On Loving Barbara

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I loved Barbara Cziarnawska.

How hard it is to write that sentence in the *past* tense, as we start doing as soon as we hear of someone passing. I'm very old, and the passing of dear friends has become common—though never "routine." It hurts every time. When Barbara or Richard or Stefano left this world I felt again the tears of things. Get ready to get old. And you know the vague, wholly absurd *resentment* we feel when a loved one dies. Why did the beloved so cruelly abandon poor little *moi*? Oh, Barbara, dearest Barbara: why are you not still here, to correct and inspire us and teach us?

I certainly *admired* Barbara. Here I can insist instead on the present tense: I admire Barbara, right now, still, and always will. You should, too. I admire her courage to leave her country, and then to commit totally to making her life in Sweden. I admire her intellectual courage in reshaping the study of management of companies and of cities, introducing into the material equations what humans actually care about, such as the narratives with which they tell their lives. I admire her wide culture, and her determination to bring it into her scholarship. I admire the way she admired scholars in management studies who also wrote well—and therefore thought well. (I don't need to give examples of scholars in management, or economics, who write like they are laying bricks in a badly constructed wall.) I admire—no, I was amazed at—her linguistic ability. She knew Germanna and especially Italian and of course Swedish' and, I surmise from her mastery of English, all of them very well. I once complimented her on her lucid and elegant style in English. She replied, in a rare boast, "You should hear me in Polish." Yes, I know: everyone needs to learn my native tongue these days, in science, business, rock music, computers. English, to use a phrase that must drive francophones crazy, is the world's *lingua franca.* That's one among several lazy reasons why I am monolingual, though I am deeply ashamed of it. Looking over Barbara's big library at home, on the many occasions I stayed with her in Gothenburg, her multilingual books shouted out to me how very stupid I am.

So, I admired her. But I also say that I *loved* her. The lists then begin to fail. We nonetheless tend to treat our love of someone or of something—of Barbara or Sweden or management studies—as a matter of prudent reasons. At any rate we practice such affectional accounting when asked *why*. Why do you love Barbara, Sweden, management studies? Well, Barbara was in her tough fashion kindly to me. That's why. Or, Sweden is a highly civilized country (as Barbara knew vividly), and I myself have had many friends there, such as Barbara, Sten,

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Helena, Rick. That's why. Or, the field of management studies, though it is not my first field, and in many ways it is inconsistent with economics, has played a rather big part in my life—for example in my long association with some of the intellectually mor nroad of its practioners, through Hams Siggard Jensen and, again, Barbara. That's why.

I loved Barabra "because" we agreed on social construction, and the importance of rhetoric. According to the prudent accounting, you see, intellectual allies *should* be loved. Or because she got me from her university my second honorary degree. You *should* love people who do good deeds for you. Or because, again, she was so very intelligent and so very cultured. People we admire *should* be loved. The question of why invites a reply in prudential terms, as though you were explaining why you bought a Volvo instead of a Peugeot.

But asking the question of why, and especially answering it as an accounting of cost and benefit, in the style of prudent economics, or as a list of duties, doesn't make a lot of sense, does it? You love your mother. Is it because it's your duty, or because she did all these nice things for you? I am acquainted with people who hate their mothers, despite duty, and despite, or sometimes because of, the many motherly gifts. Likewise, many admirable professional intellectuals are pains in the neck, many admirably intelligent people likewise. And it's notorious in human affairs that if Ms. A does a favor for Mr. B, he is as likely as not to come to resent her, as being in her debt. Such an embarrassing situation.

And of course I loved, and even admired, that Barbara loved me. But if you know Barbara, you know she never said it outright. And come to think of it, I didn't say it to her, which now I regret. She was hard-headed, on principle as it were. But she showed love in her acts all the time, if in no explicitly sentimental way. She was in that respect different form many other women. When I was a man I did not comprehend or even like the sentimental way that some women have of hugging people and saying they love them and pretending to be so very excited every time they meet. These little dramas vary of course by culture. Maybe Polish women are like that, restrained in expressions of love. Swedes also are. My wife Joanne of 30 years, Czech and northern Italian by ancestry, was like Barbara in that respect. When I would complain to Joanne that m didn't say "I love you" enough, she would reply that she *exacted* love—not a speech act but an act act.

One "reason" I loved Barbara was the way she would instruct me in being a woman. When I first met her I was early in my transition, and appreciated the tuition, which she gave by example rather than precept. (I have a Dutch friend who, in the way the Dutch call *openhartiglijk,* did instruct me, helpfully: "Don't stride across the little barrier in the sidewalk that way; do it this ‚womanly way.") Anyone who knew Barbara knows that she was judgmental about What Must Be Done Property. She was not as we say "easy-going." Think of how little girls are expert at the rules and are very willing to tell you if you violate them. Most boys don't know the rules, and could not possibly articulate them if they did, and often enough develop as adults a clueless or careless attitude that has to be disciplined by their female lovers. Or at least the lovers think so, and act on it:" For Lord's sake, George, take out the rubbish!" Barbara didn't say things directly like that, but let you know anyway. The last time I saw her I paid the bill in a Gothenburg restaurant I had invited her and Sten to, and she was, well, *outraged*. It was *not done* for someone to come to your city and *pay the bill*. This time she told me.

In so many ways, though, Barabra was womanly, and I noted it, and tried to learn from her how to do it. It's like learning social rules or languages, if you are aware that there's a right

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way. I remember vividly a time early in my tuition from her of three of us—Barbara, another female management-studies scholar from Denmark, and I— after a party got to work cleaning up the kitchen. I don't suppose she realized it, but the event pleased me. Silly, I know. But having been a man I had a lot to learn. The women clean up the kitchen. Not the men.

An even more characteristic example is when I admired a hat she owned sitting on her hall coat-rack. She instantly *gave* it to me. It's something women do that no man would ever think to do, at any rate in European or American culture. A few years ago a Spanish journalist was interviewing me, and I admired the striking ring she wore. Women do that with other women. The journalist instantly took it off and *gave* it to me, on the spot, and I've worn it ever since. Barbara's hat, alas, was too small for me. But I kept it for many years—in the sweet English word as a "keepsake," a love sign, a memory embodied.

Barbara was among the most sophisticated women I have known. She knew the score, in the sporting metaphor we use in English. She was "savvy," and proud to be. So it was startling when she casually opined one day that there were not many homosexuals in Poland. I think this was because she, though utterly un-churched when I knew her, was, raised Catholic, in the last European country to practice Catholicism with a fierce piety. It was reinforced I suppose by the honorable role the Church played in casting off communism. The piety was once prevalent ,also in, say, Spain or France or Italy or Ireland, but it was killed off when the Church came to be seen a force of evil reaction, or as child molesting. I expressed surprise at Barbara's opinion, and told her that *of course* there were about as many Polish homosexuals as British or Swedish or whatever. I reckon, as the expression goes, that you can take the girl out of Poland, but you can't take Poland out of the girl.

The English poet of the 19th century, Elizabeth Barrett Bowring wrote a famous sonnet to her husband, the poet Robert Browning. She asked, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." But love is not countable, not my love and yours for Barbara.

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A teacher of mine had translated Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in 1954. He affixed to the t beginning of the play, which was produced on Broadway, a motto he had found on a tombstone in an old country church yard in Vermont: "It is a fearful thing to love what death can touch." How true. Yet, as mortal humans, we must also love, as Barbara and I loved.

There is a poem that may help you. It has helped me. Many people have thought, as I did, that the poem came from Yahuda Halevi, a great Jewish poet in Spain of the *Convivencia* a millennium ago. No. It is actually "For Those Who Have Died," by a U.S. Reform Rabbi, who must have seen my teacher's play in New York, and remember the phrase from the tombstone:

'Tis a fearful thing to love what death can touch.
A fearful thing to love, to hope, to dream, to be—to be,
And oh, to lose.
A thing for fools, this,
And a holy thing, a holy thing, to love.

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For your life has lived in me, your laugh once lifted me,
Your word was gift to me.
To remember this brings painful joy.
'Tis a human thing, love,
A holy thing, to love what death has touched.

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