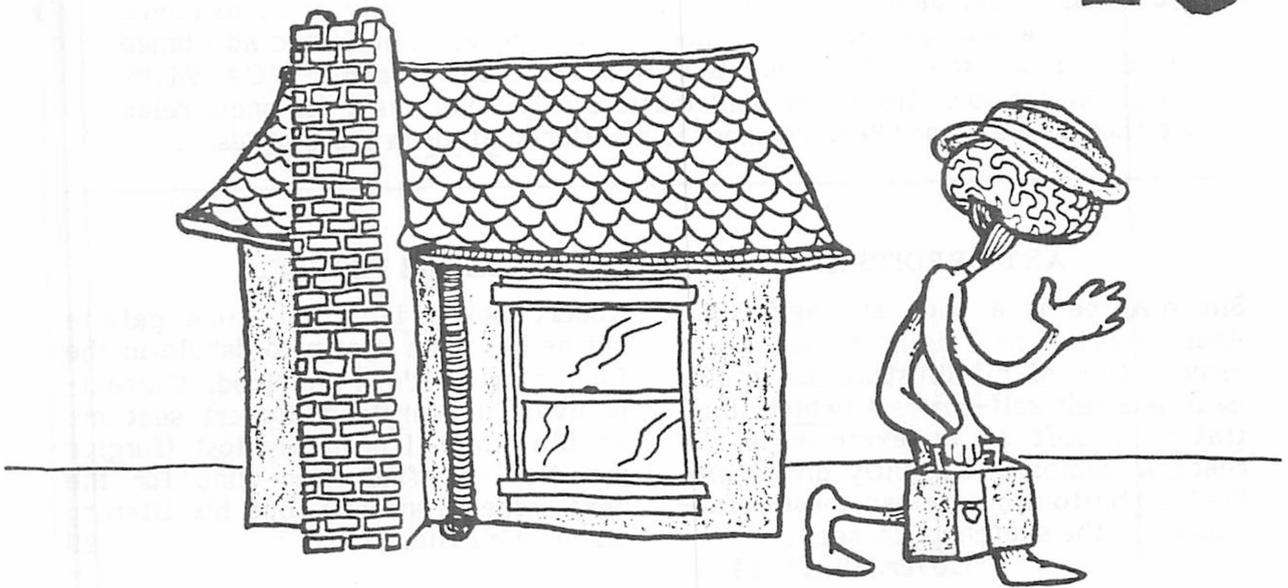


Quodlibet

18



MR. BRAIN TAKES A TRIP

January 31, 1983

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QUODLIBET 18, January 31, 1983, is a fanzine, normally a six-to-twelve page perzine but, on occasion, a modest-sized genzine, published ad libidem by Bill Patterson, 537 Jones St., No. 9943, San Francisco CA 94102. Available for locs, trades, or contributions only. You may, for once, relax. Neither D. West nor "Performance" is mentioned at all in these pages.

ART CREDITS AND ABOUT THOSE STRANGE PEOPLE...

Simon Agree is a once and again Bay Area fanartist now living in San Francisco. One of his illustrations in this issue is a fair self-portrait (which illustration is left as an exercise to the reader). Simon is currently diving into his bellybutton, but he had these scrapings from the sketchbooks, see...

Cover, 12, 13, 14, 31

Roger Patterson—no relation is no relation. Rog is Str/w fakefan, 35, 5'9" br/bl 150#, gdlkg, and available, he wants it known. Reply to Fanartist Add 770 this magazine. He gave up commercial art some years ago to follow his own eccentric vision, but occasionally will "oblige," if you can get a hammerlock on his wineglass. Not to say he's excessively bibulous, but...

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Robert Prokop is a long-time gafiater but he has been known to dabble in the fannish arts. It's in the blood. Currently living in Maryland, Robert sent me an illo which I promptly lost (forgive me, Bob--I'll find it in time for the next issue, I swear!), but his literary map is a classic.

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D. Carol Roberts is probably the most talented and the most underrated fanartist to come out of '70's Phoenix fandom, but her light is currently well-hidden under the Producer's bushel of the Emperor Norton Science Fiction Hour in San Francisco. If you want to find out why you haven't seen more of her work, read her "Fade to Black..." in this issue, then take another look at the lead illustration for "Slings and Arrows" in this issue

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I feel something like a houseguest of Procrustes these days. Mine Host is nodding over his cups, and I'm beginning to be slightly nervous. It is a very short bed, you see, and I'm all of six feet tall.

The occasion for my anxiety is a recent series of pronouncements from oracles in Virginia and Seattle on the Orthodoxy of Fanzine Publication. You didn't know we had one, eh? Attend:

The first came from Ted White in 1981 and was made current by its inclusion in Fanthology '81. Analyzing the elements of a fanzine's graphics package that produce in him a "warm" or comfortable/companionable feeling toward the issue, Ted concludes that the hand-stenciled and mimeo'd-on-colored-twiltone look is the most efficacious and appropriate graphics package for a fanzine. Ted's Gambit, as an exemplar of the form, is brilliantly persuasive, and one must admire the courage of a man willing to say within the hearing of all and sundry "I liked the last issue of Boonfark better because it was printed on canary twiltone."

The argument is all well and good, containing nothing startling and affirming the dicta of the Gospel According to Francis Towner Laney, that Most Accepted Authority of Fanzine Orthodoxy...

...only, tell me, why do I hear the snicker-snack of Mine Host's steel?

Although it had been around for about fifty years, the mimeograph did not become sufficiently accessible and sufficiently inexpensive to be generally adopted by the fannish samizdat until the 1940's. To a very great extent, the history of fanzine production to the '70's was taken up with first the struggle to conform production requirements to the limitations of the often cantakerous medium, and then to explore the freedom revealed as existing within those limitations. The work of people who have mastered the medium can be visually stunning, but the effort required to master its technique is daunting.

We cursed and struggled with template and stylus, and the countless schools, churches, and factories (inter alia) that used mimeography (and "ditto") as part of their business activity created a market for electrostenciling and thermofax. The electrostencil, at first crude and cantankerous in its own right, removed the native limitations of the medium, but it also removed a great deal of the externally-imposed



QUODLIBETAL.

discipline of working with the medium.

Some time around 1970, the price of offset reproduction dropped to such a level that, for the first time, offset printing was competitive, for certain applications, with mimeography. In 1972, for instance, when I had one mimeographed genzine under my belt and was preparing the second, I found that for a print-run of three hundred copies of a forty-six page magazine, the price difference between the two was about only ten dollars in mimeography's favor, with the balancing advantage that the price of offset included collation. On a purely economic basis, offset was considerably cheaper in terms of time and convenience, than mimeography. OAFS 2 was offset.

For a good while now, advances in electrostencilling, ink, and multi-color precision-registration technology have kept mimeography

an attractive alternative to offset in terms of production values. The cost of these technological fripperies has been to shoot the cost of new equipment through the roof. I bought my first mimeograph in 1971, used, for twenty-five dollars and spent a hundred more reconditioning it. When, last year, I couldn't find an offering in the classified section of the Sunday Chron, I priced a new mimeo at \$1,300. Quodlibet is photoreproduced or offset and is quite likely to remain so.

Although I don't think commercial offset printing will ever become cheaper than mimeography, its convenience and "cleanness" of impression will continue to make it the preferable medium for fanzines as long as it remains price-competitive.

Snick-snick. Procrustes is starting at the butt--or at least the back, right pocket.

There is yet one more point. All right: I admit to agreeing with Ted as regards the appearance of a fanzine. My tastes were canalized by the publications of the late '60's and early 70's, just before I moved, however tentatively, into fanzine fandom for the first time. A mimeo'd-on-twiltone fanzine looks like a fanzine. The other things are, of course fanzines, but they don't quite feel right unless they're mimeo'd on twiltone.

However, I don't let silly prejudices like that interfere with appreciating one of those not-quite-right things that show up in my mailbox occasionally. The wild beauty of Alpajpuri's creations, from years ago; the stolid utilitarianism of Tappen 4; the fanciful graphics of Beard-mutterings 4; all ought to clue one to the fact that there is more to fanpublishing than stylus and wax stencil. The advent of wordprocessors alone is an event that ought to be rocking our microcosm with intimations of how we can put the limitations and freedoms of that technology to use.

It would be ironic, indeed, if fans were making conscious attempts to be uninfluenced by technological change.

The theory of fanzine packaging Laney set out are now a good many years old, and a lot of *Kul-cha* has gone under/over the dam since. While we are busy producing period pieces, the world outside has assimilated and bypassed shibui and Niedermoeller and Warhol and Max and gone on to other things. This is a perfectly necessary process, and I see no reason one should stand in its way by "holding the line" and using methods on their way to becoming as quaint and as archaic as hectograph. Sic transit. Sad, but transit. The moving finger is sometimes a bird.

Besides, using the wordprocessor set on "Proportional Space," I never have problems fitting locs into my format--instead of the six

hundred words or so permitted by pica or elite type, I can fit 1,200 per page--never have to use micro-elite, sacrificing readability for packing a lot of stuff into a small space. Nosirreebob, I learned my lesson with the IguanaCon Pocket Program, I did...

Snick-snick. A little off the top. With a virtual prefrontal lobotomy to come.

* * *

Well, I was about to regale you all with a couple thousand words of Viewing With Alarm and Appropriate Sarcasm and even some *Irony* about Patrick Nielsen Hayden's recent references in Izzard and Telos to how fanwriting should be *ironic*, although he would graciously permit frivolous discussions skiffy, but I see from Wiz and Izzard and various and sundry other sources that the subject of What Fanwriting Should Be ("good," presumably) has been/is being done to death elsewhere, so it's a dead or soon-to-be-dead issue, and I don't have to ring any more changes on the Procrustes metaphor. Hallelujah and pass the salt. Tappen 5 is presumably crawling across the Atlantic even as I write.

Anyway, it would have been unfair to Patrick to take him to task for those statements--out-of-context (although, goodness knows, that's never stopped a faned before, has it? he asked naively), as he clearly didn't mean to say what he seemed to be saying. I mean, after all, there's Fanthology '81, Patrick's own estimate of the best fanwriting of the year, and there's precious little Irony there.

Or perhaps I was just being oversensitive on the point.

Oh, well, now I don't have occasion to use the 8 of Wands picture I was going to put at the bottom of the next page...

Baycon '82 happened over the Thanksgiving weekend. As it took place at the Red Lion San Jose, the site of the upcoming westercon, it served as a kind of "shakedown" which might be of more than passing interest to at least west-coast fen. However, I refuse to write yet another con report. I hate convention reports.

The hotel is literally across the street from the San Jose airport's entrance--quite a distance from downtown (a \$7 taxi fare, tip included, from the SP train station) but quite convenient for people flying in.

It was also, in November, only a month old, pristine and beautiful. The decor is a kind of modernized mixture of Art Deco and Art Nouveau, with lots of conversation pits, art glass, and every surface ornamented in some respect. The decor is basically black and red, and it gives the impression of subdued elegance. Not conducive to the frenetic.

The hotel has a sunken "Quiet Bar" seating probably a hundred and a coffee shop seating about the same. Prices in the coffee shop run from moderate (\$4.50 for a hamburger) to horrendous (I paid \$8.15 for pancake sandwich, coffee, and orange juice). The coffee shop was always understaffed, with three persons trying to serve the entire shop. A wait of an hour both in line and at the table was not uncommon. There is also a formal restaurant, Maxi's, with an all-you-can-eat Sunday brunch (scrambled eggs, bacon and ham, eggs benedict, pastries, etc.) overpriced at \$14. Both restaurant and coffee shop have a dress code, although they were not strict about enforcing it. The coffee shop closes at 1:30 a.m., but there is a Howard Johnson's two blocks away. Unfortunately, that HoJo is the only other restaurant close by. Curiously, about 11:00 on Friday night, there appeared a long line of non-convention people waiting to get into Maxi's. Apparently that is the local body-bar.

The sleeping rooms are as large and as luxurious as were those at the Sacramento Red Lion year before last. In fact, they are virtually identical. The only convention hotel of recent memory to compete was the old Adams/Phoenix Hilton last year.

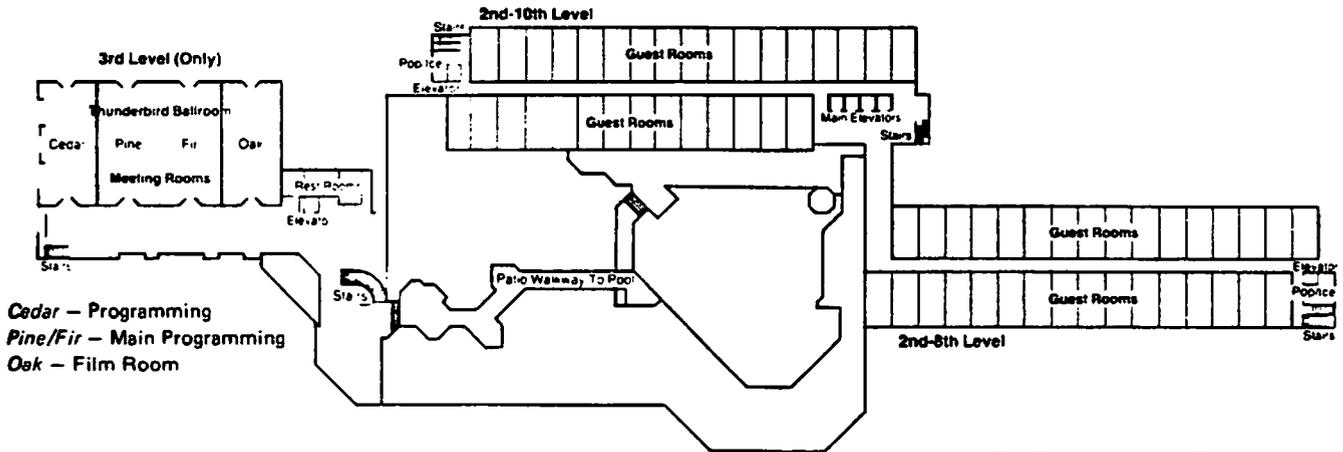
The staff was uniformly pleasant, more curious than outraged by odd fannish habits of eating at all hours and non-fannish habits of running around in costume. And the convention management was pleasantly competent. Things ran relatively smoothly. So everything looks good for a pleasant convention in July.

Except.

There are a few caveats that ought to be given out.

I understand that the convention's registration ran to just over two thousand--about the size of a Westercon. But that number included one-day and supporting memberships. The most I could estimate was an actual attendance of about seven hundred people in the hotel at any one time from Friday night to Saturday afternoon. It wasn't precisely crowded, but it's obvious that the hotel couldn't take as many as two hundred more people without popping at the seams.

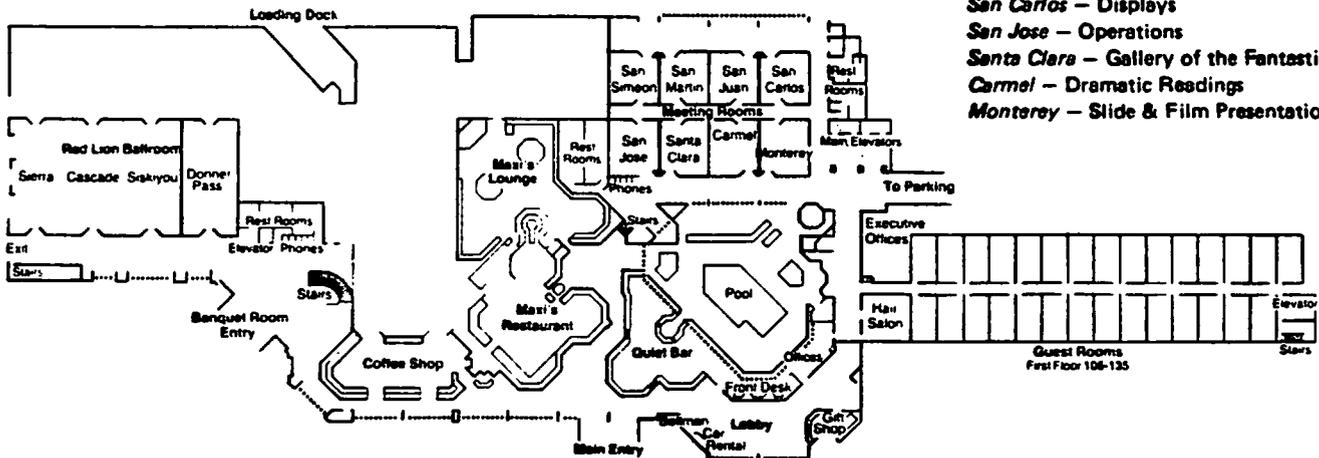
The worst problems have to do with the floorplan (See illustration taken from the Baycon '82 program book). All the guest rooms are on the northeastern (I think--directions are hard in San Jose) corner. The rooms are served by four elevators, only three of which were working at any given time. One elevator was stuck on the



Cedar - Programming
Pine/Fir - Main Programming
Oak - Film Room

Sierra/Cascade/Siskiyou - Dealers Room
Donner Pass - Art Show

San Simeon - Video Room 1
San Martin - Video Room 2
San Juan - Science Program
San Carlos - Displays
San Jose - Operations
Santa Clara - Gallery of the Fantastic
Carmel - Dramatic Readings
Monterey - Slide & Film Presentations



third floor for most of a day. The elevators debouch fairly close to the eight tiny programming rooms behind the pool where the "Science" programming was held. These rooms seat, perhaps, eighty people each, exclusive of head table and audiovisuals, with some squeezing. The main programming rooms are clear across the hotel, and there are no direct routes from point A to point B. Even worse is that the ground-floor half of the remaining available programming space is Art Show and Huxter Room. So the total available remaining programming space is the four "tree" rooms that comprise the Thunderbird Ballroom, for total seating of about 600 in the small rooms and 700 in the Thunderbird. Where they're going to put the extra three or four hundred more people at Westercon is a mystery to me. They can't use the hallways, because available walking space is taken up with frou-frou. There are perhaps ten wicker couches scattered around the entire hotel, most of them not provided with ashtrays (no ashtrays near the elevators, either, so non-smokers had better be prepared to breathe cigarette smoke in elevators). That hotel is going to be hip-deep in cigarette butts by Monday afternoon.

In fact, there is only one, small, sit-and-talk space (on the second floor, cater-corner across from the Thunderbird and on the other side of the stairs), which is not provided with chairs, and there is nothing like a genuine lobby or foyer where people can greet each other. Hotel registration lines are going to be impossible this July. It is possible to overlook the Quiet Bar from the narrow walkway around it, if one is sufficiently tall, but don't bet on it.

Convention registration promises to be even more of a problem. First, because of the limited meeting space, there is no room set aside for the convention offices. At Baycon, the operations center was on the second floor, tucked into a corner beside the stairs, screened off with moveable partitions. The existing foyer is somewhat chopped up by inconveniently-placed pilasters. It is conceivable that a hundred people at a time might be able to stand in the registration lines. The conclusion is left as an exercise to the reader.

The upshot of the whole matter is that, while the San Jose Red Lion is a beautiful hotel, it is just not suited to host a major convention. Remember the Leamington in 1975? This is going to be worse.

Secret Master of Democrats (SMOD): Tim Kyger recently ran for election to the California State Democratic Central Committee in his local (Fremont) precinct and won. Huzzah. This means he is a delegate to the State Democratic Convention.

Although Tim is a self-styled gafiote, if you catch him in a moment of weakness, he will admit to (still) being a *Fan*, as has been obvious to everyone watching him import fannish ways into the local space advocacy community. Over the last several years, Tim has grown increasingly Political, and this election marks the first step up the partyhack ladder to those rarified heights where power is the medium of exchange. Watch out Speer and Willis....

Whatever Happened To Shirley Feeney? In a moment of weakness I watched a whole evening of network sitcoms yesterday. Happy Days, Laverne and Shirley, and Three's Company. Shudder.

Get this. Howard Cunningham's hardware store has failed, and he's closing up shop. *Significant* Not to get too far from the show's upbeat character, he decides to relocate where the competition isn't as stiff as in his old neighborhood. Laverne and Shirley has moved up to 1967. Wow. Remember 1967? Summer of Love? Vietnam protests? The memory of the "Long, Hot Summer" of 1966 still fresh, with fearful anticipations of the coming summer? Nothing like that shows up--not even the stunning music being released. This show had Laverne trying to shore up the flagging self-image of her nerdish boyfriend. Shirley Feeney is completely gone--not shown in the credits or the group picture. Whatever happened to Shirley Feeney, can someone tell me? The most positive improvement in situation was in Three's Company. After years of being a nebbish trying to break into the restaurant business, Jack Tripper finally has his own restaurant--Jack's Bistro. In this episode, he was trying to assure a local activist minister that his Bistro was a nice, family restaurant, unlike the bar the minister had closed down in the same location earlier. True to the form, the situation is complicated by lusty newlyweds, and the situation is ultimately saved by the kindness of "the Girls" to an elderly woman in the restaurant. Bleh.

I did see a dramatic show (as opposed to sitcom) that was worth the watching last night, though: St. Elsewhere. I didn't recognize any of the production people as alumni of Hill Street Blues, but the show seems to have taken a leaf from their book.

The series is set in a grimy, ancient Boston hospital--St. Eligius. I think I would be calling it St. Egregious or, possibly, given the conditions, St. Litigious. Virtually all of the situations are stock from the last twenty years of doctor shows--the impoverished intern who sells his (not blood--) sperm to get over a temporary cash crunch. The arrogant, fussily AR chief of staff everyone makes fun of (except the crowd of sychophants and brown-noses he surrounds

himself with). The woman-doctor/nurse confrontation popularized by Michael Learned these last few years. And so on. The kindly, elderly chief surgeon or whatever playing straightman to the second male lead (there isn't any male lead--St. Elsewhere is an ensemble show). And so on.

What is refreshing about St. Elsewhere is its use of the naturalistic techniques pioneered by Hill Street Blues--and I'm thinking of the deteriorated sets and information overload that show has accustomed me to by now--with even less of the pomposity and self-conscious nobility of its models (Quincy, in particular, drives me wild. Only Ferillo strikes me badly in Hill Street Blues). The doctors and staff of St. Eligius come as close to acting as normal people in inherently dramatic situations do as you're likely to get in a television series. For example, one of the subplots (again, the ensemble shows do not generally run to a dominant plot; they use an interwoven mess of subplots proceeding simultaneously, in the manner pioneered by the second wave of M*A*S*H and the entire run of Barney Miller) had to do with a suspected outbreak of Legionnaire's disease in one of the wards. They did have the obligatory confrontation scene with the hospital's non-medical management, but, for the first time I can recall, the chief administrative flunky was not portrayed as a dork. His recommendation was more reasonable, given the circumstances, than the chief surgeon's. Bravo. At the end, they do have to close the ward--but it is a decision taken calmly, without agonizing, and the staff just got to work with the isolation procedures. No fanfare. Again, bravo.

St. Elsewhere may be a bit too low key for popular success. But that episode was, as far as I'm concerned, a critical success.

Talk about stubborn: Last weekend, Gail Kolthoff and I took her nephew up to Pier 39, a local mall-and-amusement-park-kinda. Wandering around the nearby streets looking for a parking space, Gail spotted one across the street and stopped, waving the car behind her to pass. The driver of the other, compact car, saw that Gail had found a parking space and quickly made a U-turn to get into it.

Furious, Gail pulled around in a circle and caught the other driver as she was head-first into the spot, but not entirely parked. Gail squeezed in far enough to prevent the other driver from completing her park. And there we stayed. For fourteen minutes, preparing to out-stubborn each other.

The interesting thing is that the driver of the other car never even looked back at us, but the passenger--another teenage girl--tried to fan up

an argument, gesticulating at us. Me, I just sat there. I had all day, and besides, I wanted to see how it came out.

In the end, the other driver gave up and moved forward to get out of the parking space. Gail inched forward to prevent her from backing into the space and, when they had gone, parked successfully. A bystander remarked to us on the thoughtlessness of the other driver. We giggled hysterically all the way to the Pier.

It certainly makes you stop and think, huh?

We have this annual shindig called the "Do-it-yourself Messiah." Every year at Christmastime, several thousand people gather in Louise M. Davies symphony hall where they are provided with scores for The Messiah. The San Francisco Conservatory of Music provides four soloists, and the attending public forms the chorus. As The Messiah has some of the best choral work ever written, this is lots of fun. There is usually a moderate fee (\$15 this year) for the performance, which goes to the Conservatory. KQED-FM simulcasts the performance for us non-attenders, and we marvel every year at the wonderful density and tone of the massive, non-professional chorus.

This is not an ancient tradition--in fact, it was begun only four years ago, within my tenure in the city. And yet this is so typically and characteristically San Franciscan that one can point to it and say "that's what's so special about San Francisco." Not merely the amenities--it strikes me that this is what community is spozed to be. I like it. It gives me hope that whatever it is that makes San Francisco and San Franciscans special is not completely gone yet, not yet bulldozed away by the increasing "Chicagoization" of the City. Nieman-Marcus thinks Geary is Rodeo Drive. But we know better, don't we?

As we didn't have a proper year-end Quodlibet, it's time and past to review 1982's films. Following is an incomplete list of 1982's films compiled by Margo Skinner, San Francisco film critic. As I have found it difficult to use the chronological sequence I used last year (Quodlibet 7. Mighod, have I really been through ten Quodlibets this past year? Don't quibble--I started production on this issue back in September), this year's list is in roughly alphabetic order, according to the chronological sequence of critics' screenings. The date following the title is the month in which it was screened for the media critics here, so it may not correspond to release dates in other parts of the country. That should be easier to use for reference purposes. As in last year's review, those underlined I have seen.

Aviator's Wife (Jan)
Annie (June)
L'Adolescent (Aug.)
Amityville II (Sept.)
Airplane II (Dec.)
The Border (Jan)

Clerk Charged

Boss Killed Over Christmas Bonus

New York

A 38-year-old law clerk who complained about the size of her Christmas bonus shot and killed one of the firm's partners yesterday, police and a company spokesman said.

Barbara Austin was charged with murder after she allegedly fired three shots into Jay Jacobs, a 50-year-old resident of Greenwich, Conn., at the offices of Burke & Burke on Fifth Avenue, police said.

"Afterward, she was heard to complain that the amount of her year-end bonus was unsatisfactory," said Michael A. McElroy, a firm spokesman.

Austin fired five shots at the lawyer, hitting him three times, police said. A gun was recovered at the scene.

McElroy said that after shooting Jacobs in his office, Austin returned to her desk outside and sat down.

Jacobs was taken to St. Clare's Hospital after the 10:30 a.m. shooting. He died less than an hour later.

Police said that after the shooting, Austin was taken to Bellevue Hospital for treatment of an apparent drug overdose. She was reported to be in good condition.

Austin had worked in the law office for a year and a half.

McElroy said Austin operated a word processor and did not work directly for Jacobs. He would not disclose the size of her bonus, but said it was determined by a committee and said, "I understand it was substantial."

He said Austin had no prior trouble at the firm.

Jacobs, a specialist in trusts and estates, was managing partner of the 27-lawyer firm, which has 60 other employees. A graduate of the Columbia University Law School, he joined the firm 20 years ago. He leaves a wife and four children.

At the a police precinct house, a man who said he was Austin's boyfriend waited for her to return from the hospital.

The man, who identified himself only as Giovanni, said she had complained of harassment on the job but would not say what kind.

Associated Press

Das Boot (Feb.)
The Beast Within (Mar.)
Blood Wedding (April)
Blade Runner (July)
The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas (July)
Bolivar (July)
The Beast Master (Aug.)
Budo (Sept.)
Bob Le Flameur (Oct.)
Burden of Dreams (Oct.)
Birgit Haas Must Be Killed (Oct.)
Brimstone & Treacle (Dec.)
Best Friends (Dec.)
Cannery Row (Feb.)
Circle of Deceit (Feb.)
Conan The Barbarian (Mar.)
Cat People (Mar.)
Christiane F. (April)
The Challenge (July)
Children of Violence (July)
The Chosen (Aug.)
Coming of Age (Oct.)
Ciao Manhattan (Oct.)
Creepshow (Nov.)
Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean,
Jimmy Dean (Dec.)
Death Valley (Jan.)
Deathtrap (Mar.)
Diner (April)
Diva (May)
The Dozens (May)
Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid (May)
Dark Journey (June)
Drugstore Romance (July)
Demon Pond (Aug.)
Deadly Force (Sept.)
Dark Circle (Nov.)
The Dark Crystal (Dec.)
E.T. (Feb.)
Evil Under The Sun (Mar.)
Eijanaka (Mar.)
Enter the Ninja (July)
Endangered Species (Sept.)
Eating Raoul (Oct.)
Four Friends (Jan.)
Fighting Back (May)
First Blood (April)
Firefox (June)
Fruits of Passion (June)
Force Vengeance (Aug.)
Forbidden World (Aug.)
Fitzcarraldo (Aug.)
Fire on the Water (Nov.)
Forty-Eight Hours (Dec.)
Garde a Vue (July)
Gospel (Nov.)
Gandhi (Dec.)
Heartaches (July)
Hanky Panky (Mar.)
Hokusai Erotica (Oct.)

Honkytonk Man (Nov.)
 I'm Dancing As Fast As I Can (Mar.)
I Ought To Be In Pictures (Mar.)
I Love You (July)
 Inchon (Sept.)
The Judge and the Assassin (Mar.)
Jinxed (Oct.)
 Kill Squad (Nov.)
 The Long Good Friday (May)
 Lola (Aug.)
The Last Unicorn (Nov.)
Man of Iron (Jan.)
Missing (Feb.)
A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy (July)
 Mariane & Juliane (July)
My Favorite Year (Sept.)
The Missionary (Oct.)
Monsignor (Oct.)
The Man From Snowy River (Nov.)
 Megaforce (June)
Night Shift (July)
The Nest (Sept.)
 Not a Love Story (Sept.)
 1955 (Oct.)
 Nagumi Pass (Oct.)
An Officer and a Gentleman (July)
Out (Nov.)
 Personal Best (Feb.)
 Partners (April)
 Paradise (May)
Poltergeist (June)
The Pirate Movie (Aug.)
 The Personals (Oct.)
Piaf--The Early Years (Dec.)
Quest for Fire (July)
Richard Pryor Live On Sunset Strip (Mar.)
 Road Warrior (May)
 Rocky III (May)
 Seduction (Jan.)
 Soldier Girl (Jan.)
 Shoot the Moon (Feb.)
 Silent Rage (Mar.)
 Shaolin Temple (Mar.)
 A Stranger is Watching (Mar.)
 Some Kind of Hero (April)
The Swamp Thing (April)
The Sword and the Sorcerer (April)
The Secret of NIMH (June)
 Survivors (July)
 The Station (July)
 Sweetpea (Aug.)
 The Soldier (Aug.)
Street Music In San Francisco (Oct.)
Siberiade (Oct.)
 Suzanne (Nov.)
Sophie's Choice (Dec.)
 Still of the Night (Dec.)
 Torasan (Jan.)
 The Thing (Mar.)
Three Brothers (Mar.)

Tron (June)
Tora's Promise (Aug.)
The Tempest (Sept.)
 Tex (Nov.)
The Toy (Dec.)
This is Noriko (Nov.)
Tootsie (Dec.)
Trail of the Pink Panther (Dec.)
Victor, Victoria (Mar.) La Vie Continue (July)
Veronika Voss (Nov.)
The Verdict (Dec.)
A Woman Like Eve (Jan.)
Whose Life Is It, Anyway? (Jan.)
Wrong is Right (May)
A Week's Vacation (June)
The Wrath of Khan (June)
The World According to Garp (July)
Without Anaesthesia (July)
 The Wall (Sept.)
 Xica (Sept.)
Yes, Giorgio (Sept.)
Yol (Nov.)

Let's see: I count 148 movies in that list, making it comparable to last year's 143. Obvious turkeys and special-interest films (like chop-saki's, and so forth), together with films that hit the city and bounced so fast I couldn't get to them, account for about thirty-six. That leaves me with 112 (compared to last year's 105). I've seen about fifty-three theatrical films this year, compared to fifty last year. I thought having HBO, Showtime, and Cinemax this last six months would tend to put me off filmgoing--and, in fact, I've deliberately missed some films because they'll be coming up on cable soon--but on the whole, my filmgoing has remained constant this year. What I have done with cable is to catch up on about half the films I missed last year. Altogether, I've managed to bring last year's proportion from 50/143 to 84/143, and the cable season is yet young.

You can only get a good impression of the year's films when you line them up that way. The first thing that occurs to me is that it's a much stronger year than '81. We had far fewer

Leafing through past numbers of Quodlibet, I find I have touched on Whose Life is it, Anyway?; Eijanaka; The Judge and the Assassin; Deathtrap; Evil Under the Sun; Missing; Victor, Victoria; The Swamp Thing; Cat People; The Sword and the Sorcerer; Hanky Panky; The Wrath of Khan; I Ought to be in Pictures; Quest for Fire; Conan; Diva; Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid; Wrong is Right; E.T.; The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas; Blade Runner; Tron; and Das Boot; mentioning no new movies in the previous two issues (16 and 17).

of the utter disasters (Paternity, Carbon Copy, Hardly Working, inter alia) that were released in '81. Instead, we got a good, solid run of commendable films. Second, foreign films made a much more impactful showing this year than last. Six made it onto my "best of year" list--which, considering my tastes, is doing pretty damned well.

One thing that was a bit puzzling is the sudden resurgence of the light drama done with comedic touches or black humor that makes them difficult to classify into the comedy-drama category. I'm arbitrarily calling them comedies. What, after all, are you going to do otherwise with The World According to Garp or Yes, Giorgio? Or the bizarre treatment given the recent version of Cannery Row?

The year's comedies were a very mixed bag. We did have a few unmitigated disasters: A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy, by reputation (I was warned away from it by Woody Allen fans. Good enough for me); Night Shift, the movie that plumbed new depths in bad taste. I keep waiting for Winkler to begin capitalizing on his television success, but all three of his films I've seen have been weak at best. He should have known better than to get involved with this turkey. Also leading the bad taste race was Partners, Ryan O'Neal and John Hurt playing a couple (literally) of undercover cops working in a gay subculture. It was a real bid for stereotype revival--a perfect O'Neal vehicle, but a waste of John Hurt's talents. Both The Main Event and So Fine also played on cable, so I have had much too much of this aging pretty-boy this year.

The Pirate Movie got uniformly damning reviews, and the critics seem to feel that it was a cheap exploitation of the Broadway revival of The Pirates of Penzance, which has had quite astonishing success. I understand that a filmed version of the century-old operetta is in the works, but haven't heard whether Linda Ronstadt and Andy Gibb will repeat their roles.

Following Blake Edwards' and Peter Sellers' untimely deaths this past year, somebody decided to recut a lot of Pink Panther footage into a new movie, Trail of the Pink Panther. I have no intention of seeing it.

Luciano Pavarotti has become almost a religious icon in San Francisco--and he does have a glorious voice, comparable only to Caruso. But his film debut in Yes, Giorgio, was a stinking cowflop. Feh and *Yick*. It does not help that he sings, midway into the movie, the single worst rendition I've ever heard of the song San Franciscans detest most: "I Left My Heart In San Francisco." Groans and hanging of heads.

Fortunately, Pavarotti seizes up in the middle. The entire audience applauded at that point. Yes, Giorgio is soppy and completely unbelievable, the agony and boredom relieved, at the end, by the gorgeous production of Turandot. They would have done better to film the opera.

The year's most surprising comedy flop was The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, and it's a headscratcher to identify why it failed as badly as it did. I mean, Burt Reynolds and Dolly Parton were perfect as the small-town sheriff and madam. Dolly Parton's inexperience and awkwardness were a little more evident than in 9 to 5, but she still gave a good performance. Other characters, however, were horribly miscast. Dom Deluise was completely unbelievable as the television rabble-rouser; and Tom Sorvino just wasn't right for the role of governor (although he could conceivably have made a fine television rabble-rouser). I was a bit uncomfortable with the level of vulgarity they chose for the movie, but the real problem was its staginess. Numbers which might have worked on stage were transliterated to film without the necessary modification for the flow of the story. Particularly awful was the dance sequence in the Texas A&M locker room, where the entire team was made to look faggy, instead of exuberant.

Annie has received mixed reviews, but I give in an Honorable Mention for Carol Burnett's wonderful performance as the boozy, greedy matron of Daddy Warbucks' pet orphanage. Finney mugged his way through, playing off that awful no-neck Eileen Quinn, the kid you want to hate. Both Tim Curry and Bernadette Peters gave creditable performances in minor roles.

"They're getting pretty stuffy up there in Sacramento, flashes Kris Tucker, who found this graffito in the laidez room at Harlow's saloon: "If God doesn't destroy San Francisco and Los Angeles, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology." Herb Caen, 1-6-83

Sidney Poitier tried to make another Silver Streak with Hanky Panky and didn't even come close. Hanky Panky starred Gilda Radner, not playing to her strengths and Gene Wilder. Wilder overdid the hysterics bit. But it was a fun picture. Another Honorable Mention.

Richard Pryor had three films out this year: Richard Pryor Live On Sunset Strip, Some Kind of Hero, and The Toy. As I can't stand Richard Pryor, I pass on commenting.

I Ought To Be In Pictures ought to have been a funny, warm movie. A teenaged girl comes to California to make contact with her long-abandoned father, an out-of-work screenwriter (Walter Matthau), under the pretext of trying to get into movies. She establishes a relationship and goes back to her mother in Brooklyn. Fini. Matthau is capable of pulling this kind of role

off, but somehow it never came together.

The Missionary was a strange one, all right. Michael Palin plays a missionary back from Africa called to establish a mission for prostitutes in London's East End (I think). The job ruins his planned marriage to a fanatic indexer, involves him with a wealthy patroness (Maggie Smith), and eventually gets him defrocked. The humor is as underplayed and as black as the cinematography is gorgeous. I liked the film a great deal and wouldn't want to see it twice. It was that kind of film.

It's difficult to think of a movie with as much grand guignol about it as The World According to Garp as a comedy, but the treatment was about as black as you can get within black humor.

Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid was a triumph of the film editor's art and almost makes up for The Jerk and Pennies from Heaven. Steve Martin concocted a pastiche "hard-boiled detective" script of the type popular during the 1940's and late 1930's, shot his film in black-and-white, and cleverly intercut with scenes from classics of that period to make it appear that his cast included Humphrey Bogart, Veronica Lake, and other stars then in their primes. It worked. Not only did it work, but the story was a decentish example of the genre. I don't recall any of the comedic elements seeming overly forced.

Julie Andrews "grew up" last year with S.O.B.. This year, she teamed up with James Garner and Robert Preston, went back to Germany in the Thirties, and played an out-of-work actress playing a gay man unconvincingly playing a woman in Victor, Victoria. The movie invites comparisons with Cabaret, Just a Gigolo, The Americanization of Emily, and, most of all, with Tootsie. Surprisingly, it doesn't come off all that badly, despite the fact that it has tarnished a bit in memory. The story turns (and turns and turns) on Garner, a Chicago hood, falling for Andrews in her Victor persona (understandably, as she's about the most unconvincingly male "female impersonator" on the silver screen). Both Andrews and Garner gave creditable, if unexceptional, performances, but Robert Preston walked away with the show in his role as the aging showman who puts the "gay" in homosexual. The last scene is, in particular, so warm and funny that it colors one's perceptions of the rest which is, let's admit it, pretty lackluster.

My Favorite Year doesn't feel much like a Mel Brooks film: the story is too coherent, the humor too carefully controlled. The story is an autobiographical moment from Brooks' career in 1954, when he was writing for My Show of Shows. Whether or not any of it really happened, it's convincing. And funny. Peter O'Toole plays the aging swashbuckler who, when he finds out

that he has to do a live performance, goes on a bender and shouts in despair, "I'm not an actor, I'm a movie star!" My Favorite Year was warm and funny and memorable.

Airplane II is a lot like Airplane--even many of the jokes are of the same type. The film's only real fault is that its story was a little looser, with less impetus--possibly because it was not a parody of an old film, but a loose pastiche. But it still goes directly for the bellylaugh, and often gets it.

Tootsie is the standout favorite of the year. Dustin Hoffman plays an out-of-work and somewhat abrasive actor who cross-dresses to become a working actress. Hoffman is, from time to time, absolutely convincing, and, as always, it's a real pleasure watching an actor with as much vital energy as he has. The situations are pretty standardized, but the treatment was done with a light and always amusing touch, which is always worthwhile.

I'm, again, somewhat handicapped by missing most of the year's worst drama. Fighting Back, First Blood, Inchon, Personal Best, and Paradise lead all the rest in this category. However, I did catch a few of the turkeys.

Wrong is Right is definitely wrong. The story is moronic, it goes on for most of its length without developing characters or situations, and it was generally a waste of film. Sean Connery gave a good performance--but he just couldn't overcome a really rotten script. Bleh.

Monsignor was this year's soap opera, a flash, trashy vehicle for Christopher Reeve, playing a too worldly priest damaged by the requirements of Vatican politics and by his own conflicting loyalties and values. Genieve Bujold's performance as the fallen novice is potential dynamite, but the character is so inconsistent, and handled so summarily, that her talent was put to waste.

Also soap-operaish, but a little more successful was An Officer and A Gentleman. What can I say. Not to my taste. A lot of people liked it.

Eijanaka was a surprising film from Japan. Imamura seems to have forgotten exactly what he set about to do, but he creates a fascinating tapestry effect as he wanders over mid-19th century Japan. Remembering his purpose at the last moment, he hustles the viewer through fifteen minutes of development just in time for the Eijanaka Riots. So the ending is somewhat confusing. But the middle is well worth the see.

And we got some exceedingly good dramers, too, this year. It's going to be hard to choose a favorite.

Das Boot is a German film, originally issued with subtitles, then re-released dubbed into

English. It's a solid, naturalist treatment of a single trip in a German submarine during World War II, its only fault being that it tends to get bogged down from time to time in journalistic detail.

The Chosen was a kind of iffy adaptation of the Chaim Potok book--iffy not because of the performances of Robby Benson as David and Rod Steiger as Rav Saunderson, which were standouts, but because of the summary treatment given some of the themes Potok took the whole book to develop. At one point, the film dropped everything to concentrate on the color of a Chassidic wedding, in scenes very reminiscent of similar scenes in Fiddler on the Roof. In the end, The Chosen left me feeling ambivalent. Perhaps if I had seen the movie before reading the book, I might have felt differently.

Deathtrap was lots of fun right up to the last scene. The plot-twists kept me guessing, and Christopher Reeve's performance made me appreciate his mastery of tiny details of body language. If he gets some decent scripts to work from, he may, in the future, become the Chopin of actors. Unfortunately, the last scene jarred badly and completely destroyed all credibility the movie had built up to that point. It's a very "bookish" device, and I don't think it worked very well, here.

Diva, a French film, was...peculiar. A real mythmaker, with surreal situations tacked onto a rather ordinary suspense-thriller, and the oddest deus ex machina I've ever seen. Diva is intriguing, beautiful, suspenseful, and absorbing. If it didn't have such stiff competition, it would be a standout for the best of the year.

Evil Under the Sun is not part of the competition. Peter Ustinov plays Agatha Christie's redoubtable and repellent Hercule Poirot with a hatful of mannerisms even more spectacular than Albert Finney's in Murder on the Orient Express. The cast and setting were dazzling, and the treatment was otherwise quite good, except that it violated the canons of the detective mystery by concealing vital clues. Evil Under the Sun was solid, if unspectacular, entertainment.

The Judge and the Assassin, another French film, also gets egoboo. It is a study of the uneasy relationship between a sex criminal at the end of the last century and a self-serving judge. It is long and leisurely developed and savory in its cinematography, much better at what it does than last year's overrated Tess.

Around Eastertime, a chiller opened: Missing. Jack Lemmon gave, again, the performance of his life (we've heard it said so often this past five or six years--and it's been true every time) as the conservative American businessman searching for his son in revolution-torn Chile.

And Cissy Spacek was wonderful as the boy's wife, streetwise, who has to wait for Lemmon to catch up to what has been obvious from the start. It's horrifying, and true, and you don't always realize the implications until after you've left the theatre. Gandhi was released for critics' screenings in late December; if it hadn't been for that, there would be no question that Missing is the film of 1982.

Paul Newman was awfully strong in The Verdict. It's a very intense film, marred, as far as I can see, only by the use of situations by now too familiar from the mush-making television dramatic shows. Still, Newman is aging well, and his skill and talent both keep growing.

Whose Life Is It, Anyway starred Richard Dreyfus, and that's an automatic plus. And it was about the right to choose the course of one's life. And it was very well handled, humor neatly blended with pathos. Good "idea" film and well worth the see.

As I write this, I have yet to see Gandhi, but when asked about it, everyone's eyes glaze over and a breathless "Oh boy" can be heard faintly on the breeze. I'm looking forward to it.

The Science Fiction and Fantasy category isn't quite as strong this year as last, despite the presence of E.T. There is also likely to be considerable divergence of opinion. Let me take the Honorable Mentions first, those that were neither, according to my lights, best nor worst, but somewhere inbetween.

Blade Runner had a lot going for it, starting with three equally pathetic stories about man and android, but Ridley Scott blew it. I think the principal reason is that Scott never decided which of his three stories he was telling, tried to tell all three, and wound up telling none satisfactorily. I was also bothered by some flaws in the continuity editing from point to point, but that's minor. More serious is the paucity of sets and effects; I got awfully tired of the same Coca-Cola sign the fourth or fifth time it came up. LA is obviously a big city, but I can remember only four or five exterior scenes. Perhaps my memory has edited some out, but I think the point valid. The locations were too circumscribed for the action.

I almost walked out on Conan The Barbarian in the first fifteen minutes. I do not take gratuitous violence very well, and the first fifteen minutes were pretty gory. Fortunately, I did stay long enough to watch it and was pleasantly surprised by the rest of the picture. Not that it's any great shakes, but it was pleasant. And I don't think Arnold Schwarzenegger will ever again find a role so uniquely suited to his...er...somewhat specialized "talents."

Quest For Fire was the occasion for a great deal of chuckling and derision in the sf community--and not without reason. This Canadian effort was pretty transparent, and the touting of its "experts" engaged in designing languages and gestures pointed up the foolishness of it all. But it was interesting. At least, I didn't fall asleep. And I don't think it deserves quite the calumny it's gotten.

I resolutely refused to see John Carpenter's The Thing, because I can't stand Carpenter's sense of grue. Apparently I was justified in this, although I have heard it said by reputable critics that it was, on the whole, quite a good effort.

We had a month of kitsch-films in April or so, and The Sword and the Sorcerer fit nicely into the milieu. For the most part, the film was a bad pastiche of Lin Carter's bad pastiches, but it does have one very impressive special effect, the scene in which the Casket of Heads comes to life. It's worth going to just for that scene. Oh, and you get to see George Maharis change into a golem, if that's your cupper.

Tron has also received much undeserved vilification. True, the story is completely unbelievable, but the effects are unquestionably dazzling and beautiful, and that has to count for something. If you don't come to it expecting much (and how could you, knowing that it's a Disney film?), you won't be disappointed.

And we come to the last film of the year, the one we anticipated with such interest and speculation: The Dark Crystal. It almost made it. The situation had a lot of possibility, and there was at least one character who was a positive delight. I don't know why it didn't come to life, but it definitely didn't. The thing that jarred me first was the dumb alterations written into the names. The bad guys are Skexes (Sceptics); the good guys are Mystics; and the protagonists are Gelflings (elflings). Bleh. Second, although I accepted every other character in the film, I could never bring myself to believe in the Gelflings. They stayed puppets (muppets) for me. This is a major handicap, not believing the reality of the protagonists. Nevertheless, it was *cute* without being overly saccharine, and Henson gets a B- for a good try.

There were two awful films, one a major studio effort (Cat People) and the other a small-budget B picture. Cat People tried to recreate some of the atmosphere of the Val Leuten film and failed miserably. It took itself so seriously--and created so much unconscious comedy--that it became nauseating. Worse because it was a waste of some outstanding talent in William Hurt and Malcolm McDowell. Nastasia Kinsky was sensuous, and that's about the sum of it. As I've remarked elsewhere, I object to people using the general-distribution

film to realize their sexual eccentricities. Incidentally, Cat People came bang in the middle of a series of "rubber suit" films, and it used its latex overskin technology extremely well. This is about the only kudo the film gets.

Forbidden World was just yukk. Exploitative and unreasonably gross, even for this genre of film.

On the other hand, there was Creepshow, which has been touted to me as a delightful recreation of the EC comics. So there's one for the vaults.

Poltergeist was a good, scary movie. I'm glad I saw it before E.T.

Umm. Swamp Thing was a decentish recreation of the comic book, completely true to its sources. Adrienne Barbeau got to be a macho machine-gunner, and I'm sure she had a lot of fun with it. Margo panned it, but I'm inclined to think it is the best adaptation from a comic book I've come across.

Much has already been written of Wrath of Khan, so I'll pass on further comment. Despite egregious goofs and inexcusable ignorance on the part of the makers, it was a much better film than its predecessor.

And then there is E.T. I almost didn't see E.T. because I thought it would be too soppy. There are people who think it is too soppy. Personally, I think they have a circuit missing. Spielberg has achieved something so true that he has topped himself, I think, beyond possibility of topping. It's all downhill from here, Steven.

The peculiar thing is that E.T. did start a national craze--I mean, that's not so surprising, but it seems to be much quieter than the similar Raiders and Star Wars and Close Encounters crazes. Perhaps that means it's more enduring. It's going to be interesting to see whether this astonishing public affection, unseen since the glory days of the Disney studios, can withstand the commercialization E.T. is taking from people like the phone companies. We'll have to wait and see.

That being out of the way, here are the Obligatory Best and Worst Lists, although I refuse to be straightjacketed into choosing the Ten Best and Worst:

Best Comedies of 1982: Tootsie, My Favorite Year, Victor, Victoria, Airplane 2, The World According to Garp.

Worst Comedies of 1982: Night Shift, The Pirate Movie, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, Partners.

Best Dramas of 1982: Missing, Diva, Gandhi, Judge and the Assassin, The Verdict

Worst Dramas of 1982: First Blood, Inchon, Monsignor, Wrong is Right

Best SF&F of 1982: E.T., Wrath of Khan, The Swamp Thing.

Worst SF&F of 1982: Cat People, Forbidden World.

On the whole, I'd say we had a decent year.

A mall just opened up next door to the office building, part of Crocker Bank's full-block Crocker Center operation. It is a glass-encased barrel vault running from Sutter to Post Streets and looks like something out of Things to Come, with pedestrian walkways lining both sides on three levels. It also fits neatly into the eclectic civic architecture of Sutter Street, the only area, really, in the city that looks anything like New York.

Pretty, it is, but as it fills up with shops, it's becoming a disappointment. There are several jewelers of the "beautiful people-jet set" variety, specializing in the garish and the gauche (Theodora springs to mind...), a number of quirky boutiques (Card'olgy, f'rinstance--a paper boutique), no less than three specialty shoe stores. A pricey Record Factory (which I won't patronize, anyway), and so on.

The mall does have a few of the conveniences malls ought to be offering: a Godiva chocolatier (that one was instantly popular), a Mrs. Fields chocolate chippery (delicious shudders), and tucked away in a corner of the third floor, a Walden Books nook (doomed, I think, to failure, as there is a much larger and better-established Walden Books on the corner) opening onto a multiple restaurant called "Choices." And it is about Choices I wanted to talk.

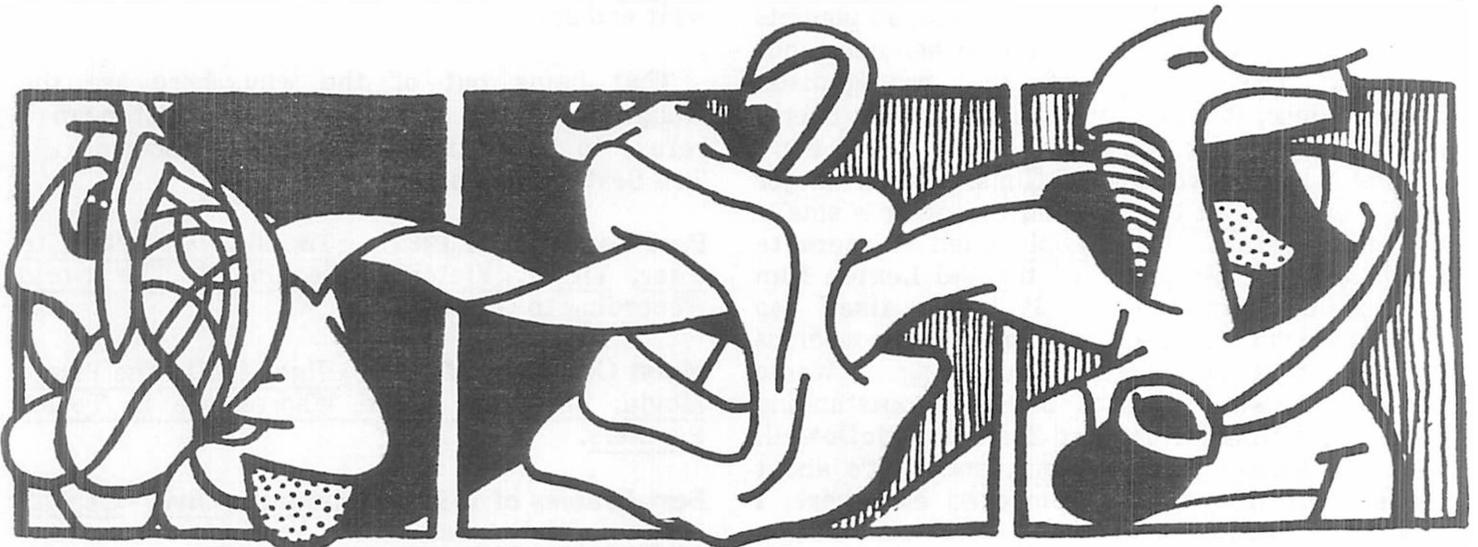
Boy, is it badly designed. I walked in there yesterday at noontime and had a shock.

The whole mall is badly designed: the esca-

lators are so placed that one has to circumnavigate the entire mall to get to the top floor--strategically obvious, except that the walkways are too narrow to accommodate everybody trying to get to the third floor. The only sizeable walking space is the ground floor pathway from Sutter to Post (and there is very little foot traffic taking that route--which should have been obvious to the architect, because there are no storefronts on Post Street in that block, and therefore no through traffic). Everyone is already on Sutter and will be going back to Sutter to exit the mall. So the traffic is directed away from an open plaza up two escalators and, at each floor, around half the floor's narrow, pedestrian walkways to get either to the next escalator or to the restaurant, then back along the same gantlet to get out. It is virtually impossible, for instance, to windowshop (which does not prevent people from doing so, but they block traffic horribly). The mall was obviously designed with just this traffic flow in mind, but the complementary considerations of walkway space were not taken into account, so the design winds up defeating its own purpose.

When one has run the maze and reached the mall's only restaurant, one is in for more traffic jam than existed outside.

This, again, is something the architect should have foreseen. Restaurants are vitally important in San Francisco's Financial District. The reason? Well, SF has a population of about 700,000. So the almanacs assure us. But the Financial District, an area of less than one square mile, has a weekday population of close to two million--a significant fraction of the population of the whole Bay Area. And all those people have to be fed. So the Financial Center is chockablock with restaurants and walk-in sandwich shops, and sidewalk delis--just like midtown Manhattan, only more so. It's virtually impossible to fail with a restaurant in downtown San Francisco.





CARRYING
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The heart of the Financial District is Montgomery Street, where most of the skyscrapers are located. But, partly because of new construction, there is now a four square-block area that is practically devoid of eateries, bounded by Post on the south, Montgomery on the east, Bush on the north, and Grant on the west ("practically devoid" means less than ten for the whole area serving something like, I guess, ten thousand or more people).

At noon on a Wednesday, there were more than a thousand people trying to chow down in that multiple-restaurant.

The restaurant is designed with a large (overly large, in fact) central service corridor, around which the seating is laid out. Each booth has its own frontage, which also serves as the main aisle for circumnavigating the central core. Leaving aside the somewhat...er...unusual selection available (there is one general sandwich shop, for instance, although there is also a hamburger stand, Zapata [a Mexican booth serving tacos, mainly], Auntie Pasta, an salad bar, a juice bar, a bakery, and a few other miscellaneous stands, but no general selection--say a hofbrau next to a take-out Chinese, a pizzeria, etc.--such as one would expect to find in a multi. At noon, the lines began spilling around the frontage of each booth, so that there was no telling where the line for the hamburger stand, say, left off and Zapata's began. Worse, as the lines overlapped, they took up all the aisle space available. And, as many of the booths are new starts, they haven't worked out their management and serving strategies yet. I waited for twenty minutes at the hamburger stand, the line not moving at all, while the servitors repeatedly placed orders for doubles that were not forthcoming, got out half an order and delayed interminably on filling the other half, and

generally kept people stacking up and stacking up in line.

Not only is the design hard on the customers, it's hard on the employees as well. Typically, Choices provides a general run of busboys, but all access to the service core is by single-door, not double-door, so that people carrying trays of dirty dishes have to wait for outcomers to pass. Very poor planning. The employees do have a small area reserved for their exclusive use, but it is, again, a narrow corridor faced with sound-reflectors, so that it is too noisy to talk and relax during the lunch break.

Poor planning. Poor execution. The architect should be shot.

The plan could be worked around, I suppose, by tearing out some of the seats or, alternatively, disposing the sales booths around the edges of the seating area, as most such multis do. Expensive to remedy. But the larger problem of foot traffic in the mall was brought about by sheer stupidity on the part of the mall's management. There is no good reason that the restaurant could not have been placed on the ground floor, where there is adequate walking space--in fact, they could have placed additional seating on the plaza, as is done at places in the Cannery or Ghirardelli Square. But No-o-o-o-o. Still, Crocker Center is a very pleasant-looking architectural and design disaster. Give it a year or two; maybe it'll shake down.

Last night I was walking down the platform about to board the 5:15 to Sunnyvale to pick up Tim's car (later to pick Tim up at the airport). I was in a crowd of about fifty people, when suddenly someone zoomed up from behind to ask me if this were the train to San Jose. "Sure," I said. "They're all trains to San Jose. S.P. doesn't go anywhere else from this station." "But is this the 5:15?" I stopped. The time of departure was on a large sign at the front of the gate. She had to have seen it in order to select a track and get onto the platform. "Yep." She thanked me and hurried on. The thing is, he said, this kind of thing happens to me very frequently--I mean, people pick me out of a crowd of hundreds of people to ask directions from or to panhandle for cigarettes or change, ignoring everybody else on the street. Why me?

It must be something about subliminal, body language, but switch me if I can figger it out. Whether I'm feeling well or ill doesn't seem to matter. Hmmm. I recollect that when Patrick and Teresa and I were working for Diane Nobel in Phoenix, Diane had an old German shepherd named "Ragnar" who had a ferocious bark. It took him a little while to get used to us, but then he was as reasonably friendly as a nearsighted and oversized dog could be expected to be. One

of us would come out the back door, and he would run barking toward us, then recognize us and let it go--unless we had one of his toys. Except that he never "got used to" Patrick. Patrick tried all kinds of strategies--friendly overtures, threatening postures, glaring--everything. But Ragnar never recognized him as "one of the family." A cwt of angry dog rushing at you can be terrifying. Maybe Patrick just smelled wrong. Or maybe Ragnar was playing a complex game we humans were too dumb to figure out. But the aggression looked real enough to me. After awhile, we gave up trying to acclimatize Ragnar to Patrick. Then the bubble burst, and it didn't matter any more.

Gail Kolthoff has her own set of signals. Gail is quite an attractive woman ("gorgeous," she says), but she can walk through a rough section of town, where the women are being hit on right and left, and never be bothered. This might have something to do with the way she hunches her shoulders and barrels on down the street. Mean-looking. Don't fuck with me, sucker. That's not entirely subliminal, although it may be unconscious.

I came across an article in the Chronicle several weeks ago about behavior in elevators--how people try to dispose themselves as far from each other as possible within the confines of the car; what signals one is giving by carrying on conversations between stops; why etiquette seems to demand that people by themselves stare at the floor indicator or the walls/ceiling. Interesting stuff. Kinda makes you want to stop and think about the behavioral water we poor fish swim in. I wonder whether identical twins have this kind of minute behavioral differences? Does one twin get hit up on the street, while the other passes in silence? I understand that twins raised together often establish an imperceptible-to-others dominance relationship between themselves. Does that kind of thing carry over to social behaviors? Hmmm.

Idle wonderings...

Postscript to the Thanksgiving Dinner recipe and schedule in 17. Several things. I forgot to mention that one should dust the creamed potatoes with paprika when they come out of the oven. Despite the low temperature at which the bird was cooked (it turned out perfectly, by the way), there was a surprising amount of pan drippings. I thought the turkey might have been ruined because of the amount of liquid in the pan. But even a small proportion of moisture coming out of a thirty-pound turkey adds up. It went into the giblet gravy, along with the remainder of the sherry-orange baste. Yum.

Also, I discovered by random experiment that the blanket of sherry-soaked orange slices is

quite edible and quite tasty once it is taken off the cooked bird. Very crisp and only slightly sweet, it made a good nosh, rind and all, for the people faunching for the bird two hours before serving time (I told them when dinner would be ready...). Also, I had only an even dozen people show up, instead of seventeen. Whew. Relief. We could actually seat everyone on chairs--and at the same table, no less.

And after dinner we had five waves of dessert: Pumpkin pie, apple pie, a pineapple torte a friend-of-a-friend brought, Roloids, and chocolate mousse for later in the evening. The Roloids were essential about that time, as people feel hedonistically obligated to sample everything. As well they should.

I'm certain you found that just fascinating...

A few issues back I talked a bit about Diane Feinstein (our current Mayor) and the moronic handgun ban she pushed through the Board of Supervisors (San Francisco is both a city and a county, so we do not have a City Council). As



predicted, the handgun ban was ruled unconstitutional, and the city is appealing the ruling to the state Supreme Court. In the meantime, the natives have become restless. The White Panthers, a Haight-based community action group that spends most of its time fighting illegal evictions and so forth, has been busy since August collecting signatures on a petition to recall Feinstein. A recall petition must have over 19,000 signatures. Yesterday (January 13, 1983), the White Panthers turned in 35,000 signatures, forcing the city into a special recall election in July, only seven months before DiFi would have had to run for re-election. The strategic reason for forcing the special election, at a cost to the city of about \$400,000, is that a successful recall would bar DiFi from public office for two years. This strategem, if successful, would have the effect of throwing the November mayoral election wide open.

The last mayoral election was contested between DiFi and Supervisor Quentin Kopp. DiFi is an ass-kisser of the most nauseating variety, true, but Kopp is a real sleaze-ball. The next election looked like more of the same. But if DiFi were barred from running again, the election would be opened up to third parties. Admittedly, the prospects are not bright. Neither Carol Ruth Silver nor Harry Britt, the two likeliest candidates, inspire much confidence. But, at this point, any random element tossed into the city's enmired political situation is a Ghodd Thing.

It almost makes me want to register and vote in the special election. Unusual temptation for an anarchist. I could very easily rationalize my way into this: after all, I have no insuperable objection to civic governments per se, and, as such things go, this is relatively harmless...

But, no. The basic principle is that participation in the political process is an affirmative consent to be governed by it. This recall election is attractive as elections go because it poses a single issue, and not the contrast of two or a few. When one votes against DiFi, one is not, therefore, voting for Quentin Kopp or anybody else. True democracy, eh?

I was thinking, as I read that news item over breakfast this morning (there is nothing like a hot ham-and-cheese croissant for preserving one's equanimity in the face of outrageous fortune), how sadly conventionalized and etiolated this city has become. At one time--for a good, long time--San Francisco seemed to specialize in a kind of vital, original, and eccentric "can do," undertaking vast and unlikely projects with almost reckless abandon. The landfill of Yerba Buena Cove was proposed in 1846, when there were less than a thousand

denizens and the city had not yet formally passed into American hands. By 1880, the Cove had been obliterated, far beyond original plans, the shoreline had been extended all over the northeast end of the peninsula, and the much larger Mission Bay was shrinking as rubble from Rincon Hill and Telegraph Hill filled it in.

In the 1870's, William Ralston financed the settling of the Central Valley and the construction of the wildly ambitious Sutro Tunnel from the Nevada silver fields into California. In the next decade, Andrew Hallidie transformed the city's dynamics by installing the cable car system at the same time John McLaren, stubborn Scot that he was, set about turning a wasteland of sand and scrub into Golden Gate Park. Shaken to bits in 1906, it picked itself up again and was running at faster than full speed within six months. In 1914, we finished the two-mile Twin Peaks Tunnel connecting downtown with the Sunset District, to bring the ocean into our ambit. Not yet ready to rest on its laurels, San Francisco drained a thousand acres of marsh to site the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 and built an island--Treasure Island--in the Bay to house the 1935 World's Fair. Simultaneously, mind you, construction was proceeding on the Bay and Golden Gate Bridges, engineering projects of such audacity that they still astound. And as late as 1957, construction began on the BART project, attempting to link all seven Bay Area counties into a transportation network. Counties too timid to grab the tiger's tail are left without rapid transportation, now. And even earlier, in 1955, the Supervisors approved a plan to raze a run-down area south of Market and turn it into what was to become the Moscone Convention Center.

The fortunes of the Moscone Center mirror the shrinking of vision that has taken place since 1960 in this city. The redevelopment plan shrunk to four square blocks. And the Center that was finally built is too short to hold such major events as a national party convention or a boat show.

We have let the shipping go and turned to tourism; the spectacular view once available to all and sundry, is disappearing behind concrete and glass skyscrapers built foolishly on the area razed in 1906, threatening sudden death by glass and masonry. The city attempts to grapple with critical transportation shortages by cutting bus lines and killing the streetcars. Blocks of beautiful masonry take the place of sidewalks on Market, but the red brick is stained with gum and coke and uncleaned. Trees so much shorter than the buildings hide theatre signs.

What we could be doing is just as spectacular as past, astonishing successes. We could be

buying a right of way to the Airport and extending BART there without San Mateo's help. We could be running BART underneath the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito and Tiburon, in a glass-enclosed mall (I know, the bridge can't bear the weight as it is now--but that's not to say it couldn't be reinforced). We could be taking the utterly necessary step of closing the downtown to private vehicular traffic and opening the blocks of skyscrapers into each other, instituting projects like experimental moving walkways (We have the mechanisms for them already in the Cable Car system), and so forth.

But we're not.

San Francisco is becoming "Chicago-ized."

Say "Cheese" and you're quite likely to get a slice of rubbery-salty-sweet something that resembles nothing so much as a cold and congealed rarebit. This is "pasteurized process cheese," a mixture of real cheeses and milk and various and sundry other things, and it can give one a horrible impression of the U.S.A.'s food habits--as bizarre in its own way as the Kiwi custom of putting beets on pizza or the French anchoyard. The only good quality this stuff possesses is a long shelf-life. Grocers love it. Harried housewives used to love it, too. We won't even think about Velveeta, which has an infinite shelf-life unrefrigerated...

But there is much, much more to cheese in the U.S. than Kraft's rubber singles. Even the most gastronomically-deprived areas (Boston, say) abound in varieties of natural cheeses. The recent fad for wine-and-cheese parties, long over on the Coast (Pacific), but still thriving in the hinterlands, has tingled enough palates with delicious possibility that a survey of generally-available cheeses is, perhaps, not entirely out of order.

The lore of cheeses, although full of pertinent details about storage and regional variations, has irritatingly little say about the history of cheese before about 1750. Mediaeval and ancient chroniclers made few distinctions among varieties, so we have scant knowledge of the cheeses of antiquity. Cheese is mentioned in the Bible as being a common food before about 1,000 b.c., so it is certainly one of the most ancient of foods. It is quite likely, however, that none of the thousand or more varieties we have today bears much resemblance to the cheeses of the ancient world. Most of them are known to have been invented after 1750.

My favorite legend about the origin of cheese is that an ancient, Middle-eastern traveler set off with a skin of goat's milk, the skin being an uncured goat's stomach. As he rode, the agitation of the horse's gait, the heat of the day,

and the enzymes in the flask, coagulated the milk. When he stopped for his meal, he found, not milk, but a pile of separating curds and whey which, having nothing else, he ate and found even more delicious than the milk, thus becoming the world's first turophile. People may have been dubious when he announced his discovery, but the ability to preserve milk was a much-needed addition to food technology.

Although the exact techniques vary tremendously, all cheese is made by heating milk to at least blood temperature and adding enzymes--usually rennet--to coagulate the protein in the milk. From this point, the liquid part of the milk (whey) may be pressed out or left in, butterfat added, or flavorings added. The cheese is allowed to age and "ripen" under carefully controlled conditions for each type of cheese, ripening either from the inside out (as in the cheddars) or from the outside in (as in the case of mold-ripened cheeses. Or they may be eaten fresh (cottage cheese or cream cheese or ricotta).

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The many varieties of cheddar are probably the most popular natural cheeses in the U.S. Most large supermarkets carry two or three types graded as "mild" (or occasionally "mellow"), "medium," "sharp," and "extra-sharp," according to the age of the cheese (as a cheddar ages, its milk-sugars convert to a tangy acid, very pleasant with cheddar's high salt content, and the cheese also becomes denser, the compressed "curds" going from rubbery to grainy and soft). Small amounts of coloring are added to develop a yellow to orange color. The cheese is naturally almost white. The "extra-sharp" designation means practically nothing, as I have seen quite young cheddars marketed with that designation. Ideally an "extra sharp" cheese is acid enough to be quite tangy, the block fracturing with a very rough cleavage, and the curd-structure almost gone. If you press a pinch of a well-aged ordinary cheddar between thumb and forefinger, it should squash flat without rebounding, something like the texture of Play-dough or wood putty. Broken up like this, an aged cheddar makes a very manageable spread, although the spreading cheeses marketed in their own pots are generally made from processed cheeses of inferior quality, far too overpoweringly salty.

There are regional preferences for varieties of cheddar. Colby, a buttermilk-y flavored variety with tiny, loose curds at once crumbly and rubbery, is favored in the Atlantic Northwest. Longhorn, a buttery variety sold very young and, consequently, very rubbery, has become an intrinsic part of the southwestern regional Mexican cuisine which bears little resemblance

to that found in California, Texas or Mexico.

Cheddar is one of the "older" cheeses, having originated, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "some time before the 16th century." Cheshire cheese is known to have been made as early as the 11th century. The name derives from the British town of Cheddar in Somerset and is supposed to refer also to the process by which it is made, but I have not been able to discover which element or combination of elements is the "cheddaring."

There are a number of fine, local cheddars made in the U.S., of which the white "Herkimer County" variety from upstate New York is probably the best. Sold packaged in a distinctive black wax coating, Herkimer cheddar is extremely sharp, with a pleasantly bitter aftertaste, and has a crumbly and somewhat granular fracture.

English cheddars seem to be coming back into favor now, and specialty stores in San Francisco are carrying at least four varieties on a regular basis. Cheshire is a crumbly, salty cheese that melts superbly. Caerphilly is a similar, but more buttermilky and not quite so crumbly cheese. Double Gloucester is a solid, double-cream variety (containing twice as much butterfat as usual cheddars) with a nutty flavor that occasionally develops a surprising bitterness. Unfortunately, the quality of the Double Gloucester we have been getting for the last few years is wildly variable from lot to lot. A flat-tasting Double Gloucester is indeed a disappointment. Stilton is a blue-veined cheddar that must be tasted to be believed. It also varies considerably in taste from batch to batch, ranging from sweetish to overpoweringly bitter. I conclude that these cheddars do not export well. Pity.

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Throughout most of the U.S., Swiss-type cheeses are second in popularity to cheddars, and it is in Swiss-type cheeses that the most ingenuity has been invested. A taste of the ordinary, domestic Swiss-type sold in bulk or brick form in supermarkets discourages further investigation: it is rubbery, flat-white, sour, and bitter. Consequently, there is a large market in imported Swiss-types in the US.

Emmentaler, the basic European Swiss-type (there is no such thing as a variety called "Swiss" cheese) is also our basic, generic "Swiss," and we are constantly exhorted to look for the "Switzerland" stamped on the yellow, wax coating. Gruyere, the most popular French variety, was previously not much used in the US. Gruyere is a solid, somewhat heavy, processed cheese with excellent melting qualities and a somewhat nut-like flavor. As the filled croissant, Croque Monsieur, and cheese fondue

continue to make headway infiltrating American menus, Gruyere is becoming more popular and more available. A Norwegian variety, Jarlsberg, has taken the U.S. by storm since 1980 and threatens to replace Emmentaler as the most popular Swiss-type in the U.S. Jarlsberg is slightly sweet, buttery, and also somewhat nutty in flavor, quite soft and possessed of good melting qualities. It is even replacing Gruyere for many applications.

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After the Swiss-types, there is a toss-up between the soft, mold-ripened cheeses of France (brie and camembert, mostly, although there are others) and the kneaded cheeses of Italy (mozzarella and provolone, etc.). The mold-ripened cheeses are eaten by themselves, whereas the kneaded cheeses (with the exception of string mozzarella) are usually cooked with a pasta of some kind. The soft, mold-ripened cheeses are made in wheels, from seven inches diameter to about twenty inches diameter. They are high in moisture content, as their whey (the liquid part of milk) is never pressed out. When the milk begins to coagulate, they are poured into rings and coated with a paste of flour or cornstarch inoculated with any of several molds. The molds ripen the cheeses from the outside inward, which is why they are generally thin (less than two inches). As the cheeses age, they go from light ivory to golden and become somewhat "runny" at room temperature. Overaging the cheeses may give them a somewhat "ammoniac" odor and sour tang. The rind of all these cheeses is edible. Because of their delicacy, it is almost impossible to use the soft cheeses in cooking.

In San Francisco, Brie seems to be greatly favored above the other mold-ripened cheeses. Brie has a light and buttery flavor, excellent with pastries--particularly croissants. Local bries (such as that of the Marin French Cheese Co.) are excellent, although they tend to be released before they are completely ripened. Apparently, we prefer our Brie somewhat fresher than is customary in Europe. An unripened Brie has an unappetizing, crumbly, and somewhat chalky layer in the center. Simone Beck recommends saving this and using it in white sauces, as the cheese ceases to ripen once it is cut. Local Bries are able to hold their own, but they show no sign of displacing the imported Brie de Mieux. Recently, double-cream varieties (sixty percent butterfat) have begun appearing, and they are received quite favorably, although they are even more delicate than their single-cream relatives.

Two other soft cheeses are generally available: Camembert and Liederkranz. Camembert is generally imported from France or Denmark. It is quite like Brie, but more

intense in flavor, frequently with an "ashy" undertone, and it becomes quite ammoniac when aged. Liederkranz is a native cheese, invented in New York in, I think, 1927. Liederkranz is definitely an acquired taste, dominated by ashy-acid flavors.

The two varieties of kneaded cheeses available over most of the US are mozzarella and provolone. Both have a very "light" flavor, nutty rather than buttery, and a rubbery, smooth texture. Both are used here most frequently in pizza and lasagna, or melted in pasta.

There are a few varieties of fresh (unripened) cheeses eaten in the US with some frequency, particularly "cottage" cheese "Cream" cheese, and Ricotta. Cottage cheese is almost too common to require explanation, except that few people seem to be aware of its many uses, feeling it only suitable cold and as a salad. Its flavor increases immensely when it is at room temperature; it replaces Ricotta in all applications (and is superior in some); makes an excellent, cool salad dressing; mixes well in tomato sauces, replacing parmesan or romano cheeses; is the perfect base for cheese sauces (as in macaroni and cheese); and is a perfect and surprising complement to legumes like Lentil soup. Even used cold as a salad, it is capable of wide variation when mixed with dry roasted nuts or fruits.

Cream cheese is another indigenous cheese inspired by an Italian Ricotta cheesecake tasted by an American turophile before the First World War. Gradually he developed a smooth cheese very high--almost impossibly high--in butterfat content for the manufacture of the Manhattan-style cheesecake, one of the most delightful desserts in the world's gastronomie. Since then, the savory uses of cream cheese have become legion. A fresh, hot bagel with lox (sliced smoked salmon) and cream cheese is a prime gustatory experience.

Ricotta is an Italian cheese (Italians eat a wide variety of fresh cheeses never found in the U.S.) used mostly in blintzes and lasagna. No Ricotta is imported; all Ricotta in the US is made locally.

Almost everybody in the US has experience of Parmesan or Romano cheeses because Italian pastas are so much a part of our diet. But the dry, grated stuff Kraft sells in shaker-boxes (together with significant amounts of sand to improve its "flowing" quality) bears little resemblance to the wedge or loaf cheeses that are also widely available. Both Parmesan and Romano are very hard, pungent, and granular (from which quality they are called "grana" cheeses). Ideally, they are made from ewes' milk, but a cows'-milk variety, much milder in flavor, is replacing the original, and you must

ask for "Peccorino Romano" to get the real thing. "Peccorino" means "sheep" in Italian. Romano is somewhat richer than Parmesan. Excellent varieties of these grana cheeses are made locally.

Bleu cheeses are also widely available, although opinion on them is extremely divided. They are manufactured by the usual processes for the basic variety, except that when the round is pressed, the dense curd is then pierced with needles inoculated with the blue or red mold, usually Penicilium roquefortii, although other species are also used. Cows-milk bleus are widely used in salad dressings, and this is probably the only experience most Americans have with the blue-veined, mold-ripened cheeses. Pity, as a hamburger with Roquefort is primo. Danableu is generally available as well as Roquefort. Unfortunately, the name "Roquefort" is so widely known that it is frequently used as a generic term for bleu cheeses. The taste of genuine, ewe's-milk roquefort is an ineluctable experience. The world stops spinning for a moment. Joshua finishes his battle somewhere, far away. Oboy. You must remember to breathe. This is urgent.

And Stilton deserves a paragraph by itself: it is a blue-veined cheddar, with a wonderful and unique flavor. We are now getting a Huntsman's cheese--a five-pound round layering Stilton with some other cheddar, usually Gloucester. Feh.

Gouda and Edam are usually discovered early on--buttery, semi-soft cheeses, both available in young and aged varieties. I prefer an aged Gouda for a munching cheese, a young Gouda for cooking. Both varieties develop a tang and harden as they age. There is also a three-year aged Gouda marketed under the name "Mona Lisa." Its tang has progressed, to my palate, beyond a good mix, and its hardening makes it difficult to work with. The extra year or two of aging I don't think has done the cheese any particular good.

The other common semisoft varieties are Bonbel and Bel Paese (Italian--quite creamy-tasting) and Danish Havarti (a variety of German Tilsit, an excellent melting cheese for open-faced sandwiches), Munster (a French semisoft made for melting), and domestic Jack cheese, a local and superior version of the primitive, white cheese made in Mexico.

Then there is a miscellany of cheeses that become generally available on a more-or-less random basis: Fontina, Feta, Samsøe, St. Paulin, and specialty cheeses such as Sapsago, Sage Darby, pepper- or olive-studded Provence (the after-dinner cheese as far as I'm concerned), and so forth. Most specialty stores carry a couple hundred varieties at any one time, so even the "specialty" cheeses never disappear completely.

Aside from cheddars, Swiss-types, soft, fresh, grana, and bleu cheeses, the other varieties are generally terra incognita to Americans. In a way, this can be a Good Thing, as it means that most of us have the delightful experience of discovering cheese the rest of our lives, getting tips from friends or just wandering into a specialty store and trying that new Bulgarian Feta or the odd-looking Sapsago. Trial and error is a wonderful thing in a cheese shop, anyway. The proportion of error is delightfully small...

Ah, it's a wonderful world we live in that has such things as cheese. If civilization must be forgiven something for having invented the croissant, it must be forgiven a great deal for creating a thousand or more cheeses.

Over the weekend I saw Gandhi, and suddenly I understand why people's eyes glaze over when it is mentioned. It's a really powerful picture.

But I think it gets most of its power from its material. Gandhi is, after all, a kind of secular saint, for archist and anarchist alike, his life steeped in intimate drama that is the highest realization of the human experience. Ben Kingsley's performance in the title role was quite good, quite believable in itself--but I don't get the sense of complexity from Kingsley that I get from biographies of Gandhi. What Kingsley has done is to realize with great artistry a caricature. And the script, although capably done as to each line and scene, leaves out great chunks of important detail and information, rushing from event to event, so that Gandhi has no chance to "evolve" his position and method. I understand that the film could not have done this--it was already three-and-a-half hours long; it would have to be expanded to twenty-four hours to accommodate the elements necessary to explain a man at once so out-of-time and so intimately a part of his time.

A few critics are touting Gandhi as the best film of the year, and it is not. Missing still has that distinction. Or, possibly, E.T. But Gandhi is an enduring classic in its own way.

Interestingly enough, Masterpiece Theatre is currently running "Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years," which is dealing, in the early episodes, with the civil-disobedience crisis Gandhi raised in 1929-1930, but from the British Parliamentary side of the story. One struggles to take Churchill's position seriously but, ultimately, fails. The angry Australian films that have made such an impact here during the last few years, our natural sympathy for the Irish, and now Gandhi, are beginning to build in the popular mind an impression of Britain, historically accurate, as a real shit in world affairs. This struggles with our old Anglophile affections--for we do, subconsciously, tend to

regard Britain as our cultural parent--and so compartmentalizes itself. Interesting.

As long as I'm about it, might as well clean up a couple of other film seen recently. Still of the Night starred Roy Scheider and Meryl Streep and was, unquestionably, one of the worst films of 1983. Still of the Night attempts to recreate the methods and images of the suspense-thrillers of the '40s, placing an ordinary man in an extraordinary situation. Scheider plays a psychiatrist whose patient is brutally murdered. By sheerest accident, he becomes involved in the man's life and involved with the man's mistress, Meryl Streep, himself becoming a target of the murderer--who may be Meryl Streep, although he does not think so. The movie plays, at once, fair and fast-and-loose with the canons of the mystery form, providing the information about the murderer early in the action, then burying it in trivia. Unfortunately, although it became quite clear early on that Meryl Streep could not be the murderer, the film never touched again on the murderer in the text of the show, thereby preventing the viewer from noticing things Scheider might have noticed for himself.

Still of the Night was also fraught with logical inconsistencies and plain stupidities. Probably the worst is the scene in which Scheider follows what he thinks is Streep into Central Park late at night, only to be mugged in a culvert. As he leaves the mugging, the mugger, wearing Scheider's jacket, is killed. To begin with, the murderer had no way at all of assuring that Scheider would follow her or even notice her. She was standing about a block away from him and wrapped in a raincoat. Second, it is highly unlikely that any Manhattanite would willingly walk into Central Park after dark on anything but the most urgent necessity. Third, having gotten into the culvert (an impossibility added to the previous one), the situation with the mugger raises its own difficulties. The murderer must be there already, because Scheider followed her there. But the mugger pays her no mind and mugs Scheider instead. And then, he puts on Scheider's jacket and is immediately killed. Which means that the murderer was right there and presumably could see and hear the mugging and know it was not Scheider. Fourth and most damning, the film presented absolutely no rationale for the murderer's unbalance. Her reason for killing five people--one of them a police detective and in her own apartment--is that she is crazy. Feh. I am of two minds about the fact that Scheider solves the whodunit by analyzing his patient's peculiar dream. It's conceptually a neat idea, but when it's done, it never seems believable.

Timerider could not have been a serious

disappointment, because I didn't expect much from it, and it lived up to all expectations. A motorcyclist running the 1982 Baja 1000 Motocross Race (Lyle Swann) stumbles into a time travel experiment and is transported back to 1877, where he runs into a fencing operation disguised as a mission. In the less-than twenty-four hours he is in the nineteenth century, he frightens and angers virtually everyone he comes into contact with, meets, unknowing, his great, great grandmother and has a brief liaison with her, and gets himself cornered into a gunfight with a bunch of desperadoes, from which he is ultimately rescued by a helicopter sent by the scientists concerned about a human being lost in time. Timerider is ultimately, just a motorcycle movie tricked out with a stfnal touch of incest. Lyle Swann, Our Hero, never catches on to the fact that he is displaced in time, so he's not aware--but the viewer certainly is.

Timerider is visually pretty, with production values far higher than one is accustomed to in this kind of B-picture. And that's about the most one can say for it.

Well, no, there is one more thing. The story was co-written by Mike Nesmith, and Nesmith did the score for the film. The story was insipid and flat; the score was, from point to point, excellent.

About the audience, however, there is a lot more to be said. At one point, one of the baddies gets his nose shot off. Every time he appears on screen thereafter, the audience at the Royal theatre giggled hysterically. Personally, I don't find anything funny about that. Kinda makes you stop and think about the Barbarians at the Gates and the Spears Crashing Through Walls, huh?

A Note About Quodlibet: I just noticed how oddly "clumped" is the distribution of artwork in this issue. That's due to the fact that I'm compiling this issue in exactly the same yard-goods way that I approach the monthly, smaller version--which says to me that I should (a) return to the thoroughgoing, design-every-page approach I used as a professional editor, or (b) use much less art, thereby moving closer to Tappen or Warhoon in terms of graphics package, or (c) stop doing these super-large issues. Of the three alternatives, I like the last best. For some obscure reason, I always become impatient with the two- or three-month production schedules, missing the "immediacy" of the small, monthly Quodlibet. The last time I did a genzine issue of Quodlibet (14), I did the "QuodlibETAL." section first and then the rest. This issue, the editorial section is being compiled from November through the end of January, expanding as all the other work goes on concurrently, so I'm not sure

how long the whole issue will be. I'm not happy with the form. Perhaps Quodlibet is just not very compatible, in terms of the psychological reasons for doing it, with the genzine format. Something important (to me) is lost.

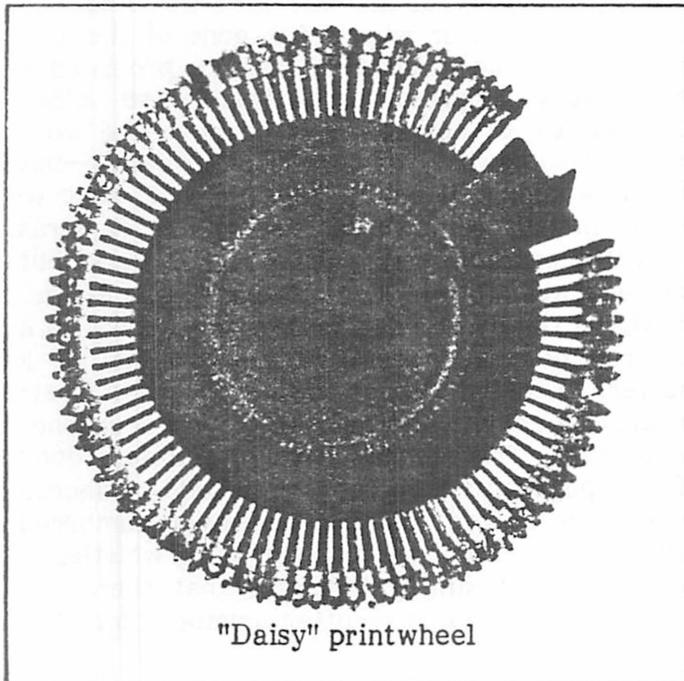
Eventually, too, I'm going to lose access to the cranky wordprocessor that prints 1,200 words per page like typescript and does boldface and the other niceties. Production will be come much more "difficult." Ah, I'll have to cross that bridge later...

How much, I wonder, of my dissatisfaction with working the genzine format (although not with genzines in general) is due to having been absorbed into a very satisfying apa from 1975 to 1977? One did his monthly piece; a month later one received it back, usually with a group of mailing comments scattered throughout the mailing. A highly interactive, monthly apa can be a very satisfying experience. I speculate that the tendency of many current fmzs to overcredit their loccol, insisting on "short and snappy" locs derives from the great sweep of apas through written fanac during the middle of the last decade. The late and unlamented apa boom has probably had a major influence on fanzines, about which little has been written.

While I'm ruminating about this thing, let me direct your attention to the illustration heading the loccol. As you can see from the table of contents, it was done by D. Carol Roberts, and I can't do justice to it in this medium. You may make your own esthetic judgments, but I happen to like this mode of Art Nouveauish-Beardsley pastiche, very much, and I also believe D to be one of fandom's finest practitioners of the style. The work is, unfortunately, just too delicate for the reproduction medium, and it gave me some headaches. In view of the fact that Quodlibet is produced with a wordprocessor in what seems to be virtually (although not entirely) terra incognito to fanzine fans, I thought I'd share some of the methods and practices I've developed specifically for fanac with the Xerox 850.

The main thing about a wordprocessor is that it has a memory--it remembers what you have typed and is capable of printing it out in virtually any format at the same time or later. Generally, you are working with figures on a screen instead of "hard copy," so that you can enter, take out, edit, and so forth, on CRT (Cathode Ray Tube = TV screen) before the text is set into print. The Xerox 850 is a pretty primitive machine, but it does have capability to print out (with the appropriate type font (made in "daisies" for many such wordprocessors), in pica, elite, or "proportional space." It can also justify or not, as you instruct the machine. Such

an instruction is made once, before you start the document, and the machine remembers the instruction until you tell it differently. That's the basics. You can add fripperies to the machine 'till the cows come home.



"Daisy" printwheel

The big advantage, of course, is that you can effectively "draft on stencil" and still be able to polish, amend, revise, and edit at the same time. Generally, it's easier to print your text on plain paper and use offset to reproduce it, but it is possible (I've done it--got good results) to take the ribbon out of the machine and print onto stencil, if that is your desire. It is also, of course, possible to make electrostencils from the bond-paper-version, which is probably the way rich brown (the exception to the virtual terra incognita above) proceeds with beardmutterings. Whatever.

The proportional space option allows you to print text like a typesetting machine, each character having a different width. Unless your text is composed entirely of "m" and "w," proportional space allows you to condense more text into any given space without sacrificing readability. The more compact text means that the eye has to scan several word-groups (of four or five words each) per line instead of the two groups usual with pica or elite lines. If, however, you break a proportional space text into two columns per page, it is possible to read each line at a single glance, so a two-columned text is easier to read. Three-column ought to be even easier, but I don't find it so.

Once you have the measure for the two columns, an additional consideration enters in. The left side of odd-numbered pages and the right side of even-numbered pages take a staple, so they require a bit more space--say a sixth of

an inch or so--to accommodate the staples. So the format for each of four successive columns is slightly different. The settings I use in Quodlibet are 8 to 50 and 54 to 96 for odd-numbered pages and 6 to 48 and 52 to 94 for even-numbered pages. This practice of allowing a little extra space for the staples is usually practiced in a bastardized way by setting a column width that allows the same margin on both sides of the page, but this practice wastes a certain amount of text space which, over the course of a large fanzine, can amount to several pages lost. It may take a bit more time and trouble to move the margins every time you do another page, but the trouble repays itself in the long run.

After deciding to use the proportional space printwheel, I received complaints that people had difficulty distinguishing editorial insertions or replies in the loccol from the main text, so I experimented a bit with the machine, trying different typefaces and so forth. The clearest choice, involving the least difficulty, was to use boldface type to set comments off from text. This is another level of hassle, as the machine does not have a boldface printwheel, but reprints each line, slightly to the left of the text. For some peculiar reason, the machine never quite duplicated the spacing on the justified text as it was reprinting, so you got an effect like the example in the box below:

The big advantage, of course, is that you can effectively "draft on stencil" and still be able to polish, amend, revise, and edit at the same time. Generally, it's easier to print your text on plain paper and use offset to reproduce it, but it is

Only the last line comes out completely in boldface, while the rest of the text has leprous spots. *Sigh* A "simple" solution to that problem is to replace every "soft" carriage return the machine puts in (telling it to justify the line) with a "hard" carriage return, telling it to leave the spacing alone. The hard carriage return is the way the machine recognizes paragraphs, so this slows down the process of moving through the copy from point a to point b. Fortunately, this does not have to be done manually; you can program the machine to do this automatically for every twenty lines or so.

So every time I do an editorial insertion or comment, I have to type and format the text, then move the paper back to the beginning of the comment, the copy the material, replace the soft carriage returns with hard carriage returns, and then go back to the second iteration of the

text and place a backspace-half-space at the beginning of each line.

This runs into problems, too. There is a certain amount of "slippage" from the top to the bottom of the page--meaning that the rubber rollers do not hold the paper absolutely tightly; it skews slightly as it goes through the rollers. Ordinarily this is not a problem, as the skew accretes at a constant rate throughout the two columns, and the text looks straight. But if, having gone to the bottom of the page, you then go back to near the top to retype a boldface paragraph, the accumulated skew becomes very obvious, the retyping giving a distinct "doublestrike" impression. This can be avoided by scrolling the paper up every five or six lines, instead of waiting until you've completed the text--so the accumulated skew isn't great enough to matter. But it's a hassle, too. The problem is compounded when a boldface section goes from page to page and you make insertions or deletions from the text preceding it, as the carefully-counted lines no longer match the sixty-lines-per-column page format. Tearing of hair. Wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This is not meant to exhort you to advance a shoulder for dampening with the tears of a faned--although that couldn't hurt, either--but rather to give an insight into the limitations of the medium.

The use of artwork, of course, becomes immensely easier, as you may compile your master from several media. However, there are still design and realization limits. One of those limits is exemplified by D Roberts' piece, as the stippling she used was so fine that the usually minor degradation the master undergoes as it is made into successive generations of masters becomes major when the detail is that fine. Most people using photo-offset, I suppose, do each page a side at a time, making enough copies to be collated into the final run. But I am using a machine that is capable of taking a whole magazine with a first-generation copy of the actual master and doing a single side of each copy at a time, individually, then the other. Unfortunately, I can't use the masters themselves if they have artwork of any kind on them, as the machine's feeder mechanism isn't flexible enough to take the different weights through and keep the resultant copies straight. I use this one-copy-at-a-time approach for two reasons: first, because it allows me to supervise the print quality on each copy as it comes off the machine and see the relations between the pages, and, second, because I hate collation. I am, perhaps, atypical among faneds in this respect. Using the machine as I do, each copy of each issue comes out of the printing process already collated and, if I'm sufficiently clever

with the stapling element, almost ready to go, requiring only a third staple in the center of the left side of the issue.

I checked the degradation of the copies on D's piece by running a first- and then second-generation in each of the machine's three density modes. No matter what I did, none of the nine resulting second-generation masters produced a satisfactory impression. There are other alternatives, of course: I could have the work enlarged somewhat, to preserve the detail--but then it wouldn't fit on the page; I would have to cut it in half somewhere. There are cameras made for extremely fine lithographic work, but none are available in a price range I can afford. So what I finally decided to do was to make up a full run of that page using the original as a master, so that that page in this issue is a first-generation copy, while everything else is second-generation. This means I have to collate a copy of that page into each copy of the odd-numbered pages run before running the even-numbered pages on the back. This, you may whistle, is dedication. It simply indicates that there are ways around problems--often cumbersome, but



The titles are handwritten: the opening music fades in and out alternating between a 60-cycle hum and the voices of the controlroom crew; then, suddenly, your TV picture rolls once on the horizontal, shudders, calms down, and you may or may not hear the host of the program say: "Good evening. Welcome to the Emperor Norton Science Fiction Hour."

You'll never mistake San Francisco Public Access for network television.

Oh. Public access. Cable companies used to be required by federal law to maintain a "public access channel," for programming generated by

alternatives are available.

Another problem the mechanism imposes is that the feeder mechanism is by no means precise. Nor is the camera completely stationary. As the machine is used, the camera making the photostatic "image" of the text tends to drift up and down, so that one is never quite certain whether or not the page-length indicators on the printing glass bear any relationship to what the machine "sees." At various times in the past, the image area has wandered up and down as much as a third of an inch. And the feeder mechanism is designed only to feed from certain positions, so the image may drift up and down on the copies. Nor is the feeder very precise in horizontal feed. Careful control of the mechanism--and keeping each run fairly small (say, no more than five copies at one time) helps to reduce this variation in what I have been calling the "shaking parameters" of the machine.

I don't think I've mentioned that I just enrolled in a "wine program" called "The Wines of California" through Maximillian distributors.

Every month, Maximillian sends me two bottles of wine, the same varietal but different vintners, from the local wineries, at a cost of about \$11.00, delivered. The set comes with a five page fact sheet detailing information about the varietal and the vintners. If anyone else is interested in this program, let me know, and I'll pass on the invitation form. I'm impressed. And as I know I have a few wine enthusiasts on my mailing list, I'll give my reactions as they come--convenient, as Quodlibet comes out about monthly, anyway.

The first month's selection was Gamay Beaujolais--a varietal unique to the U.S. I have a Fritz 1980 and a 1979 Robert Carey. Both are new houses, founded in 1971 and 1970, respectively. Last night (January 27), I tapped the Carey and found it to be rather oaky and quite "passive" in flavor, the grape transmuted into something more like a melon flavor. Not to my taste. I undoubtedly won't taste the Fritz until after taking this issue to press.

And I think that's entirely enough editorial nattering for one issue, don't you?

back when tephone rings

By d. carol roberts

the public. In San Francisco, this is Viacom's Channel 25. Two years ago, the FCC gave up trying to enforce the requirement, but Viacom is required to maintain Channel 25 by its contract with the City of San Francisco. Anybody and his brother can come into the station and buy time, usually for a minimal charge (\$10 per half hour when we started), and, after a few grueling hours getting chummy with the equipment, she/he/they can put on just about anything she/he wants. The bounds of good taste are extremely elastic.

I've worked with, at, for, and occasionally against Channel 25 since that fateful day in

February, 1979 when I turned to my companion, after trying to watch the abysmal Maria Alcora Show, and said "We can do a better program than that!"

By March, I knew everything there was to know about the Sony reel-to-reel portable VTR (circa 1970, black and white only, 26 pounds). And so, at the end of that month I set off with Jim Khennedy, Bill Patterson, Tim Kyger, Mitch Parker, and assorted guests to interview Robert Silverberg, Michael Kurland, Alva Rogers, Robert Anton Wilson, Fritz Leiber, and Tom Whitmore. These taped segments were meant to

be used, one or two each week, during the thirty-minute, live studio production: The Emperor Norton Science Fiction Hour ("ENSFH").

ENSFH has been produced weekly since April 4, 1979, except during studio shutdowns (rewiring and holidays). This is equivalent to producing a fanzine every week. And, in fact, ENSFH is a fanzine, with a fanzine's usual contents (reviews, reports, interviews), even if, at the moment, its physical manifestation is on videotape.

Primarily, ENSFH exists to record interviews with science fiction authors, editors, publishers, artists, and others of interest to the ENSFH crew and, I hope, to the audience.

In the beginning, we tramped around the Bay Area seeking out these recluses in their lair(s), taking along whatever "talent" (don't laugh--that's not sarcasm, it's what the people who appear on-camera are called) and camera people we could scrape together. We subsisted for awhile on the good graces of the volunteers and not-so-volunteers at Channel 25 until we got our own, dedicated crew together (about which, more later). Nor were our troubles over once we had cast and crew together--or even when we successfully braved, say, Robert Silverberg's succulents jungle to Get the Interview and Bring It Back Alive. Then you can think about doing any editing. Technical considerations count for more than you can perhaps imagine. Unlike film, for example, video is not easily edited, especially in the half-inch format: it's possible, but VHS editing equipment starts at \$10,000 and is rarely available for rent. The latest portable VTRs remedy this situation somewhat by allowing "inserts"--that is, cuts to, say, close-ups of books or reaction shots, but insert editing carries the video portion of the tape only--audio does not transfer. (Also absent from many public access stations are character generators, switchers that key on color, studio-quality cameras, color cards, and so on. All of which make professional programs look the way they do. As does pretaping. Most television programs are pretaped--most public access programs are not, so all the technical considerations as well as what's happening for the talent takes place in real time, with no opportunity to go back and shoot it again). You can get around some of these problems in the studio by switching back and forth between the two cameras. But on field interviews, you have one, count it, one portapak and camera. Lots of slow pans, and watch what you're backing into to get that two-on, keed.

Nowadays, these interviews usually take place during conventions (Westercon, FantasyCon, Octocon, and the Nebula Conference) although some are still done at the guests' homes. It's a lot easier that way--we can make our guests come to us. We'd like to thank all those conven-

tions for their part in making ENSFH happen.

Taping interviews during conventions has become a ritual. The ENSFH crew arrives at the hotel just hours before the authors' party (ice cream social, or whatever the local concom calls it). For most conventions, this event happens on Friday night. Over the last four years, many suspicious bellboys have helped us unload a cart full of video equipment. Once the hotel help is gone, we set up shop. Now, long before we leave San Francisco, we check the equipment: mikes, cables, monitors, camera, connectors, and so on. But a law of the universe dictates that some minor piece will always be missing. The Claremont Hotel in Oakland remains one of my favorite places because room service there can supply (and did) a three-prong AC adapter.

Allyn, JJ, and I target who we want to interview and who is going to approach whom. This is total anarchy. The ENSFH crew interviews whomever the individual members are interested in. If we don't have a crew member who reads Author X, Author X doesn't get interviewed. But this matter is just a reflection of individual tastes, not the merit of the authors. I may be the executive producer, but I feel no need to dictate.

After a final look in the mirror (Allyn checks hair, makeup, hemline; I stare at my suit--too formal, or just plain silly? JJ straightens his tie--yes, tie: we try very hard not to look too flaky) we descend.

And we all hate it. We have rarely been turned down for an interview (Avram Davidson turned us down); but, I remain in absolute horror that somebody is going to yell "Ack! Media people! WHO LET THEM IN?" And six Frazetta-type bouncers are going to string us up in the lobby as an example to other perpetrators of the nonliterary. We're not media freaks. Really. I don't even know the current (or any other) PBS schedule--we've simply realized a technology beyond hectography.

As of FantasyCon 1982, the ENSFH crew had recorded sixty interviews. You will find a list of these interviews somewhere following the fade to black on "Fade to Black..." (Transcriptions of interviews, the detailed history of ENSFH and its crew, selected scripts, and reviews will be published in the Journal of the Emperor Norton Science Fiction Hour (JENSFH), quarterly, beginning in Spring, 1983. Coming soon to a television near you.)

What do we do ENSFH for? For posterity? What can you say about a posterity of seven years--the life expectancy for videotape? An outside chance exists that laser disc recording will become accessible in time to save the ENSFH interviews: excuse me if I don't bet on it.

The crew. Nothing on the scale of ENSFH gets done without a team, and actually, video production, with few exceptions, is inherently teamwork. To operate a live production requires minimally: a technical director, director, audio technician, two or three camera operators, a script writer, a producer, and some talent. We all work on ENSFH for different reasons, and the best attribute of the ENSFH crew is that these various interests don't conflict--they support each other. And, except for the current camera operators, no one who works on ENSFH now knew anything about video in 1979. If nothing else, ENSFH has been a tremendous experience in technical education. We know now how video is recorded, what the cameras do and how they do it, what a vertical edit is, and why after

nearly four years of practice, we will never make a production at Channel 25 look like it was made at a network studio.

*

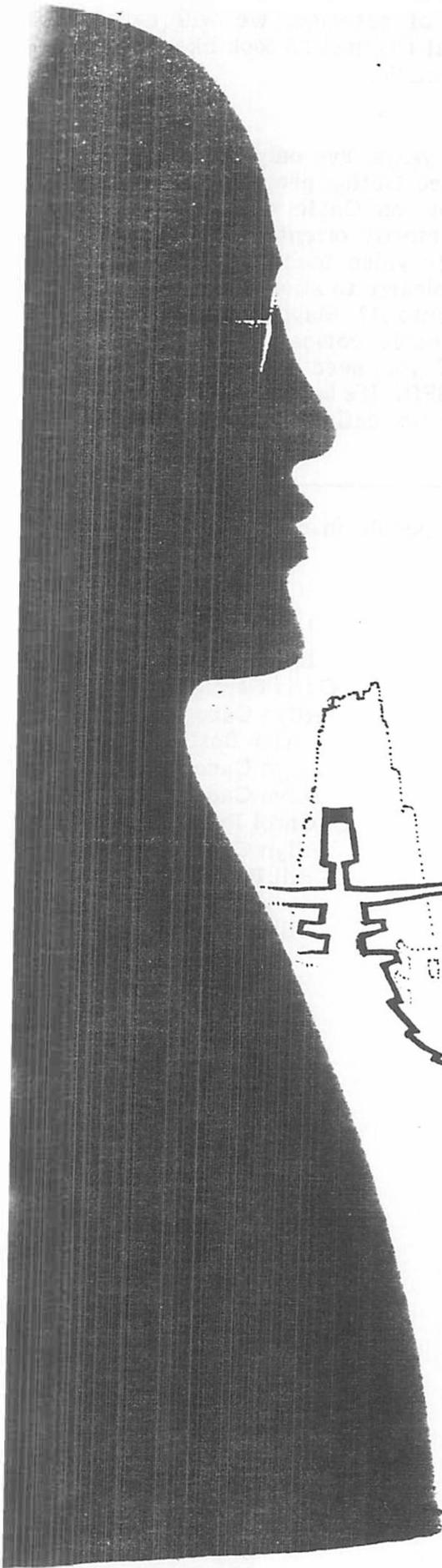
In all these four years, I've only heard of one other regular science fiction program on public access: Cox's show on Cable 4 in Wisconsin. Although fans are mostly oriented towards the written word, surely video technology shouldn't seem outrageously bizarre to all of them.

Could I talk you into it? Maybe you could find out if your local cable company has a public access station. If you need support, you can always contact ENSFH. It's been fun for us to be the very first, but it's definitely getting lonely for the pioneers.

Here is a list of the interviews we have on tape. A roster of the people involved with ENSFH follows.

Guest	Year	Interviewer
Robert Silverberg	1979	Bill Patterson
Robert Silverberg	1981	Chris Garrigues
Robert Silverberg	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Vonda MacIntyre	1979	Alan Bostick
Joan Vinge	1979	Allyn Cadogan
Larry Niven	1979	Allyn Cadogan
Alicia Austin	1979	D. Carol Roberts
Ted White	1979	Allyn Cadogan
Fritz Leiber	1979	Bill Patterson
Fritz Leiber	1981	Jim Jones
Robert Anton Wilson	1979	Bill Patterson
Tom Whitmore	1979	Tim Kyger
Michael Kurland and Alva Rogers	1979	Bill Patterson
Norman Spinrad	1979	Allyn Cadogan
Jim Frenkel	1979	Allyn Cadogan
Jim Frenkel	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Morris Scott Dollens	1979	Jim Khennedy
Pascal Thomas	1979	Bill Patterson
Stan Kent	1979	Allyn Cadogan
Dr. Simon (of the Morrison Planetarium)	1980	Tim Kyger
Roger Zelazny	1980	Jim Jones
Robert Sheckley	1980	Karl Mosgofian
Alvy Moore	1980	Jim Khennedy
Lela Dowling	1980	Tom Whitmore
William Rotsler	1980	Jim Khennedy
William Rotsler	1981	Jim Jones
Forrest J. Ackerman	1980	Jim Khennedy
Wendy Ackerman	1980	Jim Khennedy
Theodore Sturgeon	1981	Jim Jones
Stephen MacDonald	1981	Jim Jones
George Scithers	1981	Jim Jones
George Scithers	1982	Jim Jones
Terry Carr	1981	Bruce D. Arthurs
Brian Earl Wagner	1981	Jim Jones
Jo Clayton	1981	Jim Jones

Continued on Page 32



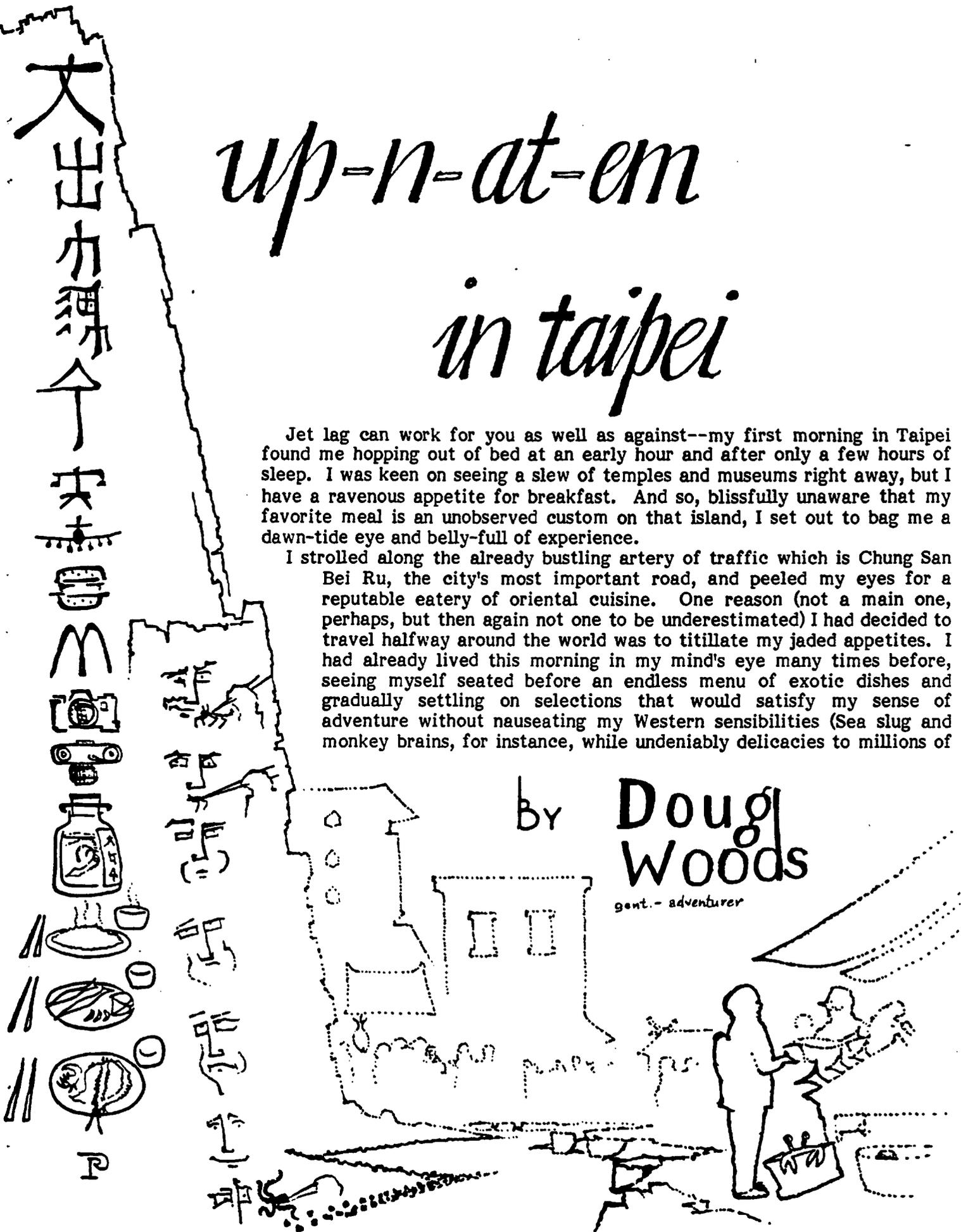
大出外獨个

up-n-at-em in taipei

Jet lag can work for you as well as against--my first morning in Taipei found me hopping out of bed at an early hour and after only a few hours of sleep. I was keen on seeing a slew of temples and museums right away, but I have a ravenous appetite for breakfast. And so, blissfully unaware that my favorite meal is an unobserved custom on that island, I set out to bag me a dawn-tide eye and belly-full of experience.

I strolled along the already bustling artery of traffic which is Chung San Bei Ru, the city's most important road, and peeled my eyes for a reputable eatery of oriental cuisine. One reason (not a main one, perhaps, but then again not one to be underestimated) I had decided to travel halfway around the world was to titillate my jaded appetites. I had already lived this morning in my mind's eye many times before, seeing myself seated before an endless menu of exotic dishes and gradually settling on selections that would satisfy my sense of adventure without nauseating my Western sensibilities (Sea slug and monkey brains, for instance, while undeniably delicacies to millions of

BY **Doug Woods**
gent. - adventurer



people, would to my palate stay strictly off limits.)

It was a fruitless, albeit worthwhile search. The only restaurant open at that hour served strictly Western style breakfasts; hence I found my first meal in Taiwan mundane as well as meager: two poached eggs, orange juice, and a slice of toast. But before resigning myself to it I had tramped a good hour through an endless maze of crowded alleyways and lanes jam-packed with noisy, friendly humanity and their daily wares. Shops little bigger than a good-sized closet offered a startling variety of textiles and food. Silk shirts and jackets of brilliant hue crammed flimsy shelves: fresh shrimp longer than my hand and striped like tigers waved feeble antennas in vats of bubbling water; all manner of fruit and fish lay stacked and strewn along a path just wide enough for the occasional motorcycle to slowly bulldoze its way through the market's narrow streams of people. Dim, dusty shacks, a little larger and more reputable-looking than the other shops, beckoned with strange arrays of Chinese medicinal herbs, baskets of antlers, trays of ginseng, piles of dried lizards, vials of snake venom, and a huge jar of what I later realized were severed penises--from what animal I never asked. All kinds of raw meat lay exposed to the open air, though constantly swept clean of flies by rubber band-powered whisks that dangled from above. Almost all the meat was unidentifiable except as internal organs--here a heart, there some rippled cords of intestines--and while the savory scents and sounds of frying flesh did occasionally cross my path, none of the simple stands possessed so much as a stool to sit on, let alone clean bowls or chopsticks. Reality did not match my fantasies--bidding a regretful farewell to the crowded market I promised myself a meal there later when I had a more confident grasp of custom, coinage, and cuisine.

My first temple I found a few hours later quite by accident. I had picked a direction perpendicular to Chung San Bei Ru (due west) and set off on foot, confident of finding something at least as entertaining as the market. An hour later I found it--or them, rather: two sprawling compounds kitter-corner to each other

and with an ornate playground featuring cartoonish statues and pagodas adjacent to them both. The first I entered had granite pillars inside its main gate designating it a Confucian temple and appeared pretty much a public garden for older folks to meet in, strum musical instruments, or exercise. The second was unlabeled and clearly used as an actual temple, with incense profusely bought and burned before the main altar in the center of the courtyard as well as at the smaller shrines set into the temple's outer walls.

Words cannot do justice to any of the temples I saw--describing one gilded rafter or carved cornice would occupy a page, and these are only fragments of the total structure. Red paint, set off by gold, green, and blue inlays played around wooden beams and planks. Scenes out of Chinese mythology decorated the second temple's central sanctuary, featuring melees of fearless warriors and courtly ladies armed to the teeth with spears, sabres, and straight swords. Porcelain images surrounded by flowers glared from their niches with unnerving ferocity.

Only here did I begin to understand how much I had unconsciously informed my imagination with scenes of the TV show Kung Fu. I had actually been expecting still halls for meditation, vastly dark and lit only with tiers of guttering candles. I did in fact discover later that several of the temples in Taipei still teach boxing, but any other resemblance to David Carradine's meditative encounters inside his Shaolin confines was pretty much lost on me. Temples in Taipei, Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist, and combinations thereof, were largely places for socializing, characterized more by chattering adults and running bands of children than solemn processions of grave priests.

The rest of what I saw--Haggler's Row in downtown Taipei, monks in saffron robes and sneakers strolling unconcerned through murderous traffic, the Tai Chi boxers on Grass Mountain behind the Grand Hotel, the incredible meals I finally did have--would all look nice on paper, I think--someday. Sorry, but not now. I know I've probably raised more questions than answered any, but maybe the above will give you a taste of what I saw.



Florilegium prasodensis

by Robert Prokop

A little less than a year ago, Ben Bova wrote a guest editorial for *Analog*. In it, he complained at some length about sf fans being "behind the times." To illustrate his point, he said that if you asked fans at random to list their favorite sf stories, you would find that the stories and authors predominating in such lists would all be from twenty to thirty years ago. Bova was arguing from a larger context, but this one fact seemed to irk him particularly. He felt it was indicative of an overly-conservative, even fossilized, mindset on the part of fans, and urged them to start considering newer works and authors as their favorites.

Well, I in my turn got irked at Ben Bova for this editorial. I came very close to writing an indignant response to *Analog*, but figured they probably wouldn't print the letter of a non-subscriber--so I never did. But I had intended to point out to Bova that if works from the Thirties and Forties were still the all-time favorites of

fans even today, then the "blame" for such a state of affairs lay not with the fans, but with the type of sf story being written and printed today. Bova's attitude reminded me of the Detroit auto manufacturers complaining about Americans preferring Japanese cars to Detroit's gas-hogs. The manufacturers never thought of finding fault with American cars. No, it was the American consumer that must change.

Bova seemed to be saying the very same thing. The fans prefer sf from the Campbell Era to that of today? What on Earth is wrong with them?

I wanted to reply to Bova that as soon as writers today started once again giving us stories like the ones that still dominate the lists of favorites, then he could expect to see newer works shouldering aside the older ones.

I am glad I never wrote that letter.

I should have known better. There are, of course, plenty of novels and short stories being written--and published--today that are "just

like" those of the Forties...and that is precisely what is wrong with them. They represent a kind of intellectual "cud" being chewed over and over again, losing something vital at every step through sf's G-I system.

There is a quality lacking in these imitations which is hard to put one's finger on but that the classics of sf have in abundance. That quality is, of course, originality. Saying that is, however, not nearly enough. After all, countless later works of sf have been "original," but are almost nobody's favorites. What I'm talking about here is a freshness and an exuberance in the treatment of the elements of a story--a, forgive me, "sense of wonder," if you will. The Lensman series has this quality. Most of its all-too-numerous imitators do not.

For a long time, I was of the firm opinion that it wasn't possible to write today a story in the manner of the Campbell Era, using the same conventions as that era, and in the same spirit as those classic stories, without ending up as dry and lifeless hackwork. I was pretty much convinced that no one could produce again a work both like the Lensman series and as good as it. I believed that the work was inextricably linked to the time when it was written, and counselled in an earlier loc to Quodlibet that we be content with what we already have (and Ben Bova's opinion be damned!).

Well...I was wrong.

Even as I was writing that earlier letter, some nameless typesetter at Signet Books must have been getting Mike Resnick's The Soul Eater ready for publication.

I first heard of the book in Analog's "The Reference Library" book reviews. Tom Easton called it a surprisingly good book, despite the fact that it was a "tale of macho existence on the interstellar frontier." I wasn't expecting much--just some good entertainment reading a fun, but probably unremarkable, book. A couple of weeks later, I saw a copy down at the local bookstore and, after some hesitation, bought a copy...

Let me digress briefly here. About fifteen years ago, after listening to interminable, unintelligible conversations among "Tolkein nuts" sitting next to me in high school, I bought a copy of The Hobbit to find out just what in the world they were talking about. I wasn't expecting much. In fact, I was even vaguely prejudiced against the book--a result of listening to the hobbit fanatics back in school. Tolkein would have to win over a hostile audience, as far as I was concerned. I sat down on a bench outside the store and started to read Chapter One: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit," I read... and my life was never the same again. I had never (until now) experienced the like. By the

end of the first sentence, I already knew I was going to like this book. By the end of the first paragraph, I knew that The Hobbit was going to be one of my all-time favorites. By the end of the first page, Tolkein was fast replacing Arthur C. Clarke (!!!) as my favorite writer.

Now in my thirties, I am not so easily given to such bursts of emotion, but opening to page one of The Soul Eater, I experienced a powerful echo of that day long ago. "There is a world, toward the core of the galaxy, where the evening sky is so bright...." Well, I guess there's really no point in copying out the whole novel right here in this review, is there? Let's just say that The Soul Eater caught hold of me in a way that no book has since the Lensman series. I literally could not put the book down, losing all sense of where I was (at work), or what I was supposed to be doing (working, I guess). Here, at long last, was an sf novel written exactly the way I felt an sf novel should be written.

The novel's story is simple--perhaps even crude. Nicobar Lane is a professional hunter operating out of a frontier outpost on the edge of human civilization--about four thousand years from now. Mankind has spread out over most of the stars to the outskirts of the galactic core and most of the way out to the rim. More than eighty percent of the Milky Way is still Terra Incognita. Resnick's galaxy bears strong resemblance to Jack Vance's Gaeon Reach. There is no such thing as an Asimovian Galactic Empire, but rather a Balkanized arrangement of independent worlds, alien cultures (some planet-bound and others star-faring), federations, and several different human empires and cultures spread every which way over a vast stretch of spiral arms. Human civilization has become so large that one side of "known space" has no contact at all with the other, as each expands outward.

The first chapters of the book have the same feel as the sf role-playing game "Traveller." Nicobar Lane is shown outfitting and financing his various hunting expeditions in considerable detail. The reader is drawn into the minutiae of Lane's activities and accompanies him on a typical venture. On this otherwise routine hunting trip, Lane has his first brush with what could just possibly be called the local "Big Foot" of his part of the galaxy--a legendary creature that lives in interstellar space, resembling Fred Hoyle's Black Cloud, whose very existence is disputed. Previous to this encounter, Lane has discounted all tales of this "Dreamwish Beast," or "Starduster," as the creature is variously named, as barroom fantasies. He never believed a word of them. Even now, after his first sighting, he doesn't get especially interested in the thing. But imperceptibly to him, he gets

caught up by it. He eventually becomes obsessed with the search for it, until it devours his career, his life, his very soul. His obsession gradually turns into a passionate hatred--a quest to destroy the creature. He sacrifices everything he owns to the quest, and when his own resources are gone, he turns to increasingly barbarous piracy in order to accomplish his goal. Thousands of lives are sacrificed along the way. At the climax of the story, he finally has his long-sought decisive encounter with the Soul Eater (as Lane as named it). The ending...let's just say here that the ending is a good one. Whether it is expected or unexpected depends on how you read the book. But I won't reveal any more of it here.

As important as the plot of the story is the setting. Resnick has a way of describing his galaxy that leaves the reader with the distinct impression that "there's a lot more where this came from." Even worlds and technologies at the edges of Resnick's story are portrayed in crisp detail, with no trace of that fuzziness that so often characterizes elements of a setting not central to the author's purpose. But here, as in a Chesley Bonestell painting, even the horizons are clear.

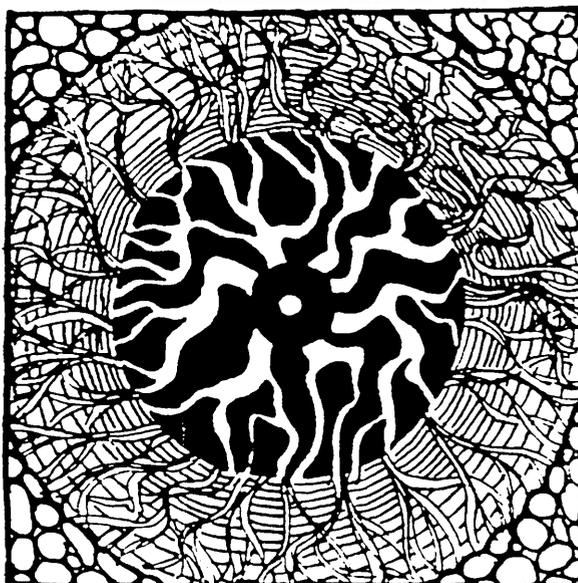
Next we have to consider the rather intangible feel of the novel. I've tried wording this point better, but it seems I can't. I want to say that the book has the same feel as the best sf from the Campbell Era, employs many of the same conventions, evokes the same reactions in the reader, arouses the same "sense of wonder"--and yet has somehow avoided being a lifeless, slavish imitation. I don't really know who, but I have a theory. Mike Resnick obviously loves this story.

It shows in the care with which he builds his universe, and in the amazingly lengthy blast of emotion that he powers his story line by.

I loved the book. I hope I have done justice to it. I recommend it unreservedly to anyone who, after reading every story in every volume of The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, wanted more--and wanted it bad. There is. It's Mike Resnick's The Soul Eater, Signet Books, 150 pp, \$2.25.*

It's the best book of the year.

Robert Prokop



* I recently picked up a copy of Mike Resnick's Sideshow. I am not impressed. Apparently, The Soul Eater is a one-shot, and not an indication of the general quality of Resnick's work--unless Sideshow is unusually poor. RSP.

"Fade to Black...", Continued from p. 25

Guest	Year	Interviewer
L. Sprague deCamp	1981	Jim Jones
Michael Moorcock	1981	Allyn Cadogan
Brian Froud	1981	Allyn Cadogan
John Stanley	1981	Allyn Cadogan and Jim Jones
Susan Dexter	1981	Jim Jones
Jeff Frane	1981	Allyn Cadogan
Ron Turner	1982	Jim Jones
Fred Todd (of Rip Off Press)	1982	Jim Jones
Staff of Morrison Planetarium	1982	Jim Jones
William Nolan	1982	Jim Jones
John Dobson	1982	Jim Jones
Don Simpson	1982	Jim Jones
Marta Randall	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Grania Davis	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Steve Davis	1982	Jim Jones
Michael Kurland and Greg Bear	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Gene Wolfe	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Dave Hartwell	1982	Jim Jones
Poul Anderson	1982	Jim Jones
Charles N. Brown	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Frank Catalona	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Ellen Datlow	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Peter Straub	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Mianley Wade Wellman	1982	Jim Jones
John Crowley	1982	Allyn Cadogan
Trina Robbins	1983	Allyn Cadogan

CAST AND CREW

Person	Position	Year(s)
D. Carol Roberts	Executive Producer, Technology Reporter, Founder 1	1979 -
Jim Khennedy	Film Reviewer, Talent, Founder 2	1979-1982
Jim Jones	Producer, Scriptwriter, Interviewer, Talent	1979 -
Allyn Cadogan	Director, Interviewer, Talent	1979 -
Karl Mosgofian	Technical Director	1980 -
David Batzloff	Audio Technician	1980 -
Rick Jaffee	Camera Operator	1981 -
Ann Gillie	Camera Operator, "God"	1981 -
Peter Wolf	Camera Operator	1982 -
Chris Garrigues	Talent	1980 -
Peggy Valentine	Talent	1982 -
Mitch Parker	Technical Director	1979 - 1980
Scott Wong	Technical Director	1980
Bill Patterson	Interviewer	1979
Alan Bostick	Talent	1979
Tim Kyger	Science Reporter	1979 - 1980
Susan Solomon	Camera Operator	1979 - 1981



Malcolm Edwards
28 Duckett Road
London N4 1BN UK

Dear Bill,

Yet another Quodlibet arrived this morning, leaving me in awe

of your productivity even before reading the first page. (I think the difference in attitude to Pong and Quodlibet to which you draw slightly miffed attention has to do only with the fact that Pong--and Izzard after it--functioned very consciously as a focal point for fannish fandom, whereas Quodlibet is very much Bill Patterson's own thing.

Hmmm. I seem to have given any number of wrong impressions by that bit of mild sarcasm. rich brown even wrote back instructing me in the meaning of the term "fannish." I had intended by that to make a mild comment about in-group-ishness and people patting each other's head and congratulating about their own fannish quotient, at the same time gently mocking any pretensions that might be read into such a comment.

I've been meaning to respond to the last couple of issues, but wanted to read Friday before leaping into the Heinlein debate. Friday still sits unread on my shelf but I may manage a comment or two anyhow.

Asimov. Let's get the facts straight. Currents of Space was first published in 1952, not 1950. Second Foundation conflates two stories: "Now You See It--" (Astounding, January, 1948) and "Now You Don't" (Astounding, November '49-January '50. So you have the chronology the wrong way round. Always keep a copy of the SF Encyclopedia by your side for such arguments. The entry on Asimov is particularly reliable, and anyone who suggests I'm only saying that because I wrote it is clearly a cad, and probably a blackguard too.

Sigh I checked the copyright date on the books for my answer. I don't know where

Richard picked up his 1950 date. Apparently I'm going to have to buy something of the sort, just to get the facts straight before writing. *Every thing I Know Is Wrong*

I'm amazed that you liked Foundation's Edge so much. I've always quite enjoyed Asimov and had confidence in his professionalism, but the overwhelming sense I got from the novel was that he simply wasn't interested in what he was writing. I don't think Asimov in the 1980's could any longer believe in the rather crude Gibbon-into-sf notion of Asimov in the 1940's (he was only 21, after all, when he conceived the series). And conviction is all important in writing. The novel came alive for a couple of chapters when it got to Gaia and one could virtually see Asimov become interested in the implications of a gestalt entity. For the rest it just plodded along, not particularly boring, but not particularly interesting either.

I don't quite see--ah: I did say "[i]t's a very good book." Perhaps I should have said "it's a very interesting book," instead. If I had followed up with a full-scale analysis of the work, my attitude would probably have come out more clearly against the book than for it.

I started Foundation's Edge in the car and remarked to Tim (Kyger) that it started awfully slowly--only to realize that in the space of ten pages Asimov had his protagonist through a Seldon appearance and a council meeting and under arrest. So things weren't actually moving as slowly as they seemed to be. The whole book was like that--an extended bridge section (as you observe), to get the three assembled off Gaia. I don't know that I would agree with your analysis completely, but I do agree that he's lost the original impetus. Foundation's Edge just isn't compelling or even particularly convincing. On the other hand, it's good to have the ravelled

skein of threads gathered up so that the overall pattern of his future history is finally visible in one location.

I found Asimov's portrayal of politics at the Second Foundation particularly unconvincing. Sounded like a Harold Robbins soaper. One ought to be able to strike a balance of some kind. But, of course, Asimov needed to portray the Second Foundation as hopelessly incomplete as the Foundation. But he winds up destroying some of the most attractive elements of his earlier stories. He's done this quite a bit recently--I have in mind particularly the short story in which he re-introduced the Frankenstein complex into his Robot stories. It might be interesting someday to do a study on the various ways SF writers get arthritic, starting with Verne. Perhaps one might find something like a Peter Principle at work--one goes along attempting more and more complex themes and ideas until one gets out of one's depth, at which point "success" becomes a hit-or-miss proposition.

Heinlein. You are very dogmatic on the subject of Heinlein. Well, you are very dogmatic on a number of subjects, but in Heinlein's case the dogmatism rests on attempting to present your preferences as objectively "true" in some sense, while dismissing others' reservations as matters of preference. A case in point is your response to Andy Thornton where you say, reasonably enough, that his responses are information about him rather than the book (true, if only up to a point) and then go on to give a set of your responses which tell us equally as much about you and as little about the book.

The last point is certainly true, and deliberately so. My point is that while one is discussing on this level, the clash of disagreements is irremediable. I was also recommending sections of particular worth to Andy, as he said elsewhere that he had never actually read most of the book. But the paragraph was badly written.

So I'm "dogmatic" on Heinlein, eh? And on other subjects, as well, eh? Sent me scurrying to my dictionary, as I couldn't see any "established doctrine" I was appealing to. But I finally found something that might be apt under "dogmatism": "Positiveness in assertion of opinion, esp. when unwarranted or arrogant; a viewpoint or system of ideas based on insufficiently examined premises." Perhaps that's what you mean, eh? Well, any of those points are subject for argument, seems to me. "Unwarranted," "arrogant," and "insufficiently examined" are all question-begging absent supporting analysis.

I do, of course, state positive opinions positively--but rarely without giving the conceptual underpinnings that go along with the opinion. This is to give others a chance to

attack the reasons and convince me otherwise. Flat assertions of one point or another are not particularly convincing, but argument has a good chance. Reversal of opinion has been known to happen--right in the pages of Quodlibet, too. It's been pointed out to me that I don't make a sufficiently great display of conceding someone else's argument. Perhaps. I tend to think it's enough to say, "you've convinced me that that's true" and go on to other matters. Another possibly confusing factor is that, while I have clear distinctions in my own mind as to what is objectively true, what I infer from objective truths, speculative opinions, and so forth, when the ideas get to the declarative stage, the distinctions don't always make it onto paper. Even when they do the first time, they may not carry through the fourth or fifth time around. For example, when I started talking about the question of "where Heinlein started going bad," I phrased the statement as a conclusion: "In talking about the 'arbitrary division' I was synthesizing conversations I've had with a number of people who make this division. The fact that the division point is arbitrary is strongly suggested by the fact that there is a close correlation between the age of the reader and the date of the book he chooses to mark the division point...I infer that a certain number of Heinlein readers make a heavy emotional investment in a particular line...of books; when Heinlein makes a departure from that line, they do not choose to follow him...." (Quodlibet 15, page 10). No one to date has examined that inference or brought opposing surveys to bear on it. I think you can see, therefore, why I'm not impressed by people saying "the first book that started to go sour for me was _____." They're not addressing the issue--only widening the statistical base while confirming the observation--i.e., both rich brown and Ted White are forty-ish, and both place the division point at Stranger (although Ted says his "habit" of following Heinlein persisted until Glory Road).

On the other hand, if you attack the work at the level at which you attacked Foundation's Edge earlier, it's possible to have a conversation, to dig into the work, and to talk about something independent of one's consciousness, starting with "I felt the same way about it, and I think it's because _____," referring to something in the work, not something in one's head. I get a little testy when conversation remains on the "emotive" level too long. It's a good place to start, but one must "go somewhere" eventually. And, as I had just (Quodlibet 14) spent 3,600 of the review's 5,000 words talking about the work itself, I think I may be permitted to make a few emotive-level statements of my own from time to time...

[From a later letter] Dogmatic? Well, I didn't really intend the pejorative aspects of the word's meaning. I meant that you do tend to come across as very powerfully assertive, and use that (reasonably enough) to give yourself a convincing last word in the arguments that go on in Quodlibet. [About not making sufficiently great display of conceding arguments] Whoever was pointing that out was hitting the nail approximately in the cranial area, I'd say. To be fair, continual exposure to Quodlibets does tend to mitigate the first impression--viz. part of your response to rich brown in no. 17. Actually, though, part of what I like about Quodlibet is that it somehow persuades its correspondents to exercise their intellects without losing their tempers (and remains fairly informal at the same time)... What wasn't apparent to me when I first started reading Quodlibet was that some of the people you seemed to be tearing to pieces are evidently old friends. I'm used to this in British fanzines, but over there in the US if people aren't deathly polite to each other in print they usually seem to be mortal enemies. My fault for imposing wrong assumptions on what you're doing (though by the time I wrote to you I had a better idea of what was going on).

Blink I don't feel particularly "positively assertive. It feels more like stating the obvious or, occasionally, advancing a proposition in the manner of "let's run it up the flagpole and see if anyone salutes." This criticism has been leveled at me before, and I was as equally helpless to deal with it then as I am now. ***Sigh***

The quality of disagreeing violently with one's friends while remaining friends is far more common than it appears to be, I assure you. Local (club) fandoms--particularly if they contain any element of intellectual discourse--couldn't survive without it. I speculate that this quality was driven underground for awhile because of the peculiar historical development of fanzine fandom here. I proceed to advance a hypothesis at which Gary Farber and the Nielsen Haydens jump up and down and foam at the mouth. We will glance, for a moment to the west (from your location) and the north (from mine) and nod agreeably: We had quite a serious decline in genzine publishing about ten years ago, you know. I speculate that the apas and perzines dominating the field in the mid-70's changed completely the character of subsequent fanzines. Things began to get a little stickily personal and "sensitive" for awhile (gross oversimplification, of course). Not conducive to the more robust forms of social discourse. But I suspect that we're coming out of this phase.

Like many of your correspondents I regard Heinlein's books from Podkayne of Mars onwards as failures, with the exception of The Moon Is A

Harsh Mistress. In one of the earlier Quodlibets (not in front of me because I'm typing this at the office; please excuse any minor lapses of memory) you said something to the effect that people couldn't cope properly with Heinlein's later books because he was writing novels whereas they were accustomed to reading romances (dividing novels from romances in the way Wells, for example did). This doesn't convince.

Not surprising, as that's not what I said. What I said (among other things developing the point) was that the possibility was suggested by the fact that most of the criticisms of TEFL and I Will Fear No Evil I have heard were more properly general criticisms of the novel genre than of the works themselves. I don't recall offhand how Wells outlined the difference between novel and romance, but the operating definition I use, derived from English Litcrit, as taught by the Blessed PMLA, collapses into something like "a novel is a long fictional work that concentrates on individual psychology and internal life, rather than on color and adventure, as the romance does." This is why I referred to his work since Starship Troopers as a "mixed bag." Once again, I was synthesizing perhaps a couple of hundred conversations I have had over the last seven or eight years, mostly with American readers, and mostly at sf conventions and in local (Phoenix) fandom.

Perhaps we are overloaded with people who don't appreciate novels here. Or perhaps my experience is unique and insufficient to draw conclusions from--but I have no information on that point. In any case, I've met an amazing number of people who don't seem to be able easily to make the leap from romance to novel genre.

The critical backlash against Heinlein started, I think, in Britain, and it started among critics who did indeed read novels--more than they read sf--and thought Heinlein was writing rather bad novels. I'm inclined to the same view, largely because with occasional exceptions I could never believe that human beings existed who behaved the way and spoke the way Heinlein portrays them as behaving and speaking. All fictional characters represent in some way what is going on in the author's head, but Heinlein's characters in recent work lack even a patina of novelistic believability which would make me believe in them as anything other than projections of the Heinlein psyche and make them work dramatically in a novel. And the trouble with Heinlein's psyche, as represented in his recent novels, is that it's garrulous, immature, repetitive, and bloody boring. If Lazarus Long was standing next to me in the bar I would quickly

make my excuses and leave. (This is nothing to do with his views, by the way. One of my favourite writers is Evelyn Waugh, whose worldview, as expressed in his novels, is far more distasteful to me than Heinlein's. However, Waugh writes brilliantly, creates real characters, and is funny.) I think it can be seriously argued that Heinlein's recent novels are, objectively, failures, because they do bore so many readers. It's fine using fiction for the presentation of iconoclastic ideas, but if many of them figuratively leave the room before you've finished, then you haven't done it very well (no matter that a few are still hanging on your every word).

Hmmm. Several points. First, regrettably, there are people around who act and react just like Heinlein characters. *sigh* Usually they are far less likeable when one meets them in person than when one meets them in fiction.

The failure or success of the works as to form is susceptible to general analysis. The question is arguable, certainly. I found Time Enough For Love completely satisfactory as to form, blending original structures (the overall architecture of the book) with neatly-turned pre-existing forms--particularly the "Tale of the Adopted Daughter" and the short novel "Da Capo" which forms the last two hundred pages of the book. One could analyze the others in detail, but I suspect that such failures as there are are not attributable to form.

It is also arguable that Heinlein is, on net, boring the hell out of his readership. Out of you and others, perhaps, and occasionally me, too. But his books--his new books--are selling like umbrellas in November, and not entirely on the strength of his juveniles, either. The sf fan, or even the "reader" as fans knew him ten years ago, is becoming a vanishingly small fraction of Heinlein's readership. So, with all his preciousness and Rimmer-esques, he seems to be reaching a bigger audience than ever. We old farts may mumble into our cups as much as we like; Heinlein is getting too much positive reinforcement for anyone reasonably to expect him to change.

Sigh It's a mystery.

[From a later letter]: Who is reading Heinlein these days? It's an interesting question, and one to which I honestly do not know the answer. Of course it would be quite possible for a writer to be an enormous bestseller without impinging at all upon the regular sf readership. Once upon a time it was possible to argue that he was trading on past success...but when the past success includes, as it does now, all the Heinlein novels most of the critics in the sf community dislike, we have to revise that. Clearly there is still an audience, if not precisely the same one as before. There again, all the people who

complain about recent Heinlein still do tend to buy his books, because of the curious fascination--unparalleled I think in sf--people have for the shape of his career, as though in its curve we could read something of wider significance. But it is significant, I think, that in a decade (the 70s) when his fellows in the "big three"--Asimov and Clarke--could pick up Hugos and Nebulas simply as rewards for still publishing in some cases, RAH received nothing, and only TEFL, I think, was even nominated. Given their obviously wide readerships the low regard for his other books isn't confined to a few vociferous critics; it seems to be general in sf fandom. (For myself, I have reached the point where there are probably hundreds of novels--few of them sf, admittedly--which I would rather read than Friday... and yet the copy sits there, exerting an awful fascination).

I suppose that Heinlein is partly benefitting from the readership explosion among otherwise mundanes since Star Wars, and partly being carried on his laurels. By this I mean that a gigantic section of the reading public apparently approves of just those silly, romantic notions that sf readers have been finding so distasteful. In a market where Robert Rimmer can be a bestselling author for twenty years, Stranger in a Strange Land has influenced thousands of lives for well and ill. A tougher, more intellectual equivalent of the romance novel, perhaps. In an increasingly atomistic society, Heinlein's sense of "community" (or "family," if you prefer to read it that way) is undoubtedly appealing. Then, again, Heinlein's readership basically grew up with the baby boom, and he has, to some extent, "trained" them to his methodology. I'm not at all sure that dislike of Heinlein's recent work is as universal in the sf community as is assumed. Heinlein, as you say, provides an almost unique test case for the dynamics of readership in fandom, and the question aches for hard data collection, for which no mechanism exists. One thing occurs to me that might be relevant: fandom--or at least the vocal part of the magazine readership--has for nearly a generation (a real one, not a "fannish" one) had a disproportionate influence on the shape of sf. But we are near the end of the wave that started in the forties of writers who came out of the sf-reading public, trained in the conventions of the field and highly influenced--incestuously influenced, at times--by the contents of the magazines. As the magazines have not held onto their market share, their influence is dropping, and the only mechanism left for fandom to express its preferences is the annual system of awards. As the awards controversy makes clear, fandom qua fandom has increasingly little voice even in those.

But anyway--if you print this letter you will doubtless proceed to prove how wrongheaded I am in all this.

Does this count?

Don't buy Hubbard's novel on any account, but if you want a laugh read the preface in a bookshop and discover just what a central figure Hubbard was to the development of modern sf. It must be true, because Ron says so.

Feh. I just heard a radio ad for that book. They must be getting desperate.

Look forward to further issues. More food and less Heinlein!

Malcolm Edwards

You should be pleased with no. 17, then, when it arrives. Actually, the readers dictate what shows up in Quodlibet. I generally just migrate along with the turbulence--which is a newspeak version of "go with the flow."

rich brown

1632 19th St. NW, No. 2
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Bill,

While the humor in the Silverberg review in Fanthology '81

may not be readily apparent, it's something which, as an anarchist, you should be in a particularly advantageous position to appreciate--once someone provides the original context necessary to understand it. The fanzine in which the review was originally published was supposed to be devoted to "killer" sf reviews. While this was a stricture which came from the editor of the fanzine, rather than a law set down by a state, the piece itself is a rather witty example of how to follow the exact letter of a Guiding Principal (read: law or stricture) while ignoring and confounding its intent. The Agberg book which is "reviewed" and criticized so devastatingly does not exist; hence, while I grant you these criticisms might be applied to other works by Silverberg, the result in this review is a piece of unstinting praise for Lord Valentine's Castle (the standard against which the non-existent work was judged and found to be so terribly wanting).

If you say so.

"...'fannish' (whatever that is)..." It seemed to me, upon first reading that line, I should be able to explain what fannishness is, although I'm not so sure I can. There used to be a simple distinction between "sercon" and "fannish" attitudes--the former held rigidly to the view that the "purpose" of fandom was to forward the goal of assuring sf's place in Literature, the latter that fandom had no particular purpose beyond being a nice place in which to make friends with like-minded individuals capable of talking about anything under this or any other sun. Sercon fans take sf, and themselves, too

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seriously; fannish fans find this amusing and generally attempt to puncture pretentiousness. Essentially, a sense of Purpose vs. a sense of humor, or even FIAWOL vs. FIJAGDH.

I can hear Gary Farber and Patrick Hayden begin to foam at the mouth.

But these once simple differences have become somewhat more complex in present-day fandom. Charles Burbee's line, "Anything two fans do together is fannish" is of some help--although one fan may do something fannish, too, so it's not so easily summed up.

So, by way of example, let's take some possible responses to your colophon line, "Death to Francis Towner Laney!"

Someone who was sercon in the traditional sense would want to know what that had to do with science fiction.

Someone sercon in a more modern way might take the line entirely seriously and observe (with some condescension) how pointless it is to wish death on someone who died nearly a quarter of a century ago.

A fan historian, who might be serious but not sercon, and perhaps thus borderline fannish, might point out that Laney died in what was dubbed "The Year of the Jackpot"--1958. Cyril Kornbluth and Henry Kuttner both died in that year--Kuttner, strangely enough, having predicted the year of his death ten years earlier in a tongue-in-cheek piece he had written for a fanzine. Several prominent fanzine fans (other than Laney) also died in 1958--Kent Moomaw, Bill Courval and Vernon McCain--the two former by their own hand; Moomaw slit his throat and both wrists in a park in Cincinnati when he learned he was 1-A, Courval put a bullet through his head after finishing Army basic. Thus, the year of the jackpot.

Finally, a fannish response to the line might be to make a humorous and/or esoteric allusion in mentioning it, e.g., perhaps point out that, even considering that your expressed wish has been granted, it would nonetheless fail to deprive Laney of his membership in LASFS. (One of the lines about LASFS for which Laney is and was famous, "Death will not release you," referred to the fact that LASFS never removed anyone from their membership list for any reason whatsoever--and thus, in the 1940's, were able to claim "500 members." In the late '50s/early '60s, when I was a member, it was Quite the Thing for those in the LASFS to allude to how death would not release them--at least until Ernie Wheatley, the famed "doormouse" of LASFS, lifted his head from a short nap as someone was saying that to add the ultimate rejoinder, "Even if you die!"

They get more garrulous as they get more fannish, is that it?

Incidentally, LASFS actually has removed

some four or five people from their rolls—the most recent being Dave Klaus, he of the unhappy memory. This past summer, before Westercon. For details, see File 770, #33.

It might help you to form a better understanding if I were to point out that much of what you seem to be responding to in a positive fashion in Teresa's writing is its fannishness. And your own line about your attempts to toss off that kind of sparkle—"Spectacle of Tinker Bell as played by the Goodrich Blimp."--certainly strikes me as fannish. You put down, in a humorous way, what might otherwise be assumed to be your own pretension in the matter of what is or is not fannish.

If you have not yet purchased and read Warhoon 28, I would suggest you do so. It seems unlikely that, after having read it, you would have any confusion whatsoever about fannishness. You might agree with it or disagree with it, but you would have no confusion.

***Ahem* he said, clearing his throat. I have a fair extensional grasp of fannishness already, thank you. That was *humor* arr-arr. One can't be a reasonably active fan for eleven or twelve years without picking that up--and you must remember that Tim Kyger and I were Patrick Nielsen Hayden's and Teresa Nielsen Hayden's earliest Fannish Mentors. And after awhile, they got out into the Great Wide World and I started learning from them, instead.**

I think what I'm primarily responding to in Teresa's writing (and conversation) is its qualities of liveliness and invention. Those qualities pre-existed her entrance into fandom, as is evidenced by the few non-formal pieces of her pre-1975 writing I've seen, and became a part of her fannish "persona" very rapidly, partly because Tim and I, and later Patrick, encouraged it--but mostly because that's simply the way she is. See my tendrils? (waggle, waggle).

When I think about such things (not often), I use a kind of inchoate sense that fannishness is a quality permeating one's life, coloring one's attitudes. If forced to the wall for a definition, I give out with the fannish/sercon distinction that "sercon" is oriented to the literature; "fannish" is oriented to the subculture. A poor thing, but mine own. If pressed further, I have to point to it and say "that's what I mean." But I certainly do not try to identify "fannish" with "humorous." There is just too damned much fine fannish stuff going around these days that is not remotely humorous--vide your own article in Boonfark 7, and Chris Atkinson's "Life Among the Looneys" in Tappen. As it happens, I've taken this subject up in the Quodlibetal editorial this issue (and probably bludgeoned it to death in the process. Aren't literary conceits wonderful?).

And part of the problem in coming up with any

fine-tuned definition of fannishness is that "fannish" may or may not (depending on the intent of the user) be a shortening of "trufannish." I am a trufan; I know this because I am able to tell, at a mere glance, if a fanzine contains a mention of my name [you have to glance at it? I've intuited that just from the vibrations thrumming through the envelope...], can spot another trufan at a distance of 150 yards simply by his or her "aura," and can turn the rustiest of mimeographs into the enchanted duplicator with a simple laying-on of hands--to say nothing, of course, of various other trufannish Powers which the Ancients Possessed. We trufen, you know, really are a Breed Apart. Slannish hl-Q types, I assure you. And I'm the queen of Moravia...

And I have seen the Eyetracks (Fnord).

[From a later letter]: Unk. My apologies for having taken so plonkingly to the humor in your statement about what "fannish" is. I think I have a fairly good sense of humor, most of the time, but I will be the first to admit that I can be slow on the uptake....Note, too, how I have sometimes taken humorous exception to places where I have felt you were being "slow on the uptake"--I'm sure you know, in psychological terms, that this is known as "projection." It's the basis for much criticism, I think--seeing one's own faults in others...Well, so much for two-bit self-analysis.

Not to tell you what your fanzine is "about"--a bit too presumptuous, that--but the discussion you and I have been having there on Heinlein is "stfnal"--unless you're prepared to contend Heinlein is really writing Regency Romances? [Who, me?] I think your approach to the topic is essentially fannish and open-ended, and certainly none of the issues I've seen has been devoted entirely to that topic--but some discussions of sf has been in each of them, if only your letter-writers recommending a book or movie to read or see (or not to read or see, as the case may be.)

Perhaps that's because I don't think of "fannish" as being anything "special." I'm a somewhat lit'ry kinda guy, you see, and Quodlibet (my sections of it, rather than my readers') reflects just everything and anything that catches my fleeting fancy. I suppose, he said reluctantly, Quodlibet's real model is Herb Caen (he said with a delicate shudder). There you have my confessio.

I tend to think of those sercon-fannish distinctions as being historical usages. It seems to me that "sercon" has frozen its usage, so that one refers to someone as "sercon" only if he draws attention to himself as being excessively taken with the notion that SF Can Make A Difference. So that one uses the term to refer to a recurring type defined historically. On the

other hand, it seems to me that "fannish" or "faanish" is being used to denote a progressed phenomenon, something new: the linkage of a new generation of fans to older ideals, standards, and methods. So the terms are no longer sufficiently commensurate that they can be contrasted in this way.

[From a still later letter...] The more I think about it, the more I think you're entirely right and I was entirely wrong in what we have been saying about "sercon" vs. "fannish." You hit the nail on the head, if I might be allowed that cliché, when you say "...one refers to someone as 'sercon' only if he draws attention to himself as being excessively taken with the notion that SF Can Make A Difference."

Yes. Absolutely. And of course the words have changed meanings from time to time, largely due to the shift in historical perspective but also having to do with the imprecision with which they have been used--my own misuse in this case being a prime example.

If there is a real and substantial difference which indicates whether one is sercon or fannish, it is of course as you imply--a matter of attitude, rather than subject-matter. Some of the best, or at least most outstanding "serious" discussion of sf has taken place in fannish fanzines--Willis' "The Harp That Once or Twice," which was Quandry's most popular feature, was largely about fans and fandom and fannish doings but roughly a third of it (I noticed via the subject index in the contents page of Warhoon 28) was about sf and sf topics.

Too, Willis' Hyphen, which is often cited as one of the few fannish fanzines which can be compared favorably with Quandry, was where damon knight wrote the essays which eventually came to comprise In Search of Wonder. And James Blish, writing under the name of William Atheling, Jr., in Skyhook and Warhoon, did the same for his Issues at Hand and More Issues at Hand.

I was completely wrong to dub your serious (but not sercon) interchange with me on Heinlein as "sercon." Good grief. Makes me wish I could slip back in time and sock myself over the head before I could say anything so foolish. But at least until I can build a time-machine out of old paper clips and discarded hairpins, accept my apology.

Hmmm. I've been mulling over recently the ticklish problem of what makes "fannish writing" fannish. I recently was so incautious as to commend to Malcolm Edwards and (Ghu help me!) D. West Orwell's Down and Out in Paris and London as a mundane example of what fan-writing ought to be (in my books)--entertaining anecdotes told in a lively and moving or amusing manner. The problem is, though--when does

something stop being fanwriting and start being just writing. Chris Atkinson raised the same issue in Warhoon 30, and I confess her conundrums have left me without, as yet, a solution to the puzzling problem. A paradox, a paradox, a most ingenious paradox. I suspect that, in the end, it doesn't really matter.

Hubbard's Battlefield Earth is new. You've no doubt heard that it was being advertised on a billboard in Chicago at the time of ChiCon IV. Hubbard sold his share (or whatever it was) in Scientology to the number two man a couple of years ago. Reportedly got an advance of over \$1 million for Battlefield Earth. I've heard that, while technically new, it's a rather typical Hubbard thud-and-blunder yarn. Like you, I have no real interest in finding out whether or not that is the case.

One is moved to mixed emotions--hoping on the one hand that the publisher loses his shorts, and hoping on the other that this failure doesn't further constrict the already shrinking sf market. A great many people have told me recently that the market for novels is stagnating because of the backlog acquired by a publishing company which has established a virtual monopoly in sf publishing. *sigh*

You're right--I'm not all that familiar with Tarot symbology [referring to rich's loc and response in Quodlibet 17]. I've had two Tarot "readings" done for me and both times they prophesized/revealed something sinister or bad was about to happen--and they both came true. Naturally, I'm a bit leery. Also naturally, I'm well aware things like this are sometimes self-fulfilling, but even with that realization, and even though I strove mightily not to let it happen, and even though I was skeptical about the whole subject to begin with, I was unable to exercise any control over what eventually transpired. A bit uncomfortable-making, to say the least.

So let me toss my yarrow sticks (or coins, when I'm lazy) and read the I Ching. "The Superior Man will remain firm and correct." I can live with that.

And, as far as that goes, I know a lady who casts a pretty good horoscope, too, going step by step through her books (as she has shown me a few times)--not "intuitively" a la Stranger, but showing you the reasoning behind it and then letting you read the book for yourself. Still, as they say, "the stars foretell, they do not compel."

I know the "science" upon which astrology is based is, if not absurd, at least based on an incomplete cosmology. But I went through the same steps using her time and date of birth, quite confident that I would easily be able to identify with that section as easily as I had my

own. But I really couldn't. I could see how most of them applied to her, but couldn't believe any of them about myself--even with my hands over my eyes and both eyes shut real tight.

You should have conducted a double-blind. That would have been interesting...

I used to throw I Ching. The practice of meditating on the hexagrams and changes is very fruitful. I do prefer Tarot, however, for the greater wealth of detail available, and, of course, the symbology is somewhat easier to work with. I have a theory that it is the practitioner working the oracles, not the oracles themselves, and the oracle is simply a window one can look through into one's own psyche. So the "science" or "method" of any oracle is fundamentally irrelevant. I have some small talent for oracles--I've given some readings that amaze me and knock the socks off the querants. I rarely fail to get a coherent reading, even though I prefer to work without knowing the question involved.

Although I am Apollonian as all get out and rationalist to the core, I was deeply and personally affected by The Bacchae and take the message seriously. And both Aristotle and Aquinas, properly read (My Heroes, as if you couldn't tell), impel one to confrontation of Mystery, the inchoate, ineffable, and ineluctable, by the very clarity of their reasoning.

"...Heinlein said he put the early ms of Stranger...aside in 1950 or 1951 because he couldn't see a market for it. I fail, myself, to see how the publishing climate was so much more improved in 1960, but this may be myopia on my part, and Heinlein was, after all, there." (Quodlibet 17, page 6). Well, I was there too and I believe I understand something of Heinlein's reasoning. I recall reading the Grove Press edition of Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer in late 1958; I believe it was about a year old. (That U.S. edition of it, I mean). Anyway, it was Miller's book which led to the Supreme Court decision on obscenity with which we live today. Prior to that decision, it was an entirely different bucket of worms; publishers were not all moral cowards but they would prefer not to rock any boats. The Post Office then felt it was their business, not merely to deliver the mail, but to read it--and I don't doubt that more than one publisher went under because the P.O. decided they were sending obscenity through the mails. Well, to someone who wasn't there at the time, I can just imagine your credulity. And "obscenity" was not, you know, simply four-letter words; at the time, virtually any attempt to deal with or depict sex realistically could get a book banned in Boston--and any number of other places as well.

Of course--how could I have forgotten the

Grove Press flap...Miller, Kerouac's Duluoz stories, "Howl," Peyton Place. You're right, of course. The adult publishing climate was much changed. Not the juvenile market, and not so much, yet. The hot, new sf writers of the late '50s were Anderson, Bester, Budrys, and Dickson. Not much graphic sex in that group.

As to how this relates to Heinlein, and to sf, note his (I believe) only previous treatment of sex--in Revolt in 2100. It's implied that the protagonist's girlfriend was expected to have sex with the Prophet, but that's not what I'm talking about--there is an actual sex scene there, although it takes place entirely off stage ("Zeke" is clearly having sex with that girl on the rock in that underground pool, but you don't get to see it). At the time, this was a very risky--and also, possibly, risqué--thing for a mainstream book to attempt to do, regardless of its literary merit, to say nothing of an sf book. I suspect Heinlein "got away with it" for a number of reasons. I probably would miss some but I'll take a stab at what may have been the major ones: (a) Philip Jose Farmer had already published a highly acclaimed sf book which had used sex for legitimate sfnal purpose (but try reading The Lovers today--by our standards it's extremely mild) [Oh, I don't know...all that *heavy* Freudian symbolism is still pretty steamy if you're young and impressionable...], (b) Heinlein was already the "dean" of sf writers, and his publishers no doubt felt they either had to stand the huff or lose him, and (c) the scene does, after all, take place off-stage.

Hmmm. I don't think so. If you look back to the magazine fiction (mainstream) of the 1930's, to which Heinlein (and Campbell) was appealing as a standard, you'll find a lot of that offstage sex. And "If This Goes On" is hardly Heinlein's first or only such treatment, although it does seem, as I ransack the dusty memory vaults, that it may be the only scene in which The Act was happening during the scene. Incidentally, Maggie also helps the protagonist over his crush on Judith That Way. But there is a certain amount of normal sexuality between unmarried adults in earlier or contemporary works. What, for example, do you suppose the two "scientists" of "Let There Be Light" were doing in their sporadic off hours, hmm? I'm trying to recall how clearly Heinlein brought out the sexual relationship between the lead characters of Beyond This Horizon, but it's certain they weren't using artificial insemination. Oh, what details sift through the sieve of memory--and I'm at work, so I can't look any of the information up. Anyway, I believe (how hesitantly I advance the proposition!) that Revolt in 2100 was first printed by one of the "specialty presses" under not quite so strict a surveillance

as the major houses. Gnome Press, perhaps? Or one of the others? I'd better shut my mouth before the real [ex] aficionados rend me to bloody bits...In any case, the novelettes and stories belong to the Astounding of an even earlier period.

Well, as I say, the Grove Press edition of Tropic of Cancer changed all that--at least in the mainstream--sometime in the late 1950's. It took awhile for those changes to trickle into the sf field, but they were certainly there by 1960. And, of course, Michael Valentine Smith's sexual awakening is central and of paramount importance to Stranger. Even though there are no four-letter words in it, and the sex scenes which are there are not graphic, there's not the least doubt in my mind that Stranger would have been banned in the early '50's, and that the publishing climate really had changed "that much" by the early '60s.

I think you're right.

I have seldom faulted your prose or choice of words, but a sentence in your Thanksgiving preparations caught me a little off guard. "Beat four eggs with a cup of sherry." I know you're sending this out to fans, i.e., slans through and through, most of whom probably have IQs of 172+. But keep in mind, Bill, that you also have an occasional "dunce" on your mailing list such as myself who might take something like that literally and end up splashing sherry all over himself while trying to bash those eggs with that cup. Fortunately, I do very little cooking myself. The relatively few individuals who have survived a meal prepared by me should be able to explain, possibly even in graphic detail, why this might be so. And if you found that description to surpass the bounds even of the willingness of an sf fan to suspend disbelief, I would just point to my stove; I have been led to believe that both Nicaragua and Guatemala make slightly larger postage stamps.

By gum, I did say "beat four or five eggs with a cup of sherry." I must remember to be more careful. I have, after all, a Responsibility to the World. I mean, who needs another Green Slime running around DC? Which reminds me that I recently cleaned out the domestic refrigerator and found a literal slime mold heaving in the bottom. Yick. It was one of those refrigerators thoughtfully provided with a drainage hole which is supposed to be hooked up to a drainpipe leading to a drain. Unfortunately, there are very few American homes with kitchen drains built to take the refrigerator's pipe. Someone, some time ago, plugged up the drain hole because the refrigerator, often opened in a household of four, would p/e/ leak on the kitchen floor. I shuddered, not so delicately, scooped out the mess, all the while images from The Blob and

The Green Slime running through my head, and carefully unplugged the drain. We now have an incontinent refrigerator again, but we do not share the refrigerator with other living things.
rich brown

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Dear Bill,
[Referring to the piece
on "Glassworks" in
Quodlibet 16]

In easy retrospect, it's obvious that Glass would not be the man to try you with; for a classicist of your tastes he's apt to be too lush, particularly on Glassworks. Steve Reich, a one-time student of philosophy at Cornell, is likelier to be your style of composer, though after your remarks in Quodlibet 16, I'd be shy of making any more such musical recommendations.

For you see you hear, rather, in terms foreign to me. The comment about the "good little etude carried to ridiculous lengths" leads me to wonder exactly what you understand is going on in this music. At least, in contrasting "Floe" with Sibelius' 5th, your point about the swelling countertheme" is astonishing when applied to the Glass piece.

A triadic figure is common to both. In the Sibelius 5th Symphony it appears as the climax to the allegro molto, the final movement. In "Floe" is of a wholly different order, comprising the entire content. By paring it down to an ostinato, Glass allows it to develop a rarified momentum, which to my ears thus makes the quotation his own. Its suppleness is in the inexorability of the ostinato, that it's in drawnout isolation. Though stratified, the stress varies on each repetition. Relentless, wavering reiterations give this piece its feeling of a burnless skinmelt into mind; there's a conflict of coherence versus persistent repetition here resolved in the elucidation of a brief utterance, a holophon. So here the redundancy (you think overblown) is no less than the soul of this new music's understanding.

To add further contrast, I think Elliot Carter's "Variations for Orchestra" is a cold piece, a contorted exercise in postserial decapitation.

Ex absurdo sequitor quodlibet, perhaps. It aint easy discussing music, especially when apparent how little objectivity is involved. J/e/d/d/u/s/e J'excuse.

Be seeing you.

Steven Black

Let's see. First, please do not cease to recommend. Some recommendations I will enjoy much more than others. But I did not say I didn't enjoy "Glassworks," Steven, only that I thought it overdeveloped as regards its materials and methods. I prove my

esthetic sense against that of Glass, but is one not supposed to do that--to interact actively with the music? And in any case, my own esthetic sense is the only one I have available for comparison.

I quite agree that Carter's "Variations" is cold. Technique, regnant, can be nothing else. My point, exactly.

I think, though, that I should back out of that comment about "Glassworks" being more a conceptual etude than music qua music. Mulling over your comments, I realized that, whether or

not I responded to it musically, "Glassworks" was music by the criteria I use, and not a technical exercise primarily. One can, of course, look at it or any other work that way, but, then, one is passing by the essential quality of the work. I think I simply got lost in the subsidiary, technical issues and failed to back off and look at the esthetic experience at the end. That is, I went off on a mental fugue that was only distantly related to the work itself. I try to avoid doing that, for obvious reasons, but sometimes fail.

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL--WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In the thirteenth century, when Scholasticism was a vital, intellectual force, the universities celebrated each of the most important of the high, holy days with a series of debates among the doctors and masters, who posed subtle, theological questions, called "quodlibets," for argument. Frequently, these "quodlibetal questions" would be transcribed by the answering doctor and later published. The term translates roughly as "what [one] pleases" or "at will." From the examples I have seen, those professors must have been made of stern stuff, indeed, to take pleasure in the difficulties of quodlibetal questions.

Alternatively, a quodlibet is a whimsical combination of familiar melodies or texts. The quodlibet was a popular musical form of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, antedating but serving the same purpose as the operatic paraphrases of the nineteenth century. The quodlibet has all but disappeared from contemporary music--or all muzak is quodlibetal. You may take your pick.

I recently ran across a passage which amplifies the explanation of the word. It is from Anthony Kenny's very short introduction to St. Thomas' philosophical thought titled simply Aquinas: "The heart of the [University of] Paris education [in the thirteenth century] was the course of lectures. On most days the Professor would lecture from six o'clock in the morning until after eight; the Bachelor would then lecture on the Sentences [of Peter Lombard, the rhetorical and theological text of the Middle Ages] from nine until shortly before noon. On special days the Professor would preside at formal disputations on topics of his choice: a problem was raised and conflicting opinions were stated and argued; the Bachelor had to respond to arguments raised by the audience; and finally judgment was given by the Master. During Lent and Advent, instead of these "Quaestiones Disputatae" on set topics, there were more wide-ranging, impromptu discussions, "Quaestiones Quodlibetales," in which any member of the audience could raise a question on any topic.... [For both Disputed and Quodlibetal Questions], each question is itself a set of many individual disputations or "articles"....To read the text of the article aloud takes about half an hour: if our editions are anything like a verbatim report of the original proceedings, the entire disputation ["On Truth"] must have lasted about five hours." Actually, the published disputations were extensively revised and polished for publication, so the texts bear the same resemblance to the actual proceeding as do the legal speeches of Cicero and Demosthenes; they probably bear little relationship, organizational or rhetorical, to the verbal disputes. Very frequently, I understand, questions were proposed one day, and the disputes were argued the next, allowing the Master time to go over the arguments and assign his students work on the subject.

Actually, Quodlibet is named for the Latin meaning of the term: "what he wishes." I first ran into the term while researching the obscure byways in J.S. Bach's music, as he did a number of musical quodlibets. And several years later, I started looking into Scholastic philosophy and so encountered the term a second time. As Quodlibet is usually a monthly magazine, of about twelve pages, containing a heterogeneous and sometimes heterogenous grouping of materials and thoughts that catch my fancy, it seems an apt, descriptive title for the zine.