

ETA OIN SHRDLU

C.K. Starr's newsletter to family and friends
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Scenes from Village Life

M O R N I N G S A T O B R O N I K R O M

I acquired my small house in the Caura Valley of Trinidad's Northern Range, in 2000. It is the 24th place I have lived as an adult, and for all I know it may be the last. I would just as soon not move again.

Obronikrom sits on a one-hectare hillside -- you can get a (fuzzy) look at it on GoogleEarth at 10° 40'58.47"N 61° 21'55.80"W -- of seriously abused land, covered mostly with scrubby secondary vegetation. I am trying to hurry up the process of restoring the natural forest by planting seedlings of crappo (*Carapa guianensis*) and west-indian locust (*Hymenaea courbaril*). Just above the house and to one side are a few fruit trees, plus a fine big mango tree that produces inferior fruit but fine shade over the patio. Across the road below the house is a pleasant stream. Occasionally on a warm, clear day, it is my pleasure to go and lie in the water with a Guinness or other refreshment.

Not every awakening is a flock of larks at Obronikrom, but many are. Often I take my coffee on the patio, looking around at the trees and whatever is moving in them. In the previous issue I remarked on visitations by raucous parrots at this time. This is also a good occasion to re-acquaint myself with the various colonies of social wasps and stingless bees about the house. The house wrens and tarantula on the porch are likewise to be greeted.

Sometimes I wake to find the buckets that I set under the eaves replete with rain water, and I am inspired to forego the indoor shower in favour of ablutions on the patio. On those occasions I positively feel like a red-hot child of nature. Gazing about at my domain, I find myself thinking "Oh yes, this is the life."

A Reader's Notes

THE PLAYS OF EUGENE O'NEILL

by Allen J. Starbuck

Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), I would say, is the greatest of all American playwrights. I was reminded of this on reading Travis Bogard's *Contour in Time* recently, which analyzes all the plays and relates them to O'Neill's life. This latter aspect interests me most, especially in relation to the last plays.

O'Neill began writing around 1912, when he spent time in a tuberculosis sanatorium. Still only 24, he had worked as a seaman, seen a fair amount of the world, been married and fathered a child. At about this time he became divorced and didn't see his child again for some years. He began by writing one-act plays, few of which are well remembered now. This suggests that he served a fairly long apprenticeship before beginning to write the plays for which he is famous in the late 1910s early 1920s. His first hit, *Beyond the Horizon*, was produced around 1920 and won him a Pulitzer Prize.

O'Neill produced many more plays, especially in the 1920s, and tried many experiments to make their meaning clear. In at least one he used masks, in another music, in another asides, in which the characters said what they were really thinking. However, in

time he abandoned such experiments in favor of trusting his actors to express what he wanted. His plays also gained increasing depth. The next to last was autobiographical, and the last was also closely related to his personal life. He was also unusual in continuing to improve the level of his art throughout his life. Such a thing is not unknown among artists, but it is also not unusual for artists to do their best work when relatively young, then plateau. O'Neill seems to have had a psychological dynamic pushing him to continual improvement. He had something specific to express, and he was never quite satisfied that he had done so.

One of his later projects, which remained incomplete, was a cycle intended to comprise about 10 plays. It was to revolve around one or two families, so that each play would have to correspond accurately with the others, the whole a true cycle. The intended title was *A Tale of Possessors Self Dispossessed* and was to reflect contradictions in the history of the United States. Only one or two of the plays remain. He appar-

ently destroyed several others, with which he was dissatisfied, and may have given up the cycle because of its sheer, daunting immensity.

An early theme of O'Neill's was the conflicts between a sensitive, unworldly protagonist and the materialistic world around him. Later, his themes became more sophisticated. In *A Touch of the Poet*, the characters use dreams to isolate themselves from each other and avoid pain. By avoiding pain, however, they cut themselves off from life, and thus dispossess themselves, an important theme of the final plays.

In *A Touch of the Poet*, the main male character has lived his dream to a degree. He begins in the minor Irish nobility, serves in the British army, where he takes a Spanish woman for a lover, then kills her husband in a duel. Cashiered from the army, he sells his castle in Ireland and emigrates to the United States, where he buys a bar in a poor location, which disposes of any financial dreams. He still dreams of aristocracy until a conflict with his wife (who has dreams of her own) becomes serious. At the climax of the play he escapes through the door into his bar, abandoning his wife, which shuts off the possibility of either retrieving his aristocratic status or finding a more realistic way to live. His wife, meanwhile, visualizes a doorway in her head through which she can lose herself in madness whenever real life becomes unbearable. Towards the end of the play she goes irrevocably through the doorway, abandoning her son, leaving him desperately alone.

This theme reappears in *The Iceman Cometh*, set in a run-down bar/hotel in New York. All the characters are down and out. They drink in the bar and lodge in rooms upstairs. They hang on to life because they still have dreams, and at the beginning of the play they're all waiting for Hickey, a traveling salesman who always throws a big party when he comes to visit. This time, though, things are different. Hickey spends time talking with each individual, trying to persuade them to give up their dreams. They are all at a loss how to react until the end of the play, when Hickey explains.

He has been married a long time, and his wife is a sweet, forgiving woman. It also seems that she has much to forgive, as Hickey is an alcoholic and repeatedly unfaithful to her. Nevertheless, every time he has to confess to her, she always forgives him, leaving him feeling guiltier than before. His dream has been to fulfill her expectations in him, but he lacks the self-control. Eventually, he has had to take a drink and be unfaithful again. Finally, he cannot tolerate the accumulated guilt, so he kills her, and a peace that he has never felt before descends upon him. And that is why he is

preaching to the others to give up their dreams. Hickey confesses the murder, the police come and arrest him, and he leaves behind a savage party of all those who were tempted to do what he preached. They have now reached the comforting conclusion that he was crazy, what he said can be disregarded. Their dreams remain in command, and they will never break out of them to live in reality.

O'Neill's next play, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, was autobiographical. It shows a day in the life of O'Neill, his parents and older brother, the interplay between the four being the raw material from which he wrote his plays. His father is a well-known actor who had made money over the years in the second-rate play *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He seems to have been motivated by a desire for financial security and social acceptance, which he has not achieved. The elder O'Neill involves himself in unsuccessful real estate schemes, and the Irish are still regarded as second-class citizens, so that his dream may be unreachable. O'Neill (Edmund in the play) despises his father for debasing his artistic talent. His mother has also been an actor, touring with her husband for years, but she, too, has betrayed her dreams. The first of these was to be a nun, the second to be a pianist. She is a morphine addict, her version of the dream that isolates from life.

The elder brother, Jamie, is a failure in many ways. He is an alcoholic, largely because of his Oedipal feelings for his mother, and blames Edmund's difficult birth for her morphine addiction. He influences his younger brother by interesting him in writing, but also by introducing him to alcohol and prostitutes, the only things that can relieve Jamie's Oedipal frustrations. He wants to destroy himself and his brother. Edmund — representing O'Neill — is equivocal, not facing his problems, avoiding confrontation. The feelings of each character towards Edmund are clear, while Edmund's towards the others are not.

According to Bogard, writing this play seems to have been a harrowing experience for O'Neill. He would end his working day with his eyes red and swollen from crying. It must have taken great discipline to continue working on so painful a project. His relationship with his brother may have been the primary cause of the pain, as well as a primary source for the situations he wrote about. Characters in his plays are often doubled and deeply conflicted. Bogard quotes Otto Rank to the effect that fantasies of the double, who exactly resembles one-

self, and is able to steal the rewards one has earned, often reflect sibling rivalry. In *Long Day's Journey Into Night* Jamie says that Edmund is his creation, his Frankenstein's monster. O'Neill may also have felt that way, with no clear idea of where Jamie ended and he began. This may explain much of the motivation for writing his plays, as a way of finding out who he was, and just where he differed from Jamie. He may have been grateful to Jamie for encouraging his creativity, but he also knew that Jamie hated him, and must have deeply resented that.

A Moon for the Misbegotten, the last of O'Neill's plays, was about his brother and evidently meant to exorcise his family's torment. Following their father's death shortly after O'Neill began writing, their mother had stopped taking morphine and managed to stay away from it for the rest of her life. However, with her death, Jamie O'Neill came apart. He was on a train, taking her body to the cemetery, when he got drunk and had sex with a prostitute on top of the coffin. In the play his female psychological counterpart talks and acts rough and indecent, but is actually a virgin. She is also a sensitive soul, a veteran of a hard and disastrous life, who can understand Jamie. The misbegotten, Bogard points out, can understand each other where the more fortunate cannot. She seems to be the only one who can give him the motherly acceptance (which no one else has wanted from her) that allows him to lay his sorrows at her feet, although only for one night.

Wandering

FOLLOWING THE TOUTE TOUTE PETITE ROUTE

In the summer of 2008, while based in Berlin, I made three short trips to visit other institutions, in Poland, France and Denmark. During each of these, my hosts took me on a wonderful extra-curricular ride into the countryside. I would like to give a little description of the first two of these.

My purpose in Poland was to visit the Jan Dzierżon museum in Kluczbork, Upper Silesia. Dzierżon (1811-1906) was one of the three most important honey-bee biologists of all time, yet he remains virtually unknown outside of Central Europe.

I rode an express train to Wrocław, followed by a lovely ride south on a very ordinary local train. No plush seats, no assigned seats, and a lot of quick stops, not at all express. On a nice early-summer day in a novel country this was the way to travel. And the place names. What a gas to read them — and even more to try to pronounce them — as we pulled into the stations. Real polish names like Bierutów, Długoteka, Domaszowice, Młokicie, Namysłów, Nieciszów, Oleśnica, Solniki Wielkie, Wołczyn all between Wrocław and Kluczbork.

Kluczbork (pop. 26,000) is set among gently

Bogard makes clear that in real life Jamie O'Neill never had the good fortune to encounter anyone who could relieve his torment. After his mother died he drank himself to death, eventually dying in a mental hospital, as he was physically and mentally unable to care for himself. O'Neill wrote this play □□ which his wife said she hated, as he also did in time □□ then, out of kindness and forgiveness of his brother for any harm he had tried to inflict, as well as an attempt to exorcise his family's problems.

The problems with the play may have started in the writing. It may have plunged O'Neill into deep depression, which would explain why his wife hated it. The production also did not go well. Among other things, it ran into censorship troubles and ended out of town, never reaching Broadway. By this time O'Neill may have been too discouraged to try to fix what seemed to be wrong with it. In addition, the O'Neill family (with his second wife) had been in crisis for some years. His daughter Oona had married Charlie Chaplin, a man some 40 years her senior, his oldest son had committed suicide, and the younger son was a drug addict. All of these problems seem to indicate that they felt unloved, just as the older O'Neills had. Instead of exorcising the family problems, it must have seemed that he had reawakened them.

rolling hills with scattered villages. Museum director Janina Baj and her husband, Edward, were waiting for me. We drove out to supper in an outlying village. When the question of drinks came up, I expressed an interest in some genuine polish vodka (wódka). In fact, I knew what particular kind I would like to try, żubrówka. They got a kick out of that. Not only did I know about their prized polish product but could pronounce it. I had heard that Poles are pleased when a foreigner makes the effort, and of course I was more than happy to oblige. I had two large shots of żubrówka and was really digging the scene.

The next day was even grander. The museum, housed in a grand old castle at what used to be the city gate, is a lovely place. Janina gave me a guided tour of the four exhibit floors. The overall theme is the relationship between beekeeping and especially Dzierżon and everyday life, with a fine emphasis on beekeeping in folk art. And a nice progression in hive design and some other technical aspects of beekeeping.

In the enclosed yard out back was something even more amazing. There were more of

the statue-beehives and, get this, several sculptors were at work on yet more of them. Plainly, this particular folk-art is not endangered.

I wanted to peruse the museum archive, which turned out to be fairly easy, as there is an orderly register of 1676 numbered items, including books, medals and diplomas, but mainly about 1200 letters. I spent a happy two hours going through the register page by page, taking plenty of notes.

About noon we drove out into the country. It was glorious to skip through the silesian countryside on a fine day, and I was in absolutely no hurry for it to end. We went first to Łówkowice, where Dzierżon was born, then to a nearby place to visit the house where he spent his last year. It is now an open-air museum with statue-hives, original Dzierżon hives and a working bee-yard of Langstroth hives.

I had gotten a fine batch of postcards in the museum shop, so the question of finding the post office arose as we returned to Kluczbork. Janina pointed it out to me, and I asked her to pull over so I could get out, but she wasn't allowed to stop there and couldn't stop until we got back to the museum. By that time I was no longer sure where the post office was. So, I headed in that direction, stopping twice to ask directions. What a gas to be speaking Polish with genuine Poles. My pronunciation must be okay, as I wasn't misunderstood during the three days I was there. I found the post office, elicited the information that it would take 2.40 zł for a card within Europe and 2.50 for anywhere else and got some good-looking stamps.

I was sitting in a park the next day, when a pleasant young man detached himself from a group of idlers to pan-handle from me. I tried to end the matter by telling him that I couldn't speak Polish -- he had the sense not to protest "But you are speaking Polish." -- but he took the initiative of going back to ask his buddies how to ask for two zloty in German and then came back to me with the request. It was all done with such grace and good cheer that I had no thought of refusing.

Cultural Conjectures

FINDING YOUR WAY BACK HOME TO BURMA-SHAVE

One day not so very long ago I was in Ohio for my friend Margaret Starbuck's 90th birthday party. A bunch of us were sitting around socializing when Margaret's sister, Dorothy Tharpe, and I got to remembering Burma-Shave signs.

The next month it was Dijon with the goal of conducting an archival interview with Charles Noirot (1922-2010). Prof Noirot, a specialist on termites, was one of the leading figures in the post-World War II flowering of social-insects studies. I recorded a good interview with him on the day of arrival, and my host, Christian Bordereau, later scanned and transmitted a wonderful set of photos from Noirot's personal heroic period in the field in Africa.

Dijon is in the Burgundy region. The next day the Bordereaux took me on a grand drive south through the main wine district along the Route des Grands Crus, with Christian lecturing from time to time. The Côte d'Or extends from Dijon to Beaune, and we followed it the whole way.

At Beaune I toured the Hôtel-Dieu hospital. It is an impressive establishment, a hospital founded in the 15th century by the chancellor of the most remembered Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good. At the same time, I got to thinking that, as with any charity effort of the ruling class, it was far removed from anything empowering of those it was supposed to help.

And then we headed back to Dijon, driving up the western side of the ridge this time. The great vineyards were all on the eastern slope of a very long ridge that runs just about the whole way. As we saw on the way back, there are more on the western slope, but not the great stuff. It was a grand and sunny day for a drive in the country.

We went right through Gevrey-Chambertin, where I got a distant look at the old castle. As we descended toward a village in a valley and she was looking at the map while Christian drove, Jacqueline Bordereau twice mentioned a "toute toute petite route". I thought that was dreadfully charming and wished I could have made up a song about it.

Burma-Shave was a brushless shaving cream introduced in 1925, discontinued in 1963. I'm not sure I know anyone who ever used this product, but its advertising was found and noticed throughout most of the USA. A

Burma-Shave ad comprised a series of five or six small signs spaced out along a roadside, always ending with the brand name. The 600-some known texts are found in Frank Rowsome's *The Verse by the Side of the Road*.

The early ads were mostly prosaic pitches, but long before I moved to the USA in 1962 they had turned humorous, with a distinct punch-line on the penultimate sign. I remember the keen interest I felt every time a new set came into sight, always ready to see if this one would be especially memorable.

None of the young people present had evidently seen a Burma-Shave ad, and many appeared entirely unaware of this bit of pop culture, so Dorothy and I regaled them with those we could remember.

Most ads were about the virtues shaving, e.g.:

A peach looks good / With lots of fuzz / But
man's no peach / And never wuz / Burma-
Shave

I use it too / The bald man said / It keeps
my face / Just like my head / Burma-Shave

And here are two that I recall seeing in Ohio:

Ben met Anna / Made a hit / Neglected
beard / Ben-Anna split / Burma-Shave

Dear lover boy / Your picture came / But
your doggone beard / Won't fit the frame /
Burma-Shave

The company also went in for road-safety messages,

with or without reference to shaving:

Don't take a curve / At 60 per / We'd
hate to lose / A customer / Burma-
Shave

Train approaching / Whistle squealing /
Stop / Avoid that run-down feeling /
Burma-Shave

It's best for one / Who hits the bottle /
To let another / Use the throttle /
Burma-Shave

On his Foreign Affairs album, Tom Waits has a song about a girl hitchhiking to get back to a mythical place called Burma-Shave. I believe he sang it the night I heard him in Georgia in 1980, but his performance so utterly blew my mind that it's hard to be sure.

I might as well add an unrelated conjecture while I'm at it. In the previous issue I wrestled with the question of why the rational intellectual tradition is so much better developed in Scotland than Ireland. I was reduced to the uneasy hypothesis that it comes down to a difference in religion.

There is reason to think that this hypothesis, while crude, was in the right direction. The golden age of scottish culture was roughly from 1750 to 1830. It opened at a time when the church was rapidly losing the power to enforce orthodoxy. (If David Hume had lived a century earlier, he would have been in deep trouble.) Meanwhile, a stultifying orthodoxy continued in Ireland.

GO, YOU HAIRY CATALONIANS

Barcelona F.C. is arguably the righteousest professional sports team in the world. For one thing, it is a focus of catalonian nationalism, so that fan support served a decidedly subversive function during the long Franco dictatorship. Any game in which Barcelona defeats Franco's beloved Real Madrid is cause for celebration. In addition, Barcelona is publicly owned -- i.e. owned by the fans -- and the players wears no sponsorship logos except that of Unicef, which the team does for free to promote an organization in which they believe.

It was a pleasure, then, to see Barcelona win the

UEFA Champions League last year, defeating Manchester United. Manchester is owned by an american multi-millionaire and will advertise anything if paid enough. It was a battle between the righteous and the odious. It puts one in mind of last year's SuperBowl, in which the publicly-owned Green Bay Packers prevailed over the sleazy-millionaire-owned Pittsburgh Steelers.

That's not all. Two years ago Barcelona won the World Cup in South Africa and this year the European Cup in Poland/Ukraine for the second time in a row. Sure, the uniforms said

"Spain", and some of the players were from other teams, but anyone could see that the world champion was Barcelona with a few trimmings. I read some nonsense about how the spanish national team had brought the different regional groups together, so that even the Catalonians were setting aside their differences with the central government for now. One wonders how someone so clueless gets to write for *Newsweek*.

I remember very well when Spain (i.e. Barcelona) won the european championship in 2008. I happened to be returning to Berlin the day of the final against Germany. Riding the bus from the airport to my institute, I found myself surrounded by young Germans, faces painted, on their way to watch the game on a big screen in a public square. As my stop approached, I started making my way

toward the door. The opportunities for provocation were rich. I moved slowly through the throng, remarking such things as "Perdón, señora. ¡Viva España!" and "Con su permiso. ¡Viva España vencedora!" Presently, they caught on to what I was saying, and we entered a good-natured argument on the matter. Switching to speaking spanish-accented (so I supposed) German, I asked them in mock astonishment if they really thought Germany could defeat Spain. You're kidding, right? Well, you will at least admit that Spanish is the most elegant of all languages. No? Now I know you're joking. Of course, if it had been after the game, which Germany lost, I don't think I would have risked pissing them off.

THREE AMBITIONS

In issue no. 41 I set forth a list of 50 things I would like to do before I die. I have already done about half of them, so I definitely need to get cracking. You may well have thought "That's nice, but doesn't he have any real ambitions?" As a matter of fact, I do.

Culinary

I want to create a really devious curry. It will be marvelously spicy, fairly hot but not such as to distract from the many flavours vying for the diner's attention. And while the diner is in awed distraction at these contending flavours, the hot pepper will sneak up behind and put the vice grips to his eyes. And in that moment of maximum confusion, a torrent of tears of joy will flow.

Show business

The one thing I would love to do in this area is an imitation of a chicken laying an egg. I'm sure Marcel Marceau could have done this wonderfully well. My mother once told me that he was such a master of illusion that he could get on a horse that wasn't there and ride it off the stage. I have no doubt that he could have laid an imaginary egg and actually made you see it.

As noted in issue no. 37, There are two things to

bear in mind about a chicken. First, when in her prime she lays an egg every day. And second, by the time she is ready to lay her egg a chicken has quite forgotten what happened yesterday. A chicken's life if one of utter, flabbergasted joy once a day, something that should certainly be brought to the vaudeville stage.

Teaching

As far as I am aware, no one at my university has ever delivered a baptist biology lecture. I would like to be the first. Biology, I am convinced, is replete with themes that are just bending over, begging for the baptist treatment. And when the disquisition is in full cry, the students in the front rows will be hurd to murmur "Mmm mmm, that's right." Those in the middle will exclaim "Oh yes! Aint it the truth?" And the students at the back will stand and call out "Lecture, brother! Lecture!" I've got my heart set on that.

The idea for this came to me as I sat gasping at the end of the preaching scene in Jimmy Cliff's *The Harder They Come*.

Appreciations

SAUCE WE GOT

With this issue we open a new series, designed to let your editor and various others sound off on things they dig.

As a young fellow I read somewhere -- or imagined that I read or that someone should have

written -- that sauces are the core of french cooking, and I embraced it. I have no idea whether it is true -- having eaten plenty of food in France, I have some familiarity with the finished product, but not how it got that

way -- but it is such an attractive concept that one wants it to be true. Sauces have certainly loomed large in my many years as a trencherman. I have already dealt with pepper sauce in issue no. 43. Here I will remark on a few others that have touched the Starr life.

Mayonnaise

You might not think of mayo as a sauce, but why not? It is what dresses up earth-apple salad, macaroni salad, egg salad, deviled eggs -- ah yes, deviled eggs -- and makes them fit for polite company. When looking for mayo in the supermarket, read the ingredients. Believe it or not, some companies actually put sugar in it, evidently as a means of avenging themselves on humanity for slights real or imagined. The Hellmann family wouldn't dream of committing such an outrage, which is one reason its product is so superior.

Better yet, make your own in an ordinary kitchen blender. This has the advantages that you can a) use olive oil, and b) put in additives to give it some edge. And why shouldn't your homemade mayo have some edge through inclusion of garlic, hot pepper and/or paprika? One of the cardinal rules in my kitchen is that a sauce should be strong enough to defend itself. In case there's a rumble.

Soya Sauce

There's nothing mysterious about soya sauce. It's just a very flavourful way of getting your salt. I seldom use it in cooking, but it is welcome on the table for dishes that call for a bit of salt at this late stage.

Fermented Fish Sauce

I have a long history with this salty and decidedly smelly south-east asian sauce. I first encountered it in an oriental-foods store in Georgia, a bottle of mysterious stuff from Thailand. Who could resist? I took it home, where I and my housemates in the Soul Pad grooved on its otherworldly smelliness. The idea that people would even think to invent such a substance and that they would then keep it in their houses and put in food passed all understanding. We dubbed it Repugnant Fish Sauce -- Repug for short -- and took to trying it on all manner of comestibles. It was a grand experience in cross-cultural bafflement.

Years later, I consumed it often in the Philippines, where it is known as *patis*. It was intimately involved in one of the two or three gourmet moments I can recall having experienced. I have always considered the gourmet habit quite frivolous,

and I was past 30 before I understood how one could ever take it seriously. I like food as much as the next person, and I have eaten some truly delicious dishes from time to time, but it's still just food? Why in the world would anyone make such a big deal of it?

I stopped at a little eatery late one night and got some stewed yardbird livers with rice. There was no soya sauce at the table, and I couldn't be bothered to request it, so I just splashed some *patis* on the mixture. After all, it was salty, an acceptable substitute, right?

With the very first bite, an amazed emotion swept over me. It wasn't not bad, nor was it pretty good, not even delicious. It was delicious, a sensation far beyond the ordinary appreciation of tasty food. And in that amazed moment I understood the gourmet impulse. I still think it's ridiculous, but it is now a ridiculousness within my grasp.

Salsa Cruda

Like pepper sauce, this is a wonderful all-purpose table condiment. By "all-purpose" I mean that a non-fruit dish that is not improved by it is probably not worth eating. Macaroni and earth-apple salads are preferred to green salads mainly because they are hospitable to pepper sauce and salsa cruda. And why put syrup on your pancakes when hot sauce will lend it real character and let it bite back? As for ice cream, well, there is no good reason to eat it.

I confess that I have never made salsa cruda -- what Americans usually mean when they say "salsa" and don't mean music -- and know it only from the commercial product. Still, it is positively on my list. And if I ever get good at it, Mark will undoubtedly be happy to douse his ulcers in it.

Shito (or shito)

There are several west-african sauces that I willingly consume, but this is the only one that I positively insisted on having every day in Ghana. Shito -- stress on the second syllable, with glottal stop -- is rather different from west-indian pepper sauce, but it has the same role in giving worthwhile dishes some added edge and, if you lay it on thick, provoking tears of joy and the flow of endorphins. It is made of powdered shrimp or fish, powdered hot pepper and other spices in oil. I miss shito. Fortunately, it is available in pre-mixed packages, just stir into oil. I am hoping Jonas Addae will bring some back from Ghana next summer.

Kuchela

You can think of this west-indian sauce as roughly in a class with chutney, although the ingredients are quite different. Chutney is the indian counterpart of western relish and its typical form has a great deal of mango in its smooth flow, while kuchela is stiffer, more granular stuff. It is made of dry grated green mango (or coconut) and spices in mustard oil.

Kuchela is wonderfully spicy, but not very hot, so one needn't worry about adding too much. And it has a wonderful set of flavours of its own, not just as a way of bringing accent to the main event. I have often thought of casting aside all restraint and having an unadorned kuchela sandwich. What holds me back is the fact that my supply comes from the mothers of some of my students at irregular intervals, so that I try to make it last.

Mustard

The uses of mustard are rather limited. It forms a fine addition to hotdogs, hamburgers, and sometimes earth-apple salad, but I haven't tried it in scrambled eggs and am unlikely to do so.

Pepper sauce is like sex. When it's good it's downright marvelous, and when it's bad it's still pretty good. Mustard isn't like that. This was impressed upon me by Allan W. Hook on a trip to St Vincent many years ago. Getting off the boat in Kingstown, Al went to take care of one bit of business, while I went to the grocery store for supplies. Later, when he saw what we had, Al threw an authentic hissy-fit. The cause of his ire was the inferior processed american yellow mustard that I had gotten, instead of the real european-style stuff. Now, Al is a tolerant guy, but on this occasion he

told me categorically that I was never again to insult him with such a wretched product. I immediately saw that he was right, and from that day forth it is only real mustard for me.

Barbecue sauce

Barbecue sauce has even more limited application than mustard. As far as I know, it's only good on barbecue. Avoid any that is noticeably sweet, as it is no better than ketchup. In fact, you can't go wrong spurning any barbecue sauce with sugar in it.

Poutine

Here is a fine, calorie-loaded dish to firm up the arteries. I am told that the name is slang for "mess" in Québec, where it was invented. Poutine starts with a batch of what Americans call freedom fries. A whole lot of curds is shaken onto the fries, and then hot gravy is poured over it. The gravy melts the curds, and the whole complex becomes a sticky mess. A very tasty sticky mess. Daily consumption of poutine cannot be good for the heart, but whenever I visit the Dominion of Canada I am pleased to indulge once or twice. The reason I include it among my appreciated sauces is that here is a concoction that makes something as bland as freedom fries really quite tasty. Unless you would prefer to sprinkle vinegar on them.

In discussing barbecue sauce, I mentioned ketchup. If my passing remark led you to suspect that ketchup has no good reason to exist, then you have been paying attention.

Appreciations

MY WONDERFUL, MODEST BALCONY GARDEN

by Lynne Shivers

[This piece, by one of my high-school English teachers, was written at my request in the late summer of 2011. CKS]

For the past two years, I have lived in a retirement community in northwest Philadelphia. I live on the top (6th) floor, overlooking five acres of grass, large, old trees and a vegetable garden. All produce grown there goes directly to the kitchen.

Each apartment has a small balcony. Mine is L-shaped, 5 feet by 10 feet on one side, 4 feet by

8 feet on the other. On the larger side I have five containers in which I grow flowers and tomatoes. I also have placed three bird feeders, which hang above the plants.

Before I moved into the retirement community, the only gardening I had done was to plant spring bulbs around my house near the woods in southern New Jersey. But my small balcony on the top (sixth) floor was so inviting that I could not resist. I was going to put up bird feeders anyway, so why not add flowers?

I've been engaged in nonviolent social change for over forty years and have read a lot about Gandhi. It was a surprise, then, when someone quoted a statement attributed to Gandhi that I had never heard: "You don't understand social change until you have grown vegetables." I thought, I can always learn something new about social change, so I decided to grow grape tomatoes. (I chose these over cherry tomatoes, for their slightly sweeter taste and thinner skins.) However, the garden supply center had no grape tomatoes in stock this year, so I bought cherry tomatoes.

Last year, I bought nine tomato plants, since I had little idea what the yield would be, and other gardeners gave only vague answers. I was overwhelmed! So this year, I bought only six plants. They are doing quite well. A few little yellow flowers that precede the fruit are still blooming, but most have formed tiny green tomatoes that are getting fatter each day. I expect the yield will be between 200 and 300 tomatoes.

With regard to parallels between growing vegetables and social change, here are lessons I've relearned: (1) preparation is the hardest part, (2) there are no guarantees about the outcomes, (3) sometimes unexpected things develop, (4) and the outcome is frequently very sweet!

A rectangular planter holds two groups of violas, which are half size pansies, one orange and one light blue. I had planned to get regular pansies, just because I like their "faces", but the garden center was advertising violas, and I realized I could fit more of the smaller kind than regular pansies. In between the two groups, planted an arching grass. It gives definition to the flowers and adds height, and I like the shape of the arch.

In between the tomatoes and violas are three round clay pots about 20" in diameter. Clay is highly preferable to plastic, as it allows the roots to breathe. The pot on the left holds milkweed plants that are now at least three feet high, with masses of tiny white flowers. (They are the main food plant of monarch butterflies.) The milkweeds are next to five stalks of butterfly bush, all with buds or blooming purple flowers on the ends of the stalks. I am experimenting with these plants this year since I wanted to see if I could attract butterflies even six stories high! So far, even before the blossoms appeared, I've seen one small white butterfly?

The tall plants are grown in the back of the pot, and the low flowers are grown in the front, so they all can be enjoyed at once. In front of the butterfly-attracting plants I have placed a pink geranium, which tolerates summer heat in this region. It also adds a pleasant bright color. Next to it is an ivy that cascades down in front of the pot, adding more

visual interest.

To the right, the second clay pot holds a bunch of salvia in the back. This is a plant that grows spikes of deep blue flowers. I grew salvia last summer and like it. It gives height and color. On the left in front, I am growing rosemary, an herb that I don't use in cooking, but I like its appearance. It has no flowers, but has leaves shaped like deep green little spikes, giving contrast to the plants around it. Next to it is one of my favorite plants, dusty miller, also called silver dust. As its name implies, its leaves are a grey/silver color which spread out a little like cabbage leaves. It has no flowers, but offers wonderful color and textural contrast to the plants near it. And next to it is another geranium, this time a salmon color in slight contrast to the pink one.

The final clay pot holds a massive growth of catnip that is trying to take over! I bought a modest pot of catnip this spring for two cat friends of mine, Bandit and Shadow, but the catnip I planted last summer grew and shows no signs of wanting to share space with other plants! I will have to cut it back and teach it a lesson in sharing space. Half of the world's cats adore catnip, roll in it, get teary, and act drunk. The other half couldn't care less! As I did not need the new pot of catnip, I gave it to my cat friends' owner, who allows them to chew on its leaves at will. When I cut back my catnip, I will experiment with drying the leaves then stripping the dry leaves and offering them to Bandit and Shadow during the winter months. I'm fond of offering catnip to them, since I developed a serious case of asthma three years ago, which prevented me from keeping my own adorable cat, Lulu. She went to live with a friend. Lulu died a year ago.

In the same pot in front of the catnip is a group of zinnias, chosen for their color and heat tolerance. And next to them is a different kind of ivy that falls down in front of the pot, again, adding visual interest.

As if all this weren't enough, I also have my three bird feeders, which attract mainly house finches and sparrows, but also mourning doves and occasionally goldfinches, chickadees, cardinals, nuthatches, and in the winter, juncos. Even at the sixth floor, squirrels visit, and I have experimented with deterrents, since they, like the doves, eat too much seed. Capsaicin cream -- which does not affect the birds -- keeps the squirrels away from the birdfeeders until rain washes it away. I have found

that freeze dried garlic bits sprinkled onto the soil also keeps squirrels from digging and disturbing the roots.

My balcony is separated from my tiny living room by a sliding glass door, so I enjoy the garden all the time. As I reflect on it, I find that the Gandhian concept of experimenting has been a useful guide with my garden. If I find plants that please

me, I repeat them the next year. If they don't work, I'll try something new. At age 70, arthritis discourages from kneeling on the floorboards to develop a garden, but containers set on hard plastic milk cartons bringing the soil up to me, so I can sit and garden relatively free of joint pain!

When the summer growing season is over, I

Cultural Conjectures

A SQUIRREL BY ANY OTHER NAME

One day it struck my attention for no evident reason that the four words that I knew for those hyperactive little, tree-living mammals with the bushy tails all have quite a fine, elegant sound to them: squirrel (English), écureuil (French), Eichhörnchen (German), and ardilla (Spanish).

That got me to wondering whether this is a general phenomenon, whether it has pleased the peoples of the world to recognize squirrels as near-magical. So I went to some dictionaries and came up with the following mixed results:

Afrikaans	eekhorning
Azeri	sincab
Basque	urtxintxa
Catalonian	equirol
Czech	veverka
Danish	egern
Dutch	eekhoorn
Estonian	orav

Finnish	ovava
Hungarian	mókus
Icelandic	íkorni
Indonesian	bajing
Italian	scoiattolo
Polish	wiewiorka
Portuguese	equilo
Romanian	veverito
Russian	belka
Serbo-Croatian	vjeverica
Swedish	ekorre
Ukrainian	bilka

So, there you have it. Good-sounding names, for the most part, but some of them more cuddly than totemic. The slavic names, if I am not mistaken, are all diminutives, as are the romanian and of course the german name. This is unfortunate, but we cant have everything.

Wandering

A TURN IN THE SOUTH

After Francis joined me in Berlin for the month of July 2008, we decided to take a little driving tour of the south. I hadn't been there in 40 years, so it seemed like a fine way to spend three days.

It was grand to be on the road again with my boy. We got to noticing the variety of license plates around us. After a time we had seen plates from most of much of Europe: all three baltic countries, all three Benelux countries, all three scandinavian countries (but not Finland), Czechia and Slovakia, Slovenia, France, Hungary, Italy, plenty from Poland (especially trucks), Romania, and all three of the Russias (i.e. Great Russia, Little Russia [Ukraine] and White Russia [Belorus]), as well as the obvious three (Austria, Germany and Switzerland).

Our destination the first day was Günzburg, Bavaria, as Francis had long wanted to visit Legoland. At 31.50 euros, I had no thought of going in,

so I dropped him off with the understanding that I would be back when it closed at 19:00. There was a blue highway nearby, so I took a leisurely drive toward the south. I pulled into a village inn for a tall beer and had some pleasant conversation with the management. There were workmen talking very dialectically nearby, such a gas to hear them. "Grüß Gott" seemed to be the standard salutation, and when I left I got a pleasant "Adee".

At the same time, I reviewed our travel plan. The one indispensable destination was the village of Gaienhofen am Bodensee and my old high school on the north shore of the Lake of Constance between Germany and Switzerland. I had figured to head to nearby Ulm, then southwest toward Gaienhofen along blue highways, followed by a counter-clockwise loop around the lake before heading north again. Looking at the map, though, it occurred to me

that we were not very far from the eastern end of the lake, and we could simplify by making a clockwise loop instead. And so it was decided, as I sat over a beer and then a coffee somewhere on the western edge of Bavaria.

After Legoland closed we drove south until it pleased us to stop for the night in the nearby village of Boos.

The next day was one of my successfulest traveling days ever. We took our time getting up and hit the road under constant drizzle and a solidly gray sky. We reached Lindau, right by the border with Austria, then headed into a very long tunnel, plainly going under the water. Coming out, we found ourselves in a broad valley with high mountain ridges to the east and south. The Alps. I had said nothing to Francis about Austria, just letting it be assumed that we were staying in Germany. It was the same kind of sneaky thing I had done when we strolled across the border from Arizona into Mexico. And again, it worked perfectly. Francis hadn't looked very attentively at the map and seemed unaware of our direction. I complained at one point that I wasn't seeing any german license plates and would really like to have some Germans around us, please. Francis wondered why this part of Germany was so full of austrian tourists, until he caught on that he had just added a whole new country to his list.

We drove south for a while, then turned west into a swiss border station. Just a couple of questions, and we were on our way again. Francis was astounded. Switzerland! That made three countries in one day. But I had to tell him it wasn't Switzerland. It was Liechtenstein, whose borders are managed by Switzerland. We stopped at the post office for a lot of nice postcards and large, lovely stamps and then repaired to a hotel restaurant for refreshment and to write our cards. As it happened, the dinner rush was over, so the two staffers came to sit with us. One was from Slovenia, the other from Austria.

Then we hit the road again and were presently in Switzerland. We got onto a fine blue highway toward Konstanz, then onto wonderful blue Hwy 13 skirting the southern edge of the lake, which came in and out of view. Reaching the western end, we has some fumbling to cross the Rhine, but we didn't mind. It was all great fun. We even mistakenly we drove over a bridge into the spectacular old town of Öhningen, realized it was a dead end, and crossed back over into Switzerland. An end run at Stein am Rhein put us on the north side of the lake.

And then, by God, we were in Gaienhofen. We got lodging, stashed our stuff, and went to have

a look at the school. Physically, it is little changed, as I judged from scanning it on Google Earth, but there are changes on other levels. My old dormitory, the Schloßheim, still looks the same from the outside, but it is now a girls' dorm, so we don't know how it looks inside. Then to a bar for refreshment and to dig the local dialect, a real blast from the past.

I have been surprised at how short the distances seem. Land travel in this part of Europe seemed like a much bigger deal when I was a teenager. In one day we drove down from Bavaria into Austria, through Liechtenstein, into Switzerland and around the far end of the Bodensee, all during daylight hours without even rushing.

The next day, our last on the road, we took confusing blue highways in the general direction of Ulm, with a lot of fumbling. We would be heading toward X, following every sign toward X, and then we would come to a junction where plenty of other places but not X were mentioned on the sign. So we did a lot of back-tracking. That was how we found ourselves inside the town of Sigmaringen. We noticed a rather imposing castle up on the hill, and Francis suggested that as long as we were lost we might as well visit the castle. Now, if I had been better prepared I would have realized that Sigmaringen Castle was the seat of the catholic branch of the Hollenzollerns and a magnificent, evolving place, but the fact is that I had never heard of it. We had a fine guided tour and then went to try to find a way to escape from Sigmaringen.

In the decades since I had been in that part of the country I had quite forgotten how lovely it is. Or maybe as a teenager I just wasn't aware of it. It was such a pleasure to wander those blue highways on an acceptably clear summer day, coming upon surprises every now and then. We would come over a rise and there, spread out before us, would be a good-looking valley with a wonderful, jewel-like old village tucked away in it. I even came to see the church in the middle as a necessary part of the landscape, a break from the red-roofed houses.

We made plenty of stops. At one stop we were peeing by the side of the road when three different cars passing by honked at us. As soon as we got back to Berlin, Francis sent Kinky Friedman a card to advise him of the spread of Texas etiquette.

BECOMING A DIRTY OLD MAN

The nice thing about turning 60 was that I could finally be a dirty old man. One does not celebrate a birthday like that just anywhere, and I gave some thought to the right location before settling on Cusco, the capital of the Incan Empire and the focus of my jaunt with the Young Starrs through the Central Andes in the summer of 2009.

Hurrying back from Bolivia for the occasion, our bus left at 16:00 and came into Cusco just minutes before midnight. We got off the bus, walked into the terminal and out the other side and said yes to the soliciting taxi driver. How much to go to the Real Panaka Hotel? Eight soles. I wasn't about to bargain with that, and when we got there I told him I thought it was worth 10. While we were still heading up the road, it turned midnight, and Nova & Francis started singing Happy Birthday. I explained to the startled driver that I had just turned 60, and it had been decided long before that this would take place right here in the Navel of the World. He thought that was ever so jolly.

My birthday was a fairly lazy time, with several walks in nearby parts of the city. We happened upon an excellent bookstore, where I got five more folk-music records, and at a nearby store Francis got a couple more national soccer shirts. While I was sampling records with the help of the

knowledgeable sales clerk, a couple of tourists came in. Francis was just standing a couple of meters away, and I suppose if you ignore his nose he could pass for an andean Indian. The tourists evidently thought he was another clerk, and one of them addressed him in heavily French-accented Spanish. I stepped over to clear up the matter, remarking very cleverly that Francis "*parle espagnol come une vache française*." Ho ho. Well, maybe you would have had to be there.

Around nightfall we all went to a little hole-in-the-wall place that I had noticed just a couple of doors away from our hotel where we had a pretty fair meal and I was shocked at the bill, just three soles each. Why do they even bother to collect the money?

All visitors to the Andes are advised to partake of coca leaves against altitude sickness. We were happy to indulge every day and never had a touch of the sickness, although, truth to tell, we did it mostly because it was ethnic and quite tasty. I believe the kids took some coca candy back to Toronto (after removing the labels), their idea of a lark. One can imagine them telling their friends, "Hey, you guys, try this coca candy we got in Perú."

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

As noted below the masthead, on 3 September 1838, Frederick Douglass escaped from slavery. If you have not yet read that great man's autobiography, what are you waiting for?

Almost as strikingly, on this date in 1852 England changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. Not a big deal, you say. Long overdue, you say. Except that it removed 11 days, just like that. The people went to bed on 2 September and woke up on 14 September. There were riots, because they thought the government had robbed them of 11 days of their lives. This was long before football hooligans, in an age when it took a great deal to get the English heated up.