
GROTTY, a fanzine of sweetness & light which talks about blandom, is partially written but solely published by rich brown, 1014 N Tuckahoe, Falls Church, VA 22046 and is being sent to a limited number of friends and complete strangers. If you get a copy from the editor directly, no doubt it's probably because he has tumbled to the ridiculous notion that spineless wimp Eric Mayer, through his apparently deliberate distortion of fact, may have damaged your otherwise pristine opinion of him. Member: fwa.

PLUMBING PROBLEM Not long back, the house which Linda Blanchard and I intended to buy developed a bit of a plumbing problem. While taking a shower, I thought the bathtub drained slower than it should. This conclusion seemed inescapable as the water reached my ankles. Hair in the drainpipe, I told myself; bent down, put my fingers in the drain and, sure enough, pulled out a lock of hair. The water began to trickle out a bit better--but not much.

As I dried myself, I heard gurgling from the storage room next to the bathroom; opened the door and found water backed up all over the floor. Hastily grabbed a bucket and mop, yelled for help from Linda and in a bit less than an hour we had it under control.

We called a plumber the next day who fixed the immediate problem but told us we had a couple of bad spots in the pipe outside which could "go" at any time. Two days later, at least one of them "went" (as they say in the plumbing trade).

Fortunately, we'd not yet gone to closing on the house, so the owners agreed to pay to have it fixed. The plumbers completed the job in about a week--but, for a while there, it was impossible for us to use either of the toilets for anything, uh, messy...unless one enjoyed the prospect of attacking a toilet full of shit with a plunger. Not a pleasant task, I'm sure you'll agree. But, you know, in certain circumstances, it simply had to be done.

Which brings me directly to Eric Mayer's TEDSCAN.

AH, SWEET HYPOCRISY I will not be wasting a copy of this fanzine on Mayer. I hope my readers will feel comfortable about showing it to anyone they like, though, including him. I mention it only because it represents a distinct change in policy with respect to my treatment of Eric: For the longest time, I made it a point to send him a copy of anything I wrote which mentioned him or any of this. He has returned that favor to me all of once on an entirely different matter and, to the best of my knowledge, has never done so with Ted White.

You see, Eric Mayer has been talking about us for some time, in correspondence and elsewhere. (More often about Ted than me, I admit, but I'm beginning to "come into my own," as it were.) Oh, sure--according to TEDSCAN this is just a charge Ted and I trumped up based solely on Eric's correspondence with me--but if you believe Eric on this, you will still be calling him a liar, inasmuch as he admits (in the course of TEDSCAN alone) he's done so with respect to Ted in letters to Linda, Bergeron, Irwin Hirsh and "a handful of close correspondents" --in addition to the letters he sent me.

Too, the latest HOLIER THAN THOU contains a loc from Harry Andruschak, remarking receipt of a letter from Eric angrily denouncing Ted for what he'd said about Harry in a recent EGOSCAN. Ted's comment had been, roughly, that many who've been thought stupid or fuggheaded by fandom have turned out to be disturbed in one way or another, and in light of Harry's recent revelation that he was an alcoholic, Ted intended to refrain from any further unkind comments about him. I'm not certain whether Harry is one of the "handful" Eric acknowledges in TEDSCAN or if this represents a new attack on Ted, but if the latter I think it's obviously more specious than the first--hard as that is to believe.

I find Eric most curious when he expresses outrage at Ted for mentioning this dispute during a convention room party quite some time after Eric had cut off communication with him. Eric even says, on the second page of his charming little fanzine, how much he "detests" the idea of talking behind someone's back--lest the point escape you. Yet how, I wonder, are we to describe someone who says one thing yet does the opposite--who presents himself as a knight going into battle against a formidable foe, but while no one is looking sneaks around to deliver his blows from the rear?

For that, you see, is precisely what has happened here--and quite clearly what Eric says and does are two different things.

"Hypocrisy," I think, is the word which describes this behavior.

In point of fact, the letters which Eric wrote about Ted (at least those which Ted and I have seen) were sent to Ted by the recipient--not by Eric "I-detest-the-idea-of-talking-behind-someone's-back" Mayer. Ted even sent Eric a copy of the EGOSCAN which dealt with this, even though Mayer had said at that point he would no longer receive mail from him. Curiously enough, it was not returned--and since Eric responds to what was said there in TEDSCAN, it must be presumed he read it. Yet, although neither Ted nor I have said we would refuse to accept mail from him, we are both still--several months after the event--waiting for Eric to send us our own copies of TEDSCAN, the fanzine in which he "bravely" takes us both on.

Can't you, now, as you page through your copy, just picture the twinkle in his blue blue eyes, the square cut of his firm jaw, the defiant outthrustness of his manly chest?

Now obviously I've seen TEDSCAN; I have a copy of a copy, while Ted has a copy of my copy. Otherwise, you know, I couldn't very well be responding to what Eric said there. It was, I also grant, as much a foregone conclusion that we should see what Eric wrote as it was that Eric would hear what Ted had said during that room party. The distinction, in my mind, is Ted said nothing which he'd not already said in correspondence with Eric, while Eric has a number of things to say about Ted and about me which he never had the courage to put in his letters.

So, hey, sure, when those copies of TEDSCAN show up, I'll be only too happy to resume my practice of sending Mr. Eric "No Guts" Mayer copies of anything I write which mentions him. Just not before.

HOWCOME: Quite some time before Norwescon, Linda asked me, as a long-time friend of Ted's, if I felt he could "take criticism." Eric had sent her a loc which was explicitly critical of Ted and implicitly critical of some of Ted's friends--including, but not limited to, yhos. Eric said things she'd previously only heard voiced behind Ted's back. Still, she wondered what Ted's reaction might be; she would make the editorial decision on publishing it but simply wanted to know what I thought she might expect if she did.

Since Linda didn't quote Eric and I thought him a rather fair and reasonable person, I told her I thought Ted could take criticism as well as he dished it out--accept it, if he thought it valid, or dispute it if he didn't--and, anyway, he would probably prefer to have it out in the open where he could deal with it.

At the time, I couldn't help but wonder what "implicit" criticism Mayer had to make about me. We'd exchanged letters without become correspondents, writing locs on each other's fanzines, and if I sometimes thought his fanac a bit bland, I also felt he often took bland topics and made them either funny or interesting or funny and interesting--which I consider to be no mean feat. I'd rather liked most of what I'd seen by him. So, for that matter, had Ted--he'd had good

things to say about GROGGY, and we'd both chuckled over various items by Eric in other fanzines.

My only dispute with Eric had concerned the nature of egoboo; Eric felt it should be a "softer" currency than it is, spread around more liberally, and I felt this just depreciated the value of legitimate egoboo. Still, this seemed more a discussion than an argument, much less a heated one--so I was puzzled.

So I mentally reviewed our earlier correspondence. I wondered if perhaps he'd taken something I'd said amiss. Maybe, I thought, when I'd suggested he might try using yellow second sheets rather than ditto paper with his hekto (a friend of mine managed to get twice the normal run of legible copies that way), I'd phrased it so that Eric had taken it as an implied criticism of GROGGY's legibility. I hadn't meant it that way, but since I could not recall how I'd phrased it, I supposed that might have been how he'd taken it.

Of course, I also wondered what in the world he could have to say about Ted --I couldn't recall any argument they'd ever had, either. But Eric seemed such an admirable sort of fan--not involved in feuds, not in any group's clique or camp, not into fan history or fan politics, just Doing His Own Thing, fanning his ax, having a good time and letting us enjoy it with him--that I could only wonder what reasonable ol' Eric Mayer could possibly have to say that might get up our noses.

Perhaps, reading between the lines here, you will have already guessed it was none of the above and that I eventually found Eric to be somewhat less than reasonable--as a result of which, my previously good opinion of him underwent a radical change after trying to work through our disagreements in correspondence and observing his in-print arguments.

FAN IN THE WHITE HAT While looking for a place of our own, Linda and I stayed at Ted's. As soon as we arrived, Linda presented him with her fanzine and pointed out Eric's letter, to which Ted took strong but understandable exception. He'd recently received two letters from Eric, on EGO-SCAN, to which he intended to respond. With these and Linda's fanzine in hand, Ted wrote Eric a letter.

This is the letter from which Eric quotes in TEDSCAN. For a while at least, Eric characterized this as a 15pp response to his "little paragraph" in Linda's fanzine (go see how "little" that paragraph was, folks) to indicate to Alan Sundry how far "overboard" Ted had gone in reacting to it. In fact, the last three pages or so--about one-fifth of the total--dealt with Eric's comments in MOVING PAPER FANTASY; the rest was devoted to responding to the two letters Eric had sent him. These days, I see by TEDSCAN, Eric's being a bit more circumspect--perhaps because I've already called him once on his exaggeration--saying that he will "make the entire 15 pages available" to those who think he's misrepresented what Ted said and, with admirable restraint, waiting two full pages before characterizing it as a "blown up" response to "an unpublished loc and a paragraph in a fanzine." So, good people, if your copy is at hand and you have any regard for truth--I feel, for reason, Eric is exempted from at least one of these provisions--you may want to go back and pencil in "two unpublished locs and a nearly page-long paragraph in a fanzine."

Ted showed me the letter he wrote Eric to ask if I thought it was too strong. I said I thought it was strong enough--it expressed outrage and anger, but clearly labeled as such. I saw nothing threatening in any of it.

Eric apparently thought he did--or, at least, said so to me, to Ted and to Richard Bergeron--and used this as his excuse to cut off further communication with Ted. Bergeron, who'd also seen Ted's letter, told me he'd informed Eric that he didn't see any "threat" in it, either.

Nonetheless, Mayer trots it out, in lawyerly fashion, in TEDSCAN--with some quotes which I'm sure he feels make his point. To do so, however, he not only had to quote Ted out of context but reverse the order of presentation to make what was said sound like a threat.

Consider: if I told you I was trying to work through my disgust with you but wasn't going to do anything drastic, then said you'd made me angry enough to punch you in the nose, you might reasonably feel that the next time we met in, say, New York, you might have to walk to Philadelphia to pick up the remainder of your teeth. But if I said you'd made me angry enough to punch you in the nose, then went on to explain how I was trying to work my way through my anger but wasn't going to do anything drastic, I might hope your comprehension of the English language was sufficient to inform you that I was not offering to take you on in a catch-as-catch-can bout the next time we met. If you can make that simple distinction, you're at least one up on Eric Mayer. Which, I know, may not be saying much.

WHAT WAS SAID Stripped of its clumsy rhetoric, even Eric's basic point in this--that Ted criticizes too harshly--is not one with which I agree. And yet, I'd be the first to acknowledge this is really a matter of opinion--and I daresay Eric's probably not alone in holding it. In fact, I'd be much surprised if many fans didn't have the same, or a similar, opinion of me.

Nonetheless, while I think Ted probably would have disagreed with Eric's contention even had it been stated as above, I also believe it a criticism he could have taken with good grace.

Eric, however, went much further, with speculation which he presented as a bald assertion about Ted's character. According to Eric, Ted is maliciously motivated and gets some undefined joy from deliberately looking for and using the most "hurtful" thing he can say when he engages in criticism. In his locs to Linda and Irwin Hirsh as well as in correspondence with me--and possibly even with Bergeron, although I've never seen Eric's letter to Dick--it seems clear that Eric does not realize how fucking stupid he appears when he tries to jump into Ted's mind to tell us all what really motivates his fanatic.

It's also obvious Eric believes this to be a perfectly legitimate form of "criticism" and that he feels he should be entitled to make his public judgments about Ted's character and motivations under this safe and comfortable umbrella.

I regard it as a rather dumb characterization of what Ted's done and--since I see that characterization as totally false--in effect, a kind of character assassination. I would simply say that criticizing what people do is not the same as providing your interpretation of what they do as though it were the only one possible. Eric is, and as far as I'm concerned other people are, entitled to think Ted (or I, or anyone else) is abrasive or that what he/I/we say can be hurtful--and even to speculate about why Ted/I/we do as we do. Mind you, I probably still would not agree--but at that point I would concede this as legitimate opinion, even if there were no good reason for it.

But it strikes me as unreasonably presumptuous for Eric to say flatly that Ted engages in criticism to be as hurtful as possible because he relishes the prospect of causing pain...unless this is labeled speculation or unless Eric has some "inside scoop" we've yet to hear about. I've known Ted much too long to believe he's engaged in fannish pursuits for sadistic purposes, even on reasonable ol' Eric Mayer's say-so.

GIGO: As I see it, Eric was sitting up in Rochester, having never met the person whose character he was taking it upon himself to assess (and from such a great distance, too!), getting input from correspondents like Brian

Earl Boob, listening to anything bad anyone had to say about Ted and, obviously, accepting it uncritically, with no one to talk to about it but Kathy (who does, in my opinion at least, "succeed" as Eric's "second voice").

I told him I would not believe he was Jommy Cross until I actually saw the tendrils in his hair. In lieu of that, I felt I had to believe my own perceptions, based on over a quarter of a century of close acquaintance, and continue to hold Ted in regard--even if it meant disbelieving in Eric's ESPer powers.

Not without disagreements, Ted and I have been friends for many years--so maybe, I told Eric, as someone who's spent time in Ted's company in the Real World as well as reading quite a bit of what he's written, I know him at least a bit better than any "paper fan" whose sources of information were limited and probably, therefore, suspect. So I told Eric I felt he didn't know what the fuck he was talking about--and gave my reasons.

Thus, you see, Eric's comment about me that I don't think he's entitled to participate in "real" fanac because he's only a paper fan is a distortion at best. At worst, it's simply a deliberate lie and Eric Mayer a deliberate liar. I leave it to you to determine which of these you think I believe.

I know at least one fan--Dave Locke--who has accepted this distortion at face value. However, in all honesty, had our roles been reversed--had "Dave Locke" appeared in that quote in place of "rich brown"--I probably would have done the same. I don't know Dave very well and don't think he knows me any better than I know him; we obviously disagree on a number of things fannish, which no doubt serves to make us both a bit inclined not to think too highly of each other. So I can understand why he might have accepted Eric's depiction as truthful--I'd have certainly been "a bit inclined" to accept it about him, had our positions been reversed.

Since I can't locate my copy of the letter I wrote Eric in which the "paper fan" phrase appears, I have just rephrased what I recall saying. I think it's accurate. But if you want to check it further, I'm perfectly willing to let Eric send you a copy of it.

No doubt some of you, perhaps including but not limited to Dave Locke, will nonetheless disagree with what I've said. But, as far as I'm concerned, that's perfectly all right--I'll just choke back my bitter sob of disappointment and try to trundle on without your good opinion.

What is important to me here is that, if you disagree, it will then be on the basis of what I actually said, rather than Eric's distorted depiction of it. I can live with that.

MINDLESS MINIONS Eric expressed reluctance to come forward with his critiques in PAPER FAN and SIKANDER because, for one thing, he felt he could expect to get a long letter from Ted and be vilified for it in dozens of places in the future. As it turned out, he did get a long letter from Ted, part of which was in angry response to one of those "critiques"--and I can readily understand, at least by Eric's lights, how totally unreasonable it is for Ted to express his anger over a little innocent character assassination. Ted also wrote a short piece for EGOSCAN which addressed the topic simply by quoting bits of Eric's letter from MPF and expressing mild incredulity.

Eric said another reason he was reluctant to voice his criticisms was because it seemed, whenever anyone was critical of Ted, you could almost count on one of his friends--in Linda's fanzine, Eric specified Terry Carr, Dan Stefan and myself--to come down on them, and he had no argument with any of us.

This is all perfectly true, of course.

Terry, Dan and I may have once been capable of independent thought but that is just a dim memory which sometimes draws attention to itself as it scuttles

out of the musty cobwebs of antiquity. Most the time, these days, we sit around with blank stares on our faces and our hands poised over our typers, giving maybe an occasional twitch, waiting for The Signal. Whenever anyone so much as hints that Ted could be wrong, he simply walks down into his basement and throws the switch on his Mind Control Mechanism. Thus, before you can say "I had one once but the wheels fell off," Ted's mindless minions are unleashed. Their power is devastating to behold.

Mayer later told me, somewhat smugly, that he'd received a "friendly" letter from Terry Carr. If I was intended to equate "friendly" with "agreeing," I didn't--I just gathered Eric felt this proved something. Maybe that my letters were not friendly or that Terry wasn't annoyed at the implication he was one of Ted's sycophants. Perhaps that Ted's Mind Control Mechanism doesn't work coast-to-coast. I don't know. I mean, unlike Eric, I do not claim any particular long-distance powers to discern what evils lurk in the hearts of men. My only talent in that regard is one practiced by any number of trufen--the ability to be able to tell, at a distance of 50 yards, another trufan simply by their "aura."

When Linda and I got settled down, I sent Eric a rambling missive (as is my wont) in response to his letter in her fanzine in which I agreed on minor points but disagreed with his major thrust. Sure, I told him, Ted and I are long-time friends--Ted was Best Man at my first marriage--and, yes, I'd have to say I've agreed with him (and he with me) about things on a number of occasions. But our acquaintance of nearly 30 years and friendship of more than 25 had its share of public and private disagreements too--in fact, once so strongly we weren't on speaking terms for a while, which might almost be expected of pipples as opinionated as Ted is or I am. I was a bit surprised that someone who'd been involved in fandom as long as Eric was apparently unaware of any of this. But perhaps he just wasn't paying attention.

In any event, I've never had the slightest qualm about telling Ted he's Full Of It, when I think he is, as he's never had the slightest qualm about saying the same to me. In fact, I told Eric, one of the things I most value about Ted's friendship is his honesty--there's absolutely nothing phony about him; he says what he thinks and damn the torpedoes.

I try to do the same.

HONESTY This is a point on which I totally agree with Ted--and which Eric, apparently, does not--namely, that there's absolutely no point to criticism which is not, at the very least, honest.

Let me digress a bit. When I was in the Air Force in Florida, Shelby and Suzy Vick introduced me to a writer's group which had a rule that, to criticize another's work, one also had to say something nice about it. Had this been a reminder, I believe I might have understood it. I mean, I know how easy it can be to concentrate on flaws and even to forget to praise what, in some respects, seems worthy of it--so I could have seen how a reminder to that effect might have been in order.

But because it was a rule, I eventually came to feel that it made all praise one might receive in that group highly suspect.

Was my "characterization" (or plot or whatever) as good as some of these pipples said--or were they simply picking that at random as their "something nice" to say about my stuff to comply with The Rule? I didn't know. I had no way of knowing. Part of the reason I'd joined, I felt, was to have my work honestly criticized; if I didn't think the criticism valid, I could discard it, and had I wanted unearned praise, I could have sent my manuscripts to my mother. I simply knew I wasn't, at the time, self-critical enough to evaluate my own

work--I was too close to it and couldn't see the forest because all the damned trees were in the way. But...what to do?

What I did was to make myself more than a bit obnoxious by not observing the rule--or, rather, by observing it in such a way that I really wasn't observing it: "Your punctuation, as far as I can tell, is mostly correct," "Your word choices are often interesting," "Your typing is neat," etc., after some lengthy bit of criticism. I did this in the hope of getting similarly straight, unabashed honest criticism in return--and instead got a mild rebuke, albeit in private, from the club president (the only professional in the group, who'd sold several historical novels) for not being fulsome enough with my praise, even though she personally agreed with me that there wasn't much to compliment in some of these writers' works.

Unable to force myself to tell the "necessary" lies, I stopped going. But I kept working diligently on my Great American Kgnovel or "GAK" for short (as I called it at the time) for the next four and a half years, in part because (even though I couldn't be sure it was entirely honest) I'd received some praise and encouragement--on something which, it turned out, had my critics been honest, they might have told me to drop and go on to something else.

In fact, that's precisely what Ted White suggested when, a few years (and far too many drafts) later, I brought it to the writer's group he hosted in his apartment in Brooklyn. Oh, my widdle feewings were hurt a bit--I wasn't yet quite mature enough to distinguish between criticisms of my work and criticisms of me...the very failing among new writers which, most likely, had prompted that "rule" of the other writers' group--but I took the suggestion and went on to other things, some of which I sold to Ted and some of which I sold to others.

A few years later I stumbled across my mss. of that novel. I thought, perhaps, it might contain a scene or two worth lifting for use elsewhere. I don't know if that's the case or not; I couldn't even finish reading the first chapter to find out. It was that bad. I'm almost tempted to say Ted's criticism was too kind--except, of course, it wasn't; it just said all that needed to be said. I'll grant you I "learned something" from the four and a half years during which I spent countless nights revising that book--but, to borrow an old Truman Capote joke, what I learned had more to do with typing than it did with writing.

HERE OR THERE Eric Mayer, I think, would have found himself comfortable in that Florida writer's group. Or, for that matter, right at home in mundane amateur journalism.

I pointed out to him that, when I'd been a member of the National Amateur Press Association in the late 1960s, even mild criticisms were frowned upon in publications which went through the "official" mailings. With few exceptions, those journals were dull, bland and boring. A few of them looked nice--but that was about the best you could say for them. However, the National did not require all members to be sent unofficial mailings (or what we in fandom would call "post mailings"), which contained--in my opinion--the cream of the crop. These journals were not only a joy to look upon--that being part of what mundane ajay's all about--but a delight to read. Some were comparable to the best fandom has to offer, most had at least something of a critical nature and a few of those were critical of other publications in that microcosm.

After explaining this to Eric, I told him I'd always inferred a cause-and-effect relationship had resulted in this phenomenon--but, if it couldn't be attributed to the critical standards I'd found in one but not the other, then what did he think it could be?

I personally feel the "sweetness & light" school of criticism which Eric advocates--of the kind which may be found in practice in official mailings of

mundane ajay, in the N3F, in writers' groups made up of little old ladies in tennis shoes, and indeed in much of the mundane world--is phony and hypocritical. Furthermore, I believe this arguably well-meaning perversion of politeness is ultimately much more harmful than the "tell-it-as-you-see-it" criticism which Ted and I and others practice can ever be--even in Eric Mayer's fevered imagination. We're all familiar with the cliché about being "killed with kindness"--and if I'm generous enough to say that what "sweetness & light" critics practice may be short of murder, I can draw from my own experience to add that they can help you waste your time on something they've been "kind" enough to encourage, even though they may not really have believed it was worth it.

At least, when I praise something--or, for that matter, when Ted praises something--you will know it's because we really like it, and not just because you're a friend of ours or because we're trying to be "nice" and/or "polite" to you.

SUPERIORITY Color me FIAWOL if you must--I think fandom is, in many ways, superior to the mundane, and part of our superiority is because this kind of hypocrisy is not generally encouraged in the microcosm. We are, rather, asked to say what we think--and at the same time we are challenged to consider, alter and/or defend what we think when others express opinions which differ from our own.

If we didn't have at least that much going for us, we'd be just what Eric would like--no different from the people in his office. We'd model our standards of behavior on those of the corporation, say only polite nothings to each other, try not to be "different" from other fans in word or thought or deed. We'd either be incapable of making distinctions between the Walt Willises and John W. Thiels in our midst or have to refuse, out of politeness, to articulate them. We'd always Defer to Those in Authority or, at the very least, engage in circumlocutions so as to disguise our real meanings.

I don't know. Every once in a while I catch myself unwittingly acting out the role of Spokesman for Fandom (self-appointed variety, naturally) and have to smile. I mean, maybe I'm wrong. Perhaps I'm getting old and set in my ways and find it hard to countenance radical changes in how we do things. Maybe I'm too imperceptive to fathom what the current generation of fans really want. Possible? Sure. And maybe, along the line somewhere, I've grossly misjudged some important change in the microcosm, and thereby failed to see how the Eric Mayer Ideal is precisely what most people would prefer fandom to be--in which case, I guess I was only expressing a minority opinion when I told Eric he could just fuck off if that's how he wanted fans to behave. On the other hand, as Calvin W. "Biff" Demmon used to say, Maybe Not.

For whatever reason, Eric responded to me on very few of these points; he just kept saying he didn't enjoy criticism, didn't think criticism was "particularly creative," and while he didn't write criticism himself, he felt if he ever did he could do so in a "less abrasive" manner than Ted. He kept returning to a by-now familiar theme--that Ted had been too critical of Marc Ortlieb (who, I must say, took the criticism in precisely the spirit it was intended, Eric Mayer notwithstanding) and should not have concentrated so much on what Marc did wrong but instead focussed on what Marc did that was right.

So, to my mind, there's no question about it--Eric would have enjoyed himself in either that writer's group or in mundane ajay (at least, if he'd stayed only with the "official" mailings).

The only question I still have is, how do we get him to go?

When Eric responded to my letter about his loc in MPF, I sent Ted a copy of my reply--with a copy of Eric's letter, so Ted would know what mine was all about. Since I was living in Woodbridge and we didn't see each other often, he replied by letter; I take the liberty of quoting portions here:

Thanks for the chance to read Eric Mayer's (undated) letter to you, and your response of June 28th.

What continues to amaze and impress me is the absolute dishonesty of Mayer's position. Check me out on this:

Eric Mayer sees himself as one of The Good Guys. He doesn't believe in hurting people. He doesn't believe in calling attention to people's faults and failings. He doesn't believe in criticism (which is not "particularly creative"), but if he did, he'd do it "in a less abrasive manner than Ted." He would never attack someone for having (or exhibiting) character flaws.

So just what has Eric been doing for the past year or more? With all the self-righteous hypocrisy he can muster, Eric Mayer has been saying things about me which might be presumed by most people to be hurtful. He has slagged me with vilification. He has identified me as someone who indulges in criticism for sadistic pleasure: the pleasure of torture. Not a light criticism, I would say, but I have to admire its "less abrasive manner."

I have no idea how widespread Eric's vilifications of me to his correspondents may be, but I do know that his letter to Linda was not an isolated case. For instance, I possess a copy of his loc on my SIKANDER piece. Here are some typical quotes:

I would like to offer a little criticism of Ted's review. I refrained when he took on US Fandom in Skel's zine, but since everybody seems to regard Ted as the man for the job when it comes to summing up Fandom, I think its only fair that his shortcomings as a critic be pointed out. I'm reluctant to do so since I realize 17 page letters will be addressed to me personally, Ted's friends will be pissed off, Ted will manage to mention me disparagingly in every article or review he writes for any fanzine in the world for the next 15 years, and no doubt, like Marc Ortlieb, my writing will be carefully carved apart to prove how inept I am... Ted, like the rest of us, is not above criticism - but he sure makes it tougher than most of us would.

Here's the same mindset, anticipating reactions and closing doors to communication in advance (note the reference to "17 page letters...addressed to me personally"; I guess I shoulda sent my 15-page letter to "Occupant"). Why does he think I take criticism poorly? Because I notice how invective-laden it is, how insincere it is as criticism? Here are some of Eric's Heavy Criticisms:

On the whole, the review is typical White. The style is smooth but lacks any spark or personality. [Now, that's perceptive!] The article is, of course, far too long. Ted makes every neo mistake in the book, right down to explaining why he missed his deadline (when a neofan does it the critic says "who cares?") and when he finally gets to the point he can't come up with any real structure but merely strings together reviews in an apparently random fashion until he's finished the lot.

Uh. That hurt. Of course, it reveals how poorly Eric comprehended the piece, since there was a specific structure and it was established at the outset (nor were the reviews randomly ordered: they built from the poorest to the best). But, here's the real cause of Eric's sour reaction:

I guess I have to be honest and admit I wasn't exactly thrilled with SIKANDER this time. I know you asked me if I minded my article being bumped back - and I didn't. But my reaction would've been different if I'd known that after meeting the deadline you set I would be bumped back by someone who didn't meet the deadline. That seems unfair. Of course, poor Ted had to contend with his Comics reviews while I had only to worry about a full time job, my wife's difficult pregnancy and the normal care and feeding chores attendant upon a parent with a two year old. Ah well, I guess I wouldn't want to sit on a 50 page article by Ted either, given his record of vindictiveness against anybody who irritates him.

That was the entire first paragraph of Eric's letter to Irwin, and I think it explains a whole lot. Poor honest, hard-working, Good Guy Eric did the Right Thing and met his deadline despite working a 36-hour day as Superpop; he was an ant, toiling his honest toil. And along comes slovenly ol' grasshopper Ted ("thirty years a grasshopper" they call me), who breaks the rules and misses his deadline. And who gets bumped? Boy, does that burn Eric. So he spends four (4) pages pissing on my piece and on me, every paragraph redolent of his sour contempt for Grasshopper Ted.

It reaches a climax of Alice-in-Wonderland absurdity on his final page, however, which he devotes to proving, in his guise as a legal editor ("I say this as a legal editor....") that "Ted is absolutely wrong" when I said, "Legally defined (along with oral rape) as sodomy, anal rape is of course, considered rape..." Here's how Eric responds, "as a legal editor":

Isn't that vintage Ted? Up there on his high horse, decrying the 'ignorance' and naivete of the letter writer, spouting off the law in his most authoritative fashion. Trouble is, the ignorant letter writer was absolutely correct and Ted is absolutely wrong. Ted's sentence is actually just a nonsense sentence, stupidly mixing in legal terms (sodomy) with, I presume, a layman's usage of 'rape' plus 'anal rape' and 'oral rape' which terms have no legal existence and which, I think are self contradictions even according to the dictionary.

Keep in mind, if your copy of SIKANDER isn't handy, that I was responding to a letter from a rape victim. This woman had been, she said, raped anally. She wasn't sure if she could say she'd been raped. Was it really rape?

According to Eric, she was not raped. It was not possible to anally rape her because the term "anal rape" has "no legal existence" and is a "self-contradiction...according to the dictionary."!! (Eric went on to quote American law, including the Model Penal Code, to prove his point--completely ignoring that, on top of everything else, the victim was not American and not raped in the US.)

Now of course what I actually said, in the sentence Eric objected so strongly to, was absolutely true. "Legally defined (along with oral rape) as sodomy..." Even Eric can't quibble with that: it's his own point. "...anal rape is of course considered rape..." And here is where Eric fucked up. He assumed that I meant it was legally "considered rape," when in fact I meant it was commonly "considered rape." You don't have to be a mindreader to figure this out, since I opposed the legal definition ("sodomy") with what in fact anal rape is regarded as: rape. Only a "legal editor" would leap to the wrong conclusion on this, and even then, I suspect, only if he were looking for things to criticize and didn't care about the fairness of his choices.

You know, it bothers me when people can't tell the difference between the map and the territory. Eric Mayer isn't ignorant. He must be aware of the fact that men rape men in prison--and that the only means possible are anal and oral. As you know, prison rapes have been in the headlines in the POST for the past year or more. They are universally referred to, by reporters, editorialists, social workers and prison authorities, as "rapes." I wonder why Eric has not protested this usage in the media since it offends him so deeply when I echo it in a fanzine?

Eric concludes his comments on "rape" with this:

But Ted SOUNDED like he knew what he was talking about, didn't he? He has a manner of doing that. I wonder if all the facts he trots out, in the same authoritative manner in reference to other fields would turn out to be equally specious if only his readers were more familiar with the fields in question? I suspect so. I know I'm not an expert on many things. Unlike Ted, I don't pretend to be in order to criticize others.

Do you detect a note of malice there? After willfully misreading me in order to prove me "absolutely wrong" on a point in which I was in no way wrong, Eric generalizes me into a habitual, boastful liar, pretending to an expertise (in unnamed areas) which I don't possess. Is this a Good Guy?

In his letter to you he reveals that he considers me "a fool." Perhaps I am. Certainly I was a fool to waste my time writing him a 15-page letter in anticipation of straightening out what appeared at the time to be a serious misunderstanding. His treatment of that letter--indeed, his anticipation and dismissal in advance of that letter--reveals the situation to be far different. Eric is not honestly mistaken. He is dishonestly mistaken--and unwilling in the face of all evidence to admit as much. I'd rather be a fool, I guess, than a malicious liar.

I think Eric Mayer is very immature. I base this on his refusal to read what I've actually written--either in SIKANDER or in my letter to him--when it contradicts his preconceived notions. His taking my statement that I wasn't threatening him as a threat is only one (extreme) example. His letters are rife with others.

Another aspect of his immaturity is his unwillingness to deal with the reactions he provokes. He said a lot of unkind and untrue things about me in Linda's zine but simply could not handle my direct expression to him of my reaction: that I was disgusted and pissed off at him. Even when I told him explicitly that "I'm expressing disgust and working it out of my system."

Now if he'd said, "Well, I'm pissed at you too, and here's why --" we might have gotten somewhere. We might have found whatever the basic problem was and resolved it. But, nooooo. Instead I get this snotty half-page letter that insults me with its stupidity and cuts off all further communication.

That is either grossly immature or a carefully considered act of malice. Or maybe both.

"If Ted does not mean to write hurtfully..." I'd like to see Eric come up with one example from my published writing that equals the snideness, contempt, malice and just plain hurtfulness of his ongoing references to me. I seriously doubt he could do it.

Here he is citing a letter in XYSTER about how a neighbor of Martyn Taylor gave him a misdirected letter from me and characterized it as "such filth." Eric is so ready and willing to believe the worst of me that he snatches even at bits like this, which he recognizes might have been "a joke," but about which he

feels "Still, it sums up Ted's fanac." Whew! My fanac is summed up as "filth!" Does this seem at all askew from reality to you? I didn't see that XYSTER (I just looked and turned up #s 2 & 4, neither of which contain the Taylor letter), but I have to wonder how Martyn's neighbor arrived at this characterization of my letter. It was an airletter-form loc, and I can't recall anything else about it, except that it ground no axes. Well, it was no Tony Cvetko letter, I'll tell you that.

Then there's this: "I got a letter from Taral...saying he was quit with Ted because Ted had apparently been chortling to Avedon over Taral's good faith attempt to be reasonable." That's interesting, since (a) I never "chortled" to Avedon about Taral's letter--I was pleased to receive it since it meant an upswing in communications between us--but in any case I was the one who told Taral how disgusted I was with his PONG piece and Taral was trying to justify himself, not the other way around; and (b) Taral and I have remained in communication and are still in communication (I just vetted a massive--32-page--article of his on fanart which will be in HOLIER THAN THOU in an issue or two, writing a 10-page letter to do so), which is more than I can say for Eric and me. And at this point I have a lot more respect for Taral than I do for Eric.

And, the final nail in my coffin, John D Owen's characterization of my loc on CRYSTAL SHIP as "vitriolic." Of course it wasn't, it was a letter of comment in which I disagreed with his editorial and said the story in that issue was 'just a conceit.' If Owen really thinks it was a vitriolic letter he's an asshole--which wouldn't surprise me, since my first contact with the man was his foolish attempt to start a feud with me in the pages of EPSILON, which I declined.

On the basis of these three things--third-hand and doubtful characterization of my loc to Taylor as "filth," my supposedly "chortling" to Avedon about a letter from Taral, and Owen's description of another loc as "vitriolic"--Eric rests his case: "It wasn't simply the Australian review which prompted my remark to Linda but the whole of Ted's fanac." And he thinks my fanac is "dead wrong." I simply cannot see how a penchant for overreaction and nastiness is in any way helpful to Fandom."

Then why doesn't he stop?

Eric Mayer has by now reached the conclusion--utterly without any supporting evidence except for the twisted lies he tells--that my whole fanac, everything I do in fandom, is "dead wrong." On this basis, he feels he can safely vilify me in the strongest terms. He speaks knowingly of my "stream of vitriol," and says, "It really comes down to a matter of behavior, of conducting oneself in a civilized manner."

What a hypocrite!

This is where Mayer's dishonesty galls me the most. He sets himself up and lectures me on my behavior, while practicing an uncivilized mode of behavior which I would never adopt, and indeed which I find reprehensible. He has decided to cast judgment on me as a human being, and, knowing me not at all and resolutely unwilling to learn anything about me by reading what I've actually written, he has taken upon himself the task of maliciously lying about me, falsely characterizing my work, and depicting me, really, as a disgustingly evil monster.

I have never done anything like this in all my years in fandom--not even to those enemies whom I most despised (like, say, Richard Eney).

Your letter is a solid one. I often think you spend too much time playing around with cute constructions that lead to elaborate digressions of a whimsical nature--and your point gets lost in the words and images. I think that may have happened in your previous letter to Eric but it's almost entirely absent in

this one, and I think that's good. Eric wants to misunderstand you. He does not want to hear any of your defense of me, and he doesn't want to be corrected about his erroneous readings of me. He is fixed firmly to his conception of who and what I am and I gather a lot of ego is riding on his position. He will not back down. He will not admit error. We are all wrong. If we say "White" and he reads "black," well, then we must have been lousy communicators, which just goes to prove his point.

Thus, the less fog you provide in your prose, the simpler and more directly you say things to him, the harder it will be for him to maintain his pose of open-minded reasonableness. Sooner or later he will have to confront what you're saying--or cut off communication with you, too. Don't be totally surprised if he does that, dismissing you as one of my sycophants.

Your final section introduces what I consider an irrelevency--the question of in-person fanac vs. paper fanac--since my in-person behavior is not under discussion here and in any case my in-print fanac would be the same if I never saw another fan face-to-face.

The true theme/topic of your section surfaces following that part.

Hypocrisy. Yes. That is the nub, isn't it? Eric can't stand the lack of hypocrisy on my part--that I call 'em as I sees 'em, and spades are labeled spades and not "entrenching tools" in my writing. If I think Marc Ortlieb's writing has flaws, I point 'em out. Eric can't accept that. He'd like me to write "what's right" in Marc's writing. Well, shit. Ortlieb already has a Ditmar or two, and plenty of people to tell him what's right in his fanac. In fact, that's his whole problem. He's surrounded by yes men who, if Eric had his way, would be all he'd ever hear. "Yes, Marc, your shit does smell wonderful. Please, may I have some more?" But then Marc stumbles out of provincial Australia and discovers that his fanac--his fanzine, his favorite artist, his writing--are all made sport of in Britain, where they laugh at him and tell him what a dumb down-underer he is. Nothing Eric has been feeding him prepared him for this: some people don't think he's worth much at all.

Now I didn't laugh at Marc and make sport of him. No, I took him aside and said, "Look, Marc, your stuff needs some work, see...?" I gave him useful criticisms. I didn't just piss all over him and tell him what a shit he was. But, oddly, Eric is acting as if that's exactly what I did. Why?

You put your finger on it. Eric is more comfortable with hypocrisy. He'd like us all to conduct ourselves more hypocritically--and it appears he's willing to show us how.

/s/ Ted White

P.S. -- So in today's mail is XYSTER #5, with a letter in it from Martyn Taylor, talking about his weird neighbors. Of one, he said, "She drank. She threw things at her boyfriend. She cursed her mother whenever she came to babysit the kids. She threw a fit when she accidentally received a letter addressed correctly to me, but put through her letterbox, loudly insisting I ensure she didn't get my filthy letters (it was from Ted White, as I recall...)..."

It is appalling to me that any fan--Eric Mayer, Brian Earl Boob, anyone--could or would take that quote and turn it into part of an attack on me. I think this incident says just about all that needs to be said about Honest Eric Mayer, don't you?

NOR JOY IN MUDVILLE Most of you who will be receiving this know that Linda Blanchard and I got engaged, after a nine-month correspondence, shortly after we met at ConStellation; that we lived apart for several months thereafter, tying up loose ends in our lives; that we attended Norwescon (where I will be fan GoH next year) and then travelled across country to make our home in Woodbridge.

Only a few of you, until this publication, have as yet been told that our plans to stay together did not work out as we had hoped.

I've moved back into the Green Room of the White House, at the address in the colophon. Linda is visiting friends and mail to her should be sent c/o Weatherlow, 21339 Willow Lane, Strongsville, OH 44136; thereafter she will perhaps go on to Houston or back to Seattle, or maybe somewhere else, depending on a number of factors.

We do, I believe, part as friends. I'm not happy with the way things have turned out for us, nor do I believe Linda is, although I won't presume to speak for her; at least, we both agree we've gotten a lousy break. It always is when you fall in love with someone you can't live with and/or who can't live with you.

The sad part is, we had such lovely plans...a regular fan meeting, a regular fanzine, a Thanksgiving Dinner...but there'll be no fan meetings, no fanzines, no Thanksgiving in Woodbridge. Nor joy in Mudville, for that matter.

--rich brown, 1984

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