



Personal Reflections

Sue Easun, editor



GOODBYE SOLOMON, HELLO RALPH: From One Ivory Tower to the Next

Sue Easun

If you are a regular reader of this column -- to the extent that reading two columns constitutes regularity -- you may have noticed my absence these past few issues. Over the past few months, I have changed countries, jobs, time zones, and lifestyles. (I have drawn the line, however, at changing my mode of spelling.) Home is now Denver, the Mile High City, with the Rockies rather than Lake Ontario on my horizon. As it happens, they are also the closest I get to an ivory tower these days.

I confess this latter point has bothered me. If my days no longer involve a skilful wending through unmarked papers and uncoded data, what claim have I to an ivory tower? If I can no longer call myself a professional thinker, what ego drives such obviously one-sided chats? In desperation--of both my plight and yet another impending deadline--I dropped all pretense of **Reluctance**, and bared my soul to that virtual guru of serendipitous sophistry: the Internet search engine.

Thus spake Alta Vista: ivory towers come in many guises. One is the home of the **White Mage Guild**, devoted to "promoting Goodness through helping others," "keeping evil at bay," and "welcom[ing] all adventurers, new and experienced". Another is a self-styled **Sporadic Poetry Page** where "Ady waxes lyrical on all manner of subjects." **Ivory Tower AI**, a freeware program, comes with "a small vocabulary" and "a pattern database that you can expand by training examples"; in contrast, **Ivory Tower Academics** proudly claims to offer the "best possible opportunity of finding under one site all the academic information and the realms of knowledge you always wanted". And I was particularly intrigued to discover an **Ivory Tower** online specialty mall, complete with classified section "to list your Medieval, Pagan, New Age and BDSM items for FREE!!!" .

(I also discovered that the term "ivory tower" comes from the Biblical *Song of Solomon*, chapter seven, verse eight--" thy neck is as a tower of ivory"--though how this came to mean "a state of intellectual isolation", I've yet to determine.)

Suddenly, I no longer felt so bad. For certain, I'm on the side of goodness and adventure. I revel in realms of knowledge and, at least in terms of this column, seemingly have no qualms about listing these revelries for FREE!!! I can even wax lyrical, if need be, though the prospect of doing so with a small vocabulary is admittedly daunting. Ady and AI have nothing on me.

All of which is my way of saying I've decided to continue this column. (I suspect I have just given my Fearsome Editor a nasty jolt by this admission, since this is the first she's heard of my possible defection.) But lest you think that I am ruled by irreverence alone, my garrulous guru also uncovered the following quote by Ralph J. Cudworth (1617-88), an English theologian and philosopher, which I immediately took to heart:

If intellection and knowledge were mere passion from without, or the bare reception of extraneous and adventitious forms, then no reason could be given at all why a mirror or looking-glass should not understand; whereas it cannot so much as sensibly perceive those images which it receives and reflects to us.

I am needed after all.



Next issue: Without further ado, Sue returns to *The Unreluctant Years*
