If boxing interests you and if you are not offended by a steady stream of obscenities then Raging Bull will be a movie that you should see.

Robert De Niro won the academy award for best actor for his role as Jake LaMotta, the raging bull of the 1940s and 1950s. De Niro certainly earned his Oscar; as LaMotta he turns in a flawless performance, a performance that required going from 155 pounds as the middleweight contender to 215 pounds as the contender for Epicurean eating and drinking awards.

This gaining of weight can be seen as a metaphor for the movie. As a fighter, LaMotta trained hard and fought hard and his stomach was rock hard. Early in the film we watch his young wife trying to get him to respond to her kissing and licking his muscular body.

Jake, however, has to fight the next day, and as an obvious believer in no sex before a fight, he finally passionately pulls away, goes into the bathroom and pours a pitcher of ice water on his raised expectations.

Now that's discipline. To deny what one really desires for some other goal is to exhibit discipline. And Jake has that: He runs, he trains, he fights to keep his body in the top condition required of a top-ranking boxer. As that discipline wanes his stomach grows - the pasta and champagne work quickly on LaMotta and without the desire to fight the desire to eat takes over. And LaMotta eats as he fights: unrestrained, intense, raging. By the final 20 minutes the camera is concentrating on a huge belly. A huge belly gets into a phone booth, a huge belly goes to the home of its now separated wife and like a bull in a china closet knocks over half the dishes while trying to pound the jewels out of the middleweight champion belt be pawned. A belly with a cigar-stuffed mouth become the images which describe the middle-age Jake LaMotta. The animal beauty of a sleek muscular body is gone.

Finally, of course, away with metaphor and image, for this is a boxing film. And the staged fights are good. In the ring one boxer is trying to hurt the other and we see plenty of hurt. LaMotta and Sugar Ray Robinson met five times to exchange and defend the title, and we see most of that combat. In one bout LaMotta, angered by a chance remark from his wife about how good looking a contender is, beats the man unmercifully in the ring to pound away his good looks.

The LaMotta depicted in the film is motivated by animal passions and by the darkest of human passions — jealousy. He is not heroic or noble, in fact, for most this raging bull has no redeeming qualities. He is, as he reminds us, one of us.

A recent philosophy and literature conference took me to Northwestern University just north of Chicago in Evanston, Illinois. While I was there I managed to sneak away from the conference long enough to see two movies and the largest art show I've ever seen anywhere.

On the first morning walking along the edge of the campus by Lake Michigan, my first image was of dozens of dead fish beginning to stink. They also floated belly up in the water. I asked a student what they were and she said "a kind of herring . . . and you wouldn't last long either if you were in that water!"

Further down the beach two men were fishing.

Arts 82 just opened in Chicago. It's an extravaganza guaranteed to cause aesthetic overload in the visual syste, of most normal art viewers. One hundred galleries are represented.

This cornucopia of visual arts is housed in the Navy Pier which was dressed up with red carpets and moveable walls to make the displays individual and not just a five acre mass of art.

Galleries from Paris, New York, London, Los Angeles, Chicago, Milano (but no Canadian gallery) were represented with about 25 pieces each. That works out to more than 2,500 pieces.

The covered pier leading up to the main show space was used to house what was advertised as Mayor Jane Byrne's Mile of Sculpture. And there was what seemed like a mile of space with dozens of contemporary large sculptures.

The movies were both interesting and seeing them in Chicago changed my responses somewhat. In Victor-Victoria the James Rockford character is a Chicago businessman with mob connections. As he walks out into a rainy Paris evening he says to his bodyguard, "I thought we left all the bad weather in Chicago" which got a fair round of applause.

Conan the Barbarian provided a different kind of audience response. Probably half of the audience was black and when Conan, the Nordic avenger, hacks off Thulsa Doom's head, a very black head, it seemed that half the house was cheering and the other half was not. If one remembers that Thomas wrote the Conan stories in 1935 it is not difficult to imagine the white-supremacy theme being part of the story.

Arnold Schwarzenegger is perfectly cast as Conan (I kept looking at my arms after the movie but they seemed to belong to a different species than his) as is Sandahl Bergman as Valeria. It is a comic book flick which looks just like the Marvel Comic Book most of the time. It is also violent, very violent.

In spite of all that beautiful art and those two interesting movies — and an excellent conference — the image stays with me of those dead fish floating up on the shore of Lake Michigan.