

November 30, 1993

Friends -

I want to be sure you understand -- with respect
to my last letter -- that it is not really
Xmas soap
With which I cannot cope.

Not only do I deem cleanliness
To be next to manliness,

But I also consider any society that is
substantially soapless
To be inferentially hopeless.

After all, what gift could be more appropriate
for third cousins
Than little molded shells or carefully hoarded slivers
of motel mini-soaps
by the dozens?

It's mail-box and service-station dressing
I find distressing.

It's wreaths of holly and reindeer antlers
on station-wagon radiators,
It's artificial snow and plastic icicles
in elevators.

And I just wonder, for instance, as
sturdy yeomen bear in the boar's head
and sing and shout it,
Has anyone thought to ask the boar just how
he feels about it?

You may think that this is because I'm
getting along in years and fretful
and fatherly,
But, though there's a lot I'll never know first-hand
about the pains and pleasures of child-bearing --
if I had just spent the past few days
straddling a donkey, and the past
twelve to twenty-four hours in parturition
only to find my corner of the cabin
contested by assorted livestock,
visiting royalty, shepherders
and swarms of angels singing in Latin,
I think I'd be tempted to say something like
"Go away, boys,
you bother me!"