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Some reflections upon my early life

what particular kind. I was born into a family all of whose members had phenomenal musical gifts. My elder sisters had magnificent voices, fantastic musical ears, very good looks and marvellous natural musical instincts. But somehow they were (hereditarily) afflicted-with a strange and tragic "blind spot" in their characters, their wills, their visions...or call it ^{rather} their "picture of life before them"...^{and} the pursuit of their Destiny, -so that all their talent, promise, ^{artistic} dispositions were actually-as Time went on,-wasted away, vitiated, diffused and ^{became} deteriorated-by their complete lack of the knowledge of work and enterprise-towards career or accomplishment. (It took me years to learn the value and meaning...and the technique of work, but I ^{had the luck} to be propelled onwards by other forces, etc.) As a boy I expected them to build their lives and talents into something fine and big, couldn't understand why they didn't, was demoralized myself by their failure to do so, and actually frustrated by it. I tried (in my boyish way) to goad them, encourage them, push them, but always they failed me since they did not actually know how or what to do about it: typical victims of the small American town! But they bore, -unmistakably-the "signature" of a kind of genius, and I ^{so young} could never fathom why they never assumed the roles Destiny had so obviously prescribed for them. I ^{so} needed ^{also} a companionship of growth, progress, accomplishment-and above all of doing the very right ^{and} accurate things in the right directions. But, as I say, the poor things, ^{though} always brimming with talent, beauty-and all the right ingredients-always failed me, ^{probably sheer} out of ignorance and naivete, (most of all) I imagine! Or perhaps (more tragically still) a ^{fatal} instinctive insensate predisposition towards retrogression? It was terribly and desperately lonely for me, their unfortunate lack of constructive activity, and ^{wise still} it had to my young ears (even the fateful sound of doom-of Time and Life lost, ^{ob} Destiny unfulfilled,-and of personal lives wrecked and ruined, because ^{so} unfulfilled! Now, having lived my long life, and having-in spite of much,-accomplished not a little, but still always needing that "sister" or "companion" who is at the same time the great expert-(I never stand still, there is always much ^{more learn and} to accomplish the more one does and "knows")-and ^{an expert} "related" by musical blood and sensitivity, (or it could be a man...a "brother"-but I've never found one....male musicians are always too vain and envious) I THOUGHT I had-perhaps-found this in Moura the first time I saw her. She was simple, gracious, kind and warm and seemed to perceive that I was no ordinary mortal...and that (I hoped) I was deserving of the kind of attention she could and should give. I have repeatedly said I understood her frantic life (the virtuoso and all its requirements-the lack of time etc.etc.) But I felt that she could have given some indication that-in the "off moments" (which everyone does have, and she seems to have plenty-too) there would ^{perhaps} be a little time for friendship-and ^{even for} mutual service! Her indifference (to me)-towards you and me-is not only disappointing-but actually rather offensive! She cannot be so stupid and mindless that she does not even suspect what rare Beings we are! And if she is, then it is all so much the worse! But even then, with a little niceness and sweetness, (and ^{with also} our understanding,) she could at least try to learn how-to have a higher better relationship, ^{and even} to improve herself and her nature thusly, ^{while} ~~also~~ giving ^{ing} pleasure-at the same time! But I fear she prefers the kind of second-class bourgeois "international society" she frequents...to ours! I met a lady the other day, (who slightly resembles her in some ways) but who towers above her in every other way, and I wish you could meet her ^{too}-and know her. (I even believe she might be the answer to your prayers for

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the “fine rapture” that you so desire and need! I was quite bowled over—by her looks and personality. She is handsome, (and “50-ish” in age) (with an impressive profile, very aquiline nose) very high “Pompadour” blonde hair, lovely kind expressive and understanding eyes, a commanding, aristocratic bearing and presence, and the quick ready sensitivity and intelligence of the exceptional Frenchwoman! And she was a very fine pianist, a pupil (and assistant to) Phillipe,—(played with Poulenc the first performance of the 2 piano concerto...and certain new things of Ravel, with both of whom she was very intimate) and she is the widow of Ravel’s favorite Conductor—the well-known Portugese Pedro de Freitas-Bronco, whom I heard often in Paris, and knew of—very well. She is travelling now, because she says “it is the only thing when one is unhappy,” and is now in Mexico. Her maiden name was Marie Leveque, and I am certain I heard her play in those days in Paris. What a woman! I can well understand how a man (or woman) could fall head over heels in love with such a magnificence...so intelligent, steeped in culture, distinguished, suave and so warm and human! She lives in Lisbon....so if you ever go there....!!! You see, if she were to stay in America (but will not) there would be the perfect “professional sister” for me to go to for help and inspiration, with my musical problems. For she is generous....but Moura has let me down in all this....so you can surely see why I have been déçu by her lack of interest. You cannot say it’s because I’m selfish, since I was ready to give her as much in return—in many other ways. I wrote to her—several times,—and very beautifully,—showered her with attentions—but she couldn’t even send me, ever, a postcard as she promised....and her rank failure—(in the face of such close proximity to you in the south of France) to do anything about getting to know you,—was, I feel, stupid—and unpardonable! How could one NOT be put out—by such indifference, I ask you?! It is irksome, annoying, exasperating, and in spite of all the extenuations, there is actually—in the long run—no excuse for it: except rank unconcern and indifference.

Do you know,—realize,—that most all of my (adult) life I have played the piano with severe handicaps? Complete lack of essential groundwork, and with a R.H. thumb and index finger partially paralyzed by an accident? (Mme. de Freitas-Branco had exactly the same accident to same thumb, so we are twins in that misfortune!) and that although “je me suis arrangé pour jouer-malgré—pas mal” with this damaged hand,—it has nevertheless been only under great strain—and most uncondusive circumstances—that I happen to have been able to play—at all! But so much for me!..I am so happy to learn that you have eased the strain on your heart, by reducing exercise. But en revâche, you must (perhaps) eat a little less, so as not to put on too much weight, as that is (par contresens) a strain on the heart! Maybe if you went out—daily—for a short slow walk—that would help? No?

I think I can say, en resumé, that I have always tried to be a fine artist, a progressive human-being, and a warm and true friend.

Edith's autobiography, with the exception of the chapters on Dylan Thomas and Roy Campbell and America and Hollywood, is quite idiotic and silly and very boring and bad. Heavy British (regional) humor à la "Punch" (!!!) with bourgeoisie as target and butt, revolting repulsive descriptions of physiques and personalities, and the chapter on Pavlik, (I feel) quite disrespectful inaccurate and displeasing. Also much too brief, curt and flimsy! Pavlik valait mieux que cela...but I suspect that was her way of "taking care

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of him," for past offences, of which there were considerable!! Nancy Cunard tragic of course, but what did she expect, spending her whole life and nature upon cheap night-club negroes, with their penchants for sex, dope, booze and not much else. Naturally her centers,—all of them—were lowered and atrophied—and finally degenerated—down to that appalling level, where she was no longer scarcely a human being anymore. Sad, of course. Eyres de Lanux said Janet wrote of her in N.Yorker, but I couldn't find it. Porfive longeurs of this letter, I beg of you. But you can read it when you have a moment of relaxation.

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Lorin Maazel conducted "Poème de l'Extase" thrillingly—the other day. You never told me if you liked the one by Dimitrio Nitropolos—I sent you!

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Please forgive this last page violation of our margin arrangement arrangement—but I didn't want to use another page and stupidly went ahead and used the margin without it ever occurring to me (as it did afterwards) that I might have used a small appendant piece of paper. I hope it won't tire—too much—your eyes—and shall be careful not to err thusly—in the future!!