Entr’acte

Exposition.

Rising action.

Resolution.

That’s the standard structure of the 3-act arc in theatre, movies, opera, lit, &c. Between each act, there is the interlude known as *entr’acte* (in Italian, *intermezzo*; en Espanol, *intermedio*). It’s a time to hit the head, grab a bag of kettle corn. Or maybe just sit and reflect.

It’s not often that we can observe the clear demarcation of acts as our lives unfold. Nobody turns on the house lights or projects a helpful “Intermission” card on the big screen. No orchestra strikes up a medley of themes to cue a rush to the lobby to get ourselves a treat.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjB5gjTEEj8

Then again.

Some life moments have such innate powers of punctuation that only the dullest mope can miss the signal. Thus does Your Narrator find himself *entr’acte*.

Yesterday, we packed My Favorite Boy off for a year abroad. A year. In Germany.<fn>Perhaps better to talk about either *Zwischenspiel* or *Zwischenakt* instead of *entr’acte*, but I can’t figure out how to pronounce the German. Mea culpa. *Meine Schuld.</fn>* As I’ve gotten older, years fly by more

quickly than when I was a snaggle-toothed, skinned-knee yard monkey. But the coming year looks cruelly long.

That photo up there is emblematic of The Boy. For the next year, he is enrolled in the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX). He will repeat his senior year of high school. Only this time he will do it in German<fn>Current operative vocabulary: 8-10 words.</fn>, and maybe in high heels and dancing backwards. Who knows? He will be in a town in Lower Saxony near the Netherlands border. He found, applied, and all but had the scholarship in hand before he ever told us what he was up to. He’s always been fearless and independent.

A clearly delineated three-act arc emerges as we hang suspended, Stanwyck and I, between II and III. Like The Boy in the photo, we are a little afraid and shall likely get wet. We have already pillaged the lobby for snacks and cocktails. We sit quietly in the dark, awaiting the curtain’s rise.

Act One: Youngsters – children, almost – meet, fall head over heels. Declare themselves dedicated to life as Artists. Commit themselves until death do them what what, exuberantly pledging their troths one to the other.

Montage: Chasing dreams with varying levels of “success”. A

dozen years pass, carefree times – more or less. But something is missing. The dilemma: discover the source of dissatisfaction.

The yearning to create a family takes center stage. Hindrances emerge, the fates are unkind. Laboratory experiments ensue, negotiations with the gods of medical science: no avail. Copious pleas to Aphrodite, to Ishtar, to Mithras, to Macha and Marduk – all for naught. Our favorites sink into a slough of wretched despond. All seems hopeless.

But hark! What luminous fortune shines in the distance? Are those blue eyes we see shining from a mythical mountaintop? Our heroes embark, a quest to climb this mountain, to best the demons and dragons, to conquer the traps set in our path. Our child is waiting. We must persevere. We must prevail. We must.

Cut to a military green DCF office bathed in flickery fluorescence. A door opens. In walks a woman<fn>Was it a woman? I think it must have been.</fn> carrying the most beautiful baby ever seen on this earth. With shining blue eyes.

“Who gets her first?”

The world’s unlikeliest and most reluctant father steps forward, arms outstretched.

And scene.

Act Two: We find our heroes trying to figure out what parenting entails. Like almost everyone, this is largely a trial and error process in which we are certain to provide our charges with plenty of things to talk to a therapist about in later years.

But they adapt and start to think they have a handle on things. As the gods abhor hubris, the phone rings and, almost overnight, the Beast know as Bender, aka Bam Bam, arrives. All illusions of having mastered the process are dashed. Cue Thalia who takes her turn as director of mayhem. The audience may now enjoy hearty laughter at the heroes' expense.

Are they laughing at or with?

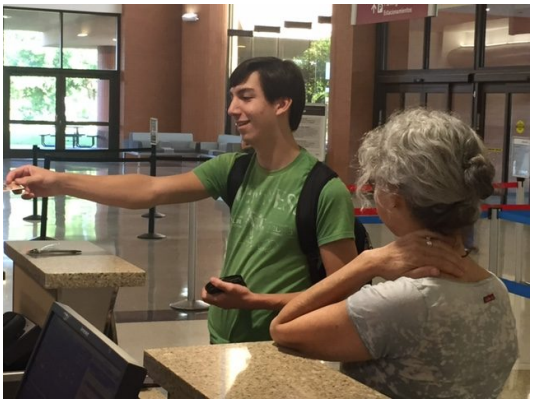
Montage: Children growing up, our heroes growing old(er), a span of laughter and tears and broken bones and banged shins and and and…
(Staging note: this transpires at ultra-high speed, almost as

if 20 years might elapse in a trice.)

Cut to Daughter kicking every available ass at university. A

science rock star in the making. But, alas, flown the nest.

Cut to the local two-mule airport where a coupletwothree of The Boy’s friends have gathered to offer their fare thee well as he departs for the far off land of Deutsche. For a year. Auf wiedershein.



Voiceover: Andre Gregory’s final words from *My Dinner With Andre.*

> *A son? A baby holds your hands and then suddenly there’s this huge man lifting you off the ground, and then he’s gone. Where’s that son?*

Camera follows The Boy through the security checkpoint. Cheers of farewell follow his progress. Even the TSA agents get in on the action.

Cut to our heroes, proud and bereft.

The nest, it is empty.

And scene.

Act Three: As the curtain rises, our heroes, and their trusty hound Maggie, are in the kitchen. Stanwyck is wearing one of the Lad’s favorite t-shirts. Your Narrator strokes his beard and ponders.

The action is not yet established, the third act not yet written.

We begin again. Constantly.