

I've been smitten by guilty conscience of late, and it's time to make confiteor. Remember all those nasty things I said in 18 about mean ol' Ted White? Well, appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, I have the highest regard for Ted's work--and I mean virtually all his work as a tireless laborer in our co-op vinyards. Even in the article I was attacking I found a great deal to be admired and only two or three points--quite minor, really--that struck me as being the teensiest bit...well, shall we say "silly"?

I have been "called" on those points by rich brown, in the loccol thish, and this has given me an opportunity to expand on and define my specific objections. You can decide for yourself how silly those few points may or may not be.

As for the rest of the article, I'd like to adopt it enthusiastically.

So, I shot my mouth off. Show me the person who doesn't put foot in mouth occasionally, and I'll show you a catatonic quadriplegic...which I am not, and Ted White is certainly not.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to Set the Record Straight--and specifically pleased that the occasion has risen so soon.

A great deal of Ted's fanac recently has been of the ou sont les nieges d'antan variety, and while I personally find the works and days of our fancestors interesting, I can also sympathise with the beknighted soul who said, in Holier Than Thou 15, that he's had just about enough of Towner Hall for one lifetime, thank you. Still, I incline to encourage this piling up of heavenly treasures that moth and sulphuric acid--at least--do corrupt. Someone, someday is going to find them useful...who knows: maybe even MMW.

But there is also a strain of theoretical work running through Ted's corpus--some parts flawed, while others--

Take the article "Sixth Fandom Nol-Pressed" in HTT 15. It started out as a loc challenging the documentation of Marty Cantor's editorial in 14. Cantor had caught the "Sixth Fandom Fandom" bug and was bloated to five times his normal size. The etiology of the disease developed by a concatenation from various bizarre statements in the by-now infamous "Sixth Fandom Fandom" Flap--"63F" hereafter.

I almost passed the piece over, as I consider the 63F one of our more idiotic intellectual excesses of the last few years. Onward, then, to the "Loc Ness Monster" and the meat of the issue--a loccol discussion of U.S. cultural and economic imperialism as it affects Canada. The spectacle of faned and faithful sidekick belaboring a somewhat dense letterhack with pigges' bladders palled after a few

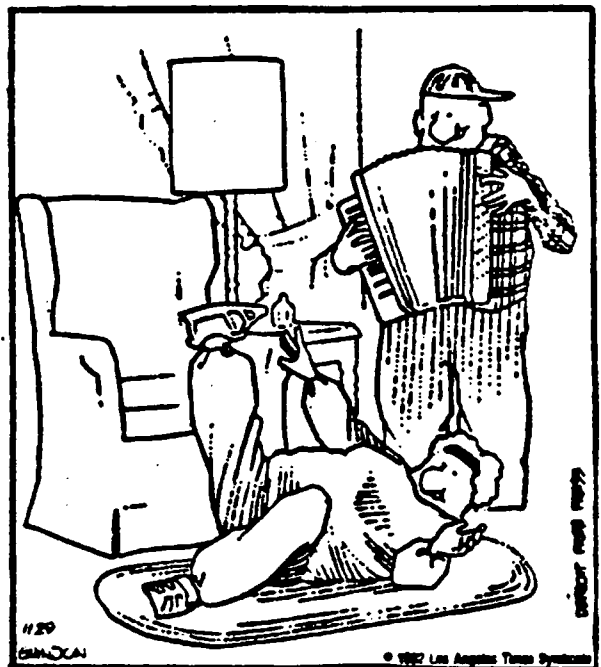
sentences, and I turned back to the one remaining piece I had reason to hope might escape the aura of semi-literacy with which Cantor invests everything he touches.

Goshwow, did I hit a jackpot.

Passing lightly over the 63F Ted wrote some lines whose sentiment I hope I will someday have occasion to echo: "We [Bergeron and White] lived through Sixth Fandom...[we] feel no Golden Nostalgia for Sixth Fandom. Rather, we regard it as part of our (fannish) lives, part of the total fabric of fandom.

"We do not see fandom as a series of unconnected eras, each populated by its own 'generation,' and none communicating with any of the others. We do not see ourselves as obsolete, members of a Dead Fandom, no longer allowed to speak or act in This Fandom. We see ourselves as fans, purely and simply, who have been active in fandom for a period of thirty years or more. We are aware of the bonds which connect us to our fancestors, some of whom, like Tucker and Widner (to name only two) still Walk Among Us. And we have become friends with fans of subsequent generations in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, operating on the assumption that we're all fans here."

GUINDON



QUODLIBET 20

Just because you do aerobics doesn't mean you have to suffer the music.

QUODLIBET 20 is brought to you on an irregular and entirely whimsical basis by Bill Patterson, 537 Jones Street, No. 9943, San Francisco, California 94102. Available for locs, trades, or contribution only. As this constitutes editorial whim, these means are the only way of getting Quodlibet. As a helpful hint, I go through my mailing list about every third issue. Begun March 2, 1983.

Blowing of nose. Wiping of tear. Kinda inspiring. On the other hand, perhaps I ought to wish I don't have occasion to echo those sentiments. There's more.

Ted then takes up a supposition I've flirted with, myself, from time to time--the notion that the sweep apas made in fanzine fandom starting about ten years ago has damaged--or at least changed the character of--fanzine fandom, specifically by removing the examples of quality fanwriting that had served as apparent "standards," always undefined, against which one might measure his own work: "our earliest attempts weren't so great, but with the knowledge of what could be done, we were not content to excuse ourselves with the explanation that we simply weren't the Ghods that Willis, Burbee, et al. were and thus couldn't be expected to meet their high standards in our work....As far as I'm concerned, most of the mumbling and grumbling about Sixth Fandom and Sixth Fandom Standards is simply the work of those fans who have such low standards or so little confidence in their ability to meet higher standards that anyone who holds higher standards is seen as a threat.... [S]ocializing agreeably in print is the bottom rung, the starting place in written fanac, not the be-all and end-all of fanning."

Here-here.

The short section that follows contains a very delicate skirting about the edges of what prosodic standards--not of content, but of prosody--Ted might be talking about. He approaches the subject mostly in terms of generalities: "...clumsy writers, writers who write hastily and without subsequent correction, writers who betray themselves as semi-literate with their misuse of language, or construct their pieces out of logical non-sequiturs, can write anything badly. When called to task for their failures, they can point to the content of their work as 'proof' that they were criticised solely because they 'wrote about the wrong thing.' Such squawks of self-justification can become confused with legitimate complaints....They can and should be ignored."

And that about says it, doesn't it? Works of any stripe that make themselves conspicuous by hasty or inelegant writing give their authors no recourse, because there is no excuse for inattention to the basics--and I'm not talking about refining one's prose to a gem-like glitter, but merely the basics: Agreement. Parallelism. Clear sentence structures. Logical coherence. The basics.

Sigh.

The thing I begin to wonder is why this is at issue at all? Does anyone feel that he is magically exempted from basic literacy in fanwriting? Possibly. I've known a few

people who seemed to doubt that there was such a thing.

I ran across a curiosity, recently, in an 18th Century (1794) gothic by Matthew Lewis--The Monk. The book is teddibly, teddibly 18th Century, rambling and dipping at will into divers, unrelated subjects between bouts with ghaisties and ghoulies and things that go shriek in the night. If you've read John Barth's The Sot-Weed Factor, you've had a taste of it.

At one point, the protagonist-of-the-moment sees that his squire has tried his hand at verse. When he mildly criticizes the form and scansion, the squire excuses himself: "All this is true, segnor; but you should consider that I only write for pleasure." Quotha the P-o-t-m: "Your defects are the less excuseable. Their incorrectness may be forgiven, who work for money, who are obliged to complete a given task in a given time, and are paid according to the bulk, not value of their productions. But in those whom no necessity forces to turn author, who merely write for fame and have full leisure to polish their compositions, faults are unpardonable, and merit the sharpest arrows of criticism."

Ha! Take that! Ecrasez l'infame!

Well, returning from my own digression to the Subject At Hand, I think Ted has done a foin thing here in writing "fini" to the 63F. Of course, Marty's correspondents don't know that, yet.

Well, *cough-cough*, I re-e-e-e-e-ally wanted to keep this to six pages, but I've received an embarras de richesses of locs. Confused as well as confusing. Hmm. Well, I think I don't have to worry about Scouter's letter accusing me of censoring him because he didn't find his loc in 18. Not only is it quite scatological, but it quotes extensively from his own poetry, an offense too egregious to foist on an unsuspecting public. If he were to compare the production dates of the fmzs, he would see that his loc (dated 2/5/83) couldn't have appeared in 18 (dated 1/31/83); the earliest it could have appeared was in 19, and, glory be, it was in 19. That's one out of the way. Well, though, there are many others. I think I'll just have to break this and print the rest in 21. Ha. Maybe I can come up to 24 issues by May--the third anniversary of Quodlibet. Not likely, but we'll see.

I see I've got eight lines left on this page, and that's just enough time to announce that some nekkid-crazy-person(s) in San Francisco have decided to do the National Fanzine Fans' convention that has been desultorily discussed for years and years and years...they're (we're, for I must confess that I have the Honour to be Registrar for the thing) calling it Corflu. At the Clare-

mont. In January, 1984. Did I make it?

No.

Support it. It couldn't hurt--and it may even be a useful thing, after all.

Ah, well--counting up what I've got on disc, I find that rich brown's loc, alone, would run this to seven pages, so I might as well go for twelve pages instead of six. That gives me a bit of time to talk about the second month's installment of the wine club. March was Gewurtztraminer (gewurtz-trah-MEE-ner) month. Gewurtztraminer is a Rhine Valley type wine, a variety of the Traminer varietal (the name means "spicy"

Traminer). It's a tough clone-of-a-grape without much in the way of subtlety or elegance, but it specializes in knocking your socks off with exotic aroma and flavors crisp as fall apples and spicy as cloves.

The two selections were from the 1981 vintages of Diamond Oaks Vineyard in Rutherford and Edmeades Winery in Mendocino County. The Diamond Oaks I found very pleasant, quite dry, with cinamon and clove flavors overriding the crisp, apply taste. The Edmeades was exceedingly dry, with a resinous taste, somewhat unpleasant. Perhaps the wine has too much skin.

And that's enough of that.

SLINGS AND ARROWS

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Dear Bill:

While there was a lot to enjoy in 18, I felt there were several

places where it lacked punch. Had Quodlibet arrived a few days earlier, I may have felt that without knowing quite why. As it is, since the issue hove on the scene the day after I received Simon Ounsley's And Still It Moves, I can give you one quick for instance. I don't know if you have seen Ounsley's zine, but I'm afraid the similarity of subject matter but difference in treatment between his account of the making of Bollards and D. Carol Roberts' "Fade to Black When the Telephone Rings" are to Ounsley's credit and Roberts' detriment. Which is to say, unfortunately, that Roberts' is dull by comparison, for the simple reason that her piece lacks life. "We started up this sf interview program from public access TV and had to learn how to operate all the equipment and did pretty well considering our limitations and here's a list of the interviews we did." I would say this was all right for a start, but surely (as the Ounsley piece indicates) there's a wealth of material here which has yet to be mined--unless they were universally dull and boring, those 60+ interviews must have been surrounded with literally hundreds of amusing and/or illuminating happenings. As it is, we have Roberts' assurance that it was "fun"--but she would have communicated it better, more entertainingly, had she bothered to tell us, say, the ten most amusing and/or illuminating anecdotes during that four-year period.

Movies. I've seen only 27 of those listed, 19 of which I have in common with you. I wasn't surprised to find myself agreeing with about 90% of what you said on those movies we've both seen; I liked Officer and a Gentleman and Blade Runner better but thought less of Ghandi and

Wrath of Khan. Strong agreement with your assessments of The Missionary, My Favorite Year, Tootsie, Deathtrap, and Diva.

Since you don't list Cannery Row as one of the movies you saw but wonder about its "bizarre treatment," I wonder what you mean. What seems to have been unacknowledged, at least in the credits, is that elements from both Steinbeck's Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday (the sequel) were used; it's been ages since I've read the books but I recognized elements from both and rather enjoyed the movie as a result. And, as a died-in-the-wool Woody Allen fan, I can't agree that A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy was an "unmitigated disaster"--it was far below the level of Annie Hall or Manhattan but it had its amusing moments and was head and shoulders above his previous "comedy," the title of which has mercifully escaped me. I also agree about Partners; I took a lady friend to see it (at her request) and fell asleep after the first ten minutes; from what I saw, it seemed a bunch of cheap shots and therefore nothing to feel bad about missing, but I'm glad to have it confirmed--again. (My lady friend said as much but it was in the back of my mind that perhaps she was just trying to make me feel good.)

I was put off by the trailer for the movie, which made it look like a slapstick comedy. Blech. I really liked the book when I read it as a fifteen-year old and didn't want to see the story travestied. I saw it on cable recently, though, and enjoyed the treatment--it's not the same as Steinbeck's, of course, but perfectly valid in its own right.

Let's see--I saw Stardust Memories premiered in Boston in 1980. That's probably the one you meant. I don't think it was a comedy, though. Nor was Interiors. I wasn't much taken with either Annie Hall or, especially, Manhattan.

Where I disagree with you most strongly is with respect to a movie I've seen four times which you list as one of "the year's worst drama(s)" and say you're just as glad you missed. Personal Best was, in fact, my favorite movie of the year; while I suppose some really militant lesbians may think the ending is a cop out--since it might be seen by them to imply that lesbianism is something one "goes through" until one can find the "Real Thing"--I nonetheless feel it was by far the tenderest and most sympathetic and humane look at the subject I've ever seen in the movies, whether from Hollywood or elsewhere. As much warmth and genuine insight as I felt were evident in, say, Tootsie, I have to say I think Personal Best was easily five times better. (Hoffman's performance in Tootsie was admittedly superlative; I wouldn't want to say anything to detract from that. But the acting in Personal Best, while not of the same caliber, was also very fine and nothing to be ashamed of, either.) The tasteful touches of comedy give balance and tension to the intensity of the drama, which draws its realistic problems from the nature of misunderstandings which are possible in all caring relationships--not simply lesbianism. As a result, I found it totally convincing, human and vital. There are no smirks, no cheap shots, no moralizing. There's nothing at all false about the external and internal realities which are being explored. The photography, the pacing, the direction are nonpareil. And I can admit to only slight disappointment about the ending--since sometimes homosexuality is something one goes through before coming to hetero- or bisexuality--although I can understand how some people might feel this was a cop out. I don't think it was, but even if I did, on balance I believe the sympathetic and non-judgmental portrayal of this aspect of human loving and caring does much to mitigate this "fault." I really think you missed a good one.

Hmm. I caught Personal Best on cable awhile back, but without the benefit of your encomium before me. I regret to say that I found it directed as a jiggle show tricked out as a sappy "intimate" drama. Generally speaking, I approve of movies whose sole purpose is the display of beautiful bodies, although I resent the trumpery of such shows claiming the status of high art. There were moments in Saturday Night Fever when the camera made love to Travolta's body, but I felt this was incidental to the line of development and did not object. I hold my nose, however, at the Blue Lagoon and Paradise. Umm. I really can't see much drama in an individual's sexual choices, and I'm just as bored when a gay friend agonizes over his "damnation" as when I see similar scenes in movies. It's inconsequential stuff and not worth building a

multi-million dollar film around.

While I thank you for the egoboo about the "fanciful graphics of beardmutterings 4" I have to wonder if you don't perhaps mean issue 3, since I'm still working on the layouts for the fourth issue.

Okay.

Jokingly, Slant overcame the "shame" of being a printed fanzine by use of a pun--Willis' claim that his grandfather had been a printer and in printing Slant he had "just reverted to type"--and I tried to do the same with the offset issues of bm, pointing out that while offset was the "medium" of dull sercon fanzines, I might escape comparison because so few of them were "rare" or "well done."

But for all of that, and even the fact that I get pleasure in messing around with "fanciful graphics," I think you're reading something into Ted White's article which any reasonable interpretation would show simply was not there. You're certainly not the first--and probably won't be the last--fan of my acquaintance to blow up out of proportion and/or make a straw man out of things surrounding, but almost totally unrelated to, points which Ted has made, Foo knows. Yet that's how your piece strikes me--you "agree" a fanzine mimeo'd on twiltone looks more like a fanzine and the others "don't feel quite right." Ted, to the best of my memory of that piece, was making points about why this might be so--why different packages give you different feelings, the problems one might have to face and try to overcome in using a package which was inappropriate to the content, which of these engender the most appropriate (or inappropriate) feeling with respect to the content, etc.

Well, I think I should have said somewhere in the piece that this wasn't intended as a personal criticism of Ted White (which should be obvious from this issue) or even, properly, a criticism of the article (I seem to have forgotten to credit it as "Uffish Thots: On Fanzine Packaging" from Pong 25; reprinted in Fanthology '81, p. 13. It is to this printing that page numbers cited below refer). What I was reacting to was something attendant on the article--the apparently overwhelming impulse among fans to take descriptive formulations as prescriptive. Ted's piece seems tailor-made for this kind of thing because of the intrinsic silliness of the way Ted--and now you--tosses around terms like "appropriate" and "inappropriate." Just what in hell do you mean by them, anyway? How can a canary twiltone be more or less "appropriate" for a fmz than blue, eh? Instruct me, oh wise one.

The conjunction of (neat and) formal (electrostencil and presstype headings) = pretentious (at 13) hit a new level of silliness,

just moments after setting records for suchlike with the comment about lilac vs. yellow twiltone in Boonfark. And the list of "cool" and "warm" elements (at bottom of 15) struck me with awe at the quiet and unassuming way Ted elevated his personal tastes to Rules of the Universe. The categories themselves may be useful--and, Ghuknows, we badly need a uniform technical vocabulary when we start talking about such things--but, really! Making up a large fmz out of twenty colors of twiltone makes me want to carry it gingerly to the trashcan: it certainly provokes no "warm" or "companionable" emotions in me.

So, what I'm reacting to isn't entirely outside the article, either. But, as a matter of just balance, I should say that the bulk of what Ted had to say was right on point, and if he'd just left it there...

And this would be a good time to say that I have a very high regard for all three of the gentlemen you feel I am pillorying, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Ted White, and Francis Towner Laney. As to FTL, I should think this would be obvious, as "Death to Francis Towner Laney" is set off by the ironic quotation of a slogan from China's "Great Leap Forward"--"Let a hundred flowers bloom." Those that bloomed--and they did--were scythed down very shortly thereafter, so the great call for diversity of opinion was the death of many thousands of people, when the Great Helmsman changed course in a few years' time. I hope you don't think I view this with approval? Then what other interpretation is available? Three guesses.



Sometimes, McLuhan says, the medium is the message--and when it's not, according to Ted, sometimes the expectations engendered by the medium can overpower the message. Generally speaking, what a fanzine contains is more important than how it is reproduced or how it appears, but its appearance and/or reproduction can and does have a measurable impact on the effect the content may have on the reader.

The appearance and manner of reproduction can have a positive, negative, or neutral impact on the content--and the content can, depending on its quality, largely overcome these respective impacts either positively or negatively; good content will help readers overcome a multitude of packaging sins, for example, while bad

content may seem ever-so-slightly better in an improved package. One should not judge a book by its cover--yet how frequently do we buy books because something on its cover appeals to us? (Okay. Sometimes that can be a blurb--or the author's name. But sometimes it's just the picture. If we judge the book as a book, we do so on its content--yet often an author's name, a blurb, or a picture can be what helps motivate us to purchase it. Not quite the same thing, but somewhat related.) If appearance and/or reproduction clash too strongly with--or is inappropriate to the content, then the alternatives which can correct the situation are (1) make the content good enough to overcome the clash or inappropriateness or (2) use an appearance and/or manner of reproduction which is more appropriate to (or less clashing with) the content. I recall nothing from Ted's article to contradict this.

I can't help but feel the issue is incorrectly formulated. To begin with, the packaging is a part of the total impact of the product; it becomes "appropriate" by being chosen, other things being equal. Talking about a packaging mode "appropriate" to fanzines of one stripe or another, short of pointing out how fancywork or lack of attention makes the verbal communication difficult, strikes me as silly in the first place and "inappropriate" in the second. Fanzines are, by their very nature, done with the medium at hand. That's one of the distinctive features of fanzines--that a diversity of media should be part of one's larger expectations of the phenomenon. When one sets an expectation that a whole genre of fanzines will look like X in certain, specified ways, one is impressing expectations on the genre that I feel are simply unreasonable and requiring a rigidity I don't think anybody possesses..

In the case of fanzines, the additional consideration of convenience enters in and may often overwhelm other packaging considerations--I know it does in my case. I'm simply not about to lay out a couple thou for mimeo equipment and spend six or eight extra hours per issue of Quodlibet when I have faster, more convenient, and, on net, cheaper media at hand. Offset or photostatic reproduction is, intrinsically, appropriate to fanzines and to fannish fanzines as well as "dull sercon" ones, in exactly the same way that mimeo, spirit, and even hecto are/were/have been.

And, putting a cap on it, reacting to the color of the paper is a "first impression." Put Gambit 56 or Boonfark 7--or Tappen 5--into type, three columns per page in 9 pt. with Newsweek graphics, and you'd have something that certainly looks peculiar--but you'd still have three fine issues, and you'd still have a storm of

controversy in the U.S. over "Performance." The graphics package is by no means irrelevant--as a mode of personal expression--but if you don't "overcome" that first impression to a perfectly ordinary type of graphics package, if you still find your impressions "tainted"--then something is wrong with you, and not with the fanzine or the editor.

I suspect Ted was exaggerating for effect--taking an impression so evanescent that it can hardly be caught and solidifying it for purposes of study.

You say you don't let these silly prejudices interfere with "appreciating one of those not-quite-right things" which show up in your mailbox; I doubt if Ted does, either. Here's a clue for you: Ted does a column for beard-mutterings. If he were, as you imply, "holding the line" on using "methods on their way to becoming as quaint and archaic as hectograph" (still used to good effect by Eric Mayer, incidentally) or intent on "affirming the Gospel According to Francis Towner Laney, that Most Accepted Authority on Fanzine Orthodoxy," this would not be the case. But it is.

Ted's point--and I think it a valid one--is that, to take two of the examples you cited, fans might find Tappen and beardmutterings easier to enjoy and appreciate if Malcolm were to pay a bit more attention to graphics and I were to pay a bit less. I think Ted is correct in this assessment but don't think it follows, in making this observation, that he's attempting to dictate to either of us how we should go about putting out our respective fanzines. He's just making the observation. And, as I say, I think he's right.

Mmmm. I don't agree. As I say, diversity is of the essence of the medium. Barring, always, the extreme example of graphics that actively interfere with the essential communication, any package adopted as a matter of personal style is, by definition, "perfect." Malcolm's severely functional presentation is perfect for a Malcolm-Edwards-fanzine-in-1982-3; your eye-catching integration of spaces is perfect for rich-brown-whenever. Redd Boggs' impeccable reproduction and justified text are perfect for a Redd Boggs fanzine. Diversity is of the essence.

However, I pay the attention I do to graphics because it's part of the enjoyment I get out of pubbing my ish--and I hope the content is good enough to overcome the "formal" look of justified margins and fancy graphics. I assume Malcolm chooses the utilitarian format he does for Tappen for a similar reason--i.e., to please himself--and in any event I find the pleasurable content of Tappen does much to overcome this "fault."

And I don't find either to be faults.

I'm certain, knowing Ted as well as I do, he is

well aware of this; at least, with 30+ years of fanzine publishing behind him, it seems highly unlikely he would be unaware of how important the personal pleasure of the editor is in the fanzine publishing equation. It's just not relevant to his point. Nor is the cheapness of offset reproduction or the inevitability of technological improvements or the ease with which one may fit locs into one's format by using a wordprocessor. Worthy of being said, in and of themselves, perhaps, but hardly a refutation of Ted's piece.

Do the above points strike you any better?

Have you read Laney's "Syllabus for a Fanzine" (which appeared, I think, in one of the Insurgent issues of Spacewarp) or are you alluding to something Ted said in his article in these (seemingly, at least to me) gratuitous put-downs of the man?

See above. Yes, I have read the "Syllabus," years ago. It's a work of major importance as a historical source.

While I agree that "dogmatic" is the wrong word, and admit I can't think of what the "right" word might be, I think I can understand a bit of what Malcolm may have had in mind when he used it with reference to some of your arguments.

Let's see if I can get a handle on it. You speak of digging into a work and talking "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." It wouldn't surprise me if that's how you view your line from Quodlibet 15: "...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."

To me, the use of "I felt" and "I think" in the first indicate the statement is not quite as "independent of one's consciousness" as you seem to believe it is. And whether it really refers to "something in the work" itself depends highly on what fills in that blank. If it's something like, "on page 31 he said, 'blah, blah, blah!'" there's no question it does (providing the quote is accurate)--but if it's more like, "it's full of shoddy writing," it may or may not be in the work. Which is to say the writing may or might not be shoddy but since this is obviously a subjective opinion, a matter of tastes, agreement as to whether or not it was "something in the work" would depend on whether the two agree that this is the case. And even if they agree, they could both be wrong.

So? My point was simply that it was necessary--for me, at least--to move away from the entirely subjective level, to go back to the

supposed object of the conversation and look at it occasionally before the conversation can progress. That's why I added the qualifier "referring to something in the work." Insofar as "shoddy writing" is an opinion unverified, it is not in the work. Once it has been verified by adducing examples, it may, admittedly arguably, be something in the work itself.

You seem to think you're only "stating the obvious:--but I can make a statement which seems just as obvious to me, although it makes the opposite point: I infer that a certain number of Heinlein readers make a heavy emotional investment in following Heinlein's line, and so of course do so regardless of how ridiculous that line may be. Neither your statement nor mine is "independent" of our consciousness--we're simply articulating our subjective tastes. Contradictorily, in this case, since our tastes differ. But that's all it is. Your subjective tastes and my subjective tastes.

Hardly. Having observed facts, we have interpreted them and attempted a synthesis. There can be no contradiction between them because they do not refer to the same set of facts. And neither the facts nor the inferences have any bearing on our tastes, one way or the other.

However, I would point out that you miss the mark widely. First, in saying that it sometimes feels as if I'm "stating the obvious" I was not referring to the Heinlein discussion, but to what I interpreted as Malcolm's general comment, and my general response to that general comment, about my mode of self-presentation. To which, I acknowledge the point, but say again that without further specifics, I am unable to do anything coherent about it. Rather on the contrary, the observation I made was not obvious at all--to me: I spent several years mulling over the conversations before I came to those rather simple and non-pejorative conclusions. After all, what could be more natural than ceasing to read an author who no longer pleases you?

However, via circumlocutions such as these, you seem on the verge of proclaiming your subjective opinion to be "objective" fact--since you appear to have convinced yourself they are somehow "independent" of your consciousness. Sir, I laugh in your general direction. "Dogmatic" may be the wrong word, and I can't think what the right word might be, but I can understand why Malcolm used it.

rich brown

I believe you've lifted statements out of several different contexts and mashed them together. I can appreciate your frustration with me, rich. As I say, the point has been made before, and I accept it as quite likely true. And.

QUODLIBET 20

hope people will hang around long enough to overcome negative first impressions. Sometimes they do--sometimes they don't. And I don't know what to do about it. Such potentially constructive criticism as you have provided me with, unfortunately, is not directly helpful, as it appears to be based in a misunderstanding of what I was talking about

Well, the process makes life interesting.

Tim Kyger
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Dear Bill,
OK, I give up. You can put away your loaded gun; you can lower it from my head.

I'll write you a loc. You can fold up your snide comments from the colophon.

Who, me?

The only thing I want to know, Bill, is why is it that you want a loc from me? You know damn well that any loc from me is bound not to have any content ("Balloon-locs" Baked by Wonder Bread).

Ok, on to comment on Quodlibet 19. The first two paragraphs of 19 make me wanna fwow up. A "single flavor at once oaky and tannic." "...the Fritz was quite pleasantly assertive, forcefully reminding one of its close relationship with the pinot noir varietal than I'm used to with a usually light gamay beaujolais." Gack! What wine snobbery! What next; are we to be treated to a psychological profile of and an in-depth interview with a chenin blanc 1978? I say, gimme a dark beer, and I say the hell with it.

Hmm. How do you propose talking about a wine without referring to its flavor? Really, I didn't use any of the *technical* terms like "catty" or "leafy," now, did I? Gimme a break. Besides, I don't think there's any depth to be in with the chenin blancs of 1978...

Well, as long as I'm sitting here winking (arr-arr), I have got to comment on Scouter's letter, or at least one major point of it. Jesus, Scouter, give Heinlein a break vis a vis his female characters. Remember that the man was born in an alien world--the U.S. of A. in 1903. The U.S. in 1903 is as far away from us, the late baby-boomers, as is Tau Ceti. Robert A. Heinlein grew up in the 'teens and twenties, for Bog's sake--those times are alien times. Look at your grandparents; they're Heinlein's generation, not your parents. Look at Missouri today, and then imagine it as it was in the first quarter of this century. It might as well be a planet orbiting around Tau Ceti to either you or me.

Do I feel that Heinlein's women characters are unrealistic? You damn betcha. Are these people

real women? No way. Do they resemble any woman I know? Of course not. Do they resemble women as they might have been in, say, the 40's or 50's? Probably not. But--and this is my point--at least Heinlein tried. In a time when there existed virtually no female characters in SF, Heinlein inserted female characters. Yes, the Heinlein female characters of that time (and now) are flawed, badly drawn, and reflect reality only in a twisted carnival mirror. But Heinlein was not trying to portray women as flawed, twisted men (even though that's what happened)--he was trying to portray women as the equal of men. Period.

OK, so he failed at trying to portray women as humans. Big deal. He tried, at least; in my book, making the attempt counts for a lot. Most people won't even try.

Ah, hell. I have more to say, pages more, but I have more things to do than try to explain that sometimes people must be judged in different "inertial frameworks" than the one in which the person doing the judging exists.

Shit. Does this mean I'm a moral relativist? (Free comment Hook!)

Tim Kyger

By me. I tend to agree--in fact, I've said as much elsewhere. There's a fascinating (and not entirely complementary) extent to which Heinlein is intellectually a fossil from the ethonic early part of the century, coelocanth-like, preserving both interesting and repellent ideas and attitudes. These critters are both interesting and valuable.

Alexis A. Gilliland
4030 8th Street South
Arlington VA 22204

Dear Bill,
Quodlibet 18
arrived in the mail
today, for which I
thank you.

Miscellaneous notes
in no particular order.

(1) after trying a rather large number of different cheeses on WSFA, we find that they prefer the milder cheeses, havarti, longhorn, the various swiss cheeses (Jarlsberg in particular) and provolone. There are two or three people who will eat all the Brie you put out, and no one else will touch it. The sharp cheeses go very slowly.

I've heard it said that sharp or strongly-flavored cheeses are an "acquired taste," but I don't know. I didn't start experimenting around until I was eighteen or nineteen, and I remember

running into Liederkrantz very early and liking it immediately. Perhaps a turophile is born, and not made. Curious about your brie-eaters. You can tell them they're probably on the wrong side of the continent.

(2) Heinlein has ceased to be a part of the fannish universe, which he condescended to enter because he thought his career needed it. He found out otherwise...he sells like mad whether the fans like him or not...and no longer worries about whether or not Malcolm Edwards & Co. read him. Which must surely qualify as a liberating experience.

That may be all well and good for him, but he's putting the rest of us into a critical tizzy. What is it about his more recent works that is driving that incredible audience? And why do we seem to be so (comparatively) blind to that quality? How do his works since 1970 fit into the line of development he's been following since 1959 or so? In what respects is he pioneering new themes (for him) and in what respect is he reworking themes that go back thirty or more years? Heinlein is probably the most quirky of the major sf writer--and his capacity for enthralling us--some time ago, even if not universally now--makes him a fascinating study.

And yes, 1950 was very tight-assed about a lot of things which loosened up by the end of the decade. I was a freshman at Purdue University that year, and HUAC was headed up by John S. Wood (Dem.GA), and the Cold War was going on, and we still had a monopoly on the atom bomb, or had just lost it.

(3) Fannish writing? Good god. Next, no doubt, will come standards and the long awaited Fanzine Review Board which will award the coveted seal of approbation for fanac.

My goodness, the way you talk about it makes it sound just like...just like...the FAAN Awards Committee. Nihil obstat and all that...

After all, if the discipline of mimeography is good, the discipline of setting movable type ought to be even better, while the loose, casual use of word-processors are clearly the way to fannish damnation.

Oh, shucks: rich brown has already used the "reverting to type" anecdote. Actually, I've had to set movable type by both linotype and hand before--and the discipline is good for something or other. Teaches one patience, at the very least.

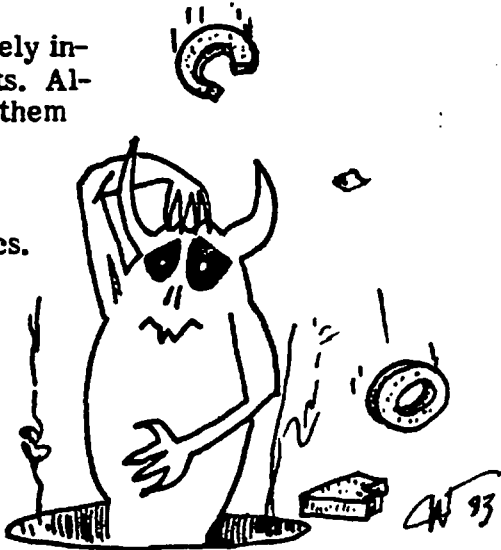
Fannish writing is whatever engages the brain of the fan doing the writing, assuming that he is writing to other fans. Or for them. And if you try to limit it by subject matter, you are simply defining your own fandom.

But what about limiting it by form, eh? Suppose fanwriting were to comprise a distinct genre of belles-lettres by way of some



unidentified-as-yet formal criterion? I've been thinking about this a lot recently, as a result of Chris Atkinson's letter in *Warhoon* 30. There ought to be some way of figuring it out? There are obviously Some Things Fan Was Not Meant To Know...

(4) which surely includes anarchists. Although most of them tend to be very serious when it comes to writing about politics. Your argument for not voting is specious, especially when you have a chance to vote against someone you don't like without simultaneously voting for some other idiot. Why should you deny yourself the pleasure? Do you often deny yourself pleasures on the basis of principal? What about sexual pleasures? What sort of anarchist are you, anyway?



Alexis Gilliland

Goey-Thomist-Zen-Macrobiotic, I think. You've got it all wrong: it's not a matter of principal so much as a question of good taste. I could get at least as much--and probably a lot more--satisfaction expressing my disdain for DiFi on one of the numerous graffiti walls in the city. A modicum of good taste prevents me from taking that way out. Graffiti is, after all, the fourth dimension.

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown MD 21740

Dear Bill:
There's only one serious fault to be found in the 18th

Quodlibet. It possesses so many comment hooks that a loc writer must combat the temptation to overdo it and emit eight or ten pages of reactions and remarks. The only way I remain within the two pages which seem appropriate for a locer of my age and feebleness is by maintaining silence on about ninety percent of the comment temptations.

Well, the only problem I can see with eight or ten pages of comment is that it would probably take awhile to write it--and, thus, get it back to me. Both rich brown's and Malcolm Edwards' locs in 18 ran to about ten pages of typescript, not including material that wasn't included in the locs.

QUODLIBET 20

You may have written the obituary too soon for the musical quodlibet. My antedeluvian edition of Grove's described the early custom as having two forms: "One was to string the melodies together simply and without any attempt at connecting them by passages such as those found in modern 'fantasias'; the other, more elaborate method, consisted in singing or playing the melodies simultaneously." Composers no longer write "quodlibet" above the staves when they create them but they happen. Have you forgotten how Ives was so fond of combining or writing consecutively snatches of familiar melodies? Or Richard Strauss' famous quotations of his own familiar melodies in the "hero's work for peace" section of *Heldenleben*? (My old Fritz Reiner recording's liner notes says there are 23 quotations, played simultaneously or consecutively.) Or his dinner section in the "Bürger als Edelmann" suite with its quotations from himself, Wagner, and Verdi? The big polyphonic outburst near the end of *Hansel und Gretel* might qualify, because four or five melodies from the opera are sounding simultaneously while the witch is baking and I'm pretty sure at least two or three of them were adapted from folk melodies. I can't cite chapter and verse without spending too much time hunting through back issues of record review magazines, but I know some of the avanter among the garde composers who specialize in manipulating tape for their compositions have been founding entire compositions on a few found melodies, prose quotations, and whatever else they have found handy. Jazz players seem to be fond of improvising snatches of irrelevant familiar tunes into their choruses. And what could those dreadful disco classics melanges by the London Philharmonic be called but quodlibets? Verdi ended his "Hymn of the Nations" by combining three national anthems polyphonically. The "Fossils" section of Saint-Saens' "Carnival of the Animals" contains one overused tune after another.

You slay me with erudition. Well, some of those might be quodlibets. I reserve judgment.

I ran into Ives when I first started listening to serious music. I grew up with "pop" music, and in 1968 or so "Soul" began swamping the pop stations. I have never been able to stand Soul. One evening in '68, I listened to the Stones' "Paint it Black" followed up by some insipid Soul song and suddenly Had Enough. I switched off the radio and didn't turn it on again for a couple of years.

In the meantime, though, I was in a "humanities" class--what we today would probably call "combined studies"--for which we were required to report on a number of "cultural events." As the Phoenix Symphony was, in those

remote days, playing in our high school auditorium, the entire class got symphony tickets. I went one evening in October expecting nothing.

Malcolm Frager was the guest artist, and he played the Chaikovskii b-flat piano concerto. That did it. I went to every symphony performance that last year of high school and heard a wide variety of music—we were blessed with a conductor (Guy Taylor) who favored a broad palette. He was forced to resign at the end of that year--so I got to hear Ives' "The Unanswered Question," new music by Carlos Chavez and others (although, curiously, I don't recall any of the "big-name" composers in residence at Arizona State), and sundry other things: the Franck D minor symphony and the Rachmaninoff C minor piano concerto. Gina Bachauer. My god that takes me back.

At the time, I had not heard of Rachmaninoff (I wasn't to read Rand until later that year), so I watched this tiny, stout woman come out in a sequined evening gown, sit down at the piano, and start to play the nine chords that open the concerto. Then, I remember seeing her hands flying over the keyboard--those three-octave arpeggios--and blanked out, overwhelmed by the music and put into emotional shock. I still can't remember a phrase from that first performance--just that I came out of the auditorium stunned and hooked-for-life. I eventually started listening to pop music again, when the Soul wave passed, but that season of intellectual and emotional orgasm had put a new perspective on what I had been hearing.

This is all pretty far afield from what you were saying, though--pardon me.

What I was about to say was that you forgot PDQ Bach and Prof. Schickele, composer of some very felicitous quodlibets.

I was happy to read about D Carol Roberts' public access show. It seems ironic that it should be appearing on Channel 25: that is the channel allotted to Hagerstown's commercial television station, and I'm sure the one in San Francisco is more interesting to watch. One thing I don't understand is this matter of video tape having a life expectancy of seven years. I've encountered references to that effect repeatedly in recent months. At first I thought it meant that some other format will be marketed within seven years which will make video cassettes obsolete. But other references seemed to mean the recordings will become useless after seven years because of deterioration of the physical tape itself or loss of the electronic patterns recorded on it. It doesn't matter too much in my case, because I might not have a life expectancy of more than seven years, either. Still, the first recordings I made with my VCR

are now nearing their second birthday and I feel some curiosity. Five years from now, if I play one of those first recordings, will I find superimposed on the video image a block lettering which informs me that I won't be able to watch this tape after September 17, 1988? Or should I write down in my engagement book a reminder to find a sturdy metal container and place it in the middle of the back yard, then place my video cassettes in it just before they become seven years old, so they can burst into flame harmlessly like those on Mission: Impossible? Or will I become absent-minded and one day late in 1988 will I smell a terrible odor and trace it to those earliest recordings, which I forgot to remove before they suddenly suffered decay and corruption into little trays of eldritch substances? If the seven-year limitation is actually a matter of gradual deterioration of the tape or its image, I see no reason why the ENSFH archives couldn't be dubbed onto new tape just before they begin to show serious effects of aging, preserving them much as photographers may copy their most prized slides onto fresh film before the fading and color changes become perceptible.

You know, I hadn't given the matter any thought. I suppose that what happens is that the magnetic patterns become progressively randomized, losing information year-by-year. We live in an energy-saturated environment, after all, with magnetic fields fluxing wildly everywhere. There are two more acceptable solutions to the deterioration problem--transferring the videotaped material to film and putting it on laserdisc, which is the closest we can come to permanent at this stage of the game. Unfortunately, both are relatively expensive processes.

Simon Agree says that the tape itself deteriorates--becomes crinkly and flakes. Well, that would do it.

Your description of how you produced this issue had for me the very same element of originality that Robert Prokop longs for in science fiction stories. Not even the Enchanted Duplicator could run off fanzines one page after another, collate the pages, and staple them together, I believe. And one thing that impresses me most about the futuristic fanzine production methods is the fact that most fans who use them are creating very fine reproduction. Many books, magazines and newspapers that utilize even more expensive and complicated publishing equipment look disgracefully amateurish today, with uneven blackness of the type, smears and streaks on some pages, improper registration, and other faults which a printer in the pre-cold type day would think had been produced by science fiction fans.

I'm also mind-boggled over your movie-

viewing. According to my estimates, you saw last year on the screen or tube 169 examples of prejudice against the current object of bigotry, the white adult male; witnessed the spilling of 646 gallons of imitation blood; viewed all but three glands and seven bones in the process of being dissociated from the remainder of bodies; heard 74 justified and 12,486 unjustified blasphemies, obscenities and profanities; and so you could be forgiven for an occasional questionable statement in your summary. Blake Edwards isn't dead, unless you were referring to his creative life; you must have been thinking of some movie other than The Americanization of Emily in that list of films which emphasized an actor of one sex dressed up as a member of the other sex; and you committed the ultimate heresy by misspelling Val Lewton's name.

Well, it won't happen again. As a reward for subsidizing PBS (\$120, if you're curious), I received the Encyclopedia of Film recently, and it has all them people in it, so I am look 'em up (parenthetically [of course] the Encyclopedia doesn't have a single entry for a film—just the people and technical terms). The reference to Victor, Victoria inviting comparison with Americanization was based on the combination of Garner and Andrews, not on the sex-role reversal. Um. Blake Edwards isn't dead. Peter Sellers is dead. Right. And as to your statistics, you can double most of them. Last night I watched An American Werewolf in London, and I think there were about 600 gallons of blood there alone. That was a tres peculiar film: lots of very conscious comedy—black, gruesome, and slapstick—mixed in with the most horrifying dismemberment, etc. Shaking of head.

If I followed correctly your discription of the new mall, I suspect that the designers fully intended for the restaurant to be in the spot where it is: wouldn't they want one of the most popular spots in the mall to force people to go past lots of other tenants in order to boost impulse buying?

Of course, and there's nothing per se objectionable about that—what makes it objectionable in this mall is that the walkways are only about eight feet wide, not designed to accommodate the traffic. The design defeats its purpose by forcing people to concentrate on moving through traffic rather than being able to windowshop. Also, the mix of stores does not encourage impulse-shopping: the mall now has eight shoestores in three floors and four, very expensive, jewelers. Prices being what they are, these are not the kind of shops that are particularly subject to impulse-buying. The design defeats its own purpose.

Cindy Williams became pregnant and that helped to remove her from Laverne & Shirley. If

I remember correctly the way the imbrolio was described in print, her pregnancy would be showing too soon to marry her at season's start on screen and appear in later episodes the same season, and then there were disputes over billing or prominence of role playing or other matters so she is currently in limbo. I'm convinced that the first few years of that series will eventually have the cult status of Laurel & Hardy but I've stopped watching it regularly the past couple of years; in fact, this is the first season since I've owned a television set that I haven't watched regularly at least one series on a commercial network.

Harry Warner, Jr.

You really ought to catch St. Elsewhere and Hills Street Blues. I can't think of a sitcom on network tv that bears following—unless you are charmed by Cheers—but those two dramatic shows, at least, deserve attention.

The St. Elsewhere theme music has me going 'round and 'round, because I used to think it impossible to do anything fresh and interesting with the tonic-dominant combination and simple syncopation. It's been all so well-worked. But this music—do, re, mi, fa-fa-fa, mi-mi, re, sol, sol, sol-sol-sol, mi—manages to be fresh and compelling. Shaking of head.

And, incidentally, I see in today's paper (May 4) that Laverne & Shirley has been cancelled.

Robert Prokop
1717 Aberdeen Cir.
Crofton MD

Dear Bill,
Diane and Lisa have gone off to Florida for 11 days, leaving me all

alone (except for Bert, but she's not that much company). It's amazing how helpless we are when our routines are broken. Here I was thinking I'd have all this time to myself, and I'd have a great time pretending to be a bachelor again. Well, it's not working out that way at all. I haven't done much of anything the past couple of days (they left last Wednesday--today is Sunday). Part of the problem is obviously this terrible weather. It has not stopped raining all week. It's raining as I write this.

Are you sure you're not in San Francisco? But more than the weather, I believe there is a more fundamental problem. If a person has been living alone for a long time, he builds up all the routines and habits appropriate to his circumstances. The same holds true for living with a roommate or a family. The fact is that I simply don't have the infrastructure in place to best make use of my time alone. I'm used to life with Diane and Lisa. There are certain things I regularly do at certain times. Consequently, I now feel rather adrift. I imagine that if I were



zoned for
Residential
Only!

forced to live this way for an extended period, I would eventually know what to do with myself. For now, however, I'm using the silence around the house to catch up on my reading.

That would have been my first impulse, too.

And what reading I've been doing!

Just last night I finished Robert L. Forward's Dragon's Egg. I don't know if you've read it yet, but if you haven't--do so! It's written in the style of Hal Clement at his best--hard science the way it should be written. The rather wild premise behind the novel is human contact with intelligent life on the surface of a neutron star. The incredible thing is that Forward actually makes it work. He manages to convince you that the idea is not only possible, but even probable.

Hmmm. Forward told us about that at Westercon last year...or was it Sacramento?

Anyway, my bullshit detector swung 'way over.

My first experience with Forward's writing was in the December-February Analog, with the publication of his novel Rocheworld. I was so impressed that I wrote him a letter, praising the story. This led in turn to a further exchange of letters in which Forward expressed an interest in seeing the work I've done on my universe.

Robert hasn't been sharing this with Quodlibet's readers, but it is all entertaining and even fascinating stuff. Someday...

So I sent him all of my data on the non-rotating planet. Now it was Bob Forward's turn to be impressed. He promptly christened the world "Eyeball," and says he'd like to turn it into a novel after he finishes his current project, which is Starquake, a sequel to Dragon's Egg. He wants to meet with me this September in Baltimore. Wow!

Pro-stroking. Heady stuff.

I hope he does decide to use "Eyeball." It wouldn't be the first time such a thing has happened. After all, the idea behind Trengo was given to Doc Smith by a reader.

And the Kingworld was suggested by Freeman Dyson to Larry Niven. I believe a number of the recent Darkover books were suggested by readers. There are lots of such anecdotes. Writers who know how to use their readership are not terribly uncommon.

So now you know why it's taken me so long to write. That, and the fact that Quodlibet 18 has given me absolutely zero inspiration for a loc. What a dud issue! Six pages about cheese? Next we'll be reading all about the potato. Oh, well, I seem to recall my own words from a few issues

back--something to the effect that it's your zine, and it doesn't cost me a dime.

Television. I seem to be watching more of it lately. Maybe it has something to do with the wintering over with an infant. I've never before had so many tv shows that I watched regularly. Let's see...Sunday is Sixty Minutes and Newhart. Monday there's nothing. Tuesday we have Remington Steele and St. Elsewhere (better than Hill Street Blues). Wednesday I watch Taxi. Thursday it's Cheers. (Sometimes Hill Street Blues) but usually I'm 'way too tired by them). Friday has nothing. And Saturday winds up with Mama's Family. Add to this an occasional movie or special, the network news (usually NBC), and M*A*S*H reruns--and that's a lot of tv in one week. Twenty hours or so.

Hmmm. Contrariwise, my viewing has fallen off this season. I occasionally manage to catch an episode of one of those shows, but my only regulars are Hill Street Blues (which I've come to enjoy greatly since they've moved Furilo away from center stage--especially the sequence that's on now, with the Killer Scuzzball Cop imported into the precinct. I didn't expect Renko to be so tempted by that numbers bag, though), and St. Elsewhere. Two or three nights a week I catch M*A*S*H and Barney Miller. Oh, and I watch Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman religiously (again). Time warp. It's 1976. Occasionally a movie on cable, but I rarely have time any more. So I'm probably doing less than ten hours a week, most weeks.

I don't know if you watched the two mini-series recently shown--The Winds of War and The Thorn Birds. I saw all but one hour of the first, and all of the latter. I first read Winds and its sequel, War and Remembrance, in 1979, and since then I have re-read them both. I consider them to be two of the best novels written in this century. Period. Unfortunately, the TV adaptation was terrible. I don't know how anyone can make WWII boring, but ABC managed to do it. Waste of time.

The Thorn Birds is another story altogether. Magnificent! A very good example of how good television can be when it wants to be.

I saw the first episode of Winds, and it was so plonkingly terrible, so turgidly paced, so over acted, that I avoided the rest. By the time Thorn Birds came around, I was too busy for any television.

Hey, did you catch V the first part of May? It got terrible reviews, but I don't think it deserved them. Admittedly, it tried to be too "big" in its themes, and realized a very serious theme--the mechanism of the Big Pogrom--in a cinematic form using the conventions of the B movies of the '50's, dominated by BEM's and therefore not to be taken seriously. But the writers were

definitely aware of what they were doing and exerted very conscious control over their materials. If you could accept the hokey conventions, the writers did a very good job with their materials. Remarkably, the special effects were both imaginative and ambitious—and nearly flawless in execution. When you compare *V* to the insipid production of *The Lathe of Heaven* PBS did a couple of years ago, to great critical acclaim, you have to wonder where tv critics are hiding their heads.

Last night I saw what was probably the most beautiful sight I have ever seen in the sky. The time was about 7 p.m. (E.S.T.). Evening twilight was just fading, so the sky in the west was not completely black as yet, but retained a hint of that beautiful, deep blue one can see on a cloudless evening right after the sunset. A one-day-old crescent moon was sitting just to the right of Aldebaran in Taurus. Forming a neat little triangle with those two was the almost blindingly bright point of light that was Venus. Off to the side of Venus swam the Pleiades. Closer to the horizon, and twinkling like a star, was Mercury. Surrounding all of these was the unmistakable outline of a glow I had seen with certainty only twice before in my life—the Zodiacal Light. To complete the picture, the stars of Orion were to the left of the moon, in the deeper black sky to the south.

This bare-bones description fails utterly to convey the overwhelming beauty of the scene. I hurried off to a field near my house, away from all streetlights and cars, and stood there silent until Mercury set behind a low hill. My thoughts while standing in that field ran the gamut from visualizing a G. Harry Stine future of the inner solar system, to imagining the paradisaical floating islands and endless, green-gold sea of Peralandra. I'm not sure which I prefer.

It's been just over a year now since I started reading *Analog* again. I am a new man when it comes to current SF nowadays. In the mid '70's, back in OSFFA, I was convinced the field had died. Now a whole slew of contemporary writers have pushed several names from the Golden Age right off my list of favorite authors—writers like Charles Sheffield, Joseph H. Delaney, James P. Hogan, Ray Brown, Robert L. Forward, and Mike Resnick. There was also my discovery of Jack Vance about a year and a half ago. I went crazy about his work, reading 21 novels by him in the past year. And let's not forget notable contributions by the "old farts" of late—like Heinlein's *Friday*, Asimov's *Foundation's Edge*, Clarke's *2010* (I haven't read this one yet, but I'm looking forward to it), or Simak's *Project Pope*. To top it all off, the *Lensman* series is back with David A. Kyle's *Dragon Lensman* and *Lensman from Rigel*. I will assume we can expect a third

soon featuring Nadreck, if the pattern holds. All in all, I am as happy as can be about what is coming out in sf today. Hurray!

I'm always a little dubious about an author extending the work of another. I'm not at all attracted to the Doc Smith stuff, but I do read everything on and by Piper I can lay hands on. I've talked about my objections to Kurland's and Tuning's recensions of Piper's material, and now Asenath Darnay has come up with *Fuzzy Odyssey*, a retelling of the events of *Little Fuzzy* from Little Fuzzy's viewpoint. Well, it's okay, I guess—but it's definitely not Piper, and I'm discovering that a lot of what attracted me to Piper was Piper's unique perspective and balance of perspectives. Other people just don't have it. *A Mirror for Observers* wouldn't be the fascinating and eternally self-renewing thing it is, if it weren't written by Pangborn. And let's not even think about Heinlein stories written by others...*Alongside Night* still rankles.

I'm also very pleased with contemporary sf, but my catalogue of approved works is about 90% different, because I'm looking at different aspects of the work than you are. Joe Haldeman, Octavia Estelle Butler, Alexis Gilliland, and Donald Kingsbury are the paragons I beat drums for.

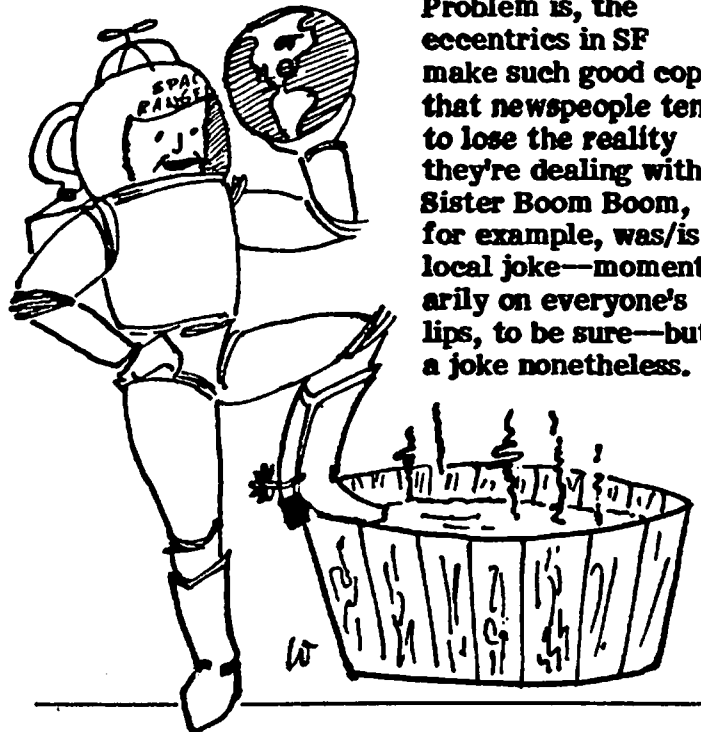
So it looks like we're fated to have material for argument forever.

I saw the *Sixty Minutes* segment on San Francisco politics last night. That's a strange city you live in, there, Bill. And they call us Washingtonians weird!

Robert Prokop

Well, the city that *Sixty Minutes* covered was certainly odd, but I'm not at all sure I live there.

Problem is, the eccentrics in SF make such good copy that newspeople tend to lose the reality they're dealing with. *Sister Boom Boom*, for example, was/is a local joke—momentarily on everyone's lips, to be sure—but a joke nonetheless.



Joseph Nicholas
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Dear Bill,
Mere weeks after
Quodlibet 18 arrived,
I've finally had a
chance to read it

properly. I suppose this is what happens when you live with someone who takes fanzines off to work with them as soon as they arrive and then carries them around in her bag for some time afterwards while writing her loc paragraph by paragraph...Poot poot poot, as we say over here....not, of course, that I object to her doing so (just to the time it's taken to reclaim the fanzine)....

To business, however. I have to say that I don't think much of Robert Prokop's review of Mike Resnick's The Soul Eater, and not just because I disagree with his taste. (Doc Smith's "Lensman" saga an all-time triffic piece of SF, indeed!) In the first place, he doesn't seem to realize just whose plot he's summarising, one that Resnick has obviously lifted wholesale: that of Herman Melville's Moby Dick, all about this whaling captain who has his leg bitten off by a larger-than-usual whale and has resolved to hunt down the creature regardless of how many people he has to sacrifice in furtherance of his quest...Resnick's plagiarisation of this seems obvious, at least to me. (Snide though this is, one might wish Prokop was as widely read in the genuine classics of literature as he is in the so-called classics of the pulp era: Resnick's theft would then not have escaped him for a moment). All he's done, it seems, is tack on some stuff at the beginning explaining how his character got that way--and Prokop's remark that these chapters "have the same feel as the SF role-playing game Traveller" does rather indicate the extent of Resnick's plagiarisation (and thus how dreadfully unimaginative he is).

I'm overwhelmed by the complexity of my reaction to this. The base of it all, though, seems to be, "How Nicholas rushes in where angels fear to tread!"

I very much doubt that Prokop "missed" the similarity of plot-structures—but he may take up the issue at his own leisure.

I suppose, by strictest construction, the re-use of a thematic structure might be construed as plagiarism. But so long as the work is a genuine re-realization in its own right, I doubt that anyone would justly complain.

There is no good answer to the question of what is common coin as a matter of cultural heritage--only a set of hesitantly-advanced and constantly revised rules-of-thumb. Crying "plagiarism" about a book one has not even taken care to read strikes me as just a trifle injudicious.

My second objection (of the two) concerns the

nature of Prokop's review. "I've tried wording this better but it seems I can't," he says toward the end, and then proceeds to demonstrate (snide though this is) just how little he does have to say about the book. At the point where he should be stepping in close to commence a detailed analysis of the book, he steps away, retreating into vague generalisations about the Campbell Era and that good ol' sendawunder. Yet the mark of the critic is that he (or she) is able to explain how the book achieves its effects and what it does with its material that marks it out from the herd, to discuss what (if anything) it has to say to us and whether that message is one worth listening to, and to judge it by the standards of excellence one applies to the literature as a whole. This Prokop not only doesn't do, he doesn't even try to do. (Admittedly, I don't manage it all the time myself, but--self-righteous though this may sound--at least I try.) All he gives us is some subjective waffle that tells us more about his predilections than anything else, and the flat, unquantifiable statement that "it's the best book of the year."

Not good enough.

Well, there are criticisms, and then there are reviews--not the same thing. It's not at all surprising that Prokop should not attempt a critical analysis in a review. Perhaps you've read Avicenna's analysis of the four modes of persuasion? (Quite a close correspondence there to Jung's four elements of personality). A work written in one mode need not meet the formal criteria of another.

Oh God, I have a dreadful fear that in my very first letter to you I've made another enemy. (I mean, Prokop is a friend of yours, isn't he?) So it goes, so it goes--no doubt further (if any) Quodlibets will be addressed solely to Judith and boldly marked NOT TO BE READ BY JOSEPH NICHOLAS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES or something not entirely dissimilar. Heigh-ho; so that goes...

A Quatrain Curse for Joseph Nicholas

Hither, fiend, and off you waddle
Hence to Pimlico. Your writ:
Off that pompous Denbigh twit and
Kiss with krenk his taste for twaddle.

Anyway, to move on to something else: I'm intrigued by your suggestion (in response to Malcolm Edwards) that people date Heinlein's decline from the time they personally began to go off him, not least because it may have some truth to it. What, however, would be your response to someone (i.e., me) who never liked Heinlein at all?

Mu. No response. Any writer's potential readership is incalculably diverse. It does,

however, make it difficult intelligibly to discuss particular issues across the gulf.

Actually, the reference you saw belongs to a much earlier debate in which I drew an inference from a number of similar conversations, in which the other parties agreed that Heinlein had clearly gone into a permanent decline at some point, but disagreed as to what that point might be. Interestingly, there was a fairly good correlation between the age of the person and the book he chose as the division point. Most of those in the forty-ish range picked Starship Troopers; most of those in the thirty-ish range chose I Will Fear No Evil; one gentleman approaching retirement chose Rocket Ship Galileo. This is an interesting fact which may or may not bear on the mechanism for the perception of a permanent decline—or, in your words, "when they began to go off Heinlein." I languish in the pillory for the inference.

I kid you not. In my first great splurge of reading science fiction—from when I first discovered it at the age of thirteen to the time I got bored with it and went off to read something else at the age of eighteen—I never read anything by Robert Heinlein, and when I did finally get around to him—shortly after "rediscovering" SF a few years later and shortly before stumbling across fandom—the first book of his I read was Stranger In A Strange Land. (Not the best place to come in, obviously, but how was I to know?) It struck me instantly, in comparison with everything else I'd been reading previously, as a perfectly awful piece of writing: no characterisation to speak of, dialogue unreal beyond belief, background hopelessly implausible, philosophical "message" simultaneously pompous and jejune—Good God, there's more political insight in a single story by Joseph Conrad than there is in the entire stupid book.

Hmmm. You aren't one of those tiresome people who insist that Rabelais should have written Gargantua and Pantagruel as novels of manners, are you? There is no good reason that a Menippean satire ought to have "realistic" (by which you mean "novelistic") characters or dialogue. As for specifically "political" insight, I don't think that's what Heinlein was aiming at. If you look at Stranger as an examination of what it means to be "human," packed into the hero tale and structured as a Menippean satire, it is a lot more comprehensible. Not as easy to analyse, of course, but...

When you compare Stranger to some of the other Menippean satires being done at roughly the same time—God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, Cat's Cradle, The Sot-Weed Factor, The Great American Novel, and so on—it comes off rather well. Certainly Stranger is truer to its classic models than Roth or Vonnegut—and if it is less

purely Rabelaisian (in all senses of the word) than Giles, Goat Boy, still it is quite a considerable addition to the genre.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Nicholas, than are dreamed of in your philosophy.

But over the years since then (I'm now twenty-nine, just so you know where we are) I've managed to read quite a few other Heinlein novels (don't ask me for a list, because I certainly haven't kept any of them), none of which have changed my impression of him in the slightest but all of which have given me some indication of where he might have gone wrong, of the point from which one might chart his decline. Not from the sixties, but from the fifties—from the time he acquired his lucrative contract with Scribners for a series of juvenile novels and his post-war sales to such as The Saturday Evening Post; a contract and sales which, I believe, led him to think he'd made it as a serious literary figure and was thus enabled to pronounce authoritatively on all manner of social and political concerns. And get away with it unchallenged, because how could his readers, with little direct experience of their own of the world, distinguish between the fantasy world existing inside Heinlein's head (the only one in which his rules and philosophies have any application) and the real one in which they would later have to live (in which life proceeds according to utterly different precepts)? The result was an increase in the didactic content of his books coupled to a decrease in the narrative content until, with Starship Troopers (which, let us not forget, was originally intended for a juvenile audience but which Scribners rejected), there was little or no narrative left at all: the book existed solely as a means of articulating Heinlein's point of view, with all opposing arguments being so caricatured or flimsy as to be easily disposed of. And the rest, as they say, is history.

(a) Your historical facts are inaccurate; (b) your description of the narrative content of the works is extremely hyperbolic; and (c) your "psychologizing" is suspect: e.g., it would be difficult, even for Heinlein, to be more straightforwardly didactic than Beyond This Horizon, which appeared in Astounding in, I think, 1941 or 1942. Throws your thesis into a cocked hat.

Entirely aside from this point, it just occurred to me to wonder how Heinlein is received in the UK and in Europe. Heinlein is intensely American. The two most major influences that can be perceived in his work are Twain and Sinclair Lewis (Shaw is the third). I could possibly see a Frenchman identifying with Heinlein's naive, materialist positivism, but I wonder that any Brit would find much to identify with. Do you have rabid Heinlein fanatics there,

as we do here? Or is he strictly part of the background--as, say, Eric Frank Russell or Brian Aldiss is here? Curious.

I've been told by those who know their Heinlein better than I do (i.e., those who have read everything or almost everything of his) that Friday is a much better book than The Number of the Beast. Well, that wouldn't be difficult (The Number of the Beast is less a novel than a means of venting decades of stored-up bile against his pet hates and--given that the "characters" are all clones of him, speak like him, and end up at an SF convention given in his honour--an excuse for an orgy of slobbering self-congratulation), but any novel which attempts to claim that the only thing a woman has to fear from rape is the rapist's bad breath and suggests that she would be most fulfilled by marriage, children and gardening is not one that I'm likely to take remotely seriously.

I wonder what you'll make of all that?

Joseph Nicholas

I snort in your general direction, is what I make of all that. If you insist on setting up straw men, you may take all the pleasure you can derive out of knocking them down, but it seems a futile gesture to me. I don't think anyone who has read the book will take seriously the contention that Friday attempts to show that "the only thing a woman has to fear from rape is the rapist's bad breath and suggests" etc. Friday's psychological need to "belong," to be a legitimate part of family and community, is so strong--and so manifest--that the externals are, in this context, trivialities.

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Dear Bill,
I have here beside me a page or so of scribbled notes of things to say in

response to Quodlibet 18; how far I'll get through them or stick to them is not at all certain--the trouble with making notes of things that catch your interest is that some of them are no more than a sentence or two, and others require in-depth explication which, since I'm typing this out while taking a lunch-break at work, they won't get.

Anyhow...

First up...the Fiawol/fijagdh (which latter must be an Irish word, no other language spells with just that profusion of consonants). Here in Britain, fandom may amount to a way of life but is never treated, at least by zine fans, as more than just a hobby--rather in the way that at college, study may be a way of life, but you'd never guess that anyone (or at least those I hung

about with) took it seriously.

That's a very neat analogy, and one which hadn't occurred to me. Of course, one can run into the occasional oddball for whom learning is a way of life and college is but an especially-intense episode.

In Australia, the elaborate nonchalance about fandom is less pronounced, perhaps because there is less fandom about: there (or at least in Sydney up to about a year ago), fandom is a social gang, and fanac is parties, picnics, caving trips and conventions; now, I gather, it's also SCA banquets and tournaments. Which last have pushed the gang over into another fandom...it used to be gaming and fantasy; then the gang moved into SF, now it's gone medieval, picking up and shedding members over the years, but still essentially the same gang for most of whom any outside "fandom" was little more than an excuse, and a trendy excuse at that, from which the props to the social fermentation were to be borrowed. It was the social fermentation that was the Real Thing, the hobby was little more than a way of passing time in between either generating or passing on gossip. As a social life, it was great. But it hadn't much to do with fanzines.

Hmmm. I wonder if that mightn't be true--in varying degrees--of most local fandoms. My experience is limited to only two, one (in Phoenix) nascent and the other "mature" at its inception. The nascent fandom did adopt and drop fads until a group of hard-core fan-type fans developed. The social interaction, though, was the mainspring and subtext of everything else. And in San Francisco, the local fandom exists solely for, by, through, and with social interaction. Everything else is Form impressed on Prime Matter.

Your mention of the "Do It Yourself Messiah" reminds me of the days when I used to belong to another fandom--Choral Society. That also teetered between being just a hobby and being a way of life: we called our conventions "Inter-iversity Choral Festivals" and "minifests," we had pubmeetings at which we sang bawdy madrigals in (as the evening went on) increasingly peccable four-part harmony, we even had zines--it was there, editing the monthly newsletter for our choir and as correspondent to Erato, the quarterly AISCA (Australian Intervarsity Choral Societies Association) journal, that I took my first steps in fanwriting--con reports, mostly, about our concerts and the I.V.s...c'est plus la meme chose, n'est-ce pas? But I never got to sing in the Messier.

Just as well. Most of Messier is tough sledding.

And on to films...Quite agree that Blade Runner was no great chop. Most of those who

like it agree that there wasn't much story or sense to it, and they ask me to look at Ridley Scott's great visual sense...in fact, two of what bothered me most about it were visual illogicalities. Remember the shots of that deserted department store where whotshisname with the dummies lived? Remember how Scott kept cutting from the interior, white-lit, with a searchlight beam raking across it to the outside sky where a multi-coloured woman flashed across the skylight? Now, those two, repeated, shots just don't add up. That flashing woman would have spilled multi-coloured light into the well of the store, that searchlight would, every now and again catch in your eyes and blind you. Certainly, it would be visible looking up through that skylight. That's a failure of visual logic. So, it seemed to me, was the lighting of Deckard's apartment--expensive interior decorators use that indirect corner lighting that doesn't actually illuminate but just throws interesting gloom and shadows around the corners. But it's hardly the style you'd expect a tough cop, or ex-cop, to affect. Sure, it's creepy, and makes you jump and wonder what's lurking around the corner or in the bathroom--that's just why a real Deckard, as distinct from Scott's feeble wimp, wouldn't have it. It is no more than a cheap trick. As is most of the action that takes part in that apartment. I've read, in some fanzine, some woman (ah, yes, Lilian Edwards in This Never Happens) raving about the romantic seduction of Rachel. To me, that "seduction" seemed right along the lines of the sort of feel-up that culminates in some creep pushing the "what do you mean NO, you led me

on" line when he's had you baled up against the wall wishing you had the courage to knee the slimy jerk in the groin...that sort of scene is just so tacky...I guess you could say that the whole silly film was tacky, from voiceover to its gooiily sentimental ending with that nice blond android suddenly deciding he wasn't going to do the sensible thing and waste Harrison Ford all over the ground below--I was just so disappointed that Ford didn't get his. Just goes to show, the good guys never do win.

I thought the political-personal story of the androids very compelling, almost Hugo-esque, and far better than the other stories Scott tried to tell in that movie. If he had stuck to that one, he might have been able to create a truly "great" film. As it is, Blade Runner is merely tawdry and tiring. Reminds me, though, of a far more successful attempt at a political-personal story--The Year of Living Dangerously. That one, too, had great material. Don't quite know why it didn't make it...

We also liked Dark Crystal, so much so that we went along to an exhibition of its puppets and props on in Mayfair, and there we found a couple of the performers who'd worked the alien puppets (as distinct from the Gelflings and Podlings who were conventional glove puppets, like the Muppets) showing how they created the different creatures, sometimes up to half a dozen people responsible for one creature's movements. No doubt they will (or perhaps have) publish an expose of all this technical detail, so I won't bore you with it here. We enjoyed E.T.--laughed in all the right places as well as a few of the wrong ones; we had expected to sneer but were mostly won over. We didn't like Wrath of Khan (aka over here as "the Girth of Kirk"--Soap opera meets space opera, soap opera wins).

On successive seeings of E.T. I become more bothered by Spielberg's occasional heavy-handedness (e.g., the fact that you see no adult's face except Mother's for three-quarters of the film; the menacing march of the government people in their isolation suits up the hill, while the hot air dance-shimmers, the obviously faked-up menace-lighting as they set up in the house, and so on). It worked the first time but wears thin later on. The most coherent criticism I've heard is that it is overly "manipulative"--meaning that these people felt the strings being pulled. But I can't take that too seriously--I think, rather, that these people are objecting to being called on to feel an emotion they feel to be "second-class." More reasonable is the criticism that Spielberg dips too heavily into Disney's well of whited sepulchers. This is certainly true, but it doesn't bother me as much as it does others.

You comment, in connection with Gandhi, that



it and such Aussie films as Breaker Morant and Gallipoli show Britain as "a real shit in world affairs" which as you say is historically reasonably accurate, and no less so for such British colonies as Australia (handing out strychnine-laced flour to Aborigines as well as the famous Tasmanian massacre) and America (equally bad record with respect to the Indians). Trouble is, these days America gives the same impression, and it seemed to me that the main point of Missing was to point precisely the same finger at America over your government's involvement in South America.

True. But everyone here is already aware of that, in general terms. The proposition seems to be fairly well accepted in literary and cinematic mythoi. There are, every year, dozens of exposes of moral corruption in the American conduct of foreign affairs--and they do make their impact, in a vegetable-empire kind of way. Missing put the information forward in very concrete terms--which is what we need much, much more of.

Trouble is, of course, that any "imperialist" power does mean promulgating and protecting that nation's commercial interests in its investments and profits with little regard for the welfare, wants, needs, and normal rights of the locals--after all, their main value is as either low-paid labour to be exploited, or as consumers who will buy such attractively advertised goods as Coca-Cola, baby foods, jeans, televisions, radios, etc. which are as useless to them as they are to the more prosperous workers of the capitalist countries. Of course, it's not only America that exerts this modern imperialism, but America as "biggest" certainly does so very visibly. And then there's the political interference to make sure that trading interests are not restricted or interfered with...that's when it all gets really nasty.

Well...I find it very difficult to believe that the U.S. government seriously thinks it is protecting the commercial and economic interests of the nation as a whole. It's very clear that someone's commercial interests are being "protected," under the unsanitary doctrines of mercantilism, but most of the actions seem... random at best. Conspiracy theorists like to think of the "underground" aristocracy of commercial families, our own equivalent of the "gnomes of Zurich," directing economic and political foreign policy in a coherent (and evil) manner. But on the whole, looking at the last twenty to thirty years, it seems to me more like simple moral corruption of individuals manifesting itself wherever an opportunity arises. Opportunity rises everywhere. And whoever has enough "pull" at the moment can tug Congressional simpletons into line to support him. More

complex--more vague than a coherent policy of mercantilism. But, I think, a more accurate teleology.

I found D Carol Roberts' "Fade to Black" fascinating, and were I nearby would certainly rush to get involved. Seems to be rather a paucity of community access stations in Britain, however, or at least in central London.

And I'd like to take issue with a bit of Prokop's article. I quite agree with him about the narrowness of Ben Bova's attitude to sf, but for quite different reasons. I see nothing wrong with people preferring good stories from the old days to some of the newest stuff--after all my favourite reading includes Jane Austen (1800s), the Mabinogion (1300s), the Tain Bo Culagne (700s-1400s). What worries me about the charge that sf fans read so much from the 30s and 40s of this century is more that they don't read older as well as newer stuff, but (presumably) stick to the narrow range, known as "genre" because it delivers nothing really new, but simply permitted variations on the same few themes. And I'm surprised at Prokop's accepting the implication that nothing new and good had been written recently, when the last few years have seen John Crowley's Little Big, Wolfe's Book of the New Sun, Bishop's No Enemy But Time, last works by Dick, Aldiss's Helliconia Spring, Priest's The Affirmation, Sladek's Roderick, Angela Carter, and lots of others I can't at the moment call to mind. And that's only the last couple of years... the last three decades have seen plenty of good stuff come out. Has it all simply passed Prokop by?

However, will look out for the Resnick Soul Eater. Mind you, anyone who can praise the Lensman series with a straight face strikes me as an unreliable guide to taste.

I think, rather, that Bova's complaint was so self-interested as to be disingenuous. It's not terribly suspicious (or portentous), for example, that a constant reader of sf might prefer the fourth re-reading of Slan to virtually anything Bova has written. But Bova was referring to the fact that reprints crowd the market for new writing. This is a marketing phenomenon only distantly related to considerations of "quality." Simply put, those reprints are "safe" from a marketing point of view--guaranteed sales based on a track record of thirty or more years.

There are some obvious considerations of "quality" that might influence this phenomenon--but they have more, I think, to do with things like weltanschauung than with fashionably lugubrious prose or highly-polished characterization.

I confess to having read not one of the books you mention, but the list of authors does not encourage. I'm more impressed--at the moment,

anyway--by the complexity of synthesis very diverse writers such as Donald Kingsbury and Octavia Estelle Butler are working with at the moment. A matter of tastes, no doubt.

Found your cheese guide rather dry and stiff going--more analogous to mousetrap cheese than an eating variety. Perhaps you could have done it as a folded liftout guide, rather than as editorial matter.

Judith Hanna

Na, und...Reading Quodlibet, you get quod libeo. Bound to be a very mixed bag.

Don D'Amassa Bill,
323 Dodge Street Thanks for Quod-
E. Providence RI 02914 libet, which had one of
the more interesting
letter columns I've encountered recently. I was particularly taken with "Scouter" and his comment that the revolution of The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress was foisted upon the majority by a minority who were more concerned with their own welfare than the common good. That's probably a fair depiction of the events in the novel.

That's a very peculiar notion. Do you not consider starvation, attendant civil disorder, and cannibalism (within seven years) to be a consideration of the "common good"? Admittedly Wyoh was in the revolution biz for other reasons, but those are the considerations that motivated Prof and Manny. In fact, it was precisely those considerations of the "common good" that convinced Manny, who didn't care to be involved.

It's also probably a fair depiction of the American Revolution and a very high percentage of all "popular" revolutions. If there had been a majority vote taken, the Revolutionary War almost certainly would not have happened, and we would still be a British colony, or Commonwealth. A large proportion of the leaders of the revolutionary movement were heavily in debt to British interests and saw a severing of political ties as a means to abrogate their debt. The Tories were subject to confiscation of their goods even if they did not materially support the British colonial government. The vast majority of people probably didn't really give a damn, and had they known what was in store for them, they might well have lynched Jefferson, Adams, Henry, and others.

It takes a hell of a lot to push the majority of a population into taking violent action. Our revolution was a conservative rather than liberal revolt, despite the fact that it frequently served as the model for liberal revolts in other countries.

Don D'Amassa

Well, American history is not my metier, but everything I've read indicates that the American Revolution was the Confused Revolution. It would be very difficult to make a case for the American Revolution being "conservative" in the same sense as was the NAZI takeover in 1933. There were certainly many "conservative" interests involved. On the other hand, the supporting theory was radical-liberal.

George Flynn
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Dear Bill,

Thanks for Quodlibet

19. I must admit that I've been hearing enough about the zine to have been thinking of writing to you anyway....

Somehow I seem to have read this account of "Metro Fandom" before. The idea of not having a local fandom seems strange to me, since currently I belong to at least three only marginally overlapping ones--and some of those overlap with still others.

Hmmm. You might have read Loren MacGregor's much more witty account in a recent Izzard. It happened that Loren wrote his for the Nielsen Haydens at the same time I was composing mine for Quodlibet. The coincidence brought about at least three issues of Lounge Dub, a modestly unsuccessful fmz of, by, and for the Lounge Lizards.

It was very strange for me to be without a local fandom--I mean, Little Men's was here, but it didn't feel right. Lounge Lizards feels right.

"Only in San Francisco"? Well, I don't know. Reading your account sent me to the Boston yellow pages: while they don't have discount coupons of any sort, the ordinary listings under "Massage" read much the same (curiously enough, this is on the page after "Marriage Counselors," where the sex therapists are listed). It's interesting how many of the "Massage" listings have just a phone number but no address....

But it was the discount coupon, not the service itself, that was remarkable. Every major city offers those services. In the SF Yellow Pages, "Massage" has twenty-one pages of listings, but is separated from "Marriage, Family & Child Counselors" by three pages of "Martial Arts." Top that.

Hmmm, I read The Other just a few months ago. I seem to recall that I liked it; but on the other hand I can't now recall the plot in any more detail than you indicate, so I guess it wasn't all that impressive.

Actually, I quite enjoyed The Other, right up to the point at which the boy's schizophrenia was revealed. Then I lost interest abruptly.

Even Heinlein doesn't deserve to be judged on the basis of I Will Fear No Evil....

"In an anarchy there is someplace else to go if you don't like it where you are." Well, that's true now, at least in those countries that allow you to leave. But even in an anarchy there isn't likely to be much in the way of places without social systems already set up, as long as the population density is anything like it is now. A frontier is really a prerequisite for the freedom to move out being very meaningful.

Depends on what you mean by "meaningful." Back in the days when Charles Schultz was doing more than taking up space on the editorial page, he had Linus say something that has stuck with me for twenty years (so far): "There is no problem in the world so great that it cannot be run away from." Occasionally I've had problems beyond my power to influence or cope. Sometimes I just had to endure, but other times I managed to solve them—permanently—by running away, changing environments, getting away from people whose preconceptions and expectations of me were so powerful that they threatened to swamp me. Or getting out from under the external stimuli I was reacting so badly to. My move to San Francisco was like that: I was unable to find and hold a job I enjoyed in Phoenix. I think now that there were lots of external things about that situation I wasn't aware of at the time. I thought it was Just The Way I Was. Moving to San Francisco, I stepped into a seller's market for skills and had a chance to stretch my legs and show what I could do. Got vast amounts of egoboo (read: positive feedback), and that allowed me the "slack" I needed to work through other psychological problems. Seven years later, I'm much more comfortable with myself than I've ever been.

Those quite minor changes were certainly "meaningful" to me. Frontiers in the psychological sense exist in the psychological sense, if you take my meaning.

The interesting possibility of anarchies is the ability to move into completely different social systems—from a syndicalist to a communitarian to a Georgist—even into local socialisms or theocracies, if that kind of thing suits you. The notion that everyone's psychological and social needs are best served by a moderately class-structured society—or any single social form—has always seemed to me absurd.

Can't say I've ever seen "ad libidem" as opposed to "ad libitum," and I suspect that whoever listed the former as the basis for "ad lib" just didn't know Latin very well. I was somewhat startled by Redd Boggs' suggestion that "ad lib" (or, more usually, "ad-lib") is becoming archaic, since I would have said that it was still in quite common use. But maybe that's just in my vocabulary, since I also go back to the days of golden-age radio. It is of course a lot

easier to notice a new word coming into use than to notice an old one disappearing (until people start asking you what it means).

I don't think "ad lib" is going out of usage: television is keeping the term quite alive. Still, you can never tell. Not everyone picks up even things that are supposed to be common coin.

I like St. Elsewhere, but somehow manage to miss it at least two-thirds of the time, most commonly because I've dozed off by then. This is curious, since I almost always manage to watch Hill Street Blues no matter how tired I am; perhaps one could develop a scale to measure how much one really likes a show by such means. You know, around here some people have complained that none of the characters on St. Elsewhere and other shows with Boston locales have Boston accents. It occurs to me that this is just as well, since most of the country thinks a Boston accent is the same thing as a Harvard accent.

Hmph. I spent several months in Boston in 1980 and found about 15% of the population had that particular speech impediment. (I shall not soon forget hearing, in the Sheraton World Headquarters, about "ow-uh fee-uh-less lee-duh." Made me want to call in Henry Higgins to tread her violets). When I took the dictation test for the temporary agency, the dictater had a very thick Harvard accent, and every time he said "commer," meaning "comma," I typed "commerce." When you're tootling along at 110 wpm, you're largely working in advance of the voice). The agency people understood the problem—laughed quite a lot, in fact, and didn't downgrade me for errors.

Contrariwise, I may miss Hill Street Blues, but I watch St. Elsewhere religiously. I can never remember the name of the show, though. Whenever I talk about it, I can recall clearly the theme-music and have to whistle it and get others to remind me of the name. The network is now re-running the first season, and I'm finding that if I had seen the very earliest episodes of the show, I probably would not have tuned back to it later. It didn't begin to hit its stride until the fourth or fifth episode, but, glorioski, what a stride.

I started out disliking Hill Street Blues, but am now quite won over. Part of the problem, I discovered, was that I didn't care for Furillo at all. Now that he's moved away from center stage, I can accept the show with much more enjoyment.

Terry Carr
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Dear Bill,
Quodlibet 19
arrived before I'd
managed to finish

reading #18 (the reading-crunch for Best SF of the Year always keeps me busy in December and January), so now I have two issues to respond to. Separately I'm sending you a copy of the most recent of my fanzines, a two-year-old Diaspar, of which I have any remaining copies....It should, anyway, serve to demonstrate that I agree with your thoughts about how fans oughtta move with the times in their methods of fanzine production, since that Diaspar, like most of the fanzines I've produced for the last fifteen years, is Xeroxed. There's a lot to be said for the hand-crafted qualities of mimeo-on-twilstone, and all of it's been said many times over, but I incline to the view that the best method of producing fanzines is the one that's easiest: fans who don't have to mess with inky rollers and showthrough will probably publish more often, and frequency of publication is a fannish virtue that's been insufficiently lauded in recent years because we've so seldom had examples to laud. Besides, one can produce fanzines by Xerox that still have the personal touch: the Enchanted Duplicator is the one with a trufan using it, after all, and "duplicator" doesn't have to mean "mimeograph." Nor do I recall Ted White ever railing against Xeroxerie as such--remember that the first few issues of Pong were produced by Xerox, until he and Dan lost their Connection.

Frequency of publication is one of those fannish virtues honored more in the breach than in the observance, true. I think we're getting, now, a taste of the reason that might be so: I'm receiving about twenty fanzines a month, most of them of the small-and-frequent variety (lordy, the number of Pig on the Walls alone is staggering!), on top of doing my own used-to-be-monthly fmz. Before I widened my mailing list to 150, I made it a policy to loc every fmz and respond to every loc as well as print it. That's simply impossible now. In fact, although I really like the quality and quantity of locs Quodlibet is receiving, I'm forced to consider cutting back on distribution, simply because--as you can see with this issue--the locs are overrunning the format. Tsuch complaints! That I should have tsuch complaints, oy!

Your survey in #18 of last year's movies was interesting largely because it showed that though you're certainly no vapid media freak, you and I disagree on a whole lot of stuff. You thought Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid a great improvement on Pennies from Heaven, for instance, whereas I thought DMDNP had nothing to offer but its gimmick of inter-cutting clips from '40s movies and even that wore thin very quickly for me, but Pennies from Heaven is my favorite movie of the last several years: its mixing-and-contrasting the ashcan realism of many '30s pictures with the romantic fantasies of the dance numbers

struck me as incisive ('30s movies had no middle ground), especially since Steve Martin's character in PfH brought the theme to the fore so well.

Well...perhaps I was overhasty about PfH. I didn't like the character, I don't much care for the genre, and the contrast between the glossy dance numbers and the tawdry "realities" didn't make it less repugnant. On the other hand, as you point out, it was conceptually "tight" and "technically proficient," a skillfully done work I don't find personally very attractive. DMDWP was less technically proficient--as you say, it relied too heavily on its gimmick--but I still felt better about it on the whole.

And though I was taken in by E.T.'s sentimentalism just as you were, I'm someone who cries at weddings and curtain calls (to steal an old line of Miriam Knight's); the movie was really pretty bad. It's still the best sf movie of 1982, I guess, but that's extremely faint praise. (As usual, I'm voting "no award" in the Best Dramatic Presentation" category of the Hugos).

We seem to disagree about TV programs, too. I'm addicted to Hill Street Blues, but St. Elsewhere leaves me cold; it has the multiplex form but zero content. Carol and I gave it a hopeful try; we watched the opener and even though it bored us we tried the second show, too. But twenty minutes into that second show Carol turned a pained face to me and said, "Can we please turn this off now?" We did.

I sympathize. As I've said earlier, if I had caught only the opening shows, I wouldn't have tuned back in. The leather scene in the first episode and the bizarre seduction in the pathology lab were *ick*, to borrow an old Azapa expression. One of my current roomies is a nursing student, and we get extra kicks watching it together, trying to out-diagnose the interns. Successful most of the time, too. My antique PDR gets a workout on Tuesday nights.

Please note that it was M*A*S*H that pioneered the several-plots-at-once format for TV shows, with Barney Miller copying it once it had proven popular. Hill St. came along later when soap operas posing as dramatic shows were successes, so Hill St. adapted the soaps. When that made it, along came St. Elsewhere. Kind of interesting that, in this general format, we've had two comedy shows, one set in a hospital and one in a police station, followed by two dramatic shows set in a police station and a hospital. TV producers are so very imaginative.

Ummm. I think your explanation is a little suspect. M*A*S*H did use the continuing story technique, starting some time ago--but some time after All in the Family (and its progeny) began using it. But M*A*S*H relied on the standard sit-com formula (the episode-crisis) as

its base, although it made extensive use of multiple-plots, right up to the end. Barney Miller, on the other hand, started out as a different beast. For example, even in the earliest shows, before the characters were refined, there was no single, most important, crisis. I mind particularly an episode in which the situation is a stake-out, everyone in the building and the neighborhood is dropping in for kaffee-klatsch, Fish is contemplating divorce, and Barney Miller's wife is constantly calling up for advice with retiling the bathroom. The situation inherently called for a polytelotic turnover of material, both in situation and in ensemble. Note how both shows handled turnover of personnel: M*A*S*H introduced one new character at a time and integrated him into the ensemble. Those called up for a crisis were dropped as soon as the show was finished with them. In BM, new officers came in, stayed for a few episodes, went away, and showed up later. Fish retired and popped up in three or four episodes years later. Ray the wino popped in for the precinct open house and showed up at infrequent intervals, showing a consistent development outside the confines of the show. The two shows begin from different theories of structure. I still regard M*A*S*H as basically a sit-com and Barney Miller as an ensemble comedy--different genres. The mark of the sit-com is the star; the mark of the ensemble show is that there is no, real star. There is clearly no star in St. Elsewhere, and although HSB keeps trying to make Daniel Travanti the star, characters like Renko, Esterhaus, and Belcher are so "grabbing" that the show does not rest comfortably focused on that other wimp.

You have pushed a button, sir. Now I will shut up.

All of your editorial comments were interesting, in both issues, and of the outside material in #18 I particularly enjoyed D. Carol Roberts' piece on the Emperor Norton show. I keep seeing references to this in fanzines and letter-subbs like Allyn Cadogan's, and as the list says, I was interviewed for it myself, but since I live in Oakland, naturally I've never had the chance to see it.

Drop in on one of the ENSFH parties at Westercon sometime. D&Co. bring a VTR and set it up for the room television, running ENSFH all night.

In your piece on the Lounge Lizards I missed seeing much about who's attending those meetings and what goes on. Fanclubs meeting in bars is a venerable old tradition, especially in England with the White Horse of oldtime fame and more recently the One Tun; around here we of course had the Cellar until Earthquake

McGoon's had to move--not that the fan & pro habitues of that constituted a fanclub as such, but then neither, I gather, do the Brits at the One Tun. I wonder, do the Lounge Lizards stand around cheerfully insulting each other in the most horrid fashion, peeing on each other's shoes, etc.? Probably not, I guess: we in the colonies don't have the distinguished traditions of the Brits.

Well...when the opportunity arises for the gratuitous or, hopefully, humorous insult, there are very few Lounge Lizards who will pass it up. The most stylish references, though, are to Bill Breiding's erstwhile hair or Stacy's predeliction for falling asleep at parties.

As to who shows up, lordy there's a million of 'em, and I can't keep track. The Midwestern Expatriates are there. The ENSFH crew shows up on a more-or-less regular basis. Rich Coad and his circle are regulars. Cheryl Cline. Mog. Seattlites. And then there's a bewildering variety of people I don't get introduced to because no-one, apparently, ever introduces anyone else, assuming that everyone knows everyone else. I may know lots of these people in print, but who can tell?

As someone who came into fandom near the end of the justified-margin tradition, I published most of my early fanzines by the type-a-dummy-copy-first method. I thought it made a fanzine look neat and attractive, when done correctly, but after a few years I decided the improvement in appearance didn't equal the double typing effort, and abandoned it. Now you can imagine my envy of fanzine editors with machines that will automatically justify typed copy for them--and allow them to make revisions so easily. The latter in particular would be a godsend in my professional writing, and I suppose that in a few years when the prices become lower I'll give up my trusty old Selectric and plunk down the cash for one o' them newfangled things. Bob Silverberg bought one recently, and though while he was learning how to use it he accidentally erased the first chapter of a novel, he now loves it. Says it's great if you decide along about chapter seven to change a character's name.

Terry Carr

I do quite a lot of professional-type writing on the Xerox 850 and find that its main advantage lies in revisions--not the petty things you're talking about, but where you decide that a chapter isn't quite right and has to be done over from scratch, or when you discover that something you wrote in early in the ms is factually incorrect and affects the entire remainder of the story. The biggest boon I appreciate is that you never have to retape the

entire ms--just make your revisions and run them out. Shepherding the machine may be tedious--but it's tedious at the rate of about one page per minute standing over the machine, not at the rate of seven or eight pages per hour whacking away at the keys. Takes a lot of the drudgery out of the creative work.

The Xerox is not the best machine for a writer, though (at least, not the 850); there is an utterly necessary step in readying a ms for printout called "reformatting" which is a real, time-consuming pain in the butt.

Newer wordprocessors, such as the NBI, have neat features like automatic spellers to correct many typos, automatic sequencers, etc. Sexy machines. Still, I have a certain fondness for the Selectronic, a now-antiquated typesetting machine that had an 8,000-character memory. It gave one complete control over the appearance of the text out of a typewriter-like thingie. If IBM were to make one of those with a 64K main memory, I'd probably buy it in preference to a wordprocessor.

Ah--on June 13, the end is near in sight. At page 23, it'd better be.

Sorry about the delay between 19 and 20. There's a bit of a story there: I got involved in a bit of state (shudder) politics, helping get an initiative started. The initiative bears a strong resemblance to the Nuclear Freeze initiative last year, but calls, instead, for the establishment of a permanent, civilian space station before 1990. The text is as follows:

THE SPACE INITIATIVE

Findings and Declaration

Section 1: We the People of the State of California do find and declare that,

(a) The National Goal of Landing a Man on the Moon demonstrated that American talent, commitment, and resources could accomplish a task once believed impossible, and

(b) An unprecedented quarter-century of Space Exploration has greatly expanded our understanding of the Earth, our companion planets, and the universe beyond, and

(c) NASA's programs have resulted in extraordinary scientific and technological advances that have returned, over twelve years, approximately \$14 billion for each \$1 billion invested, and

(d) A reusable Space Shuttle is now available

to transport materials and products back to Earth from research and industrial facilities that can utilize the unique resources and environment of space, and

(e) Establishing such orbiting facilities with international participation will reaffirm our society's creative leadership in a rapidly changing world by combining a pioneering spirit with a positive vision for our future.

Text of Transmittal

Section 2: Within one month after enactment of this statute, the Governor of the State of California shall sign and cause to be delivered to the President of the United States, the following, that:

The People of the State of California respectfully request the President and Congress of these United States to direct the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to establish, before this decade is out, a permanently inhabited Space Station, as the cornerstone of an expanded and continuing civilian space program for the benefit of all humanity.

Neat, huh?

Now, you may think that working on an initiative is a passing strange position for an anarchist to be in, and you would be right. I plead that I was seduced--partly by the challenge, partly victimized by inability to stand by and see any job botched, and partly because, well, I thought it important.

It didn't give my anarchist conscience too much trouble (well...some), because the initiative process is an acceptable type of guerilla warfare against a representative system. Throws all kinds of monkey wrenches into the works and constitutes a minor annoyance to the Powers-That-Be. And so long as I did not myself register and vote, I'm technically "in the clear." My understanding is that I am simply urging people to follow their convictions (statist) as I follow mine (non-statist). If it's fun and harmless--why not?

And if this strikes you as rationalization, you're welcome to your opinion. I might even agree with you.

I got into this through the back door: Tim Kyger asked me to help with the Northern California Space Caucus, a group that is exactly what it sounds like--a caucus of space groups in the Northern California area. Well, that's okay. They needed a lot of clerical support, so I wound up being the Secretary. But then the NCSC decided to do the initiative, and I kind of got sucked into the quick, emergency work to get it going. Now I've wound up on the governing

Board. But, frankly, I'm burned out after three months of flat-out effort.

I do like the challenge, though. The work I do routinely calls on so little of my abilities that something like this promised to be--something that provided a real stretch--is/was compelling,

whether or not I'm convinced of the general worthwhile-ness of the project. By the time Quodlibet 21 comes out, I'll have a resolution on the question.

And if this doesn't provoke a wrathful loc from Sam Konkin, nothing will...

