

Home, Sweet Home: Dispatches from the Manchurian Candidate Factory, #17

Κύριε, ἐλέησον. (Lord, have mercy.)

My own opinion (borrowing from Richard Wolin) regarding the stuff I write: "Anecdotally rich but analytically impoverished."

Distribution: Book group, Adams Blvd./Cochran Ave. and Environs, Selected (wouldn't want to get me face bashed in) Tenants of my Apartment Complex, Others. Check eBay for my Book: *Schizophrenia Weaponized*.

Purpose: To Ridicule Few. To Amuse Many. To Inform All.

A reminder: because of frequent computer malfunctions, when I notice an egregious "printer's devil," I'll **bold** it and add (sic). That'll bitch it.

Copyright notice: You're free to redistribute so long as all contents, including my name, remain intact. This dispatch is in the public domain. Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins, Los Angeles, 3-1-23

"Having gotten mixed-up in writing, I have been punished for my impudence;
Refractory, I have offended my era's mentality.
The accumulated calumnies could very well get the better of my carcass;
As useless as it may be, my voice will nevertheless survive in these pages.

— *Lu Xun's* autograph/poem (1933). My translation from the French

The others, at least, were ashamed of their depredations; but what's to be done with this one who's proud of them!

— *Julien Benda*, quoting from a story by Tolstoy. My translation

One can't well argue the honor and beauty of an act by referring to its usefulness.

— Montaigne

"History: A conspiracy, not always among gentlemen, to defraud."

— Ambrose Bierce (possibly paraphrased)

(I can now freely attest to that)

"What for?" Akhmatova would cry indignantly whenever, infected by the prevailing climate, anyone of our circle asked this question. "What do you mean what for? It's time you understood that people are arrested for nothing!"

— Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope against Hope*

The Cat Walks (Backward, Natch!):

Montmartre, 1989(?), with mom and aunt *Zette*, having dinner (I believe I ordered pizza, imagine) in a little restaurant when, from a nearby table, one of two other patrons, Germans, in a loud, boisterous voice says: "*Der Kerl weiß nicht worauf er sitzt.*" Turning around, I was met by his gaze. My kitchen German can just about make out what he was saying, something not very nice. I say "just about" because there is another interpretation, assuming he was capable of irony.

In the following sequence of events, I see a theme developing:

1. Irene's request for a loan amounting to about \$50,000 for her close friend, *Nilüfer Çagatai*, when I lived in Echo Park. I refused but was unable to imagine one possible significance of her request and, as a result, felt somewhat guilty.
2. My near total loss of investment in the stock market.
3. Subhash's letter requesting repayment of a loan while I was in Normandie, recuperating from a suicide attempt.
4. My aunt Irene's request for money while I lived in San Gabriel.
5. A subsequent car accident, facilitated by John Zhou. I was forced to fork over much of my savings to pay for damages as I had no car insurance.
6. A puzzling lack of any business customers for two months, as with #5, while I lived in San Gabriel. Forcing me to move out of my apartment.
7. According to Gail Hooks, after my father's move to Los Angeles, an acquaintance who lived near Pomona, hit him up for a loan of some \$25,000, a request he apparently turned down.
8. The loans, totaling \$1600, to Tyler Uggla, a neighbor on Garth Avenue, loans never repaid.
9. My father's personal possessions, lost in their entirety sometime during his last sea cruise; misplaced by the storage company handling them, according to Gail Hooks, the woman helping him on his return after I refused.
10. The disappearance of every penny of the estimated \$50,000 my father had at the time of his last vacation. According to the same Gail Hooks, the money was drained by expenses for his home nursing care even though these should have been covered by Medicare.
11. The warning: "*touche pas a l'oseille*" (hold on to your savings) heard as a customer in line behind me talked on his phone at the Wells Fargo on Pico Boulevard. If meant for me, a warning which went in one ear and out the other.
12. The outright theft of one of two RVs I had invested in with Greg William, long-time customer for RV solar systems. Parenthetically, in this sorry business, I believe Greg, a wholly decent and intelligent person, is a victim; far more so than I am. I. Will. Hold. Him. Harmless.
13. Hugo Sanchez's(?) (a pleasant person who had paid me in full for work done) request for a full refund of \$3000, a considerable amount for me, over a year after sale of a solar system I had installed in his RV.
14. Steven Hill, a customer from El Salvador, whose stuff kept going up in smoke and his (partial) refund. (Note: I think he tested me for depth of my involvement with underage girls prior to this financial debacle).

The theme, you ask? A fool and his money...

La Rubrique des Gueules Cassées (A Section on War-wounded):

Learned from a recent visit to a dermatologist that I have something called facial dandruff. A permanent condition, apparently.

In the movie *Blade Runner*, one of the creatures complains to its creator about its allotted lifespan. "Accelerated decrepitude," it whines. A neat phrase, I thought at the time. Maybe not so neat, though, when applied to oneself. I now suspect my health problem(s) stems from what I call "slow poison." No, not the neighbors, *inter alia*, who have diligently been "*empoisonner mon existence*" (bugging me) "*lo*," (← Get it?) these many years. It was *that* pizza (solid peasant fare, you say?) a-and those Gummi Bears, it was.

The Quotable Other, i.e., *L'Enfer, c'est les Autres* (Hell is Other People) — Sartre:

Spontaneously, imitating an imaginary official of our *Securitate*TM bureaucracy, I once said: "That's Lawson's boy, that nigger crazy!" (A line adapted from Dick Gregory). I remember getting a funny look from Colette at that moment. The truth shall come from the mouth of a ~~child~~ turnip.

"*Tu n'as pas de suite dans les idées*" (You never finish anything). My mother used to tell me.

And now, a multiple-choice pop quiz. Laughs best who:

- a) Laughs last.
- b) Laughs without being told to.
- c) Feel no need to laugh at all.

Sassenach™ and His Yankee Damsyankee Tricks:

(2-5-23) Outside, as I'm working on some wood, Brother *Cantinflas* puts in an appearance, sits on the lawn and switches on his radio. A thought: I should figure out some way of giving him a quiz after one of his sessions wiv' that infernal trick radio(?) of his. A quiz on his retention of the ~~material~~ near-gibberish he listens(?) to. Would be interesting to see the results.

(2-9-23) Two days ago, I taped to the sidewalk in front of Peyton Place™ the four pages of HSH #15. A day later, two were gone. The others remained until this morning when I taped a red thread to link them (your Geeerman would know what is implied here). Well, four hours later, the whole thing had been ripped away. Censorship most foul, I say!

Juegos de Manos, Juegos de Villanos:

Ahainna! (Appalachianese for, I'm not going!) Reason is: fear. Fear of the job. The so-called "kneecap job," that is. I believe in the military, they call it a mobility kill (a rose by any other name...). Moreover, in spite of this obstacle, were I to actually succeed in leaving, naively expecting to ever return, the other shoe would then drop. By which I mean one of those "Black + Decker™ jobs." A *Provo* specialty, to be sure. Though *Sassenach™* would not be above taking a leaf from *that* playbook for the occasion; I'm sure. Regarding the first option, the kneecap job, I refer skeptics to the following incidents, some previously mentioned:

1. Slo-mo pursuit #1: Years ago, police chasing a yellow car (not mine), in Santa Monica, on Lincoln Blvd at 5 MPH.
2. Slo-mo pursuit #2: Some years ago, police in Beverly Hills, on Doheny, at 5 MPH, one night. Incident witnessed by me as I shopped at a supermarket.
3. The CHP letter inviting me to pay them a visit to peruse an item, belonging to me, found in a stolen car recovered in the San Geronio Pass. *Coño!*

A-and those are the *good* guys... "So *Uferlos die kalte See.*" — *Seemann* lyrics, Rammstein

Speed Bumps on the Road to Ragnarök:

Benelux: A Kushi, it's True, but a Nice One:

(2-5-23) For the last weeks and the second time tonight, as I watch a police(?) helicopter fly by my window, visible, as usual, from where I sit (how *do* they manage that trick, anyway?); after my, by now obligatory gracious wave at the chopper (you know how it is with us crazies), I've taken to saying: "*On a toujours besoin d'un plus petit que soi.*" ("One always needs someone smaller than oneself." – credit to *la Fontaine* – or was it a *Le Sueur* canned peas ad?)
 (3-1-23) To which, on a spur of the moment, I just added: "Swing low, sweet chopper" (adapted from an African-American spiritual song).

(2-10-23) At the U-Haul on Obama Blvd to buy some rolls of tape, I happened on a clerk who steadfastly ignored me, as with my previous encounter that day at the library nearby. So preoccupied was she with listening to a police recording on the speakerphone that it took some time for her to take notice of me. Whereupon, she says: "You ready?" I, all ~~passion~~ patience spent, with an expressionless face (matching her mien), put the rolls I had thought to buy back on the counter, quietly said "Thanks" and left. The m.o. of a passive-aggressive, wot? *Non, mais!*

Wink-wink, Nudge-nudge:

An (imaginary) Q & A session:

Q: Where are you from?

A: Los Angeles.

Q: No, what country?

A: Ummmm, I'm an Angeleno.

Q: I mean, where were you born?

A: Oh, France.

Q: Are you French?

A: Nöööö!

Q: So, what are you, then?

A: An Angeleno, I tell you.

1) "The inside of me is my home. It will follow me wherever I go." — *Nils-Aslak Valkeapää/Áillohaš* of the *Sámi* nation. If ever forced to pronounce the name, I'll just say: Nils-wot's-'is-face; easier that way 2) My home is wherever there is a fair amount of freedom to be got. (paraphrasing Tom Paine)

Last year, as I went to hand in and cancel my driver's license at the Inglewood DMV, I noticed a fellow passenger on the bus who got off at the same stop. A member of the Nation of Islam by the looks of him, I reckon. Some of the possible (serious) implications were not entirely lost on me...

The Provocation Will Not Be Televised:

Is anyone in this place *not* an act? Beginning with my two sisters. Expanding around me in ever-broader circles to include: friends, customers, my landlord – occasionally playing meanie-for-a-day, the various hapless bureaucrats who, presumably having gotten the short end of the stick, are selected to be amateur provocateurs when I come a-calling, the neighborhood acts I subsume under the rubric Peyton Place™, the cops encumbered with more than one hat, etc, etc, etc. Just how far up does this go? I say again: Mimic Men™ (credit to Naipaul). Mimic Men™ all. Mimic Men™ of this, our Cargo Cult Democracy™.

(2-9-23) You shoulda seen 'em today. Gawd! At Costco. *Tonton* (and assorted impedimenta, quite literally. Methinks some of them "zig-zaggeth uncommon wyde" – credit to Bierce) was *there*. Little old men. Little old ladies. Slow-moving ones. Fast moving ones. Foot draggers. High-steppers. Cripples, even. A.

Provocation. Every. 3.5. Seconds (by my estimate). In short, an extravaganza; but Oh, so genteel in demeanor, they were (again, I'll plead the 6th on that one). You'll be relieved to know that not once, I say again, not once did yr. Fair-haired Boy™ have to dip into his emergency supply of that Nadanil™ (credit to Erica Jong(?)). Though I'll confess to a wee drop of the creature (in the form of a bottle of sparkling water, Natch! Thought I'd sworn off the stuff) once I got home. A man's a man, for all that, wot?

Conclusions:

Cherry blossoms; much like Democracy. Both beautiful, it's true; both impermanent. Though I won't go so far as to say: beautiful *because* impermanent; that would be a Japanese-type thought.

"We are as gods and might as well get good at it" – Stewart Brand in the first *Whole Earth Catalog*, 1968. Quite. So why the recurrent, snowballing catastrophes humanity has been continually living/engendering since the last ice age/dawn of agriculture? Paraphrasing Jared Diamond: "Agriculture is the greatest catastrophe to befall mankind."

(2-16-23) Was thinking this evening: Surprisingly, I may be among the more reliable cog of this vast machinery. And the longer the duration of the tergiversation, the more I'm convinced of it.

To end on a lighter note; a joke. Heard on a TV show from down SA way. Three guys, sitting around a table, part of the *Boer Soek 'n Vrou* thing. All three *plaasjaapie* types, upscale though. One says of another: "There was a time when the only two words of English he knew were: 'Yes' and 'Not Yes'." Cute.

(signed)

Ударник Пятилетки (*Udarnik Pyatiletkiy* – Shock Worker for the Five-year Plan. A-and I have the badge to prove it – the provenance of which is in itself a story perhaps meriting a dispatch of its own...)

P.S. To my beloved sisters, Irene and Colette (the latter dead of breast cancer in 2018): May our wordless tears, yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

P.P.S. Bleak Lives Matter™

P.P.P.S. To Irene: Regards to *le Malin*.