

The life and loves of Annie Hall

THEN AGAIN, by Diane Keaton. Random House, 265 pp., \$26.

BY MARION WINIK
Special to Newsday

One of the key insights of Diane Keaton's memoir, "Then Again," appears in its final pages: "In a way I became famous for being an inarticulate woman." In that sweetly self-aware light, this book is just what you might expect: a self-deprecating, charming, occasionally wise, occasionally cringe-worthy collage of outbursts, anecdotes and musings.

Collage is a technique Keaton learned at her mother's knee. In 1961, when Diane was 16, Dorothy Hall (nee Keaton) packed her four children into the family station wagon and drove them from California to New York to see an exhibit called "The Art of Assemblage" at the Museum of Modern Art. "Soon she was collaging almost anything," remembers Keaton, "including collage trash cans and collage storage boxes made with lumpy papier-mâché; she even collaged

the inside of all the kitchen cabinets."

Included in "Then Again" are many excerpts from Dorothy's 85 journals, along with photographs of their bindings and contents. The journals document the emotional peaks and valleys of Dorothy's life as a wife and mother, her frustrated ambition, plans for self-improvement and reactions to her daughter's success.

Most interesting are the parts dealing with Keaton's career. She moves to New York, gets a part in the musical "Hair" and doesn't take the extra \$50 per show offered for stripping in the final scene. She meets Woody Allen and stars with him in "Play It Again Sam." She suffers from bulimia for about five years before a shrink helps her.

Keaton has never married and is still pretty much of a teenager as far as romance is concerned. She's never gotten over any of her famous boyfriends. "I miss Woody. . . . I know he's borderline repulsed by the grotesque nature of my affection."

"Once Warren [Beatty] chose to shine his light on you, there was no going back," she explains, but she never "quite



Diane Keaton, with Woody Allen, in "Annie Hall"

passed the savvy/smarts/endurance test."

Next, she provides a list of all her notes and phone messages from Al Pacino. "After Al," she writes, "I lost all semblance of . . . sexy confidence. Maybe I wasn't pretty enough for Al."

Last but not least, at the age of 57, she is so dazzled she forgets her lines every time she and Jack Nicholson run through their kiss on the set of "Something's Gotta Give."

More self-esteem might have made her more successful in love, but as a memoirist, her lack of egotism is an asset.

"Every audition was lost to either Blythe Danner or Jill Clayburgh, who weren't 'too nutty,'" she writes of her early struggles. When she wins an Academy Award for playing Annie Hall, she dismisses it as an "affable version of myself."

It was a brilliant idea for Keaton to adopt a baby girl at 50 and a son a few years later. She may not have been wife material, but she was made to be a mom, and though she has buried both of her parents, it doesn't seem that she's ever been happier than she is now, in the sweet triangle of a family she's created.

One man's villain is another man's poison

THE PRAGUE CEMETERY, by Umberto Eco. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 464 pp. \$28.

BY JOHN ANDERSON
Special to Newsday

Mischievous, ghostly, scholarly and facetious, Umberto Eco's "The Prague Cemetery" is a novel befitting the author of "The Name of the Rose" and "Foucault's Pendulum" — a work so jammed with historical detail and literary allusions that a reader can barely see the narrative forest for its very erudite trees.

As the publisher's jacket copy puts the question: What if the historical upheavals and catastrophes of the 19th century — the bombings and murders; the horrors attendant to the Paris Commune and the Dreyfus Affair; that founding document of modern anti-Semitism, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" — were all instigated by a single malodorous character?

Well, what if? For one thing, that character would be a tough one to spend 464 pages with.



Umberto Eco

We meet Captain Simonini, an aging Freemason- and Jew-hating secret agent/master forger, as a venomous old diarist who is, apparently, schizophrenic. Although he retains no memory of inhabiting his alter ego — that of a priest he murdered some years earlier — Simonini is nonetheless aware of his other self, and the two personalities correspond by letter, one writing by night, the other by day. It is a highly original con-

cept on Eco's part, and it alleviates the necessity of spending too much time with a character who, for all his highly refined taste and gourmet appetites, is a bottomless well of self-justifying poison.

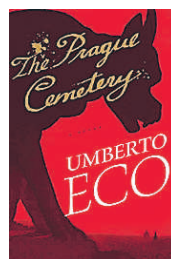
"The Prague Cemetery" was released last year in Europe and provoked what ought to be called the Huck Finn Response: Readers, many critics warned, are too impressionable — or perhaps they meant feeble-minded — to understand that Simonini's loathsome musings on Jews, Freemasons, women, Jesuits, etc., are not in fact endorsements of those views by the author.

It seems obvious that Eco's portrait of Simonini is meant as a satirical mirror for our own times. Various powers-that-be use Simonini's talents to foment upheaval within the Italian nation-building campaign of Garibaldi and the clandestine opposition to Louis-Napoleon in France; he is influenced by "Dr. Froide," influences the Dreyfus Affair, works for the Prussians

against France and undermines the Commune of Paris. He is a malignant Zelig who reflects not only the complacencies of our supposedly post-racial world but the contradictions inherent in the current global political climate.

"The Prague Cemetery" is a Eurocentric novel; as such it is a rather useful survey for Americans whose historical view of the 19th century is dominated by our own nation building and civil war. But the moral that Eco is imparting is pan-national: Throughout his adventures, Simonini consistently tortures facts to fit his biases.

His career as a chameleonic secret agent in the employ of this nation, or that cabal, reflects his soul, as he convinces himself of the validity of his hatreds, despite any and all evidence. "Apart from the pleasures of coffee and chocolate," he says at one point, "what I most enjoyed was appearing to be someone else." Or everyone else, as per his creator's subtly caustic point of view.



this week

Readings and more events on Long Island

Monday

Julie Klam reads from her new book, "Love at First Bark: How Saving a Dog Can Sometimes Help You Save Yourself" (Riverhead). At 7 p.m., Sachem Public Library, 150 Holbrook Rd., Holbrook; 631-588-5024, sachemlibrary.org



Thursday

Carol V. Aebersold will sign copies of the children's book she wrote with her daughter, Chanda A. Bell, "The Elf on the Shelf" (CCA and B). At 4 p.m., Book Revue, 313 New York Ave., Huntington; 631-271-1442, bookrevue.com

Saturday

East Hampton author Dava Sobel discusses "A More Perfect Heaven: How Copernicus Revolutionized the Cosmos" (Walker & Company). Call for reservations. At 3 p.m., East Hampton Library, 159 Main St., East Hampton; 631-324-0222, easthamptonlibrary.org



Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Robert K. Massie reads from his new biography, "Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman" (Random House). At 4 p.m. BookHampton, 41 Main St., East Hampton; 631-324-4939, bookhampton.com

