

arts & entertainment

Thought-provoking lunacy in Allen's unruffled book

Review By Bill Roberts
Without Feathers, by Woody Allen,
 Random House, New York \$7.95

"Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons. . . Whosoever loveth wisdom is righteous but he that keepeth company with fowl is weird. . . Of all the wonders of nature, a tree in summer is perhaps the most remarkable, with the possible exception of a moose singing 'Embraceable You' in spats."

Pithy, thought-provoking statements like these are typical of Woody Allen, and his new book, *Without Feathers*, is full of them. But Allen's talents go beyond the aphorism. What makes this book so lively are the many forms of his unique lunacy.

In the short story "The Whore of Mensa," we follow private detective Kaiser Lupowitz as he uncovers a ring of call girls who are willing to discuss intellectual subjects with any Joann—for a price.

Allen satirizes literary criticism in three pieces dealing with unrecognized "geniuses" and the true identities of Elizabethan writers. In "If the Impressionists Had Been Dentists," we read

the private letters of Vincent Van Gogh, D.D.S.

Two plays, *Death and God* compose more than half the book. We all knew Woody Allen could write dramatically; each of the six movies he's written was a success. Considering that his last film was called *Love and Death*, it's no surprise he has again tackled the big subjects.

But these two plays, unlike the movies, are so tightly constructed! Even in *God*, which features an on-stage phone call to Woody Allen and a couple of appearances by Tennessee William's character Blanche DuBois, there are neither wasted lines nor digressions detracting from the play's main point.

Woody Allen's main point is that there is no hope, we might as well give it up, but we ought to slide down the tube laughing. He got the book's title from Emily Dickinson's remark that "Hope is the thing with feathers." The reply of the Jewish kid from New York to the spinster poet from Massachusetts: "The thing with feathers has turned out to be my nephew. I must take him to a specialist in Zurich."



bernstein on words

That's been done correctly

By Theodore M. Bernstein

Something that's been done before. Here we go again settling a bet. Terrie Elain Leventhal of Philadelphia, saying that she has a bet with her boss, asks, "Is it grammatically correct to contract the words *that has* by using an apostrophe? The phrase in question in our office is, 'The thing that's impressed me most. . .'"

It's correct, all right, as you can discover by looking into any dictionary toward the start of the letter s. Now the question is, which is the one that's won the bet?

Reluctant adverbs. A sentence read, "The appeal was dismissed on the ground that it was untimely filed." Robert Townsend of Elkins Park, Pa., asks whether that word shouldn't be untimely or untimely, recalling a quotation that read, "We embraced friendly."

Although untimely doesn't sound like an adverb, it is one. Still, some words ending in y seem to fight off being turned into adverbs.

Although happy is happy to help out in a sentence such as "He sang happily,"

the word ugly screams and squawks when it has to play an adverbial role, as in, "He behaved ugly," despite the fact that it has that adverbial form.

Several other words—friendly, masterly, funny, kindly—are reluctant to appear in clumsy adverbial garb and so they are rarely used in that form.

When such words rebel, the thing to do is to give in and reword the sentence. That opening sentence above would have been more graceful if it had read, "The appeal was dismissed on the ground that its filing was untimely."

Word oddities. A scenario was originally used—and still is used—to refer to an outline of a film, play, opera or the like.

But within the last decade or so it has been taken up by politicians and journalists to designate a proposed course of action, often one that has been proposed before.

Most recently it was employed during New York City's financial troubles and employed so much that it has become a cliché.

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CINEMASCOPE:

By Robert Thurber

Six new movies grace the cinema scene this week, which, up until now, has been bleak to say the least. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* finally gets its Lincoln showing at the Stuart Theatre.

Best bets for the connoisseur of the silver screen include *Peeper*, a spoof of 1940s detective movies, and *Butley*, a classic with Alan Bates.

Cooper/Lincoln (54th and O) - *Gone with the Wind*, the classic tale of struggle in the Civil War.

Cinema Theatre (13th and P) - I - *Lisztomania*, (R) a Ken Russell film starring Roger "Tommy" Daltrey, Ringo Starr and Rick Wakeman. A brief sketch of Franz Liszt's life. (R) II - *The Man Eaters* with Burt Reynolds.

Douglas Theatres (13th and P) - I - *Peeper*, with Michael Cain and Natalie Wood. Best performance of the movie is turned in by Liam Dunn, playing a bungling confidence man who always turns up in the wrong place. (PG) II - Walt Disney's wonderful cartoon *Fantasia*. (G) III - *American Graffiti*. Richard Dreyfuss (of *Jaws* fame) heads

an excellent cast through an early 60s revival.

Hollywood and Vine Theaters (12th and Q) I - *Return of the Pink Panther* with comic genius Peter Sellers. (PG) II - *Under 14*. (X)

Plaza Theaters (12th and P) I - The American Film Theatre's *Butley* with Alan Bates. Director Harold Pinter expertly stages this play about marriage relationships. (PG) II - *Apple Dumpling Gang*. Another Walt Disney flick for 14 and under. (G) III - *Rooster Cogburn* (. . . and the Lady). From those people who brought us *True Grit*, another western saga of rough men (John Wayne) and even rougher women (Katharine Hepburn). (PG) IV - Diana Ross in *Mahogany*. A story about a star on the rise.

Stuart Theatre (13th and P) - *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Medieval farce from six of the craziest Englishmen alive. "Say the right word and the duck flies down."

State Theater (14th and O) - James Coburn and Charles Bronson team up for *Hard Times*. (PG)



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