

The Sacred

VII

Apropos Of Nothing

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Feeling some obligation to provide relief from the incessant rigors of man's dubious behavior, specifically his proclivity toward Conflict (War), and inveterate determination to resist coalescence into a societal whole, I take leave to explore the Love, and abiding passion between William and Rose, the chief protagonists herein referred. William and Rose might belong to us, our species; they might even serve as exemplars in some dimension, in that they spurn the Warlike amongst us, deeming them anathema to the Treasured **LIFE**.

Perhaps it is what they have found in one another that tames some particular savagery which affects the rest of us. Are you not warlike? I mean, do you not brandish the sword to do honor to your flag, or perhaps to your creed, your way of life, to maintain your neighborhood pure of color, your street purged of riff-raff, vagrants, deadbeats; are you not rigid, rather than pliable in these matters? Do you not resist the societal constraint that would interfere with your right and privilege to despise your fellow man?

What is this LOVE that is given to man and woman that they must suffer the pangs and agonies of the Romeos and Juliets. What is the proper name for a society that demands this Love must function within this boundary or that? Are all Loves the same; do they all generate the same intensity of feeling? Is the beast, homo sapiens, to be so ennobled upon each occasion the 'human' breast feels these pangs? Or must one imagine that only certain individuals fall heir to these special liaisons, which may only serve to excite envy or jealousy in others - and in some cases an overbearing indifference ('look at those two; they cannot even control their emotions!')?

Do those unappealing (non-beauteous) non-Spartan rolly-pollies feel these same pangs? How are they able? Surely they do not measure up to the fantasy. Are they drawn by the miracle of obfuscous inosculation, by a special order and dispensation in the variants of natural selection? We might conjecture upon the role that 'Beauty' plays in serving the needs of the species. Aye! Indeed we might!

And what of our hero and heroine; where do they belong in this non-hierarchy, this wondrous manifestation of the reproductive imperative? Had these two become some wanton creatures after their wounding at the whim of Cupid and Psyche. One (psyche)analyst offered rather pedantically, 'it was SEX!'. Yep!, that's what got 'em, SEX! (A considered judgment, not a psychoanalytic observation.)

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It has been asked, "Shall loveliness not always be loved?". Does the beast-breast pound the more if he or she tumbles with the beauty? Ponderous Cupid forbade Psyche a visualization. The 'Analyst' (that cool breeze) perceives the arch-nemesis (love) as a fulfillment of an 'Anatomic Destiny'; perhaps headless and legless as well.

Hollywood may not have been able to generate too much enthusiasm with this pair, but still, near-beauty sometimes, possessed of some kind of animation, like a rapidly beating heart, is sufficient to shame the mere appearance of perfection. William and Rose were the personification of the throb, approachable to each other, vulnerable to each other in their deficiencies. They were not plain, but of an attractive vintage, not only to each other.

Perhaps this fascination with physical beauty is a fairly shabby business, at least no more rewarding than some other idealities we foist upon ourselves. Has it not been intoned often enough that beauty lies to the depth of thine own epidermis, and that appearances may be deceiving; and that it is the beholders who claim the prize. Our adages are rife with embittered cautions.

His was not a macho, studied (studded) stance. No jaunty hat or Cowboy boots, legs a-wide, arms akimbo, or a wristwatch sported on the inside like a huge secret, attached to an immense band. He projected no protruding crotch cod-piece from out tight britches. And there was Ed intimating the guy with the biggest belt buckle has the smallest weeny. No jingle, no jangle. And surely no Sir Lancelot, Galahad, or two-gun kid, tamer of the west. Ordinary for the most part, one might say. One might say 'all to the good'; no false hope, no false promise.

Hers were not lurid red lips, rouged cheeks, and darkened eyes; only a faint self-conscious perfumation. She did not expose a cleft or stroke a thigh. And no obvious jiggle. What one might call a 'naturalness', if one is still able to conceive of such a possibility in our highly structured mores where individuality is cloaked in mirror images. Nakedness is tantamount to prurience (in the eyes of the beholder) and exhibitionism is considered a contravention of public decency. She flaunted not.

I remember the excitement in those days when 'streaking' had become a momentary novelty in our curious lust for entertainment and titillation. Some had blithely offered "There was nothing new under the sun". Killjoys!, however true. Skinny-dipping at the mountain side woodsey-lake, the setting of a novel wedding, sporting a mail-order minister, proved an abrupt revelation of the truth; people are adorned with moles and sundry blemishes, and myriad imperfections. What is true of the asymmetry of their noses and ears is often true of their more concealed parts, and yours and mine, as well (just so long as we are able to walk away when we grow weary of the show). Plyboys, Pantyhose, and Hustleher have it all wrong, like taking photos of perpetual lavender

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sunsets. While prurient nakedness may aim for a glandular erudition, the two-dimensionality spoils the effect.

Overcoming obstacles was not a new experience in Rose's love-life. She had married against the wishes of her parents; a mere girl at eighteen, enamored of the Christainized dark-skinned Asian. Yes, she was 'given away' in a traditional ceremony by a grim-faced father. I too am a father of a daughter; I too am grim-faced; one who did not 'give away'. I can hardly say more.

And when she announced to her parents, once again, her new flame, her 'true love', her father could only admonish further "out of the frying pan into the fire". Fathers of daughters are cast upon the very same shore with JOB.

Fathers would arrange their daughters marriages, reserving unto themselves the sole right to love; is it possible that one can love more than some fathers do their daughters; a truly aesthetic infatuation, a loving of one's three-dimensional 'animated' creation? Or is it all those years to which one becomes attached, or is it the part of one's ribbing from which one cannot bear the severance? What do fathers know? So often they part as strangers from their offspring. And earn the gratitude of the Gonerils and the Regans. Nowadays the world transforms itself kaleidoscopically, in an attempt to perpetually seduce itself within a fanfare of nothingness. The panorama is interpreted as change, and as IN; and you're OUT, you're not WITH IT; not world class, fast track, global, yuppie, hip; not got the 'raht stuff'. A seeming need of a newness, a breaking away from something that appears fixed in foregoneness, to express a difference, an expression of self - alien to the father, to the parent, who, in reflecting upon his own youth, can only wonder at the deception created by mirrors. How transitory it all appears, and cyclical. Nature's way of weaning, of riving, of splitting off and issuing forth. But the insult. The admonishment of Moses "Honor thy Father and thy Mother" goes begging like all the other Tough Stuffs (an inconvenience to the offspring) (to all of humanity).

I recall my own mother and father as an unlikely pair, a pair who eventually split asunder, brought upon by the 'anomalies and vicissitudes' of this life. What one might 'Honor' is somehow lost in their squabbling, in their unseemliness, their unlikelihood; some kind of estrangement from the idea of Father and Mother. Father was feared more than honored; mother was some incomprehensible fixedness, a dedicated, responsible stoic, wronged in her affiliation with that other half. I feel certain mother has earned more than she will ever receive, while the other commanded, receiving more than his due (What is one's due; is it what he takes?). There is something illogical about a relationship when love is absent, although love, itself, is not a logical extension of matter.

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*Our Cinderella, our fairy tale beauty 'come real
Glided from the stage, a happy ending
With her prince, all hearts aglow,
Their event blessed, well-wished into eternity.*

*All arrayed to ankle in wedding white,
Cinderella became resolved into a beaming photograph
Whereof the palpable presence
Assumed henceforth another role
A fulfilling of the promise;
One forever obscured from our eyes.*

*Now, buried in an puffy-covered album
Beneath some sacred paraphernalia;
'Tis always tenderly tucked away
Alongside the brown box with the tawdry necklace.
Buried, fixed flatly on a funeral background,
A cool entombment for a pair of beauteous eyes
That speak a Rose, hothouse grown;
All to preserve a nostalgic and acquiescent dream.*

*A pair of shoes, a bridal gown,
Mold growing on the one
The shape of a hanger on the other.
Cinderella tucked away in a closet,
A happy dream? A stiff, cob-webby remnant.
Time, that steady plod, advancing
Imprinting its heavy tread, clear and sure
Transforming her into the more customary human shape.*

*Aye, Prince!, wherefore this inexhaustible elixir,
What spring dost thou tap in your thirst,
As though the whole globeround were your private resource?
A bold presumer you are MAN! PRINCE!
You are Cinderella's very own and she Yours!
She, without identity - merely a mirror.
A beauteous object to extend your princely ego;
Tirelessly she groomed for your EGO, Oh Prince!*

*Cinderella, upended, became an empty vessel
Drained to the lees by the handsome prince
She wanteth, she wanteth replenishment
Too plain, Oh Prince, but not plain enough.*

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*Some dumb fairytale titillates our dull imaginings
Our stupid longing for what does not exist
Our inevitable failing, our careless submissions
To what we are, stead of what we are not.
Now, Gargantua, Now Grotesque Ape,*

*Open your album
Regard your beauteous Cinderella
Restore your fairy tale
Return that which ye have taken
Or move onto the next
Until you fade into the night
Ah, that one should fall prey to your subtle goodness.*

*You fairytale beast who wobbles on his hind legs
Like the mongrel who sits at my side,
Which professes nothing
And does on all fours what you presume to do on two.*

*Cinderella arrayed in white
All abeam and glowing
Having now closed the last page of the Romance
Seemed to stumble descending the Castle Stair.*

Thus it is we might wonder what would be the natural end of Romeo, Tristan, Paolo, had they not perished in a fantasy. Perhaps contained in our intelligence is an element of prescience. Our desire is to produce a happy ending; do we suspect that Juliet will grow homely, that Romeo will become fat? Why ought they not leave this life at the peak of their enthrallment, while they glow like meteors? I think we cheat a little in arranging life to create a proper debut and its proper exit.

I look backward (only assuming it is backward) from the Eighties where fallout shelters are considered an anachronism as Nuclear Winter portends. The sexual revolution has abated somewhat; the discovery of the G spot didn't precipitate any particular rush toward the abandonment of making War Plans in a preference for the New Frontiers of Sex (Old fuddy duddies anyway.) The younger generation has been liberated with the PILL. All kinds of pills are available. Cigarette smoking was hazardous to your health, and still is, and now other people's smoking is also hazardous to your health. Don't breath, and stay away from nukes. They have taken three whacks (I'm guessing) at artificial sweeteners (non-fattening, non-caloric, a diet Right) the first two

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containing the potential to put you on a permanent diet; the last, a doubtful entrant into our oral-alimentary canal - full of neurotransmitters in aluminum cans. That sweet taste in your mouth is all in your imagination.

The two alternatives: Anorexia or obesity. Normal does not fit the mould. Madison Avenue cannot hack normal. What the hell is normal; can you imagine Product Endorsement of World Class Normality? Hell No!; everything has to be abnormal; extra-normal; off the norm. Oh come now, be bold, NORM IT! Nuclear aint normal, that's why its so popular. Diet Nukes.

If you regard the advertisements of those days, the long lost Sixties, that everyone would like to forget, you will find a staidness, and something less sinusoidal; then backward another ten or so years, all covered up and stiff, and further still, stiffer and stuffier. Even the old folks are flashy nowadays, in comparison to the days of their youth. Everybody wants to be abnormal; World Class Abnormality. Shed your skin like a snake; moult with Madison Ave. and Gay Paree! Throw away that old clapboard self. Bury Yesterday.

William had described to me an experience he had during the days when he tumbled end over end in those impossible throes, helplessly doing exactly what he was doing. At every opportunity and suggestion he sought Rose's company. His every waking moment was filled with thoughts of her, and many hours of the night tossing within a troubled sleep. Truly, he had not been able to sleep; it had become apparent he had begun to lose weight, looking wan and drawn. It would seem that 'falling in love' was a 'task' for the young and not for the middle-aged.

They had taken to meeting in the cemetery during lunch hours and during break times, and at other times when their need to be with each other demanded no other alternative. Perhaps their meeting place carries an undercurrent of the macabre, reminiscent of the sepulcher of Juliet. If it had been only the one cemetery, perhaps its proximity might well escape notice in its macabre sense. But when it was determined that they might escape the notice of familiars even more effectively in yet another cemetery, one might begin to wonder. Still, the cemeteries were a sort of private place whereupon people entered them, perhaps for private reasons. They were treed, isolated places in the urban glut of structure and asphalt. While it is generally true that lovers are oblivious to their surroundings, William and Rose were not so privileged, and indeed the cemetery proved an agreeable place to secret oneself beneath, and enfolded within its bowers, away from the cyclopean crowd.

William thus described to me one occasion in this second resting place of the departed, to which they had driven during lunchtime on a sunny spring day. They had parked the old limousine on a seldom used roadway that wandered down the slopes under huge Douglas fir trees,

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interspersed with maples, the enleafed bowers resting atop the roof and hood of the car, the sunlight filtering through the leaves and fluttering to the slightly buoyant breezes coursing through their sanctuary. Rose was sitting in the front seat, he lying with his head upon her lap. The car was setting somewhat askew its front pointing somewhat downhill with the passenger side tilted downward as well, his head subsequently sloping with this unaccustomed inclination. He claimed he had the distinct sensation of floating, or tumbling, or being airborne without any reference to the earth. He was aware of Rose's fingers coursing through his hair in a gentle stroking motion; he could feel her warmth and the feel the slight stirrings of her body as she breathed, these being his only seeming contact with reality. He might have existed in a painting composed jointly by Chagall, Rousseau and Gauguin, perhaps depicting a scene described by W.H.Hudson and Emily Bronte, all the while set to the music of Vivaldi, Bach and Ravel interwoven, arranged by the Japanese.

One day, while parked in their modern-day surrey in this latter planting of strange obelisks, while lying with his head upon her lap, he read aloud the words, translated from the German, to Mahler's Song of The Earth.

Indeed a whole new world was opening to her; truly his world was one of mystery, hardly someone easy to know. Her previous intellectual pursuits had involved the world and notions of science at home, at school and at work. They also involved the exposure to the patent themes found in the American Verities espoused by the Belongers and the Worshipers of the True Way. While her 'religious' background evolved through the nominal exposure to Christian ethos, additionally the social mores had gravitated towards a rigid morality, again espoused as the Right and True Way. In her feelings and spirit she rebelled against the rigidity, and the righteous groove-like mentality of her mother, especially; her father tended to be subdued, but doubtlessly imbued with the same principles of right thinking and right conduct. Notwithstanding, she felt loved by her parents, and felt love for them, while at the same time sensed their love would be sorely tried by one at variance with their politics, patriotism, their principles, their morality, and their righteousness. It was not hers to question them; her role was clearly one of being the mirrored part only.

In William she had sensed some different ethos; mysterious, though real and valid; and not alien to what she could feel. As she might attempt to defend some aspect of the mirrored part, she would soon begin to realize her own acquiescence. She had wondered if she could accept William's flowing, non-rigidified, non-mirrored open-ended mores.