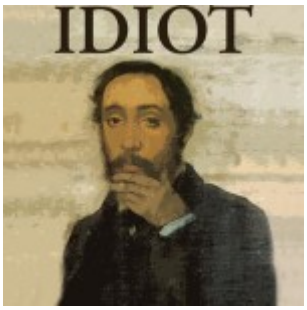
My Favorite World #8



I Like Big Books and I Cannot Lie

The astute follower of this blog<fn>The use if the definite article is pessimistically intentional.</fn> will have noticed that your Narrator loves books. Almost daily I add three or four titles to my “must read” list. It’s great to look at the list in anticipation of great reads to come. It is also to despair: so many books, so little time. We do what we can.

One of my favorite places of any kind is a good bookstore. When we lived on the other side of Lake Pontchartrain, the nearest bookstore was a Barnes and Nobles about 35 miles away. The family would sojourn there for a Friday night’s outing, and as soon as we opened the door, the smell of paper and glue and coffee would turn me into a ravenous book beast. Everybody went their separate way, and we would meet back at the cafe about 30 minutes later. Because the store was so far from home, I would turn up with an armload of books, because who knew how long it might be before I returned. Better safe than stuck without a book.

Occasionally we would travel and find ourselves in a town with a great, independent bookstore. In Asheville there was Malaprops, a truly magical place. Here, my frenzy was even more pronounced. Because who knew how long it would be until I found myself in a great, *indie* bookstore? Two armloads, minimum. Beach trips to the Forgotten Coast always begin with a trip to Sundog Books where everybody picks out their reads

for the vacation.

You get the idea.

When we moved to our current humble burg, no indie local store of this sort existed.<fn>Purely used book vendors are a different breed, and awesome on their own terms, but not what I'm talking about here.</fn> Sure, there was a Borders (now gone) and a B&N and a Books-A-Million.<fn>In my snark, renamed Books a Dozen and a bunch of other crap.</fn> But these are not especially appealing places for the book browser.<fn>B&N was at one time a terrific chain for book lovers, but the tchotchke-to-book ratio has taken a decided turn for the worse in recent years.</fn> For the book lover, the best option is the local library.

Our library is one of the things that makes this My Favorite World. The selection is terrific, the online reserving system easy and efficient. The place is well-laid out and well lighted. The staff, many of them volunteers, is helpful and cheerful. And if they don't have what you want, they will move mountains to find it through another library system. I've had books borrowed from libraries as far away as Miami and Houston, University of Chicago and Chapel Hill. Seriously, our library rocks.

But I miss the bookstore experience. I miss the feeling of finishing a book and placing it on my shelf – maybe to be read again, maybe not – and the conundrum of where to put a particular book. Did I like it so much it might displace a cherished hero volume? Does this belong in the philosophy section or science? Burning questions that fall to the wayside, because now when I finish a book I dump it, unceremoniously, into a slot in the wall at the library.

So while books, and the pursuit of books, and the dogged determination that *I will read every book in the world worth reading before I die*,<fn>Hubris is never pretty.</fn> are a

major element of MFW, I find myself in recent days wondering:

Why doesn’t our community have a great local bookstore?

Does our community really need one? Is it supportable?

Who has the stones/insanity/vision to create such a place? A place where people linger over the printed word and exchange ideas about what makes a book great; argue passionately about whether Oprah picks have ruined reading or saved it; quibble over whether the Booker Prize has gone soft by considering non-Brits; &c. Even more, a place that serves as a fulcrum for a vital community that values the inspirational and aspirational cocktail that comes from that luxe mixture of books and magazines and music and really excellent coffee.

Whoever that person is, s/he will be creating a vital component of My Favorite World. I’ll be waiting.

> ***V:****What’ll we do?*
>
> ***E:****If he came yesterday and we weren’t here you may be sure he won’t come again today.*
>
> ***V:****But you say we were here yesterday.*
>
> ***E:****I may be mistaken. (Pause.) Let’s stop talking for a minute, do you mind?*

MFW.

The Management wishes to….



Here at i2b, we love a good story well told. Alas, even though we have several to tell and – arguably – the skills to tell it well, the twain have not made acquaintance for several weeks now. It's not for lack of writing. In fact, the Writer has several pieces he feels merit publication and an increased daily ration of gruel and breadcrust. Lucky for you, dear reader, that the Publisher and Editor, in cooperation with the arbiters of decency in the Standards & Practices Department – good, earnest people whom the writer insults as "pecksniff simpletons" – have intercepted the notes in a bottle the Writer dropped into the privy in hopes of bypassing our essential and benevolent oversight.<fn>We had left him alone – shackled, of course – for our weekly shareholders and board of directors banquet. The menu was sublime, but we lost track of time and gave him time to attempt his deception. Luckily, we foiled his chicanerous efforts.</fn> We find them in poor taste, shocking to the conscience, and an insult to human decency. The Writer wept as we burned his makeshift foolscap (inscribed in his own blood with a sharpened toothbrush handle), but he is being made to understand that this is all for his own good. How he wept tears of gratitude when we cancelled today's flogging in favor of a light racking! It was touching, indeed, to see a man getting his mind right.

The Writer yearns to unlimber his quill on a range of topics – from what it means to dare greatly as an artist, to what in the hell difference is there between a wall-eyed undertaker and an alleged Democrat who votes just like him – but until that wretched scribbler learns to behave in polite society, the Management has no choice but to keep him under wraps. For his own good, of course.

My Favorite World #6



From fashion to futbol to absurdist political horror stories to fabulist fiction to the happiness to be found in an unspotted foot…it's My Favorite World.

Fashion Statement(?)

Guys, there's something about putting on a blazer. Amirite? You stand a little straighter, you carry a little more air. It's not that it's hard to slouch or slump with a blazer on, it's just that it's easier not to. I hold this truth to be self-evident: that all men being created equal, a blazer will elevate one over the other. It's one of article of clothing guaranteed to confer *gravitas.* Or so I thought.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered Michael Davies and Roger Bennett – otherwise known as Men in Blazers – while I was lying ill on the sofa. I was watching a Detroit- Boston NHL game<fn>Original 6 represent!</fn>, and when it was over the remote was too far away to flip over to Wolf Blitzer's beard ejaculating speculation about another airline tragedy. So.

Here comes Michael and Rog, a couple of balding Brits in tragically ill fitting blazers, holding forth from what looks a janitorial supply closet and offering up, well, best let them tell:

> *We discuss football. And wear blazers. Usually at the same time. Men in Blazers is driven by the belief that Soccer is America's Sport of the Future. As it has been since 1972.*

And just that fast, I was laughing so hard I nearly rolled off the couch.

On Chile's Alexis Sanchez, who likes to pull his jersey off after a goal:

> *His back is made out of Braille, and you know what it says if you run your fingers across it? It says…..sexy!*

And how does this 5'4 runt score leap over the 6″1 goalie to score?

> *"His Drakkar Noir is like a trail of chloroform."*

Later, talking about – and showing hilarious examples of – the alarming decline of Mario Balotelli's once prodigious skills:

> *His transformation from being an elite footballer to an avant garde slapstick comedian…"*

…which apparently was caused in some wise by too much time cavorting in hot tub advertisements with super models…

> *He's clearly suffering some shrinkage from that hot tub, Rog.*

One of them later describe the owner of Man U (I think) as looking like a Muppet with too much starch.

I know next to nothing about British Premier League Football,<fn>FWIW, I like women's soccer better than the men's game – much less whining and flopping. Though I admit that saying that around "real soccer fans" makes me feel like I'm defending the layup/set shot laden WNBA.</fn>but if these guys

are part of the broadcast squad, I'll be watching more than I had ever imagined. Even though my philosophy of the Supremacy of the Blazer has been shattered evermore. Here's a nice dose to give you an idea. Think Skip Carey and Pete van Wieren with posh British accents.

http://www.nbcsports.com/show/men-blazers?guid=nbc_bpl_mib_top10characters_141229

Also, too, they have a posh posh Latin motto:

> *viri recte vestiti*

Men who are clothed. They qualify, but only just.

Posh. MFW.

The Never Ending Reading Challenge

I've finally finished Perlstein's *The Invisible Bridge*, a surrealist drama about the so-called rise of the ever comical penis in a suit, Ronald Reagan. Fortunately, the story has a happy ending, where Reagan is denied his shot at the 1976 Republican presidential nomination at the last minute. The last line is a quote from one of the Wise Men Pundits of Washington, who notes that at age 65, Reagan is far too old to consider another run for the Presidency.

What a relief that was! The whole book long I feared that nothing could stop the Sainted Ronaldus Maximus. Can you imagine how catastrophic a Reagan presidency would have been for this country? We dodged a bullet there, for sure ya betcha.

Now after that chilling ride of absurdist horror, I turn my attention to something more down to earth and believable: *Don Quixote*. But not until I finish up the Italo Calvino collection of *CosmiComics*. Calvino introduces protagonists who

have existed and evolved since the begining of time, with generally unpronounceable names (Qfwfq is the main “guy”), and who are not human – in fact, what they are beyond pure existence or unicellular *being* is usually uncertain<fn>Though Qfwfq’s romantic interest is called Priscilla, and it appears she evolves into a camel over the eons.</fn> – but who embody more humanity and insight into the human condition than most so-called flesh and blood co-called characters in 98.43% of so-called fiction. That a work of such playful, meta style evokes such heartbreak and yearning is testimony to a writing style that is learned, witty, tender, and above all, light. I cannot recommend this one more highly.

So many books. So little time.

Happy Feet

Main reason this is My Favorite World? This:



Petechial Rash – Very Nasty

That’s my ankle/foot almost exactly six months ago. The rest of my pitiful corpus looked pretty much the same. Somehow I’ve made it to the end of 2014, and there were a couple of times I wasn’t so confident I’d get here. So, yeah pretty much good that I didn’t die.<fn>YMMV</fn>

My New Year’s Resolution for 2015 is simple and concise: stay the fk out of the hospital. I wish the same for all of you. Thanks for sharing My. Favorite. World.

My Favorite World #5



My Favorite World comes at a good time this week. Sometimes the whole MFW ethos can find itself smothered by *stuff*. But then you just open your eyes, and there it is. MFW.

I just spent a long weekend with extended family, an even dozen of us. A generally good time sprinkled with the occasional fraughtiness, not unlike most family gatherings. Yesterday, a long day of travel that began at 9 am and was capped by weather-socked airports and a short train ride from the airport to friendly local bed space. Good job Delta, you almost got us all the way home.

This morning, up early, back on the train to the airport. J and the kids stayed with the plane option. For reasons too tedious to recount,<fn>”Gadzooks,” cries the reader. “Too tedious for *this* blog? Unpossible!”</fn> I ended up driving

home from ATL. Finally arrived here cold, smelly, and tired a mere 32 hours after departure.

Shorter: travel during the holiday season is not in any way part of My Favorite World. Humbug!

Ah, but then I arrive safely at home and hearth, and there reposes Maggie, the Wonder Dog of Wonderment, holding court at fireside. This fine beast, who chose us by wandering into our driveway 8 years ago while we lived in the uncharted swamps on the other side of Ponchartrain, discharges all hint of negativity with the slightest nuzzle and yawn.

Maggie is a Catahoula Leopard Cur, the state dog of Louisiana, and a breed that remains unrecognized by the poncey toffs at the American Kennel Club<fn>Those blackballing bastards, too busy sitting on their loathesome, spotty behinds squeezing blackheads, not caring a tinkers cuss &c.</fn>. This breed is known for its acuity as a herding and hunting dog, and is often trained in packs of three to chase down and subdue wild boar. That's one of these bad mammas:



This creature will fuck. you. up.

That's some serious anti-beast right there. I sometimes ponder Maggie, the WDoW, and try to extrapolate her enthusiasm for chasing squirrels into something akin to the fervor it must take to undo a boar. To no avail. Because let's be honest and ruthlessly so: Maggie the WDoW is more of an area rug than

hard charging anti-beast killer, the gentlest of curs who wants nothing more than to get under blankets or snuggle with her favorite boy.



These creatures will not.

And then, too, also, too…I am back home with my fabulous wife and kids, our extra daughter, and my mom. It is pouring rain, the fire is crackling, and there is a cold IPA waiting for me to s(l)ink into the holiday season. With all that, what else could this be except My. Favorite. World.

And also, too, as well…thanks to everyone who stops by to read these rambles. The traffic has been much busier than I dreamed, and I appreciate the comments and likes and shares more than I should – but given my inherent shallowness, less than you might expect.

Merry Whatever It Is That Makes You Happy With What You Have To Be Happy With, and a Most Favorite Worldish New Year.