condition more than it is already. He is blind in his left eye, his right eye deteriorates, his hearing is not the best, and yet he daily goes forth to grapple with the world, seemingly oblivious to the wounds it has already inflicted upon him. I wish (to borrow American phraseology) that he would "slow down."

We both of us, my twin brother and I, look much younger than we are. Maybe this, to some extent, is why we work so hard. I, however, remain in excellent health, continue with my

usual job as well as doing occasional modelling. I love my work, my friends, and I continue to travel as much as time allows. As for my "world work"--as I call it--I have given up with peace issues. I simply can no longer bear to work with those creatures who call themselves peaceniks. There are exceptions to what I observe, but for the most part all I ever see are unhappy people who live in a world of abstractions so rarefied as to invite the curse of Parmenides. I think the "final straw" involved my going to hear a fellow lecture about what he called conflict resolution. He had come to England from Detroit, and would be giving talks about London for several weeks. One Saturday when I was not working I attended both his lecture and "workshop" (a strange term invented by Americans), and by coincidence, spent some time with him that evening. He was terribly conceited, touting himself as an expert over and over. Yet, when he spoke, all I heard were empty formulas, ritualistic recipes, all of which come naturally and simply to a candid and courageous person. And, I should add, all of which are embarrassingly elementary to any person who can claim even a modicum of maturity and self-confidence. Most striking about this man was the contempt he held for people in his





personal life. Toward friends, his lover, and his colleagues, it seemed he had nothing to say that was not tinged with envy, malice, and a selfish inability to attribute to them a single kind comment. At the end of that evening with him, I was left with one over-riding impression: Here was a man who is too cowardly to face his own anger. As a result, he deals with it through conflict-resolution formulas, and thus, in the name of peace, chops people up through his passive aggression which can not but erupt. I thought to myself that if this is peace, then give me war, where we know that the enemy is dangerous and that there are no foes masquerading as self-proclaimed saints.

Please do not misunderstand me. I do not condemn all those who call themselves lovers of peace. In fact, there are some people (Francis' wife, Abbe, being one of them) who are passionately committed to peace, and truly practice something of peace in their own lives, rather than doing nothing more than opposing violence. But these people--their numbers are too few. I have left the peace movement, as a movement. Now I direct my "world work" to a different set of issues, primarily looking into how the British government deals with the disposal of toxic wastes. I and a small group of associates have been quite effective in bringing to the government's attention the importance of this issue. Our work is relatively pragmatic, we have found that presenting facts works much better than harsh confrontation, and we have helped formulate policy which makes the British government much more careful about how such wastes are handled. Without drama, histrionics, or much in the way of press coverage, we are helping make the world a safer and more enjoyable place in which to live.

This last year has been good to me. I am looking forward to spending time with little Marion, and I hope to spend time with Francis before the rigors of parenting have wasted him away. I say this, not to chide Francis, but to remind him of his own predicament. It was not long ago that I phoned Francis only to discover that he was completely tired out from parenting. Abbe, Francis' wife, was equally exhausted. She cheerfully, and teasingly, spoke of how my nephew was being a little toad. Francis, being jocular, corrected her with, "No; we'll say tadpole. Or, come to think of it, given how he's been tonight, toadling." So this is what parenting a baby does to my erudite and intelligent brother's mind! He studied philosophy so he could discourse at length about language as it is analyzed by Piaget and Wittgenstein. Instead, he comes up with nicknames like "tadpole" and "toadling."

This next year Marion's dotting aunt must make her way to the States. The trip is expensive, I do not like flying on planes (they seem like big, dirty, dangerous buses given that their interiors are exactly like the buses one finds in American cities), and this time, Francis warns, he will not be able to travel with me about the States for even a couple of days. Oh well. I am a loyal sister. I shall convince my brother that little Marion is not a toadling but a prince. And I may even insist that Francis and Abbe take a night off for whatever it is that old married couples still do, i.e., are still able to do, while I stay at home and pamper this little boy who, when Francis is rested, is called "Daddy's Glory Boy." I must say, I rather like this latter name. Maybe Francis' Ph.D. in philosophy has not come to complete nought.

Fondly,

*Francis*

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ARTICLES  
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It seems I remain unable to curtail my publishing. Truly, I want to publish less in the way of all these nonfiction articles, and concentrate on publishing my fiction. This year I published 12 articles, bringing the number of my publications to 155. My best publication this year was a review article entitled, "Two Books, and the Men's Movement, Reviewed." This article, forty pages long, with illustrations, was published by the Men's Rights Association in January of 1990 as a special booklet. Given the specialized market, only 200 copies were printed, but it had a strong effect upon readers; I say this, given that I received letters from 33 readers discussing their reactions to it. Actually I received several other letters too, these, however, merely stating that they would like me to phone them so they could discuss their responses. Since I made no phone calls, I can only judge the response in terms of letters received.

The article reviewed two books by major authors within the men's movement. Both of these books were, I believed, incredibly bad. Yet, one book had received an enthusiastic reception by the men's movement, and the other had been virtually ignored. I believed that this was because the men's movement is so desperately in need of heroes that they have come to accepting men as leaders on the basis of their success potential, rather than on the basis of what they actually contribute to the movement. In the case of the author whose book was eagerly accepted by the men's movement, his book was selling well and men in the liberation movement were hoping to get on his bandwagon. As for the author who was virtually ignored; he had been the most successful



author in the past, and people were unwilling to criticize his current book, for fear that doing so would cause him to withdraw his support from men's groups. I did not like the rampant hagiography I was perceiving in the men's movement. It meant that we could not criticize ourselves, it meant that paltry literature would be accepted as our current gospel, and worse, it meant that dishonesty was being fostered within the movement. In fact, Warren Farrell, the author of the successful book, had arranged with The Coalition of Free Men that they give him a prize for his book. They did. "Best Book on Men's Issues for 1986." In return, he would put on the jacket of the paperback edition that The Coalition of Free Men had given him this prize; thus, the organization would get a bit of vicarious advertisement. A morally repugnant arrangement, no? I thought it my duty to expose all this, and did. I was afraid. I knew my doing so would anger a number of people. Some men in the men's movement would not like seeing their heroes punctured, their dishonesty exposed. They would reject me. Despite these fears, I wrote the article, and Men's Rights Association published it. The 200 copies went out to key men within the movement, and there was a great furor. I was, I admit, surprised at how positive most people who wrote me were. I had thought that I would be vilified by howls of execration, and instead I was thanked, praised, and generally appreciated. There were some who took exception, however. Sometimes the exception was complete; other times partial. I appraised each response carefully, and did not go easy on myself in assessing the nature of each response as I categorized them. There here follows a list of the responses:

Entirely positive:	14	(42%)
More positive than negative:	6	(18%)
Neutral, or evenly balanced in response:	4	(12%)
More negative than positive:	5	(15%)
Entirely negative:	4	(12%)

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In short, 60% were either entirely positive in their response, or more positive than negative. This is not bad, especially considering that people who are angry about something are usually more likely to write their response than people who feel positive about something. (At least this is what the pollsters often say; I am neither a pollster nor a statistician nor a demographic sociologist, so I can not be overly sure of such things.)

I was proud of the above-mentioned article. It was well written, it had the effect I had wanted it to have, and I felt somewhat vindicated as to my indignation and concerns about the men's movement.

In past issues of The Aviary, it has been my custom to herein print an article or two, or perhaps a short story, to give my friends and various colleagues some idea as to my literary (and illiterary) capabilities. This year, departing from my usual gamut of topics, I shall give you a couple of articles which pertain to music.

The first came about in a most unusual way. Thorens, a manufacturer of turntables, was having a contest: whosoever should write the best essay on the topic, "Analog Is Timeless," would win a turntable worth twelve hundred dollars. I had been wanting a better turntable, and I thought, well, I should give it a try. There was one problem. Namely, I do not believe that analog is timeless; i.e., I do not believe that analog recordings will always be available because some music lovers believe they are better than digital recordings. I do believe that current digital recordings, which utilize only 44,000 bits of information per second, are generally inferior to analog; they simply can not capture enough information with that many bits. But studio engineers (and synthesizer manufacturers, who are the ones who really know the ins and outs of this issue) have said that if ever digital recordings are made which utilize between 150 and 200 thousand bits per second for the music, then digital recordings will have as much information as analog recordings do, and will not have the many drawbacks analog recordings have. So ... to try and win this essay, I would have to write a convincing essay even though I myself was not convinced.

The end result was that I did not win. But as one of the sore losers, I was sent a copy of the winning essay. Upon reading it, I became even sorer because the winning essay pretty much said exactly what mine said, only it did not say it as well.

I had struggled over that essay for several days. The main difficulty for me was its length; the limit was 250 words. I could scarcely keep it at that. But after several days of pruning, I shaved my essay down to exactly 250 words. The winning essay was 247 words. But, as I said, mine was better. To convince you of this, I here print for you the winning essay, penned by a fellow whose name supposedly is F. Mark Funk. Read it through for what it



is worth:

### ANALOG IS TIMELESS

by F. Mark Funk

Music is one continuous smooth, curving, flowing wave. Analog music takes this one wave and duplicates it in the vinyl grooves of a record which are, in turn, reproduced through the audio system to ultimately be transformed from vinyl back into music: a continuous wave of smooth, curving, flowing music.

Digital takes the smooth, flowing sound wave and chops it up into little bits, each with a different unconnected edge, like little black boxes lined up in a row. No matter how small they make each bit (4, 16, or 1000), each bit stands alone. And, as you move along the digital signal, you bump up or down from one bit to the next. This isn't music; this is just sound.

Many audio terms are compared to terms used in photography. And in the same way, we can compare an analog recording to a digital recording just as we can compare a camera-made photograph to a digitized photo. A real photo has warmth and feeling and we know it is real. A digitized photo is nice, technically exciting but antiseptic and lacking the true feeling of a realistic reproduction. And many digitized photos are "touched up" to improve upon the real world. The same is true when you compare analog recordings to digital recording.

Analog is a timeless expression of the sweet and familiar reproduction of the original music; whereas, digital is a computerized clone lacking the sense of feeling and emotion that lives within all of us.

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Well, Funk's essay is redundant, given to committing a plethora of mild grammatical errors, and given to more rhetoric than explanation. As for his general writing style, look at that first paragraph again. It makes one wonder what kind of slime this writer uses for lubrication when he masturbates, does it not?

As I said, I am a sore loser. I believe I should have won that twelve-hundred dollar turntable because my essay is better. Read, and see:

### ANALOG IS TIMELESS

by Francis Baumli

Because digital recordings are made up of bits--separate pieces of information--all digital recordings are a broken presentation of discrete parts, i.e., the encoded musical message is full of tiny holes. In this sense, digital recordings are like half-tone photographs--those pictures in the newspaper which are composed of tiny dots. If the photo is either enlarged or looked at more closely, the picture begins to blur. A similar problem happens with those bits in digital recordings. When the number of instruments increases, less of the whole is captured since bits, because numerically finite, have built-in limits. So also, the more carefully one listens to any digital recording, the more its tonal colors blur.

In analog, however, there is not a finite number of bits; rather, there is a continuous physical surface with an infinite amount of musical information. Thus, "digital versus analog" translates into "finite bits versus infinite continuum." Finite limitations frustrate; infinite generosity satisfies. Analog's musical information is infinite; it therefore satisfies, and what satisfies endures--is timeless.

In this spirit, Thor, the Norse god of sound and thunder, is analog's exemplar. Thor used the sound of his hammer to protect heaven from the giants below. His strength lay both in his hammer's infinite power, and in the fact that when he threw it, it always returned to him, ready to again reproduce his infinite strength. Likewise, analog's strength stems from its infinite informational capacity, as well as from its constancy of musical reproduction. Hence its timeless appeal.

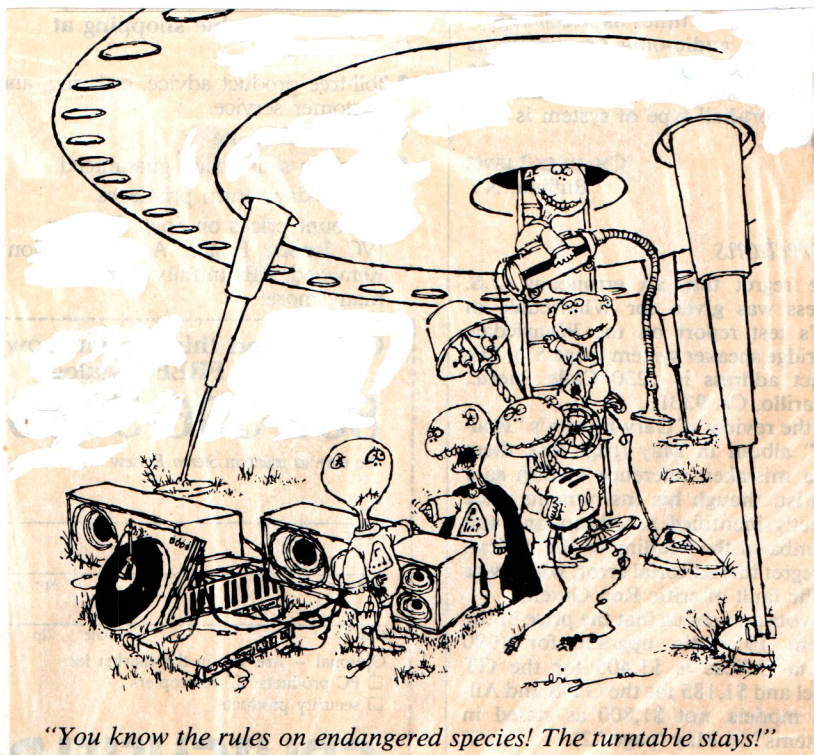
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You're right. That was a very cheap pitch, bringing in the myth about Thor, to appeal to their name, Thorens. It didn't work, so I suppose I should be almost as embarrassed as I am.

I never write well when I must be brief. I never write well when I am not trying to be truthful. So I admit that I well deserved not to win that prize, even though I made a couple of points that were better stated, and certainly more cogent, than were Mr. Funk's.

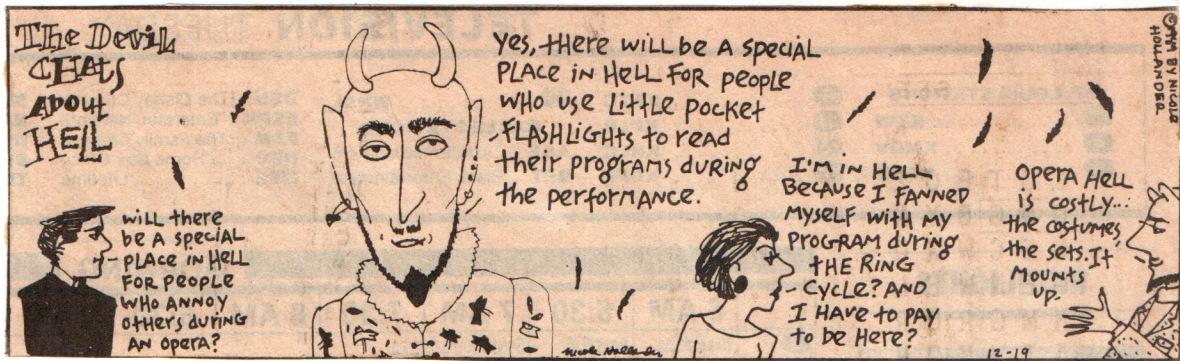
One small aside; I found it curious that both he and I made the comparison to photos.

Ah well; this is the sort of venial sin I commit only about





once per decade. Forgive me, dear reader, for I have already vowed penance.



I stated earlier, in this Aviary, that over the last year I have been listening with a more critical, and unappreciative, ear to recordings that are done on "original" instruments. A great deal of excitement has been generated in the music world by Roger Norrington's original instrument recordings. He is as convincing as any conductor working in that genre, he is obviously an erudite scholar of the early scores, and he also is opinionated. I like his conducting; I do not always agree with his more pedestrian opinions. A case in point: Norrington has recorded Beethoven's nine symphonies, and they are worthy interpretations. But in my opinion, his view of the Ninth is incorrect, especially in the Finale. He has stated that in this movement Beethoven was being raucous, bawdy, bold, rowdy. He even went so far as to claim that this symphony is so irreligious, Beethoven intended that certain bassoon notes in the Finale were intended to represent people farting. Well, I take exception to this claim. I have studied the score, and pondered it mightily, and I do not believe there is any musical flatus intended by Beethoven. Norrington's opinion upset me, and caused me to write a very lengthy letter on the topic to a Beethoven scholar whom I count as a friend and colleague. Only after writing the letter did I realize that I had, in effect, penned what amounts to a modest, but not unworthy, article on the subject of Norrington's fecal fixation and the Ninth's Finale. Here follows a selection from that letter, this time with a title of its own:

#### BEETHOVEN'S NINTH:

#### A SIMPLE PRAYER, RATHER THAN MYSTICAL VISION OR MYSTICAL UNION

When it comes to interpreting Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, there has long been a tendency to view it as a grand exercise in mystical awareness. Conductors as diverse as Steinberg, Furtwangler, Ormandy, Toscanini, Szell, and Horenstein have all presented the Ninth in this light--as a mystical tour de force. In my opinion it was Bruno Walter who, in his recording with The New York Philharmonic, gave this way of interpreting the Ninth its finest expression.

However, as pleasing as is this mystical interpretation, it is never quite convincing, especially in the Ninth's Finale. (Let us keep in mind that Bruno Walter, in his recording of the Ninth above referred to, recorded the first three movements in 1949, but pondered the Finale another four years before finally recording it in 1953.) If the aesthetic intent of Beethoven's Ninth, when rendered in mystical terms, consistently eludes us, then indeed it may be the case that a different perspective has been needed. And maybe Norrington's impulse can best be understood as an attempt to remove Beethoven's Ninth from the sphere of the heavens and bring it down to earth.

But even though Norrington's impulse may be correct, this does not mean that his analyses and conclusions are. For him to describe the Finale as irreverent, sexually lewd, and to even go so far as to state (along with the scholar David Cairns) that the bassoon notes at the beginning of the tenor's hero march represent beery farts, is crude in the extreme. I see nothing wrong with suggesting that the Ninth's Finale is Bacchanalian and Dionysian, but whatever else one may think of the Ninth, one must keep in mind that it was written in the early 1820s, the same time that the Missa Solemnis was composed; and however one may wish to perceive the Ninth, one can not deny that it has words and music that are imbued with a pervasive religious quality. While indeed it is true that Beethoven's personality had its rough edges, nowhere else in his music do we detect even a trace of anything uncouth or vulgar. Why then believe that Beethoven's Ninth is to be understood in terms of such irreverent and scatological descriptives?

I suggest that a better understanding of this work's aesthetic emotion and religious dimension can be achieved by turning our thoughts to the various stages of religious consciousness and the ascending levels of mystical awareness as outlined by Saint John of the Cross in his several books written in the 16th century. We might also examine Evelyn Underhill's masterful book, Mysticism, which, written in this century, helped clarify and schematize the seminal writings of St. John of the Cross.

From these two thinkers (the first a true mystic, the second a pedagogue), we learn that the mystical approach to the divine is accomplished in five stages: 1) Awakening, in which one is imbued with full awareness of the importance and presence of divinity;



2) Purgation, in which one rids oneself of any aspects of the body, mind, or soul which would distract from contemplation of divinity; 3) Vision, in which one attains full, though transient, awareness of the divine; 4) Dark Night of the Soul, during which one feels the loss of the formerly glimpsed divine presence very keenly, but can not come closer to divinity; and, 5) Union, in which the soul gains full access to the divine--constantly beholds it, savors it, and mirrors it in benevolent action.

Music's religious content, whether representational or expressionistic, can reflect the various stages of mystical awareness as described by St. John of the Cross and Evelyn Underhill. The exquisite religious awareness of Handel's Messiah, for example, depicts the delight and enthusiastic prayer of mystical awakening. Purgation is reflected in Liszt's Requiem (R. 438) and in the ascetic, almost barren content of his late piano music. Mystical vision is apparent in the grandeur and religious joy of Padre Antonio Soler's music, especially in his Concerto No. 6 in D Major for Two Organs. The Dark Night of the Soul is formidable terrain, seldom negotiated by music, but Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 (the "Kaddish") struggles within this realm. As for mystical union, we may (with some caution) speculate that Franz Joseph Haydn might have achieved this level of religious awareness. Often criticized for the joy--as opposed to the more conventional solemnity--of his religious works, Haydn responded with, "Since God has given me a cheerful heart, He will forgive me for serving Him cheerfully." His religious spirit is manifest in his Masses, his late string quartets, and especially in his composition, The Seven Last Words of Christ--in which even amidst the acute pain and suffering, a sense of divine joy and happiness abide.

Where, in this spectrum of religious or mystical attitudes, does Beethoven belong? I believe his religious spirit remains at the first level--that of religious awakening wherein prayerful contemplation of the divine constitutes the full scope of one's religious awareness. Beethoven, let us remember, although undoubtedly a theist, was never at ease with his religious convictions. Like many other aspects of his personality, his religious temperament was inconsistent: ambivalent, rebellious, idiosyncratic; and at the same time, humble, prayerful, devout. His attitude toward the divine was never so devotional as to move him to mystical purgation (he was too immersed in the carnal world for that). Much less would he have ever shown the singularity of religious focus which would be necessary for his moving beyond purgation to mystical vision or union.

If what I above stated about Handel is correct--that Handel's religious awareness remains at the level of prayerful, mystical awakening--then we can perhaps better understand Beethoven's own religious feelings. He admired Handel greatly, believed the Messiah to be the greatest piece of music ever written, and he had a copy of the Messiah score with him on his deathbed. Beethoven, perhaps the greatest composer who ever lived, remained humble in his conception of the divine. His was a soul capable of prayer, not of mystical vision or union. Hence, however great his music, when we look to its religious content we see that it remains attached to a world wherein souls relate to the divine in a rather simple way. However joyful or mighty their aspirations, their religious awareness and the language that reverently bespeaks this awareness never move beyond the level of worship and prayer.

Here we come to understand why so many people have trouble with Beethoven's Ninth. It is such a joyful, aspirational, and religious piece of music, one wants to believe that it reflects either the ecstasy of mystical vision, or the fervor of mystical union. The problem is further complicated in that conductors can never quite make up their minds as to which of the two it reflects--mystical vision or mystical union; they present the first three movements as a preparation--both subtle and grandiose--for the sublimity of the Finale; but once there, they never seem to be quite sure what the music's relation with divinity is. Hence, the listener feels unsure, dissatisfied, and something about the Finale always eludes us. I above claimed that, in past decades, Bruno Walter's reading with The New York Philharmonic has been most successful, and I believe he succeeded precisely because, unlike other conductors, he was sure of what he wanted in the Finale--he opted for mystical vision, whereas other conductors have vacillated between the fleeting transience of mystical vision and the abiding security of mystical union all the way to the end of the score.

But even Walter's reading of Beethoven's score dissatisfies. Something feels wrong--the Finale leaves one inspired but somehow confused. I am suggesting that this aesthetic confusion results from a confusion about what the religious dimensions are within Beethoven's Ninth. Those religious dimensions are not as high as Bruno Walter, or any of the several other conductors I mentioned, believed them to be.

Norrington has correctly intuited that past readings of the Ninth have been flawed because Beethoven's music has been put on too high a mystical pedestal. He is right in bringing Beethoven's Ninth back to earth; he is wrong in describing it as irreverent. In short, Norrington has gone too far in his reaction to traditional readings of the Ninth. In his righteous attempt to strip the Ninth of its undeserved religious grandeur--of its transcendent mysticism--he has sullied it spiritually by ascribing to it an irreverent, uncouth vulgarity. And however much Norrington chooses to espouse or defend his observation about those beery farts in the Ninth's Finale, he will never divert our attention from what is blatantly obvious in the music and in the text--that the Ninth's Finale, however Bacchanalian, remains fully imbued with a devotional religious attitude.

Let us bear in mind that there is a distinction between the Ninth's simple, mundane prayer of religious awakening, and the sublime aesthetic dimension which Beethoven bestowed upon this humble subject matter. A correct interpretation of the Ninth must involve realizing that conferring sublime aesthetic dimension upon mundane religious awareness does not thereby raise that religious awareness to similarly sublime dimensions. Rather, the exaltation is a musical one, and in the case of the Ninth, it might even be argued that the music soars so freely precisely because its subject matter remains so humble--in no

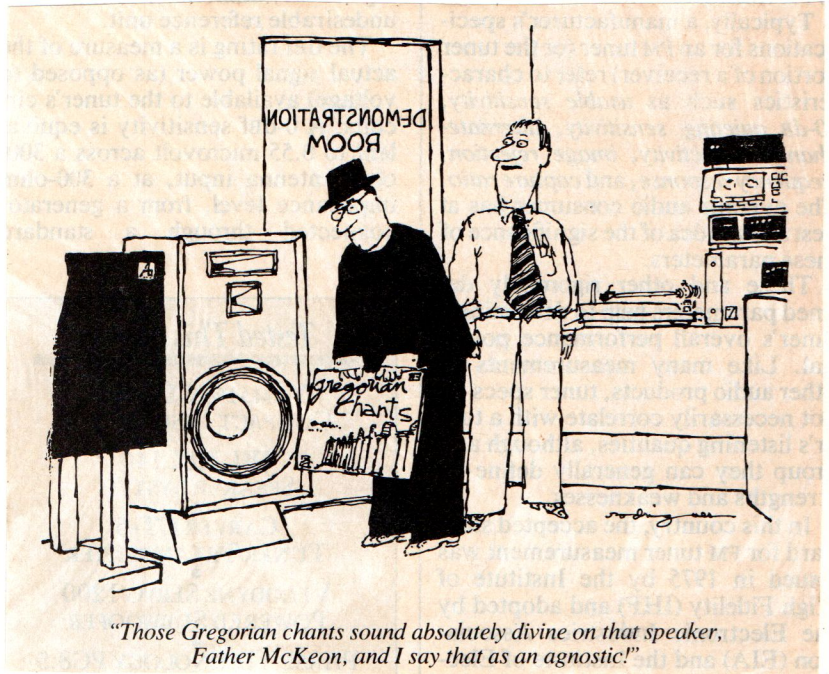


way threatening to tether the music when it soars.

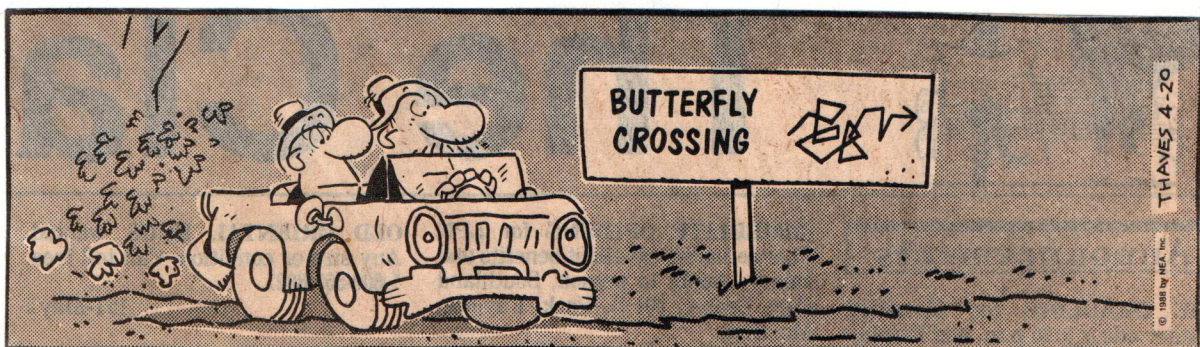
Norrington's playing of Beethoven's Ninth is engaging in its originality, but his interpretation of the Finale is no less frustrating than are those many mighty attempts on the part of previous conductors. Norrington's attempt frustrates in a different way. I must here assert that after one listens to Norrington's recording several times, his version of the Finale not only is unconvincing, it also tends to become rather displeasing. One's delight at hearing such a novel interpretation gives way to a mild irritation--irritation at the irreverence of it all.

Norrington shows more circumspection in his view of the past--his analysis of music as it was originally played--than in his understanding of our contemporary conductors. I say this because I believe that during the past decade two great conductors have at last divined the religious meaning of Beethoven's Ninth, and have interpreted that long-misunderstood Finale as a simple prayer and not as an exercise in exalted mystical awareness. I refer to Herbert von Karajan's last recording of the Ninth, in 1984, with The Berlin Philharmonic, and to Christoph von Dohnanyi's recording with The Cleveland Orchestra in 1985. In the Finale of both these recordings, from the initial bass recitative to the last chorus, there is a pervasive smile--almost laughter--which accompanies the devotional reverence. In these two interpretations, the Ninth's Finale combines the humility of a simple prayer and the joy of brotherly love with the full musical power that Beethoven brought to this symphony. The result, in both these readings, is entirely convincing and eclipses all previous interpretations of the score.

Norrington should harken to both Karajan and Dohnanyi. From them he might learn what the true religious dimensions of the Ninth are, and thus come to understand that when the Ninth steps down from its pedestal, it does not descend so far as to discard its religious reverence. Norrington then might take this understanding and, with his awesome talent at using original instruments and original tempi, give us a truly unique and satisfying interpretation of Beethoven's Ninth. But until Norrington himself is willing to precisely locate, and in his conducting, re-create, the true dimensions--modest indeed, but nevertheless unsullied--of Beethoven's religious intent, his playing of the Ninth, albeit engaging, startling, inspiring, will remain neither convincing nor accurate.



profinis



I am weary. As always, when I write, there have been too many words. I promise that next year's Aviary will be shorter, and I am sure of this since I have resolved to change its



format considerably. Some sections will be missing entirely, others will be combined. I can no longer do issues of The Aviary as long as those of recent years. I simply haven't the time. Moreover, I haven't the energy. This entire issue has taken me longer than usual because this damnable multiple sclerosis I have has been particularly invasive over the last several weeks. I am undergoing (should one say "incurring" or, more maudlin yet, "suffering"?) an exacerbation, and there have been times when willpower like unto the gods (or perhaps like unto the dumb beasts) is all that has brought me to this typewriter. I fear there may be more mistakes in this issue than usual. I do not take the time to go back and reread this thing. I haven't the stomach for it. My life, once past, is carrion, offal. I do not care to go back and begin pawing through those old corpses. Instead, I present them to my friends. They are best suited to do the grim ritual--the autopsy, and make final, suitable pronouncements about the condition of that life prior to its having become history.

So thus I present to you another history--another letter. Please, this time, respond to it as such. I, meanwhile, shall return to my more important work: my fiction, my carnal temptations, my Phenomenology, the duties as well as the pleasures of parenting, the beholden task of husbandry, the rigors of wrestling with one's own besodden soul, the horrors and the glories of mortality, the eager expectations of a friendly and kinetic wife, and this massive need for sleep--for allowing the soul to succumb to the law of spiritual gravity.

I shall print fewer copies of The Aviary this year, i.e., I shall be mailing out fewer copies. I have been, if not too generous, then too liberal with it in the past. I have given these precious words into the hands of people who later blithely told me that they spent a few minutes browsing through my letter, and then threw it away.

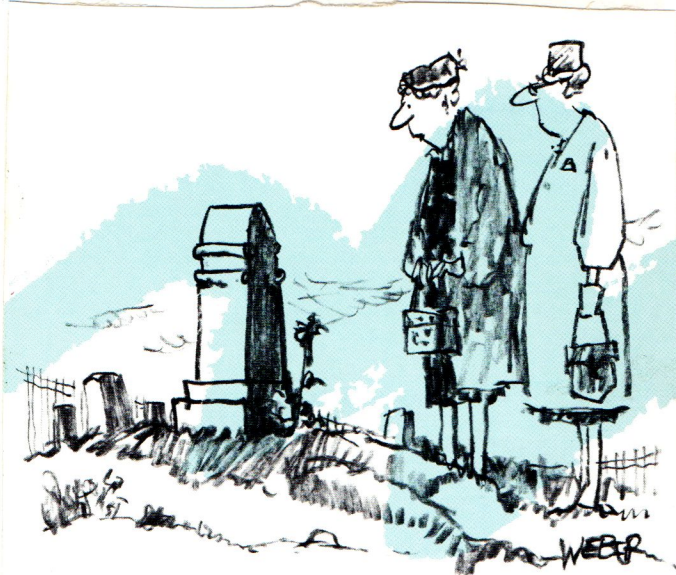
So ... I shall be mailing out this issue of The Aviary over the next few weeks, i.e., during May. This date, April 25, 1991, it appears I am finishing this issue. Into the hands of several friends these words shall be delivered. What, I ask you, will be the reaction?

The question, of course, is quite rhetorical. More, any answer it elicits would be redundant, given that any requested analysis of an anticipated reaction will yield a response no different than

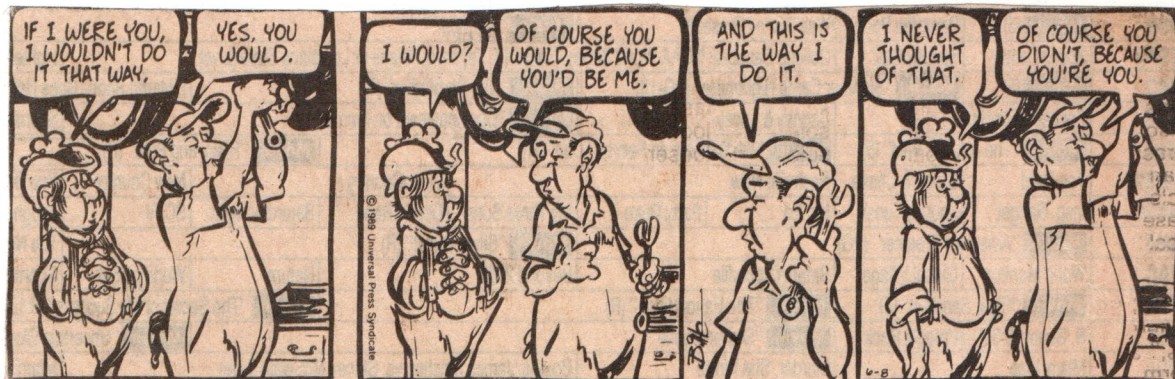
the one that would have been forthcoming anyway. (Did I say this right?) (Or have I just again asked a falsely redundant rhetorical question, again doing so at this very moment?) Oh well. Let us leave this trivial mystery be.

On a less rhetorical note: I do anticipate what my friends' reactions will be. Some of them will make an effort to do as I have requested: to answer this letter with a letter of their own. As for the character of those letters? Will there be the usual deluge of angry, acidic accusations? Probably. I am coming to accept the inevitability of this. And I am beginning to understand that it is no one's fault but my own. In The Aviary, Baumli's personality is thoroughly revealed, in all its grisly detail. While I am quite translucent about who I am when daily interacting with people, they do come to understand me better through reading The Aviary since herein I make explicit those many vague and uneasy notions people have about me. Given that I suffer no delusions of grandeur, and since I am immune to personal paranoia, I occupy a privileged perceptual position when it comes to viewing how others harbor and daily nourish their judgements of me. Thus I understand that many people love me. Furthermore, I understand that people love me so much precisely because my hostile, abrasive personality does so much of their spiritual work for them--I reinforce in them their conviction that all of humanity is united in a common, loyal, devoted brotherhood of mutual hatred and loathing. People are grateful for this gospel. Falling, as it does, from Baumli's reticent lips, they know it must be true, and thus they feel less lonely as they go about their daily lives loving their neighbor exactly as they hate themselves.

I am suggesting, of course, that people are grateful to have heard Baumli speak his mind about those aspects of human nature which, were they not blessed by Baumli's reluctant but merciful benevolence, would truly be so foul as to be unspeakable--even by Baumli. Why, then, do people get so angry with me? Why, when I point to what is unpleasant about human nature, do they protest and become defensive? Is it because they worry that I have, in



*"I told him it wouldn't kill him to try to be nice once in a while, but I was wrong."*





condemning all of humanity, condemned them too? Of course not. They know that to be condemned by a human being is, at the same time, to embrace the possibility of being forgiven. Hence, they are grateful for my condemnations, and if anything, most of them devoutly hope that their souls are the archetypal instantiation of every sin I decry, which would allow them the ascetically abject privilege of being the first to fall prostrate and beseech from me a penance.

No; people are never angry with me because they fear my condemnations. Rather, I believe that people become so angry with me precisely because I am such a kind and friendly fellow. They perceive me as being so cheerful, so generously beneficent, as to be, for the most part, above moral reproach. Which makes people a little crazy with jealousy. And I do know that when the depths of moral depravation are stirred by mortal jealousy, there are howls of hatred which refuse to spare even a soul as pristine as mine. But ... so be it. I do not try to teach morality by example. Nor do I use a whip. It seems, instead, that I have learned the art of motivating other people to wield their own penitential scourges. If their plaintive wailings of anger thereupon accost my ears, well then, I will accept the cacophony as my own penance--my own path of moral innocence--and be on my merry way.

Yours, most contritely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the name 'G. M. ...' followed by a long horizontal flourish.