

RICHARD DEMARCO – Thoughts on the ending of 2020 and the beginning of THE NEW YEAR 2021

I am writing this on the **Twelfth Day of Christmastide** on the **Feast of the Epiphany**, so it is written in the hope that it will be possible for those receiving it to consider it as Christmas message of goodwill.

On the last day of 2020, I re-read the text of the Edinburgh University Festival Lecture given by **Professor George Steiner** entitled '**A Festival Overture**' at Edinburgh University's **McEwan Hall** on **11th August 1996**. This lecture was in celebration of the 50th Edinburgh Festival. The opening paragraph provides me with much food for thought regarding the impact of the Edinburgh Festival upon my life in Edinburgh. The text is as follows with particular reference to **Shakespeare's play 'Twelfth Night'** and therefore to the fact that, on 6th January, the **Christian Feast of the Epiphany** celebrates the arrival of the **Three Wise Kings**, offering gifts to the **Second Person of the Blessed Trinity** as a new-born child in the town of Bethlehem during the reign of **King Herod** under the **Pontius Pilate's** Roman governorship of Judea.

"The roots of words go to the heart of things. This heart can be manifold, even self-contradictory. FESTI, the Latin designation both for days in which business or affairs of civic concern can be conducted and for holidays, for days set aside in celebration of the gods. Feste, in Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's unfathomable clown, in whom the music of merriment and that of desolation are inextricable. 'Festivals' come to be the language via OLD FRENCH and ITALIAN. They are garlanded (festooned). Spencer sees the solemn joys in the whole etymological constellation. But there are also, and immemorably, feasts for the dead, a FESTIVITAS ancient as the funeral games for Patroklos in the ILLIAD. Whatever its joys, a festival, because it sets aside normal time, because it assembles human beings in a unison of feeling, will comport a touch of mortality. Again, an unnerving ambiguity inhabits the dictionary: a SATURNALIA explodes under the aegis of the god of Melancholy, a CARNIVAL, be it in Naples or in Mexico, parades its grinning skulls. 'Come away, come away death' sings, Feste to Orsino in a line whose magical duplicity enacts beyond paraphrase or logical justification, the sacred sadness, the TRISTITIA which gives to a true festival its joyful gravity."

I am therefore thinking of the vital role of **Feste** and Shakespeare's play 'Twelfth Night'. I must focus on the truth implanted in the first paragraph of George Steiner's lecture on what is the true nature of the Edinburgh Festival and the serious role of the clown or the comic actor. As such, he or she now dominates in recent years the programme of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the form of the stand-up comedian whose *raison d'être* is to evoke non-stop laughter. In doing so, the comic ignores the fact that, in the ancient Greek concept of theatre, the Mask of Comedy was to be irrevocably linked to that of Tragedy. This meant that theatre, at its most profound level, associated the sound of human laughter with the sight of human tears.

Last night, I was reading notes on Geoffrey Chaucer's '**The Franklin's Tale**', my favourite of **The Canterbury Tales**, reminding me of the genius and beauty of Chaucer's 14th century language and how Chaucer was inspired by the writings of **Boccaccio's 'Decameron'** and how, in the very origins of our English language, there is the undoubted impact of the languages of Continental Europe. This New Year 2021 begins with the world of **Brexit** in the English-speaking world of Europe. Of course, **Brexit Britain** will make my life's work difficult to continue as I am someone who has inherited the Italo-Celtic culture of Europe. I have always thought of myself as having been blessed as a citizen of Europe and I have been, therefore, grateful throughout my long life for the gift of the Edinburgh International Festival for having helped the process of Europeanisation in the cultural life, not only of Edinburgh, but throughout the entirety of the British Isles.

The present period of lockdown has given me the opportunity to read a recently published book entitled **'Sacred Britain'** with a sub-title **'Unearthing Our Mysterious Past'**. This is edited by **Mary-Ann Ochota**, a Cambridge University graduate in archeology and anthropology. It is beautifully illustrated with photographs of the world that I have explored on the Demarco Gallery's **'Edinburgh Arts'** expedition as the Demarco Archive's contribution to the world of the Edinburgh Festival. I was particularly impressed by the photographic images which illustrate this publication, in particular those of the Fortingal Yew, the Aberlemno Stones, the Tomnaverie Recumbant Stone Circle in Aberdeen, the Orcadian Ring of Brodgar, the Callanish Stones on the Isle of Lewis, the Stone Rows and Sacred Circles on Dartmoor, Glastonbury's ruined Lady Chapel as a Christian site of pilgrimage, the fortress of **Dunadd** in the Argyllshire's Kilmartin Valley and its sacred site of coronation of the Kings of Dalriada, the Kilpeck Sheela Na Gig in a Romanesque Herefordshire Church, and the prehistoric tomb of Bryn Celli Ddu on the island of Anglesey.

I regarded all these sites of sacred Britain as extensions of the world of the Edinburgh Festival. They provide undoubted proof that whatever we regard as the beginning of our British cultural heritage, it originates in prehistory and in the Middle Ages. The photographs are inspirational to me and they evoke memories of all the explorations I chose to make as my contribution to the official Edinburgh Festival exhibition programme under the aegis of what was conceived as an Edinburgh Festival Summer School entitled **'Edinburgh Arts'**. It came into being in the 1972 Edinburgh Festival with the Richard Demarco Gallery in fruitful collaboration with **Edinburgh University's Schools of Scottish Studies and Extra-Mural Studies**, as well as with **Edinburgh City's Cultural Services and Museums**.

Just before midday on this last day of the year 2020, I received a telephone call from **Eric Ritchie**, a life-long friend who was a fellow student at Edinburgh College of Art. He is a remarkable artist who, together with his wife **Rena**, must surely play an important role in the self-imposed task I now face in the writing of my memoirs. Eric and Rena Ritchie belong to my generation; the numbers of octogenarian and nonogenarian are diminishing at an alarming rate. The telephone conversation evoked many memories which I dare not forget of key participants in the early years of the Edinburgh Festival. I am thinking of those who I identify with the Edinburgh Festival world firmly embedded in the history of Edinburgh College of Art. Eric Ritchie chose to study in the School of Design. He, therefore, was a student, as I was, of the celebrated Royal Academician **Leonard Rosoman** who directed the School of Mural Painting. Eric Ritchie was encouraged by Leonard Rosoman to become a key figure in the transformation of the physical reality of Edinburgh College of Art into the annual College Revels. I can never forget his transformation of Edinburgh College of Art's Sculpture Court into a Parisian Café during the 1953 College 'Revels' entitled **'Plastered in Paris'**. Such was his success that he was given the task of almost single-handedly transforming the Sculpture Court with abstract designs for the following year's Revels.

However, it wasn't only the artistic world of Leonard Rosoman that inspired Eric Ritchie. He was fortunate to meet **Richard 'Dickie' Buckle**. He involved Eric Ritchie in the process of transforming the unlikely space of **The Waverley Market** as the cavernous extension of Edinburgh's **Waverly Railway Station**. **James Dunbar Nasmith**, of the architectural firm of Law and Dunbar Nasmith, had been invited by **Lord Harewood**, as the Director of the Edinburgh Festival, to provide an indoor temporary Edinburgh Festival art gallery to house the large-scale exhibition of sculpture by **Jacob Epstein**. These sculptures were mainly placed on plinths constructed in plywood and painted to resemble marble. This was the task dutifully carried out by Eric Ritchie. He had also been entrusted by Richard Buckle to play an important role in transforming Edinburgh College of Art as the well-nigh perfect setting for the 1954 Edinburgh Festival exhibition celebrating the genius of

Serge Diaghilev. Such was the success of this exhibition that Eric Ritchie was again a key designer of the 1964 Edinburgh Festival exhibition celebrating the 400th anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare.

I wish to share these thoughts as part of the beginning of my memoirs, and therefore my indebtedness to so many friends that I dare not forget. I regard them as belonging to a Communion of Souls, both living and dead. I do firmly believe that all artistic endeavours originate in the meetings of friends and their shared values, hopes and aspirations and in their capacity to collaborate in the spirit of life-long friendship.

Obviously, I regard each day of my ninety-first year of life upon this sacred planet as a blessing. This planet is now tragically endangered by global warming. I therefore feel reassured by the thought of the possibility of celebrating this spirit of the Edinburgh Festival with a version of 'Edinburgh Arts' in the year 2021. This must focus on the celebration of the **100th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Beuys**. He defined himself as an artist-teacher. As such, he played an inspirational role as a faculty member of '**Edinburgh Arts 1973**' with his '**12-hour Lecture**' on the 18th century revolutionary thinker, **Anarchasis Cloots**. I worked together with Joseph Beuys, inspired by the Edinburgh Festival under the aegis of 'Edinburgh Arts' from 1973 to the year of his death in 1986. My memoirs must make special reference to Joseph Beuys and his dedication to exploring the Celtic cultural map of Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France and Italy.

On the morning of **New Year's Day**, I was inspired by a telephone call from another life-long friend, **Professor Sarah Wilson**, of London University's Courtauld Institute of Art. This conversation referred to the films recently made by **Marco Federici** inspired by the Demarco Archive. Sarah Wilson recalled her personal experience of an expedition on a 1992 'Edinburgh Arts' journey to Poland. This enabled her to commit herself to the unique cultural life of Poland, despite the repressive nature of Poland's Soviet Communist government. That particular expedition introduced her to the flourishing avant-garde spirit of artists living in the cities of, not only in Warsaw, but particularly in Cracow, Lodz, Wroclaw and Lublin.

Our conversation led to the fact that my first experience of the Edinburgh Festival in 1947 was the French language production of **Moliere's** masterpiece '**L'Ecole des Femmes**' performed by the **Louis Jouvet Theatre Company**. My first experience of the reality of Continental Europe was thus focused on Paris as the then undisputed capital of European culture.

I was fortunate to be among the party of **Holy Cross Academy senior students** and their teachers who travelled by train via London, Dover, Calais to **Paris** in the summer of 1949 to spend a week living in the historic Lycee Saint Louis on the **Boulevard Saint Michel** in the heart of the **Parisian Left Bank world**. It was in Paris that I was overwhelmed by the genius of **Les Ballets des Champs Elysees** and their production inspired by the music of Bizet's opera '**Carmen**'. This production took place in the exquisite beauty of **Le Teatr Marigny**. On its stage, I was bedazzled by the dancing of **Zizi Jeanmaire, Roland Petit** and **Jean Babilée** and the sixteen-year-old **Leslie Caron** in what was a combination of ballet and avant-garde theatre. After a week in Paris, we travelled by train to the Alpine landscape of **Lac d'Annecy**. Needless to say, this first experience of France was a life-changing experience for me as I prepared myself for four years as a student of Edinburgh College of Art. I knew that my cultural heritage was distinctly European and that the experience of the Edinburgh Festival brought me closer to Paris.

This Covid-19 pandemic has laid waste to my plan to collaborate with **Laurence Pais**, the **French Consul General in Scotland** to present a 2020 version of the 1990 exhibition entitled '**French**

Spring'. This enabled the Demarco Gallery to collaborate with the **Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art** and The French Cultural Institute under the direction of **Alain Bourdon**, who introduced me to **Caroline David**, Director of Exhibitions in the French Region of Pas de Calais Nord, which included the city of Lille.

The exhibition was presented in relation to the Demarco Gallery 'Edinburgh Arts' expedition involving a dozen French art critics, artists and art historians who were prepared to travel on **The Road to Meikle Seggie** towards the Kingdom of Fife into the Pictish landscape of **Maggie Wall** in the town of **Dunning** and the landscape of Perthshire to Perth as the ancient capital of Scotland. The exhibition took place in the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art in Belford Road, the Demarco Gallery in Blackfriars Street, and the French Cultural Institute in Randolph Crescent.

Alas, 'Twelfth Night' will henceforth be associated in my mind with the death of my life-long friend **Jim Haynes**. His death marks the end of an era. Together with a whole host of friends, Jim Haynes managed to introduce into the Edinburgh of the Fifties and Sixties the spirit of the international avant-garde in all the arts. He was an American who chose to identify himself with the European cities of Edinburgh, London and Paris.

He is irreplaceable. I cannot imagine how Edinburgh could have absorbed the Swinging Sixties without his physical presence, not only through the Paperback Bookshop and The Traverse Theatre Club, but in the hearts and minds of his multitude of Edinburgh friends. He chose to spend the last decades in his beloved Paris. His house on the **rue de la Tombe Issoire** became a meeting place of friends and a virtual nodal point on the map of European culture attracting new friends from the world over. I now have the moral duty to somehow become involved in celebrating his life and, in doing so, collaborate with **Edinburgh Napier University** which now has the responsibility the **Jim Haynes Archive**. This celebration must collaborate with the Traverse Theatre as well as the Scottish Arts Club and his many Edinburgh friends, and certainly with the four young friends of Jim who raised the funds necessary to make the film '**Meeting Jim**'. This film, directed by **Ece Ger** from the cultural world of Istanbul, is focused on Jim's annual visit to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe world and entwined it with his life in Paris and the way in which he welcomed innumerable 'friends' from all over the world to what became known as '**Sunday Dinners**'. In this way, the film concentrates on the fact that, when celebrating Jim Haynes' life, it is necessary to see that Jim managed to find himself thoroughly at home as an expatriate American in Europe so that any celebration of his life has to pay homage to the historic Alliance Francais-Ecosse.

My life in Edinburgh has long been associated with the fact that Paris was the first European city to reveal the importance of European culture. Therefore, I feel obliged, in relation to my long friendship with Jim, to go back to my experience of the 1940s and 50s as a schoolboy and particularly as an art student. My thought, therefore, takes me back to 1952 when I travelled to Paris accompanied by **John Fox**, my Holy Cross Academy schoolfriend and together we explored Paris and its environs, including Versailles, on an extremely tight budget. This week-long exploration led to the publication of what I entitled '**Paris Diary 1952**'. It was illustrated by my pen and ink drawings and with a special cover, front and back, of a multi-coloured lithographic image of Parisian cityscape. I decided that my 'Paris Diary' should dominate my degree exhibition at Edinburgh College of Art in the summer of 1953. It defined my choice of my four years of study as a mural painter, a book illustrator, a typographer, and a bookbinder. This revealed my commitment to

the study of all aspects of graphic design rather than the rarefied world of those students choosing to study in the Schools of Painting and Sculpture. It should be noted that my brother **Michael**, with his poetic gifts, helped me write the texts of the Diary.

This Paris diary was a homage to my **Demarco family relations** who lived in Paris for many years en route from the Apennine mountainous region of Italy south of Rome. They were farmers and shepherds who became artists' models favoured by the Parisian painters and sculptors. They are now revealed in stone as sculpture decorating the rim of the **Place de la Concorde**. I cannot forget the evening when, in 1950, my father took me to see these sculptures, providing proof that my Demarco family is celebrated as essentially European within a Franco-Italo dimension.

Obviously, the death of my dear friend Jim Haynes has saddened me and at the same time alerted me to the fact that I must use every remaining day of my long life in putting the Demarco Archive into the shape and substance of a collaborative art work and certainly among the most important collaborators must be Jim Haynes. I have endeavoured to find the exact date in August when our two lives intercepted in the world of an Oxford University theatre contribution to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The theatre production was a two-hour long version of **Ugo Betti's** deeply disturbing play entitled '**Corruption in the Palace of Justice**'. It was in the church hall on that part of the Royal Mile known as **The World's End** where St. Mary's Street and Jeffrey Street intercept with the Canongate section of the Royal Mile. I did not realise on that unforgettable evening that this production was part of Jim Haynes' introduction to the world of the Edinburgh Festival. When the play ended, he started the engine of the only car parked in the street which happened to be his **black Volkswagen 'Beetle'**. He drove to where I was beginning to walk homeward accompanied by my wife Anne and her younger sister, Elizabeth, and he drove slowly towards us. I will never forget his first words of friendship! "**Can I give you folks a ride?**" Instead of going towards the West End, I suggested that we drove to have coffee in the candle-lit interior of the only coffee house in all of Edinburgh. It was the **Leigh Coffee House**, owned and managed by the Scottish actor **Moultrie R. Kelsall**. This we did before deciding to attend the classic production Italian Commedia dell'arte. It was performed in the commodious Central Hall on Lothian Road. I firmly believe that that first meeting with Jim Haynes can be considered as the day on which the Traverse Theatre Club came into being, very much dependent on the *joie de vivre* identified with Jim Haynes. Our friendship led inevitably to the ways in which Jim Haynes managed to find time to be, not only an American National Serviceman, but also a Spanish language student at Edinburgh University. His involvement in Edinburgh University life inspired him to open his fabled **Paperback Bookshop**, the first of its kind in Britain. It was in the world of the Paperback Bookshop that he met **John Calder**, the Scottish-Canadian publisher of avant-garde writers, including those associated with the **Nouvelle Vague** in Paris. Among them were Françoise Sagan and Natalie Sarraut, as well as Samuel Beckett who became John Calder's life-long friend and favourite author. It should be said that John Calder's education in Montreal at the McGill University and his continuing studies in the world of the Café Voltaire in Zurich inspired him as someone who divided his lifetime's career as a publisher and patron of opera as the very personification of the Francophile. Their friendship was to lead to the Edinburgh International Festival's commitment to the **1962 Writers Conference** and to the **1963 Drama Conference**. My life has certainly been blessed by the life-long friendship of Jim Haynes and John Calder. John Calder was among the small group of friends who established the **Traverse Theatre Club** as an Edinburgh-based extension of both the Paperback Bookshop and John Calder's opera festival in his family's hunting lodge in the Kinross-shire Ochil Hills. It was Jim Haynes who provided me with the opportunity of presenting my first contribution to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the form of an exhibition of my Scotus Academy art students' paintings. It was in the Traverse Theatre Club that I was able to establish and direct the **Traverse Art Gallery** which was the

forerunner of the Demarco Gallery in the four-storey Edinburgh New Town house in Melville Crescent. Needless to say, the inaugural exhibition of the Demarco Gallery included paintings by the Paris-based artists **Henri Hayden, Alfred Manessier and Serge Poliakoff**.

I am grateful to the Turkish director of the film 'Meeting Jim' for providing me with a film sequence where I am waving '**goodbye**' to my dear friend Jim as he sits on the train to London which will take him to Kings Cross and then to St. Pancras to board the Eurostar to Paris. I cherish that filmic imagery of our friendship and added to a multitude of memories born out of the international spirit of the Edinburgh Festival.