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INDICTA

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Quodlibetal.

Well, I've given up on trying to create order out of this chaos. I've got three different drafts of **Quodlibetal.**, begun three different times and on three different sets of machines. Hell with it. Every time I try to sort out the drafts, it gets delayed another month. I'm just going to print them as I got 'em. You can sort things out if you wish. Verbal cuisinart...

Surprise!

After pubbing 22½ issues in four years, I disappeared for a year. End of April, '84. This is being written on April 13, 1985. Well, apologies are not in order. I never promised anything except quodlibeo--what I wish.

Actually, I've started recompiling this issue three times, but what was begun in leisure has been repented in haste, and each of the three recensions have since disappeared. The last disappearance (in October) would have been final and irremediable, because it was all on disk, and we changed wordprocessing systems in January. Xerox disks are not compatible with the NBI, and I just couldn't see spending the \$350 required to convert the formats. This means that the material--mostly a zineful of thought-provoking locs--would have been irretrievably lost. Fortunately, though, I unearthed a complete hardcopy and ran it through our Optical Character Reader, and it appeared (magic! magic!) in my screen. So apologies aren't due on that one--particularly to Gary Farber, who wrote eight pages of single-spaced microelite as only the ~~FARBER~~ Farbeleh can.

And now that's out of the way...

Let's see. I quit my job at Alioto & Alioto (& Alioto, Italians unlimited) at the end of April, '84 and took a month or so off to prepare for probable going into business with my partner (Joe Sheffer) in an AI development scheme. I don't remember, at this remove of time, what I may have said about that, so, briefly: Joe and I have been working for the last two years on a fundamentally new approach to the computer natural language interface. We've got a system set up that looks a little bizarre from conventional standpoint(s), but it is a genuine natural language interface in that it allows the computer to store and manipulate the full context of English language sentences (only English at this point, although there's no particular reason it couldn't be set up in other languages or input in one language and output in another). It is

extremely relation-rich, but with only a fraction of the memory cost of a relational database. Our database is a semantic network composed of interlocking tree structures defined in part by the incoming text and in part by entries in the Vocabulary File. Some of the entries we make in advance; others are made by the system itself during input-processing. This database is so dense and so memory-efficient that we can implement this natural language interface on a microcomputer--in fact, the demonstration prototype of natural-language inquiry system we developed in February of last year was run on a TRS-80 with 48K RAM. It was programmed then in Interpretive Basic, but that was so slow that we've since bought a Tandy 2000 and loaded on Forth, which runs lickety-split. We think this is a real revolution in AI work, and I can't think of anything comparable to it.

At any rate, back in the early Spring of '84, we were showing this demonstration prototype to various venture capitalist types in and around Silicon Valley. If somebody showed sufficient interest in it, we would have to move very quickly into the full-scale development, so I was positioning myself to be ready to do just that. For one reason or another this never materialized--partly, we concluded, because we should never have been showing it to venture capitalists in the first place (because they were looking for a fully-developed product that can be taken to market) and partly because the bottom dropped out of the venture capital market at about that time. It shows no sign of rematerializing so far and probably won't until the uncertainties about changes in the tax laws are clarified.

So when my cash reserves began running out, I eked them out by temping for Alioto & Alioto. In July, they offered me a substantial raise, with increase in benefits, so I came back to work for them full-time. When the Office Manager quit to go back to school in August, they offered me that job, which I accepted in mid-September. It then took about two months to get all the various balls back in the air.

In October, the crush of work was becoming so disastrous that I persuaded the partners to spring for a new wordprocessing system--the NBI Office Automation System 64. This issue of Quodlibet is being done on it. Getting to the point where they would make such a decision required about a month's worth of research. I wound up writing a thirty-page report and recommendation, complete with charts, graphs, diagrams, and Tables showing branching possibilities for conversion. The people at NBI were impressed. They told me I should go into the consultation business.

And then there was the incredibly major hassle of getting the contracts signed and the equipment delivered and setup. We wound up with the OASys 64--a 60 Mb Winchester disc ICU driving five wordprocessing stations, three printers, two PC workstations, an Optical Character Reader and intelligent modem hooked up to Westlaw's legal research database.

That was a disaster from the start: not one person did what he said he would do during the entire six weeks of the delivery and installation. We had to have an outside electrical contractor come in to install the wiring--which meant thirty-two meters of twisted-pair and coaxial cabling run through wiremold conduit. But the contractor did not specify wiremolding, despite the fact that that was all we discussed, so when they actually began installing it, they laid two-inch diameter steel conduit down the halls until I saw it and became hysterical. Whereupon they took it all down and put in the wiremolding we had originally discussed. Then the delivery--coming from Boulder CO--was scheduled for December 26. Some of it arrived on December 20; the rest dribbled in over the next two weeks. Our supplies didn't arrive until the system had

been up and running for about a week. We still haven't gotten Westlaw hooked up properly. The tables for the printers didn't arrive until days after the printers were installed, and the sound hoods arrived even later. When I tried to install the sound hoods, I discovered that we had to unhook some of the coaxial cables, which required the Field Engineers from NBI to come out again and do it all from scratch.

But it's up and running now. A real beauty and a pleasure to use.

The training was another matter. NBI has the most screwed-up training I've ever heard of. The idea of the approach is quite sound: split the training up into a number of four-hour segments on different days so that the trainees can be using the material they learn on the job. Unfortunately, the classes were composed of a mix of people who had their systems set up, who weren't going to get their systems set up for another week or two, who had used wordprocessors before, or who were making the leap from electric typewriter to wordprocessor in one jump. They proceeded so slowly and covered so little of value, that my secretaries came back from the classes still unable to operate the machines to do the work that needed to be done. Fortunately, we hadn't yet gotten rid of the old Xerox 850's, and we've been using them to fill in the gaps in our education. With the OCR, we can even have a document produced on the Xerox 850 and read it into the NBI, so as we become more skilled, we are transferring material from one system to the other. The lettercolumn was treated this way, so I wouldn't have to retype it.

I was kinda looking forward to 1985, but it's turned into a succession of disasters. In late February, a surprise reorganization of the office took place, and my position was abolished. I thought for awhile that I would be, too, but that finally stabilized so that I get to keep the title--and the job--occupying a niche in the nether-nether ecology of a firm whose dynamics might have been the inspiration for Doc Smith's Trencu.

A week after the reorganization, a deal Joe and I had been putting together with a company in New Zealand fell through with a great thud, and the whole project was placed on the back burner for six months or so.

Except that we recently discovered that our remarkable and innovative work had been anticipated in 1970 (the language PROLOG) and was just now catching on because the Japanese have adopted it for their Fifth Generation Project. The discovery was a bit depressing at first, but it may turn out to be the best thing that could have happened, considering. Time, as they say, Will Tell. Frankly, we're both tired of it after two years of intense--and uncompensated--labor.

A week after that I got the news that my flat had been sold and the new landlord was evicting us as of the middle of April. Joy! Rapture unrestrained!

After a few weeks' worth of mutual threats, we finally got that situation stabilized to the point that we have until the end of April to move out.



At first, I wanted to find a quiet, one-bedroom apartment for \$400 or less a month. The agencies I betook myself to just laughed at me. So I wound up going the roommate route again and found a recently-renovated flat with only two flatmates (albeit in a dull and inconvenient neighborhood) but a deck and a spectacular view of downtown SF for only \$50 a month more than I was paying on 14th Street.

So the month of April was spent packing and carting around boxes and grumbling a lot. I made the move on April 27, so my new address is:

1729 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco CA 94115

There were other and subsidiary disasters, allarums, and excursions, but I won't bore you/me by recounting them here/now.

Three false starts later, **Quodlibet** resurfaces and gasps for air. Most of the material herein has been buried since--what? May of 1983. Shaking of head.

Well, I've been a little busy...still am, in fact.

In some ways, I'm happy to have missed active participation in the last eight months of zine fandom, because the odor of the activity has been less than pleasing in all of its parts. In fact, not to put too fine a point on it, fanzine fandom developed an oderiferous armpit, what with Bergeron, Avedon Carol, rich brown, and the Nielsen Haydens versus the world erupting into flame everytime I went to pick up mail. Heaving of sighs. That may have something to do with why I haven't been picking up my mail more often than once every two months or so.

Perhaps now that the Taff race is over, things will calm down again. Reflection at a distance yields the conclusion that it was interesting--if only because it revealed an absolutely classic pattern on the development of fan feuds. But I'm also glad I wasn't in on it. The only impassioned letter I wrote was to Dick Bergeron saying "can't you find something more interesting and/or momentous to talk about than Avedon Carol and her admittedly manifest insufficiencies...?"

On the whole I'm most inclined to agree with Pickersgill's (?) speculation that perhaps Taff has had its day; perhaps it's time to put it away, because it certainly doesn't seem to be doing what it's supposed to be doing. The awfully patronizing material I see popping up about how the English and European votes have to be protected and weighted and so on and so forth doesn't impress me much.

Not to get too bogged down in a situation which doesn't interest me at all, let's pass on to subjects of more moment.

I recently saw Steven King's new movie, **Cat's Eye**. King has apparently found something else to do with his unpublishable novellas, for Cat's Eye is an anthology film, three stories loosely tied together by the framing device of introducing and following the peregrinations of the cat who becomes a major character in the third segment. The movie also demonstrates King's desperate need for an editor who can point out and eliminate the schlock King seems to favor. Not to put too fine a point on the commentary, the movie--or, part of it, anyway--was disgusting, utterly repellent, lacking even the putative saving grace of subtlety. And then it sank back into mediocrity.

Segment 1 is a takeoff on those "quit smoking" clinics that use aversion therapy and operant conditioning. King's "twist" is that the thug running the clinic (Alan King) tortures, not the client (James Woods) but the client's wife and child. A classic idiot plot. Woods simply caves in to King's bizarre worldview with scarcely a mumble of protest. At the end, he winds up toasting King.

Segment 2 has a gambling mobster (Kenneth McMillan) running an aging tennis pro (Robert Hays) through a complicated bait-and-switch bet. Hays has to creep all the way around a skyscraper in Atlantic City on a five-inch ledge, beset by a pecking pigeon and harrassment from McMillan. Then Hays turns the tables, and McMillan falls to his death.

The first two segments were almost classic Twilight Zone material. Segment 3 was a bit more like Dante's Gremlins. The premise is that a tiny troll (complete with a 1-inch kris) gets tired of living under a bridge and comes to live in the walls of a little girl's (Drew Barrymore) bedroom. The cat fights the troll in one of the most unbelievable animal sequences ever filmed and sends it into a fan. Yes, we are treated to a detailed examination of the remains.

King scripted this one, so there's no one else to blame for it. It's as sleazy and pointless a production as ever I've seen, full of moronic slapstick and self-conscious pop references (e.g., at one point, McMillan says to Hays: "You get the girl, the gold watch, and everything." The rest of the film's references are about on that level).

The most depressing thing about the experience, though, was the audience laughing at the slapstick torture sequences of the first segment. I confess to a breach of good manners: I was so incensed and disgusted that I shouted "Do you morons think this is funny?" Someone shouted back (shouting seems to be de rigueur at the St. Francis Theatre) "It's only a fucking movie!"

Trouble is, it wasn't and isn't. It's a fucking barometer.



In Quodlibet 21 I made the rather basic mistake of placing caricatures or evocative drawings next the incoming locs, without either seeking permission or crediting prior appearances. I've apologized to a number of complainants already, privately, but owe a round of apologies to everyone else. Sorry about that. Good intentions and so forth, in conflict with the inevitably hasty preparation of the issue. I did like the design effect, and if I do it again, I'll try to touch all the right bases.

I recently bought a membership in the Smithsonian Institute, and I'm finding that the monthly magazine, Smithsonian, is one of the most remarkable buys I've ever made, for it is exactly as eclectic as that museum. The May issue, for example, contains a short article on heraldry using as a hook the anecdote about the Bloody Hand of Ulster. In the same issue is a discussion of the McIlhenny Tabasco empire, following up on April's article on seasoning peppers; articles on the Iriwaddy River; Gypsy Moths; the new Dallas Museum of Art; cognitive mapping; recycling architectural ornaments; and remembrances of D-Day, Robert Henri, and

the Mitchell-Ruff Duo.

Very few of Smithonian's articles go beyond the level of the superficial, but they are uniformly written in a lively, entertaining style--a joy to read each month. I can't imagine a better encouragement to support the Smithsonian Institute--even if I never make it to DC.

I watched The First Olympics--Athens, 1896 on television this past week and was both moderately entertained and somewhat seriously bemused by the liberties taken with the history. I think I understand some of the reasons for diddling with the facts--but I still think them bad and inadequate reasons. For example, the film has three Americans participating in the Marathon, whereas the U.S. did not actually have any entrants in that event. I suspect the filmmakers fudged the history so that they could "involve" the viewers in that important event, thereby getting them the "room" they needed to bring out and play on S. Louis' symbolic significance to Greece and to the Games. Coincidentally, this allowed them to make up an event otherwise undocumented to explain the lifelong friendship between two formerly antagonistic Olympians.

While the incident worked dramatically, I can't help but feel somewhat cheated on the whole. What else from this supposedly "factual" documentary is made up from whole cloth? Is, indeed, any of it to be trusted as history? If The First Olympics had not purported to be factual, it would have been a fine work of fiction--a bit melodramatic, perhaps, but isn't that a part of the portrayal of the Mauve Decade? As history, it Bites the Big One. Should have watched the other special instead. Bulwer-Lytton's histrionic Last Days of Pompeii.

...So let me become stultifyingly serious for a moment and wonder about the place of fanzines in mainstream fanac these days.

I'm told that at one time, a fanzine was a major part of mainstream fanac--perhaps the defining aspect of fanac. One entered fandom, pottered around awhile as a noxious neo, then started doing fanzines. The fanzine either put the polish on your neohoodship and set you on the path to the Magic Mimeo, or it did not, and you gafiated. You had your local (club) fanac and your collection, and you attended conventions, sure--but the fanzine ordered your fanac, whether you edited, wrote manuscripts, loomed fiercely, or merely subscribed as deadwood. If, in the scholastic definition, the soul is the animating principle of the body, then the fanzine was the soul of fandom.

I can accept this as a historical formulation, because I seem to have picked up on it as late as 1968, when I got into local fandom. Perhaps I introjected it because fanhistories written about the forties were a significant part of my fannish learning-curve. But there was little obvious evidence of this philosophy outside the histories, even then, and it is actively being contested now. The growing breed of convention fans claim that the center of fanac is the convention. And they may be right. "Fankind," their massed voices ring with conviction, "shall not be crucified on a cross of twiltone."

Most of the people who receive Quodlibet are fanzine fans by inclination, so I'm going to assume that I don't have to defend fanzines. For all their inherent limitations, they fill certain psychological needs in a way that cannot be paralleled (or pareiled).

But the "ante" -- what it costs to get into the game--is fairly high: access to certain equipment, for example, often requires an unabashed willingness to take advantage of the good nature (or lax enforcement) of Those In Authority. Questions of basic literacy seem to become yearly more imponderable. And then there is the real show-stopper: a fanzine cannot--ever--have the sense of "immediacy" offered by real-time experiences. The fanzine inherently trades off immediacy for permanence, to gain the precious advantage of the completed thought and enough time to evaluate it.

Manning

the



Barricades

While these advantages seem overwhelmingly important to us, it must be noted that not everyone places the same premium on verbal communication. The most frequent fanzines routinely require three months or more between writing something and publication of a response. That is quite long enough to forget what you originally wrote, so that you must review your own text. After sufficient practice locating fanzines, chess by mail ought to be a snap.

That fanzining has certain inherent entrance barriers would probably not have occurred to anyone thirty years ago. But we are no longer a tiny, ignored community of the bookish-to-begin-with. Stfnal movies attract hundreds of thousands of patrons every day. N.B. I figured that last night I could see Indiana Jones because the terribly crowded Search for Spok opening would siphon off most of its potential patrons. Wrong. At 9:15 p.m., the 10:15 showing was sold out, with a substantial line waiting for 12:45 tickets. The ticketholders' line for the 10:15 showing stretched to the distant end of the block, turned down an alley, continued all the way to the next block, turned again and went back up the street nearly to the end of the block--a quarter mile long. More than 140 million people saw Star Wars as of last year's Variety estimates. Made-for-television sf movies routinely take 8-10 million viewers per play.

The wonder is that we don't have more than seven thousand trying to get into major sf conventions.

And what is the complexion of our community? That's a tough question, because it hinges on how you define fandom, which hinges in turn on how you define fannish. And that's another can of worms. But perhaps there are some gross-behavioral inclusions-exclusions that can be made, just to give us a liberal estimation.

Let's suppose that we're interested in looking at the "mainstream" of fandom, and let's suppose further that it can be defined in some nebulous way. Starting with the exclusions, we can exclude anyone whose principal fanac belongs to the sphere of a recognized fringe fandom--Tolkein, Burroughs, Lovecraft, Dr. Who, Oz, SCA, Regency tea dancing, and movie cults. This is a fairly traditional exclusion, as anyone who remembers the Famous Monsters fans can testify. In excluding film cults, I don't want to exclude, at this point, people who are primarily "media fans," just those whose main fanac is tied in with a particular movie. Participating in George Lucas' fanclub or doing a Trekzine does not include one in mainstream sf fandom. There are thousands of people who may or may not be a part of mainstream sf fandom whose principal fanac involves "the movies" in some respect. Also, fairly obviously, a mainstream fan may cross over to one or more of these fringe fandoms without necessarily migrating out of the mainstream.

The second exclusion I propose is that the individual must be routinely involved in fanac of one kind or another. Remembering that we have left out fringe fandom fanac, this leaves us with people who collect or deal in sf and/or attend conventions and/or participate in local fandoms, and/or are involved in a way in some more-than-perfunctory way. Fairly obviously, a single contribution to an apa does not qualify one as a more-than-momentary and -accidental participant in mainstream fandom. On the other hand, it would not be either fair or profitable to exclude certain old-time fans whose only fanac is annual minac in FAPA, for example. So this criterion must be interpreted with some flexibility.

The third exclusion I propose would involve some minimal awareness and deliberateness of participation in the fannish subculture. Someone who is not aware that there exist such things as fanzines, or who is aware but has not worked up enough interest to actually look at a few--or

drop in on local clubs--could not conceivably qualify. Very obviously, there are fans who reject one or more of the cornerstone activities of the subculture--vide Richard Bergeron and Harry Warner, Jr. and their deliberate avoidance of conventions. This does not make them any the less a part of the mainstream of fandom.

What this leaves us with is a smallish number (perhaps ten thousand or so, worldwide) people who regularly participate in conventions, and/or local clubs, and/or bibliophilic activities, and/or fanzines. There is a somewhat larger number of people around the fringes who don't really understand what's going on but have some kind of interest in the phenomenon. I figure that there must be less than three thousand fanzine fans worldwide, with an average circulation per fmz of two or three hundred, overlapping. How big an impact would you expect fanzines to have nowadays? Although we siphon off a certain amount of new blood from the growth of the convention's importance, it seems fairly clear that the colophon now wags the indicta. Fanzines tend to be relatively more "in-groupish," so that the opportunity for exposure is reduced at the same time that we erect another entrance barrier, of issues which cannot be expected to be of general interest. Vide this article, in this fanzine.

The question of "general interest" is another provocative imponderable. If we fanzine fans constitute a third of the population of mainstream fanac, who composes the remainder, and what are their abiding interests?

Quite clearly the dominant interest in mainstream fanac is in mediaconnected sf. This generation and succeeding generations of fans are brought in by visual imagery, rather than verbal imagery. Fandom's own entrance barriers of involvement will tend to screen out a certain number of the "communication incompetent," but this trend will eventually place an increasing mental rift between two camps of practitioners as they deal with their image-sets in fundamentally different ways. Even fanzine fandom will be affected by this visual/verbal rift in unanticipated ways, despite the fact that the fanzine is the camp of the verbally-dominant.

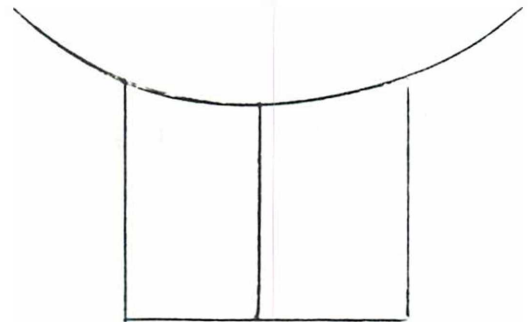
In any case, the phenomenon is well under way. As fanzines have turned in on themselves, they have left vacant the position of nexus. The fanzine has ceased to be the place where fanac comes together. That position has been taken over by the convention. Our mantle has necessarily fallen. Pretensions to the contrary are merely laughable.

And that's okay. We are fallen back on our own resources--on the essential truth that we engage in a-jay because it fills a personal need as does nothing else.

But we must also concede that the convention fills personal needs in unparalleled ways. What might those needs be?

We know why we go to conventions. Some of those criteria may apply. Others--such as the desire to experience one's contributors tete-a-tete--do not. I've already mentioned the agreeable phenomenon of "immediacy." There is a certain excitement to a convention, a sense of

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not knowing what experience is around the next pilaster, that everyone who has ever attended a convention in his neohoodshipcyness will understand. For the nonfanzine-fan, the convention is the place where every aspect of his fannish experience comes together--the movies, the pros, the other fans local and non-, and the experience of the splendid multi-facetedness of it all. I think that this is the force which drives a convention-fan above every other consideration: the sense of barely-subdued excitement which restores the original meaning of gafia: Getting Away From It All means going to an sf convention.

Then there is a subsidiary fandom which has grown up around convention committees. Try as one might to preserve the innocence which lights the experience of the convention, there comes a time when one's appetites are jaded. At that time, there opens up a new world, an insider's world of convention management.

Convention management is a house of cards which is always collapsing and being put back together again at the next con. As every con is fundamentally the same for the attendees, so is each one a different experience from the inside. The mundane contacts with which one works, the subsidiary crises, the kinds of things that go right and go wrong, are always different, variable enough to continue to hold interest. And when were you last really interested in the fanzine's editorial excuses for being late, hmmm? The corresponding anecdotes--about what concom chair was snogging with his walkie-talkie off, which underling was thrown to the hotel's dogs, and what X did to Y when Jerry Pournelle did Z, perennially circulate the circuit of convention fans. Curtis Clemmer may have a richly rewarding fannish life. Who knows? His name may be legend in one con-fan circuit or another. In any case, it is symptomatic of the evolutionary process that the conventions should begin to honor convention fans, however misplaced an individual honor may be.

Well, we're up to the big question: what can/ought we to do about it all?

I do not think that we can recover the central position fanzines once held. Nor do I think we ought to try. Our *raison d'etre* is perfectly sound in its own right: we are a special interest group within the mainstream of fandom, and we will always draw on those who share the same, very special interests as do we. I think, therefore, that we should turn our attentions outward again, granting a *prima facie* respect to the faceless--and relatively voiceless--masses at which we have turned up our noses as the "mediafan-without-qualification." We should try to see him in his role as a fan and as a part of fandom, necessarily preserving at the same time our own independence of judgment. As detestable as we find the swirls of Runners and costumed cretins, they form a definite part of the ambience of realtime fandom, and we must necessarily accept them to some extent, as part of that ongoing process.

And, now, I've had about enough of this treacly "reasonableness."

Wolfpissers-Zapp!

by SCOUTER

One pleasant consequence of the year-long lapse in Quodlibet's publishing schedule is that the Heinlein...um..."debate"...is undoubtedly over and done with for good. I had mentioned to Scouter (Daffyd ab Hugh) that it was time for another topic, and that it might be a good idea to take up what later became the Strategic Defense Initiative ("SDI").

I have a plethora of positions on the subject, of which one dominates: there appears to be no way out of the status quo: MAD is mad. When one reduces all the "yes, but..."s out of the question, one is left with one, overwhelming fact: SDI takes the first step--however fumbling, tentative, and unsatisfactory--away from (by passing through) MAD. It's a step in the direction of making planetary nuclear war technologically obsolescent.

The avenues of approach I most favor exploring are "defensive" in the purest sense--knocking out delivery systems, damping chain reactions, etc. But if I were a voting man, I would go along with some of the more "aggressive" avenues as well, provided that the fruits of the research were put into the public domain.

Having stated my base position, let me stop. Scouter has other perspectives on the whole matter which are probably of greater interest, anyway. Herewith is a couple of letters he sent to Quodlibet on the subject:

"Eat hot flaming laser death!!"

Dear Bill:

Enclosed please find a letter I originally wrote to send to the Mockery News, but which tumesced, out of control, into the many-legged monster you now hold.

I think it makes many important points--it is a good, brief description of how the SDI would actually proceed, for instance--but it is clearly too long to appear in a newspaper whose letter column is limited to thirty inches of complaining about Silicon Malaise, Medicare, and the disposition of Great America.

Politically, it now is clear that the Reagan administration will not bargain away the SDI in Geneva. Rather, I suspect that the Soviets under Gorbachev will use SDI as an excuse to withdraw for a time and consolidate their new position (which they will urgently need to do with a sudden change in leadership.) They will say, "if you're not willing to negotiate about the existence of Star Wars, we can come to no meaningful arms reductions," and will split.

The obvious reply is to publically offer to work together with them on the SDI, since they will then be exposed as not acting out of concern for a balance of power but out of a desperate desire to maintain the

status quo, in which they hold a decided edge. Since their government is secretive and non-consensual, it is very easy for them to introduce new weapons (like the SS-24) under the guise of revamping old systems, and to exceed the limits of treaties--not only in numbers of missiles, but in ABM systems and such (Cf. their new radar array protecting the Bering and Okhotsk Sea missile fields). This we cannot do, due both to the openness of our society and to the participatory nature of American politics, in which every truck driver thinks he's a foreign policy expert, and every petty political hack covets the Oval Office.

I doubt that such an offer will lure the Soviets back to the table, since by the time it is made (mid-1986 if I'm any judge of the quickness of the political mind to apprehend the obvious) it will be expedient to wait until the 1986 elections are over, to see the color of Congress, and perhaps even unto the mouth-end of the '88 primary races, to gauge the tenor of the candidates. Will it be Bush and Hart? Will Hart run on an anti-SDI plank? Will Kennedy draw off the ultra-liberal wing of the disintegrating Democratic party, and force Bush to turn to Paul Laxalt for meaningful competition? Will Jesse Helms leech the power of the Oral Perjority into a suicidal bid to resurrect the Confederacy?

If it becomes clear that the country is still pro-Reagan in 1986, and that Congress will still support the SDI, and if the 1988 candidates do not mention SDI one way or another or support it, I figure the Soviets could return to the talks by late 1986 or early 1987, willing to accept missile defense. This will definitely be the case if we have pursued it technologically (that is, with brains and money) in the meantime, and not flaked out like we did in regards to the mobile basing mode of the MX missile (which, you notice, the Russians have picked up for themselves).

Since Ronnie won't be running in 1988, I predict that the interests of General Dynamics and Lockheed and such will push SDI out of the rhetoric of those who throw their heads into the ring with any serious hopes of having it returned unsevered (Hart, Laxalt, Bush, Baker, Deukmejian). Kennedy, Cuomo, O'Neil, Jackson, and possibly Anderson (newly risen from the tomb) will all come out firmly against missile defense, waving the position papers of Sidney Drell and Carl Sagan like so many golden tablets, each of them swearing in groups of three and eight that yessiree-bob, they have seen them there tablets and can vouch for their authenticity--though said politicians are about as qualified to judge strategic and technological matters as were the original three and eight witnesses qualified to judge the divinity of Brigham Young.

Oops sorry, my fingers appear to be running away with the typing element. In closing I can only hope that Quodlibet is not yet assembled and can take my lamented Jerkery Nudes letter. I will leave you with an important thought, referencing Dean Richard Moll (Admissions, UCSC), authored by my old housemate Arom Roberts:

Unfortunately, these conclusions are not supported by the figures he cites. The figures he cites are wild-eyed fanaticisms, half-orcs, and utterly without tuppence and jam. It is obvious that he has lost control of his greatcoat and slippers, and that his mug has been cracked. The poor man!

Letters to the Editor
San Jose Mercury News
750 Ridder Park Drive
San Jose, Calif 95190

16 March 1985

Editor:

To see the absurdity of Steve Minsuk's argument against the Strategic Defense Initiative, that during construction the Soviets will have no choice but to launch an all-out first strike, let us look at the actual sequence of events we will follow in moving from no defense to strong defense.

The first component to be installed will be a system of low- and high-orbital satellites, many more than we have now, and each more powerful in spying ability. The leading edge of each satellite will be hardened against impact and beam weapons, alternating layers between a superhard plastic and soft foam, called "shaving cream" by the defense industry. Each satellite will be shielded against electromagnetic pulse. Thus, destroying these early-warning and command, control, communications and intelligence (C³I) stations will be a very difficult and expensive task, especially if they have the ability to alter their own orbits. It might take a nuclear warhead to wipe one out; nuclear bombs exploding in space would be an unambiguous warning that a strike is about to occur, so at the least they will give us an expanded capability for strategic monitoring of the Soviets.

Next, we would install heavy point-defenses of our missile fields. These would be true anti-ballistic missiles, and so would definitely require invoking the clause in the ABM treaty allowing withdrawal after six months' notice. Other point defenses, which are not covered by the ABM treaty, would be rapid-fire (6000 rounds per minute) vulcan-cannon-type guns tied to heightened radar-infrared tracking systems on ground and to hardened supercomputers. These guns would literally shoot down incoming missiles with high-velocity bullets. Missiles set to detonate on impact might still explode, but they would not be near enough to our hardened silos to destroy our counterforce, and the odds of a "successful" first strike (from the Soviets' point of view) would be greatly diminished.

But how destabilizing is it to make a Soviet first-strike ten times more difficult?

Strategically, at this point, the Soviets will see their first-strike option effectively closed, and will be frantic for negotiations to "renounce" this new "destabilizing" and "frightening" development in the strategic balance. But how destabilizing is it to make a Soviet first-strike ten times more difficult? Since we cannot use point-defenses to defend a city--a missile exploding in the air is as devastating as a ground burst to inhabitants--we have not yet denied the Soviets retaliatory capability should we launch a first strike ourselves. We have only prevented them from attacking first and annihilating our own counterforce. And while under construction, our new point-defenses will not in any way impair our current ability to counterstrike in the event of an attack. The Soviets will be deterred from striking for the same reason they are now: by fear of retaliation (assuming their leaders do not believe in the Nuclear Winter; if they do, then that gives them yet another reason why attack is suicide.) The ABM treaty may have made sense in the late 1960s, when there was no defense; but a treaty must arise out of technological reality, not try to dictate it. It makes no sense now, and withdrawing would signal to the Soviets that we are back in the real world, and no longer willing to cripple our own ability to defend our citizens (which is certainly one responsibility of government).

During this phase of development (about six to seven years from now)

we will also begin deployment of pop-up missiles whose payload is a mini C³I center, both small tactical ones for battlefield management and large strategic ones to replace satellite coverage and launch-warning/control in the event that our "eyes" are destroyed by ASATs (recall, such ASATs would be far more difficult to deploy or use with our improved satellites, hardened and shielded). Thus, even the Soviets' ability to first rabbit-punch our early-warning system and then knock us out would be eliminated.

By now, the Soviets, perceiving that we will not be deterred by threats or whining, will have begun deployment of their own hardened and shielded C³I satellites, and development of their own point-defenses unless they have already developed them (which has been suggested by members of our intelligence community). This, too, will be stabilizing--and for exactly the same reasons.

Research will have been proceeding apace, not only in the "Star Wars" laser defense, for during a missile's boost phase (the period the rocket stages are firing), but also for tracking and identifying during the coast phase. Coast phase (after firing the rocket but before re-entering the atmosphere) presents difficulties for defense because the missiles are neither hot (as for point-defense during re-entry phase) nor firing their bright rockets as in boost phase. Also, this is the time period in which they will deploy their light decoy warheads, which are basically balloons or pieces of foil. Since there is no atmosphere, these fluffy decoys will coast right along with the real warheads and be indistinguishable. (When they hit the atmosphere, they will be left behind, and will not affect re-entry phase defense).

But coast phase is an important place to defend, because it is there that the multiple warheads pop out of the missile and begin orienting towards their targets. Also, it is far less devastating to our population, both in terms of explosion and radiation, and in terms of a nuclear winter, to destroy impact-exploding warheads out in space. There is no atmosphere to contaminate, no dust to kick up and block out the sun, and certainly no cities to devastate. Interdicting missile warheads in space would certainly mess up all civilian communication satellites (the military ones would be shielded, remember); but few people would argue that destroying our satellites and destroying our cities are comparable tragedies--not even Carl Sagan. Thus, it is vital that we develop methods of coast-phase detection, identification, and tracking, with an eye towards orbiting "warhead hunters", or pop-up ABM's, or airplane-launched interceptor missiles which interdict during coast phase.

And eventually, perhaps twelve years in the future, we will be able to begin deploying an actual boost-phase energy or particle weapon defense.

Obviously, during all this development and deployment, the Soviets will be trying to install counter-defenses to our missile defenses. But consider: they already run all of their missile factories on three-shift, twenty four hour a day schedules. To remake their missiles to be able to penetrate such a multi-layered defense would require them to recall all of their missiles, and transform all of their factories into rebuilding boosters, missile skins, and re-entry vehicles, assuming they could even develop such counter-defenses (which all require tremendous technological achievements and advances--this for a country which cannot even build microwave ovens). And then, if we deployed even one more component to our defensive system, they would have to do it all over again. Even if they could, they would only be regaining abilities they have today; they would not be increasing their missile force because they

simply do not have the resources to simultaneously rebuild and expand--the Russian people are on the edge of starvation as it is.

Likewise, the SDI is such an expensive program for us that we also would be effectively prevented from expanding our own offensive capability. Critics who argue that "somehow" the defense community will "find a way" to arm-twist Congress and the people to go along with spending fifty, sixty, seventy percent of our budget on Defense, which is what it would cost to simultaneously pursue SDI and offensive weapons programs, obviously have little respect for the people of this country and their elected representatives. Military spending has already reached a practical limit as a percentage of the budget, plus or minus a few percent, and money spend on defensive systems is money not spent on offensive systems.

And as for the strategic balance and relations, the Soviets respect only one thing: strength.

Pursuing SDI will tell them we are no longer willing to deal with them from a position of weakness--that is, by allowing them to be considered any sort of a world power just because they have nuclear missiles. With the deployment of every single component of the Strategic Defense Initiative, their ability to hold the world hostage will be eroded. Their only long-term response, if they do not want to go the way of Spain following the defeat of the Armada, is to improve their economy (by becoming more open to free enterprise) and to improve their relations with the U.S. (by renouncing their current terrorist activities, both against other countries and against their own citizens).

Then, and only then, can we co-exist in "mutual respect and cooperation".

SCOUTER



SLINGS AND ARROWS

Joseph Nicholas
22 Denbigh Street
Pimlico, London
SW1V 2ER United Kingdom

Thanks for Quodlibet 22. I read it with interest, and would reply in detail to the bits that directly concern me were it not for the fact that, with Tyncon II: The Mexican now less than four weeks away, I'm racing

to complete the next issues of both the BSFA's Paperback Inferno and our local CND group's newsletter before then, and thus don't really have the time to spare for other forms of fanac. Sorry...will try to do better next time. (Perhaps).

Apart from one quick comment on Mike Resnick's letter. I suggest he re-reads what I actually said--because he will then notice that, far from talking about his book (which I will probably never read, largely there are many more important things to do), I was talking, and in all letters since have been talking, about Robert Prokop's method of reviewing it. Quite a difference, really.

Umm. Yeah. Does anybody believe that?

Ben Indick
428 Sagamore Avenue
Teaneck NJ 07666

As you know, your most amiable city, which I miss so very much, exercised its customary suavity and dumped "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" in favor of "San Francisco

(Open Your Golden Gate)." How regrettable that the city failed utterly on that ceramic sculpture of the late Mayor Mosconi. I forget the sculptor's name at the moment, but I've seen other work of his, equally far-out, well-done, and possibly nerve-jangling. It should be placed and kept in the SF Museum of Modern Art (near City Hall), where, amidst the generally unimposing collection there its originality and verve would stand out.

I believe the sculptor's name is Arneson. The bust has been acquired by a private collector. The current administration insists on forcing its ickily-sentimental romanticism down our throats time and again.

I recall, too, the excellent restaurants, and a Creole type on the Bay seems hardly unusual. How come no one praises the wonderful (recently restored from a fire) John's Grill, of Hammett fame? Janet and I spent a very happy evening there. I'll save Creole for New Orleans, I guess.

But John's Grill is praised endlessly, at every opportunity. It's just that it is such a fixture in the city's life that it no longer rates special hoopla.

Three cheers for Mike Resnick and one goober for Mr. Nicholas. No, not a peanut.

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown MD 21740

I hope I haven't written this loc once before. An issue of Quodlibet has been awaiting comments for the past two months, if I may judge by the fact that I haven't previously in-

scribed on it the runes which indicate a locced condition. But I seem to remember quite clearly commenting on "Courtesy of NOLA" somewhere, somewhen. And yet the remainder of the issue doesn't produce a similar deja vu sensation. I used to worry about such things, but now I just go ahead and write a loc. At worst, you'll guess the real truth, that I've begun repeating myself like every other old man, and at best, you'll confuse me with a television network and accept the fact that I've gone into summer reruns.

Show me the faned who would dare to suggest your failing faculties, and I'll show you a cad. You have commented to "Courtesy of NOLA" before--in FAPA. I frequently recycle articles on which I make some particular effort from Quodlibet to Hors Commerce, or vice versa. It happens that "Courtesy of NOLA" was written for Quodlibet but published first in Hors Commerce when my invitation into FAPA came six months earlier than I had expected.

So, skipping further comment on that big article, I can report ability to sympathize with what "I Left My Heart In San Francisco" does to your sense of aesthetics and municipal patriotism. When I was journalizing, I devoted a column to the fact that Maryland's state song, "Maryland, My Maryland," is utterly unacceptable for its lyrics. I took the trouble to hunt up every other official state song. Only two or three of them had any violence at all in their words, and none of those even approached the quantity of violence, prejudice, and invective in the complete lyrics to Maryland's official state song. Maryland didn't adopt a new state song as a result of my column, no more than did its legislators approve at their 1984 session a proposed revision in the words to the song which would remove their original purpose of propagandizing for the Confederacy. Unfortunately, there is no good alternative existing song that might be pushed to replace "Maryland, My Maryland." "There's a Girl in the Heart of Maryland" would have been a good substitute until recent years when the four-letter word in its title became unacceptable in polite society. And there's nothing wrong with the tune to "Maryland, My Maryland," a slightly altered version of an old German folksong. Bob Crosby's orchestra once recorded a quite entertaining jazz version of it without the words.

Violence and jingoism do show up in the oddest of places. Psalms 132 (I think) starts out with one of the most beautiful passages of the Bible: "By the waters of Babylon I lay down..." But it degenerates into the most disgusting violence at the end: "Happy shall be he who dashes the heads of your children against a rock," and so on. Does give one the impression that the Israelites weren't exactly happy darkies in Babylon, shuckin' and jivin' away their Mesopotamian nights...

I think there's one reason why Heinlein's fiction sells so well. It's genuine science fiction, not mundane fiction under a transparent disguise of removal a few years into the future or with current social and political problems transported to another planet. Whatever its shortcomings in literary judgments, the mass public for science fiction has sound taste in this respect: it rewards the writers of genuine science fiction like Heinlein, Asimov, Clarke, and Herbert by buying their books in enormous quantities.

I assumed when I wrote those fan history books that most fans feel as Darroll Pardoe does, possessing little interest in fannish people and events before their arrival on the fannish scene. So I've been quite surprised at the fact that the books sold so well among fans who weren't around during the 1940's and 1950's. I'd imagined that nobody would want to read except for the sake of nostalgia for his or her early years in fandom and maybe the excitement of seeing his or her own name in print. I believe I've read elsewhere that when Darroll "disposes" of fanzines he destroys them. This seems to me slightly less awful than book-burning sessions. It's unnecessary. Most large conventions have a table somewhere for giveaway stacks of fanzines, and if the fanzines are several years old, fannish fund-raising efforts could use them to sell for whatever goal exists.

To me, though, that situation seems somewhat worse than book-burning. Books, after all, are produced by the thousands-of-copy lots and have a much better chance for survival if isolated and moronic communities decide to destroy their heritage. The same cannot be said for fanzines.

Pursuant to an issue which is, apparently, perennial in FAPA, I've instructed my Executor to offer my fannish effects in the fanpress, so these barques-envois will have an opportunity to outlive me. I recommend the same kind of arrangement to all and sundry.

And I accumulate so many books for much the same reasons as you do (although the situation is complicated in my case by my unsystematic nature, which makes it hard to find a book when I want to refer to it). The Hagerstown public library isn't very large and it thins out its books stock ruthlessly so it will be Up To Date, making it impossible to find most of the books I want to read or refer to there. Then there is my love of books: unless there should be a disastrous fire some day, the books I own are safer from damage or destruction here than they would be in a building subject to flooding or with lots of kids around, and I feel that the more books I own, the more books will survive as long as I do, no matter how perilous their existence may be after my death.

Well, I'm as sentimental as the next guy about books, but it's primarily their availability I'm concerned with. Public libraries appear to have abandoned the greater part of their public trust in an effort to accomplish the lesser. By this I mean that there is certainly no reason that a public library should not provide books of topical interest to its patrons. But the major reasons for possessing a library have to do with its being a repository for useful, necessary, and interesting information. By orienting itself to the book-of-the-moment crowd, the library progressively disenfranchises the remainder of its patronage and assures its own, eventual destruction. A library which is nothing more than a glorified version of the local supermarket's paperback rack is a superfluous institution. The corner supermarket does that kind of thing much more efficiently, with less cost to the public.

The computer terminals at the newspaper office here had a particularly vicious form of bad design. The shift lock key was in a spot where it was particularly apt to be activated if the little finger of the left hand strayed just the least bit off dead center of one key during touch typing (the "a," I believe, but memory has failed already in this respect). I don't know how often I glanced at the screen and found eight or ten lines all caps because I'd inadvertently brushed the edge of that shift lock key when typing another character. Maybe some computers have the ability to alter a hundred or so words from upper to lower case at the push of a key but the only way to rectify the blunder with the equipment we used was by retyping everything letter by letter. To make

things worse, the shift lock is virtually useless in journalism. We didn't capitalize key words the way the Hearst editorials used to do, and most headlines are now written in lower rather than the old-fashioned upper case.

Hmm. Didn't you have a global search & replace function? That would probably have reduced the problem to retyping the capital at the beginning of each sentence or proper noun. But even in journalism you need the shift lock for access to the doubled-up characters in the numeric sequence.

In contrast to the graverobbing described by the old chiropractor (in 22), a small town church north of here decided to convert its cemetery to a parking lot. When the dead were disinterred for removal to another area and reburial the curious were foiled. The contractor had erected an opaque plastic substance as a sort of screen all around the scene of operations, and only workmen were permitted inside. Maybe civilization is catching on.

Maybe. But I had rather the opposite impression.

Gary Farber
420 Pine Street, Apt. 108
Seattle WA 98121

Well, Bill, yer QD's arrived today (Nos. 22, that is--May 4), and I thought I'd stagger back to that old shed in the back of my brain where I put the old locwriting equipment in storage. 'S terrible, just terrible,

what the elements do to machinery like this, he muttered, looking around at the rusty irony, the sagging logic, the decrepit values, and ancient ideas covered over with webs of sticky Moskowitzisms. Why, look, Bill, right over in that corner--that used to be an almost brand new (well, only reconditioned once, in 1968) Warner TwoPager I got in 1971, and only briefly used approaching capacity--look at it now! The rollers just fell out when I nudged it, and the Feud Inhibitor is completely out of whack--just listen to those noises: "sue for \$25,000!...SCOAW...head in the elevator...104 significant...and you're not even from Phoenix!" *SLAM*

Hmm. Guess I can't use that to respond to you with. Lessee, what other old loccers might work--I've got such a collection back here...rummage, rummage. Here's a Hulvey, set on Full Babble...better not. A Tim Marion: "...and then I grew my fingernails, and then Ned Brooks wouldn't speak to me, and..." No. Hmmm. How about a Bowers: "...., ..., ...: "...". No, that's right--he hired Dave Locke to do all his writing, didn't he?

I do have a reconstructed classic Betty Kujawa mixed with the guts of a Helen Wesson and a few bits of Gary Mattingly--but, no. And while I do have a really new Linda Blanchard on special order, it hasn't arrived yet, so I guess I'll have to go with my original.

Hi, Bill

At last.

Actually, I'm not at all a pinball addict, and was never more than a bit of a pinball aficionado. I'm something of a video-game groupie, and am therefore eversomuchmore up with the times keeping, eh? (If your arrow can split my infinitive directly down the center, then you win half the kingdom.)

I almost can't bear to interrupt you in mid-conceit. William cannot Tell. What infinitive? Huh? What infinitive. Is this bait and switch or sumfin, eh?

One major reason I haven't been zine-active lately is...well, Ted White had it partly right when he said I was spending my time on cons,

but he was quite wrong on the type, as I've just got through being a Hart delegate to my Legislative District Democratic Convention and have generally been spending a fair amount of time on Hart strategy meetings, caucuses, etc. Generally speaking, I spend most of my time on reading / talking / being active -- or inactive-but-concerned -- with politics/world affairs/national affairs/history/news. I also try to have a Life and try to work for a living. Combine that with sloth, always one of my major favorite Deadly Sins...

Sloth is wonderful. Sloth is terrific. Sloth is, even, Beautiful. I as properly chastened. But, seriously, kid: why don't you stop wasting your time with all that mundane crap and get down to the real nitty-gritty of life--I mean, who is Joseph Nicholas really a hoax of? That's a fundamental--nay, an eternal--question. A fit subject to harness such a transplendent (and sensitive) fannish intellect to, wot?

Also, I note that this loc was written well over a year ago. The elections have come and gone, but the condition persists. Perhaps sloth is more prominent in the makeup of this syndrome than political gafia, hmmm?

Besides, if I don't write letters like this one, yet keep up my bribes to my Legions of Admirers so they keep mentioning me in their fanzines, then eventually, some fan from Great Britain or Australia, say D. West, or Pickersgill, can decide I must be a particularly dumb hoax. Whereas if I do write letters like this one, they can decide I must be a particularly dumb hoax.

Now, if I wanted to keep in practice writing letters that say nothing I could sign off here with thanks, but I'll see how nattering on the first draft goes.

Incidentally...I'm also North American Agent for Britain in '87. Presupporting \$2.00 to me, along with offers of help, fundraising, roomparty throwing, etc. Surely you want to start putting "Britain is Heaven in '87" in your colophon...

Not even in my Indicta.

Long pause here while I flip through 22 and 21. Your previous issues were indeed full of 37 comment hooks each but while I had partially started locs then, I'm not going digging through boxes to start a partial novel-length loc to you. I might have leaped in with all my Heinlein opinions then, but too late here. On third thought, I think I won't leap in between you and Joseph Nicholas, not more than a little, at least. You guys are wandering around each other so much, it's difficult to tell what the argument is, much less determine if you've managed to agree on a sufficient number of terms to argue. I would agree with you in asking Joseph what source he cites for saying that Heinlein "wants to be taken seriously, as a major literary figure with important messages to deliver." Since almost all of Heinlein's public statements run along the lines of the "beer money" argument, I wonder where Joseph found Heinlein declaiming on his wish for literary acclaim. This has nothing to do with Heinlein's "worth," or how much one dis/likes him, of course, but Joseph does say that the point he is trying to make is that although Heinlein wants such status, he isn't very interesting and doesn't deserve it. The rest of the discussion seems to wander around the landscape.

I didn't know we were having an argument. I thought I said we didn't have enough material to argue with or about. Silly me.

I also must pick up on and ask Joseph, what "prime time popular tv series about a year or so ago" did Clarke have? I presume it was never around here, and I don't believe I've heard elsewhere about a British one, and so am curious. Joseph?

(Since writing this, Gary has come across a reference to Arthur

Clarke's Mysterious World, picked up for U.S. syndication. But he still hasn't seen it. Ed.)

Because of the feeling that Joseph sometimes (not here) tars all Americans with the same brush (as if I were to write about all British fandom as in complete agreement [or partial agreement] with Thatcher), I must laugh here and refuse credit on behalf of the Americas for the "space programme" being an American invention. Who, after all, put up the first satellite, the first man, and the first orbit, etc., etc., and absolutely gave us the kick in the butt to get going--not to mention numerous other important firsts, and important work generally through today?

Margaret Thatcher?

I agree with some of your earlier points to Joseph, but I find your description of Heinlein's following uncomfortably vague. While Heinlein, in the U.S., is completely in print (all major works), and mildly known generally with Stranger, etc., he certainly in no way whatsoever has crossed over to get any "literary" respect at all in the sense of New York Review of Books, New York Times Book Review, or academically. His appeal is strictly genre, and where it extends beyond, as I see it, is only where sf generally has made inroads into mundania, or the blip of cultural impact around Stranger. Seven out of ten people on my street never have heard of Heinlein, I'd guess, at least. I'd guess the ratio was the same with "American newscasters," and I'm being generous.

I dunno. Maybe. But a thirty percent name-recognition counts in the polls as wildly enthusiastic public acknowledgment.

I am "vague" about the subject of Heinlein's following because I don't know much about it--other, of course, than that of myself and the people I correspond with. Certainly, initial print runs in excess of 200,000 are typical for Heinlein, but not for the rest of the genre, so I incline to doubt that his following is strictly limited to genre-readers. I further note that Job, his most recent novel, is not, apparently, addressed to genre-readers in particular (or, at best, only incidentally). Apparently Heinlein himself, using whatever publishing demographics he has available, thinks he has a much wider audience. That kind of thing always Remains To Be Seen, of course.

As to reviews in NYTBR or NYRofB, or any of the Brentano's crowd, I can't imagine any contemporary writer really taking them seriously any longer. Once, perhaps, but now...

While retaining my right to condemn popular things, I must agree with you that using "the lowest common denominator principle which governs popular taste ensures that the worst will always outsell the best" as a primary theorem in analysis is so simpleminded as to be almost worthless. Infinite amounts of "bad" are not popular. Some of what is popular is sometimes "good." "Good" analysis requires more sophisticated discovery and reasoning, such as what specifically makes the awfulness of Barry Longyear so comparatively popular. Me, I haven't read him, so I can't, although I do have an unread copy of Circus World aquired free from somewhere, and it does skim awfully. Heinlein's popularity, well, that obviously includes fastmoving plots, incredibly accessible writing, very simple-and-easy-to-identify-with characters, sometimes genuinely skiffy atmosphere, or futuristic extrapolation that seems believable, and the fact that he's built an audience over 45 years and millions of copies. This has nothing to do with how individually pleased we are by these factors, or whether others do more interesting things better, it just has to do with why he's still selling. Heinlein's technical skills are very uneven and very limited. His characters are extremely simple. Hmm, I was about to start on his didacticism, but I see I'm about to

start wandering the landscape with you, so I'll shut up.

Heinlein does seem to have that effect on people, doesn't he?

Joseph's paragraph on the Friday rape scene confuses me, too. First off, I think Friday's behavior towards rapist and rape is one of the least believable bits of the plot, is fairly ridiculous, and is a major flaw in the book. That seems obvious to me. But, while I am one to hold that ideas and stories do affect people, and that politics and "ideas" cannot be removed from fiction any more than any other aspect of fiction, the idea I get from Joseph here is that one must despise Friday, or perhaps just Friday-the-character, because it's important and if you dismiss it, you have to dismiss the Manson killings?

What?

I've read a fair amount by you, Joseph, but do you hold this stance on all authors and fiction? I hadn't noticed previously.

I, too, have lived with and without a tv for years at a stretch. Having spent at least a third of my life without one at various times, currently I prefer the option. It's terribly valuable as a news supplement, for those moving picture scenes that convey what words cannot, for timeliness, and for seeing people react I otherwise can't. Further, there's a good amount of stuff on PBS--movies, documentaries, and occasionally I like junk, no question about it. The many years I've lived without a tv were fine, but it doesn't enhance my life any more than the one across the room from me now does by being turned off. Why, I can be just as superior and snotty with one, as without: just ask my friends.

There is also a lot of good stuff on commercial tv. If you drop out the obvious sickies, like the ailing sitcoms and "dramatic" shows with the long, white whiskers, it's a medium with a vast range of quality represented--just as one might expect from the leading popular art form of the century. After all, the theatre which gave us Ibsen and Co. also produced Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl, the record-breaking play of the last century.

John Wayne, right?

Huh?

A couple of words to Darroll: fan history is no more the "fascinating thing some find it" than the "not" fascinating thing Darroll finds it. "Fascination" is a quality of a person, not a thing. I find fanhistory fascinating. Fanhistory is not fascinating: I am fascinated. Darroll's case of having been active since the early 1950's is scarcely typical of modern fans. "Fanhistory," to many current fans, is not, say, discussing Walt Daugherty's role in the 1946 worldcon, which is the sort of thing Darroll considers "fanhistory," but what happened at Chicon IV, two years ago, or in 1980, etc. Darroll's attitude is perfectly fine for him, of course. I am distressed at something separate, as I'm always distressed when I run into this. It is Darroll's personal privilege to do what he wishes with the fanzines he receives, of course: use them for diapers, bake them with eggplant, whatever. If he doesn't see them as having further use to him once he's read them, I do wish he could see his way clear to pass them on to someone else who does care. It has nothing to do with collecting. It's a simple fact that fanzines have circulations in two or three figures, and there are always hundreds of fanzines never seen by hundreds of different fans because their circles don't overlap enough and the circulation isn't large enough. I'm talking only about cases where people wish to see these zines, of course. It's one thing to throw out a newspaper, or modern paperback--anyone can get them. But, if you throw out a fanzine, you're destroying a limited edition original of only 40-300 copies, and the rest

of us who will never see it suffer because of this. I'm sure I don't see half the fanzines Darroll has no further use for, and this greatly pains me. There's nothing wrong with getting rid of fanzines if you don't care about them--makes perfect sense. But, I do think, if one is taking any but the strictly self-oriented attitude, that passing fanzines along to promising neos, clubs, etc., is the least one can do if you don't have anyone asking you for them. I'll accept any fanzine from anyone after they're done, and in many cases I'll agree to pay postage or more, just to preserve fanzines from destruction.

I've already said ~~my~~ my piece on the subject.

I would think the major reason there is so much badly-designed wordprocessing equipment (or software) around is that there's the tremendous rush to get out on the market right now since the field is advancing faster technically than the ability to market. The field is young, and there's a lot of chaff to be sorted. I've been completely spoiled by office wordprocessors--another reason I haven't been too active in fanzines in a few years. I like DEC. CPT is okay, but I'm waiting for the cheap home voicewriters (are you familiar with what's going on in avionics? Amazing stuff with voice control, invisible instruments, etc.) I was greatly amused at Silverberg finally getting one without ever using an electric typer--from manual to wordprocessing in one jump.

I understand the voice interface programs have resulted from a classification of voiceprints into eight basic groups, thereby bringing the variable patterns into a small enough range to be handled by micros. The first company to bring out a practical voice-responsive typewriter will reap a major fortune overnight.

Surely San Francisco has some variants of the typical psychotic's graffiti about how the FBI or CIA is beaming microwaves to control your brain with "lazars" or somesuch?

Well--scratching of head--there must be, but I haven't noticed them. Currently, urban NecAztec is making a revival, which makes it difficult to decipher what they're about. Umm. Last year we had a spate of interesting Punk graffiti. The new crop of graffiti is stencilled on all manner of varied surfaces. Fairly dull ones about the Nuclear Menace and an interesting group of "There is no God but you" stencils. These occur every two or three hundred yards along Valencia Street (and elsewhere), so I get a kind of spiritual Burma-Shave sequence every morning as I walk to the BART station.

But, gee, Lee, fandom is all about Ted White said this and Ted White did that. I mean, we all think so, don't you? Well, back to inhuman fandom, full of "subject matter," form, and...oh God...content. It's hard. Really.

I notice Patrick and Teresa picked up Lee's quote as a lino in Killing Time.

I doubt Heinlein ever sat down and thought, "now I'm going to write a woman who's equal to a man." I'm possibly wrong, but I suspect it wasn't at issue, not put that way.

I suspect that some of that kind of thinking did go into the manufacture of Number of the Beast--except that I don't think that Heinlein thinks in terms of "equal, per se."

So, I agree with Don D'Amassa that I don't think Heinlein really tried to show woman as equal of men. I think he just had his own ideas of what he thought were interesting, strong woman characters. Your example, Bill, of "equal" woman are pretty terrible: Belle of Door into Summer is one of the more evil characters he's ever done, and a despicable person. She's also a particularly feminine female evil character, too--

her evil is specifically of the type that sleeps with men and uses sexual and other wiles to seduce Decent Guys into Her Power. Girdie FitzSnuggly, while only onstage in a limited fashion, is the good-reverse of Belle. She sleeps with Guys, but she's Okay and a Good Egg. "Alluquere," or Mary, as she's called the majority of the book, is still a secondary (tertiary?) character dependent on the men for all major decisions, who is led through and saved by the primary male. Now, I'm not even taking the position here that Heinlein "should" write "equal" males and females, or saying that these characters don't display individual strengths at times. I will say that they generally achieve what they achieve through men, or manipulating men as the primary sources of power in their situations, and that in no way are they "equal" or interchangeable with men in their stories. Now, saying that Heinlein's theory of women and "popular theory of women" don't overlap much is reasonably true, and ditto that women will be individual regardless of how analyzed rather carefully walks you around how you see women and "popular theory," but perhaps that's a minefield you wisely stay out of.

As you say. I will note that, while acknowledging the many problems with the mythology of woman that Heinlein writes from, I think there are just as many problems with the several mythoi which are currently regarded (rather narrowly) as "acceptable." I think there are certain truths to this Havelock-Ellisan point of view, and certain other truths to Friedan's and even to the completely loony Shulamith Firestone's, and others, as well. The truths in the Ellis-type mythos which Heinlein uses are generally adaptable to the theory of the oppressed-in-general. For example, the mythos held that women were inherently "childish" in many respects. Aha. There's another oppressed class. If you look at certain "childish" and "womanish" behaviors, they look suspiciously similar to the rationales used by many apologists for slavery throughout history.

I don't think Heinlein thinks the term "equal" is at all appropriate. I don't think Heinlein thinks men and women are at all "comensurate." It can sensibly be denied that Heinlein creates "equal" females; it cannot be denied that he has surpassed reasonable expectations in the creation of memorable and "strong" female characters. Within the Ellis-type mythology, the woman "leads from behind," so a character may be independent without seeming to be. The conflict between public conformity and private disregarding of conventions is a major theme which runs throughout Heinlein's corpus. A female character shown publicly will virtually always be subordinated: sometimes we see such a character only publicly; at other times, we see her privately. Betty Sorenson, for example, in The Star Beast, is shown entirely privately, and we see her entirely in her "natural" role as the force which gives shape (and spine) to John Thomas' life. This kind of role is less acceptable now than it was when the book was published--but at that time, it was regarded as completely conventional. It should be noted that, generally, a popular writer who is too out of step with the ideology of his times ceases to be popular and must be "rediscovered" when the Wheel of Fate brings his ideology more into conformity with the public's. If ever. This is a great liability to a writer whose career has spanned, as you note, more than 45 years.

I quibble stongly with some of your definition in your argument with Don on MIAHM. A "genuine market" is not the same as a "common good" by the way I use the terms. I might find in an unrestricted market a "genuine market" for, say, lead piping that works fine for five years, but will kill you in ten. I might make a big killing ('sorry) in three years, but this don't fit my definition of a common good. Have you noticed that I'm not a libertarian? There are lots of markets for things

that aren't in my definition of a common good.

"Quibble" is exactly the right word. You have your objection--and I don't--because you choose to be much more arrogantly paternalistic than I in this respect. Parenthetically, you've also carelessly commingled an assumed moral evaluation of a product into the economic analysis. For example, it's manifest that people will consciously decide to buy and use products they know put them at high risk of death or deadly disease (he waves his cigarette carelessly in your direction). But in any case, the terms of your argument qualify the lead pipe you propose to sell as both a genuine market and as a common good--that is, if a significant fraction of the market didn't want to buy the piping, it wouldn't be possible to make a "killing." In either sense. If the deleterious effects weren't known generally, the seller cannot be morally adjudged, because moral judgments apply only to those things to which one can apply volition. One cannot apply volition to an unknown. If, on the other hand, you know, but the public does not, that the lead pipe will kill your customers, then you have committed an actionable fraud--but that's neither here nor there when the matter of markets and common goods are under consideration. The question applicable to that are: is it in the public interest to have available to it inexpensive, state-of-the-art plumbing. The answer is, obviously, yes. Your argument disintegrates.

"Common Good," in economic analysis, is not a moral term per se, but a term of meta-political thought. The issue is not whether a given product is a net contributor or detractor to an individual's wellbeing--for that is an evaluation which only an individual can make for himself. The issue in economic analysis is whether or not a choice exists. Q.E.D. By the material terms you have outlined, your ravening child-killing, wild-eyed slaughterer-of-the-public entrepreneur was filling a common good, as evidenced by the fact that people were willing to pay him for his product, thereby permitting him to make his killing(s). Again, your argument undercuts itself upon examination. Whether altruism is a necessary product of self-interest is the arguing point for a number of political systems and theories, I thought. Could you finish your last sentence in that paragraph? You don't think the common good, insofar as it can be distinguished from the interests of individuals, is all that important a consideration...to what? To Heinlein? To Manny? To you about what?

The statement is complete. I think that any kind of "common good" that can be distinguished from the good of individuals in the commonality is not significant. Period.

As for arguing over whether the American war for independence was "liberal" or "conservative," this is totally meaningless. Define your terms, if you want to bother.

I agree. It's totally meaningless outside of a particular context.

I imagine you'll tell us how you reacted to the latest quake, so I won't ask. So there.

By gum, I forgot to mention that. A neat-o-bizeato shaker that one was. I was in the office at the time, walking from the coffee area to the front office. Kinda danced for a few seconds. By the time I moved the twelve feet or so to the foyer, everyone in the front office was gathered in the doorway trembling. One of the bottom-supported partitions in the office was swaying, and a mostly-dead flower arrangement was showering withered iris petals. By the time I got a plumb bob fixed up to measure the amplitude of the S-waves (most SF quakes are K-type, but this was clearly two S-types), it was over, but I kept getting tiny tremors for the remainder of the day. Some damage in San Jose we kept up on. I had my headphones on, and as new news came

over the radio, I typed up a digest and tacked it on the bulletin board. Fun. Once in awhile. It's strange how people react so variously to earthquakes.

I haven't seen Terms of Endearment, nor the Oscars ceremony, but did like Linda Hunt and Year of Living Dangerously. It might be kinder to Dan Wynne to rewrite him a little so as to enable him to achieve a slightly greater mastery of English.

See, you are an elitist snob...

Also, there's this whole class of fen I'd like to issue an Executive Order to telling them to Shut Up and stop trying to "defend" U.S. foreign policy since they do such an embarrassingly awful job at it. I think I'll add Dan to Marty Cantor...

Your "Courtesy of NOLA" piece was entertaining to me, sounds like a great meal, and you had some bits of nice writing (yes, some of us notice), but no comment hooks. Reread it twice looking, and, uh, I'm going out to get something to eat, Bill...

Glancing at #21. Regarding fannish repro: I've cranked many hundreds of thousands of cranks on Gestetners of many numbers, particularly 120, 230, 260, 360, 466. I've cranked A.B. Dicks, Rex Rotarys, dittos, and many other breeds. I've cranked many thousands of pages of The Enchanted Duplicator, as well as having to go over the play, then starring in as Jophan (with dozens of rehearsals). And ya know what, Bill? Ya know what? I say, the Enchanted Duplicator is the one with the trufan at the button.

Gimme easy photocopy, or laserprint, over mimeo anytime I have to crank it. Automatic collating and binding isn't bad either.

Amazing. An intelligent letter from Lord Jhim Kennedy without dippy spelling! However, I think QD looks fine. I like books without pitters really well, too.

Re "Sense of Wonder," I think confusions of terms arises again tween Prokop and Nicholas. If "sensawunder" means stuff along the lines of appreciating the mystery of the universe and the particular bit we're marvelling on at the moment, or a child-like fascination with how amazingly amazing something really is, etc., etc., I think it's nice if almost everybody has some variety of that. If we mean "E.E. Smith," that's a bit of a limited definition. Personally, I read the Lensman series when I was 7, and caught it at just the right age to hunt them down and enjoy them greatly. I didn't run into Skylark until I was 9 and it was really Too Late. I'm still fond of him, but regardless of taste at all, if one can't discern that say, Joanna Russ has more skill with the English language and attempts vastly more sophisticated goals than E.E. Smith, then one has a reading problem. I don't say that you have to like Russ or dislike Smith, but there is an objective superiority of that nature of Russ over Smith. Naturally, you can still not care beans over Russ, and love Smith. But, as you point out, Bill, we all have different things we wonder about, and it needn't be limited to E.E. Smith. Actually, you don't point that out, but I will.

Beck, if I didn't say that, I shoulda.

Put another way, I appreciate the sense of wonder E.E. Smith had, and I appreciate the SoW he gave most of his readers at the time. I appreciate SOW he still gives to those who find it there, and I can appreciate it myself. I also appreciate the SoW in Delaney, or Priest, or Russ, or Coover, or Doctorow, or my electric light, of Dick, or Pyncheon. Limiting my SoW to "you're a blinding flash and a deafening report, ace!" "QX!" would be a touch limiting.

Terry Carr said his usual number of intelligent and witty things I am in agreement with. As a tangential point to his comment that sf, unlike

fandom, has so many reissues of earlier works that "any new writer or critic probably has a decent knowledge of the field," I'm working hard on trying to get used to the fact that a fair percentage of new people I run into at cons, or elsewhere in skiffydom, are not familiar with more than a smattering of current sf. This includes some new writers, or hopefuls. I recall a conversation with one such at Orycon where Jerry Kaufman had to explain who L. Sprague de Camp was. I can think of a couple of neopros I know who really know little about the field, and while the type are not yet the majority, they aren't unbelievably atypical of newcomers either. It's a product of the popularity of sf, of course. Sometimes I don't know how fans from the 1940's can take it--oftimes it seems I'm reeling with future shock (well, lifting my eyebrow--see?) as the field ages. Times change.

No, you're safe. I briefly considered inflicting my review of Friday on you, but the moment passed, and you are safe. Except: notice how he compulsively described every breakfast in detail as a sensual experience, and only breakfasts? Things I had trouble believing besides The Rape: a universal credit card that can be burned out by any slot when it ceases to be good (she has to look for an out of the way slot so the potential cloud of smoke won't attract a guard) yet there is no provision for setting off any alarm to fetch said guard; that the Great Genius Kettle Belly Baldwin wouldn't keep the provisions for his death uptodate despite constant awareness of his impending imminent death when the (not much to it) Fate of the Earth is in His Hands. On the positive side, I haven't yet seen anyone point out: it seems to me that Heinlein's clearly always had a problem dealing with death. Several of his books deal with desperately struggling to avoid it: Mike's philosophy and Fosterism in Stranger, the various Martian afterlives, where Mike the computer went in MIAHM, I Will Fear No Evil and books, through Number of the Beast. Yet in Friday, he actually kills off the Father Figure and says "tough shit" to the Middle wise learning figure of Friday. She has to cope for herself. This seems to me a rather more mature step Heinlein has taken than he's previously shown on the subject--that he actually faces up to the death of the Old Man, and only partly through the book. (Prof in MIAHM dies a martyr at the end, not the same thing at all).

Oh, I dunno. Thorby Baslim might have something different to say about that...

Humho, time for the news and time to go. Is this what you call a loc? It's been so long I forget. Amn't I supposed to criticise Charles Korbas or Keith Walker or something? Kin I declare that I'm a Fifth Fandom Fan, and everyone should Worship Art Rapp, Spacewarp, and Roscoe?

Hey, I've been doing that all along. Roscoe Rools, eh.

Goodnight, Bill

Goodnight, Gary.

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Many thanks for much-appreciated QL. Liked everything. Keep especially asking myself how else I would have known what it's like at the opening of a NO restaurant in SF.

A bit of information you couldn't otherwise have lived without, eh?

Since 1962 I like to consider myself a sort of expatriate San Franciscan so knew about the Official Song hassle. Am on your side, regarding ILMH as a sort of Glockamorrass of gunge; besides, wasn't it Tony Bennett who singlehandedly ruined The Big Store with Tenement

Symphonee?

I just love getting cryptic pocsards from across the Big Pond. Complete with scenic view of the Donaghadee Reservoir. This one has kept me busy for a month or more: I've asked everyone of my acquaintance about this paragraph. Tony Bennett they recognize. Complete blank on everything else. What the Hell are you talking about?

Saw a new graffito today in D'dee today...I AM ME. Seems a fraught statement on the lines of I AM THAT I AM; which I cannot decide to attribute to Popeye or Jehovah, surely the first time that option has presented itself.

Maybe Aristotle. Wasn't Popeye's motto "I Yam What I Yam?"--an obscure reference to the Swahili "Ya," for "rice." Obviously a roundabout reference to his perennial spinach, but I can't quite complete the derivation...

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Good to see Quodlibet alive again; Vic Reppert and I had begun to wonder what happened to you. And keep putting in your plugs for the joys of being a San Franciscan. From where

I'm sitting it sounds like an exotic existence. When are you going to start writing for Food and Wine?

Hey, if I did that, then everybody'd know about it. The fewer emigres we have, the better. More to go around for the rest of us.

We do occasionally run into loonies who don't like San Francisco. My attitude is: fine! Isn't it great that the world has such a variety of tastes in it! Now, would you please step aside while I break out my personal key to my personal paradise? Thankyou...

A couple months ago I made a long overdue decision to take the vast majority of my library, which was in Phoenix, out of storage and cart it back to Yuma. For me, moving books is a sad, weary experience of deja vu. Most of my adult life it seems I've been hefting bulging cardboard boxes or straining at impossibly heavy suitcases, not so much owning books as being owned by them.

Of course I did some sorting first. I gave some away, trashed others, and ran up a ridiculously large credit margin at Al's Used Book Store. It still left me with more than I could cram into a largish four-door sedan, and I meditated all the way home on the burdens of material attachment.

Filling my living room floor and couch with a medium-size mountain of books did little to encourage my sense of possessiveness. Of course I had plans to put up shelves, and they shortly became an obsession for me, but in the meanwhile I had to daily blaze new trails to the bathroom. Murphy's Law was working overtime, too: trying to screw struts into my living-room wall was like carving Mt. Rushmore.

Well, thank God for power tools and for a friend who would take time to drill me some holes. The struts finally went in, and I laid six eight-foot-long planks across them. Combined with the floor space underneath that made 56 feet of book space, which, after another week of alphabetical sorting, was still not quite enough for just the fiction and poetry. Adams through Asimov, plus history, reference, art, and everything else, had to find other space.

And still I go on buying more books.

Gee. Back in my salad days, I can recall the frustrations of living with over 150 linear feet of books/magazines. Fortunately (I suppose), dire straights forced me to break up the collection in 1976. That

hardened me somewhat. My accumulation has grown somewhat since then, and been broken up twice.

Last year, I decided that trying to keep everything instantly available was a losing game, so I boxed up what I could, piled the remainder in manyh layers on the capacious closet's hat shelf, and left only the reference texts--languages, Californiana, and 14th century historical works I was using for various projects--special collections and the Encyclopaedia Britannica, together with various philological, bibliographic, and film references, etc.--sitting on a lone 5x6' (30 linear feet) brick and board bookcase I had installed three years ago. so I weekly scrabble through piles and boxes of the tucked-away books as I hunt up a particular reference I need to feed my English vice.

And still I go on buying more books.

Well, one consequence of the great book exodus was that I found myself, for the first time in several years, surrounded by most of the stories I lived in during my pre-college days, a time remote enough to seem like an earlier incarnation. On impulse I found myself thumbing through passages I hadn't cracked a peek at in ten years or more and found them an irresistable read. Nothing new in them; I could quote some of the passages. It was just reassuring to enjoy them all over again.

I found myself re-reading the whole of Stranger in a Strange Land. The words were the same but the experience was not, for this was a book I had never allowed myself to read with a relaxed mind. By that I mean a kind of surrender--to judge a book you have to first treat it like a good book and then see if it insults your sensibilities. You have to enter the story's stream with a beginner's mind and see where it takes you, and such was my religious upbringing (that's right, blame it all on my parents) that I had never allowed myself that pleasure with this book.

Remember, this was my first solid reading of Heinlein in almost a decade; what first impressed me was what clever writing it all was. I had forgotten. In some of his books the unending ripostes get a little distracting, but if Stranger was your first Heinlein novel I can't see how the beginning, at least, wouldn't charm you. The Battle of the Rose Bushes, seen through Michael Valentine's disembodied innocence, is a particular favorite of mine. By the way, how can anyone think that such writing appeals only to American readers and not to the British is beyond me.

The second impression was to what good use said cleverness was put. Lamponing Bible-belt mentality--an outlook not just of American or even Christian dimensions--is a noble task and heartwarming to see. To Heinlein's credit the satire doesn't really carry a negative outlook: the avatars are in their heaven(s), and if we wouldn't take them so seriously we could run a middlin' fair planet. (Yes, this is strictly old hat, but somehow I managed to miss out on the 60s. Bear with me: sense of wonder is not the less for being naive).

The last and most general feeling I carried away was respect for how many taboos Heinlein managed to encompass in just one novel. Sex, religion, cannibalism, death, law and order, established "morality," etc.--it's quite a shopping list. I know Stranger became a hippies' "Bible" at one time. In retrospect I'm surprised that there wasn't more of a hue and cry raised against it by conservatives and evangelicals.

Stranger has always been one of my very most favorite books, and it is the one which gave me the strongest sense of Heinlein's great potential for technical subtlety and mastery over his materials. Coming from a series of relatively uncomplex books, he achieved in one, astonishing jump, a perfectly formed Menippean satire, in which all levels of interpretation reinforce each other. I was, therefore, quite

angry to see how thoroughly Alexei Panshin misunderstood what was--and undoubtedly will remain--Heinlein's greatest achievement on a purely technical level. Other books have been more pleasant, more accessible. Others have attempted larger, more complex plot structures. But the level of integration in Stranger is astonishing.

Job is out. A comparison between Stranger and Job might be interesting, as they concern themselves with overlapping thematic material.

After reading Stranger I harked back briefly to those halcyon Sunday afternoons spent in the Phoenix slanshack. One of the subjects we frequently tackled then was the merits of sf as Literatoor. Was any of it Great? Lasting? In class with, say, Faulkner, Hemmingway, or Dickens? Why or why not? Years later, life in the real world has put a damper on my enthusiasm for this subject, a transition that started, ironically, in a class on the American short story. We were discussing a story by John Barth, and those of us who had actually read the damn thing were trying to get the prof to explain what it meant. Instead of answering our increasingly pointed questions, the learned man began to assure us that the author in question was indeed recognized nationwide as a Great Writer, and that at conventions of modern language scholars (MLAcons? Yes, they have 'em) Barth was very much in demand. In fact, he had recently written a novel of 600-plus pages in the same incomprehensible vein as the story we had just read. The prof went on to describe the book's complexity and far-ranging critical importance. As he paused, one disheveled student of Literatoor interrupted to ask, in a genuinely awed voice, how long it had taken to read this novel. "Oh," replied the prof casually, "I haven't read it." "You--you haven't," asked the student. "But why not, sir?" "Why, because," said the esteemed gentleman, "I have better things to do with my time."

Chuckle. Having attempted on several occasions to read Letters--even succeeding to the extent of 200 pages once--I can sympathise with this man's sentiments, if not his pretensions.

Ever since then, whenever the subject of criticism raises its thorny head, whether over a book, movie, or dame, I can't get too worked up. Few people seem to share my tastes consistently; if one of them steers me toward something nice, I'm grateful. Reading Stranger, however, did remind me of one guiding criterion I've had ever since tuning into Madeline L'Engle's Wrinkle in Time, lo, these many years gone by: it's good to feel discontent. Partly, I guess, this is C.S. Lewis's feeling of Joy, or "intense longing." But the books most important to me, though perhaps of differing literary merit, all had one other thing in common. They kept me dissatisfied and, thereby, a little more aware. You can't be entirely asleep when you're looking for something, something that will make you a messiah unto yourself, a messiah maybe not capable of all Michael Valentine Smith's repertoire of magic, but able to work miracles of a more subtle, profound nature. In spite of some lengthy dead ends, I haven't given up looking.

Who loseth to God as man to man
Shall win at the turn of the game.
I have drawn my blade where the lightnings meet
But the ending is the same:
Who loseth to God as the sword blades lose
Shall win at the end of the game.

For God our God is a gallant foe that playeth behind the veil.
Whom God deigns not to overthrow hath need of triple mail.

Ezra Pound

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I was unsure why I received this Queerdybbuk #22, since I didn't recall commenting on any of the last three or four or five or whatever; but nothing particularly good being on tv at the

moment, I began to flip through it.

After that, so am I (unsure).

While sort of half-reading Quodlibet with one eye and watching CHiPs with the other, I noticed your remark to the effect that popular literary approval is not of the "lowest common denominator," fabled in song and spell, but merely indiscriminant.

Not only do I applaud your perspicacity (which translates to "I agree with your opinion") but I would like to push the thought further. A good case can be made that public acceptance is a necessary condition for literature to be great literature.

The most telling argument against this is that many things people like to consider great literature have had an indifferent reception. But maybe our definition of "great" needs to be examined, and set more in accord with experience.

If great literature is that which, for instance, opens new vistas of reality to the readership at large, or illuminates a feeling or an attitude or idea--then surely it has to be read to have its effect...no matter how brilliant, I would have a hard time calling a book great if it was so obscure only a tiny handful of people understood it; especially if I wasn't one of them (case in point: Ulysses, which in three attempts has not held my interest beyond page eighteen).

Naturally there'll be a conflict between those people for whom Ulysses was crystal clear, such as yourself, and those of us for whom it was indecipherable. But so damn many works of art commonly considered great are accessible to the average person (though certainly more so to more intelligent people) that I could look on the obscure or unaccepted works as the anomalies; consider Shakespeare, Moliere, Cervantes, Swift, Twain, and Marquez; Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Magritte; Michaelangelo; Ansel Adams; and so on and on. There! This should spark some controversy between your arrogant, elitist human soul and my revisionistic elfin heart, eh? eh?

You've got the categories wrong. On this point, I'm the anti-elitist sonofabitch. "Revisionist" and "atheistic," too, but I doubt "elfin."

Naturally, I'm predisposed to agree with parts of your argument. I don't know about "public acceptance" being necessary, though. And I'm even more uncertain about how to measure it. Certainly not by marketability alone. After all, before about 1965 Tolkien must have regarded his work as more-or-less a failure, based on market response. Then it just "took off."

Ruskin and Shaw set the groundwork for twentieth-century academic literary criticism, and I've come to believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with the theory (although there are certainly many things right, too). Surely the ability to "move" the reader is a criterion--but it's so damnably arbitrary: people are moved by what they are, individually, "ready" to be moved by. Certainly there must be something in the work which is capable of exciting the intellect, accessible at some level. Ruminare, ruminare. I note that most of the works undeniably "great" (in the parlance) are accessible at many levels, so that people can take from it whatever they are capable of perceiving and come away from the experience satisfied, whatever their level of

perception.

To make it scientificfictional, who is the greater writer, Michael Moorcock or Thomas Disch? Harlan Ellison or Barry Malzberg? I pick the former in both cases, and mainly for the reasons above.

P.S. There are of course other criteria than popularity--I don't want to call Robert Ludlum and Sidney Sheldon great literary artists...

Good.

About da Revolooshun--I tend to see the American Revolution as more of an early battle between Colonial second-wave civilization and more independent third-wave civilization, to use Toffler's vocabulary. In general, milking a colony for raw materials, transporting them to the motherland, and selling back industrial goods is the essence of good garden-variety colonialism. On the contrary, the intelligentsia of the United States seemed to stand for do-it-yourself frontier independence, clever technological solutions to economic and social problems, withdrawal from the petty squabbles of the old European oligarchies (admittedly we seem to have strayed from these sentiments recently, say in the last seventy years). This is not to insist that this was every person's motivation, or anyone's conscious motivation; rather that that seems to have been the effect.

Most recently, I think the political "party" closest to this early orientation is the Yuppies--though I may be biased, being a Hart campaign worker (then again, it's one of the reasons I became a Hart campaign worker).

The fact that many of the prime movers (of the American Revolution) were rich middle-to-upper class supports this, since their wealth was usually in the form of property or services (plantations, inventions, etc.) rather than inherited aristocratic wealth. The fact that the government they formed strayed considerably from this early direction doesn't obviate the point, either, since bureaucracies always have great ham&eggs (inertia) and resist change, tending to mimic their predecessors. This also applies to the Russian and French revolutions, even though both contries are now ponderous, grinding bureaucracies fully as worthless as the systems they replaced.

I think Reagan and Mondale are among the last hurrahs of this old industrial order, and even they have to bow to the future in their rhetoric. Whether Gary Hart wins this nomination or the '88 nomination or none ever at all, I think that is the direction our society is heading...we see now the avalanche which began with the pebble of 1776 (violin section enters here, swelling to John Williams-like crescendo as we look towards the east and fade to black...)

I'm afraid that I've totally given up trying to follow this campaign. I swear: they become more ludicrous each time. I was at least interested as long as Glenn was campaigning. It would be intriguing to have a President who had some feel for the importance of space development in some aspect other than aggression-display for the benefit of the U.S.S.R. Mondale's anti-Star Wars statement raised a bit of interest recently, but I find virtually no response to it in the news. As far as I'm concerned, that ought to be grounds to Get Mondale, and if I were in the arena, I'd be working for Anyone But Mondale.

The above was written back in May, but I find it even more applicable now, the day the Republicans end their rubber stamp convention in Dallas. As far as I can tell, Mondale has squeezed out any possible chance of winning this election by insisting that his temporary, slight margin in the polls gave him a mandate. Nor does he seem to have read the message the polls were conveying: that he is not even a plurality candidate as far as Democrats are concerned. Mondale has torpedoed the

Democrats' chances at this election for the sake of his own ego. I'm afraid that Ferraro will swing more votes against the ticket than she could swing toward it. Sic Semper Gloria Mundi.

LA DELENDA EST

Speaking of barometers, I just read Kyger's copy of Uncle Dick's Little Thing and found out about the LACon II \$200,000 profit. I've already fired off an angry loc to UDLT, but I'm going to repeat some of it here, as this will probably be published first.

The thing that impressed me about the reportage and commentary--not only by Smith and/or Zeldes but by all of the locwriters and contributors--was the tone of petulance and mild sarcasm which predominated. This is not a minor peccadillo: it's a goddamned outrage.

There is a well-developed "consensus" about disposing of profits from major conventions. Heretofore, those profits have been mounting but still relatively minor and have been treated as "change." Fandom has expected to pay a little more than is strictly necessary to insure a cushion against failure. For the only convention whose financial data I have at hand, that cushion amounted to about \$1.50 per person and was achieved by unbelievable cheeseparing in the months before September, 1978.

LACON II took a cushion of about \$20 per person

Now, I know how this happened: the Constellation disaster must have caused the LACon II committee to panic and keep an extremely tight control on expenses. No venality involved there. But LACon's proposed distribution is venal, indeed.

The data summarized in UDLT are as follows:

Disposable Profit		194,000
Staff expenses	\$65,000	
1990 LA Bid	20,000	
Constellation Bailout	10,000	
LASFS Air conditioning system	10,000	
NESFA Building Fund	10,000	
Fancylopaedia III	7,500	
Fan Funds	3,000	
AussieCon II	2,000	
Fan Fund Trip Reports	1,000	
VCon 12 Bailout	500	
	<hr/>	
	\$129,000	
 Floating Fund	 65,000	

I doubt that anyone will complain about donations to the Fan Funds or the Fancy III project, though the amount in question might raise some eyebrows. Endowing a special fund to keep trip reports in print is original but correct, and monies passed on to the next convention and financially straitened regional conventions are time-honored. I might suggest that someone from Corflu--whoever's running it this year--go hat

in hand to SCIFI and get enough to last a few years.

Even the idea of a substantial Floating Fund separate from the standing worldcon bailout fund has merit--although the thought of using the cash to revive the SFL sends shudders up my spine.

But there are several items in that budget which it is not even possible to dignify by calling "questionable." Leaving aside the arguable but distasteful (for reasons I will get to later) notion of "investing" in NESFA, two items call for outright condemnation on moral grounds: subsidizing their own 1990 bid in the stunning amount of \$20,000 and installing a space conditioning system in the LASFS clubhouse.

The \$20,000 kept to support a 1990 LA bid is so obviously corrupt and inequitable that it may not require argument. It encourages me to consider (ghu preserve me!) mounting a competing San Francisco bid, despite the fact that we cannot hope to hold a hotel for five years. We would be poor but stylish, I can assure you.

The LASFS Clubhouse air conditioning system is another matter. Perhaps I should make it clear that in 1973 I had no reservations about the LACon donation to the LASFS clubhouse fund. The amount of the donation, it seemed to me, had been fairly earned by goods and services specially provided by LASFS--particularly the video game in the con suite which did box-office business until the ~~Boiling Ancient Falls~~ First Fandom meeting commenced.

Since 1973, I've become aware of a disturbing development which has caused me to become less sanguine about donations to a sponsoring club. That is, the increasing tendency of major clubs to take to convention running as a profit-making enterprise to support local projects. I didn't like it when certain fringefannish cretins began supporting themselves by putting on local conventions, using the sweatshop labor provided by fan and pseudo-fan organizations. At the risk of coming to sound like Armand Hammer (ghuforbid!), the whole "amateur" structure of the sf convention begins to tremble. I can't see any reason why I should come to Boston or Los Angeles and work like a dog in conditions which could only be described as execrable so that the LACon II Committee can sit in an air conditioned house in suburban LA on Thursday evenings for the rest of the lifetime of the airconditioning system they sweated out my pores. The miserable conditions used to be tolerable only because I felt I was enriching myself by the experience pour le merit, pour la gloire. The question of monetary endowments didn't enter into it, because whatever was left over was nothing more than a healthy chunk of spare change I trusted the concom to put back into fannish circulation.

Fortunately, living where I do, I do not have to deal with the moral question Boskone presents. LA is a different matter.

Let there be no dissembling: that \$200,000 "profit" was acquired by running a thousand-person (or so) sweatshop for several days. Disbursing any of that money to the personal comfort of LASFSans represents hubris on a scale so vast that every other example in our fannish heritage pales by comparison. "Fandom? c'est moi."

The only practical suggestion I could make at this point is the course of action I intend to follow: I will not attend, buy a membership, or even vote for any convention for which LA is bidding unless the bidding committee makes a commitment that not one cent of the proceeds will inure to the benefit of LASFS.

LA DELENDA EST

SOME CONVERSATIONS IN AN ELEVATOR

July 9, 1984

- Speaker 1: Dan seems like--it seems like it's always "that time of the month" for Dan.
- Speaker 2: So you think it's--
- Speaker 3: He's like that all the time.
- Speaker 3: I don't know...I went in and told him he had a deposition tomorrow, and he said, "I know that." And I asked if I could use his desk, and he said, "No." I guess by now I should be able to figure out when he's kidding, but (shrug).
- Speaker 2: Daniel--
- Speaker 1: It's kind of a lunar thing.
- Speaker 2: Daniel "PMS" Mulligan. (Laughter)
- Speaker 1: Are those initials I'm supposed to be familiar with?
- Speaker 3: Pre-Menstrual...
- Speaker 2: Pre-Menstrual Syndrome.
- Speaker 3: Syndrome. That's right.
- Speaker 1: Oh, that's like--
- Speaker 3: You get--
- Speaker 2: Crankiness.
- Speaker 3: Now wait just a minute.
- Speaker 4: Did you hear about those women in England who killed some men? They got off that way.
- Speaker 2: That's what they call the "Rag" defense."
- Speaker 5: Is that like Dan White's "Twinkie" defense?
- Speaker 2: Hmmm. Come to think of it, a Twinkie's about the right shape. (Beat) I can't believe I said that.
- Speaker 2: That lends a new angle to Dan White's waving the bloody Twinkie, doesn't it?

Exeunt All

