

Twygdrasil And Treehouse Gazette #53

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The Demon Bael

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AUNT DORA'S FUNERAL

It is as my father has said: funerals are for the living not the dead. My father was right about another thing: I really don't know these people and I could easily be the odd man out. Which is why he urged that I not go. But I could not do that very well. I had talked to a coherent Aunt Dora a month before. And that haunted my mind like a ghost.

However, my father was wrong about one thing: I wasn't isolated this time around, like I would have been 25 years ago. I had a topic of conversation, my research about Chaim Cohen, the great grandfather of the clan. Actually, I didn't have any info about him per se. But I could regale the relatives with info about a relative in Russia none knew existed. Also, about my Aunt Minnie's address in 1920 and the ship my great Uncle Mendel came over on in 1905.

Then there was computer talk. Merely because of my job I know more about the web and browsers than most. And my cousin Ira desperately want to learn about them.

I know an old man on the bus who wears a Washington Redskins hat. It shows he is prepared to talk about football and he attracts conversation that way. Computers and Chaim Cohen were my hat.

So this funeral, as ghoulish as it sounds, allowed me to catch up on 25 years of socializing. Socializing I left off when I moved to the D.C. area.

Also, I got involved in another topic of common conversation, 25 years of the family soap opera. When the family gets together that is what it really wants to know. What can I say? I too am caught up in it.

My mother was a source for it, both in ways she wanted to be and in ways she did

not. She felt that my Aunt Dora had been gypped out of various legacies. She urged my Aunt Dora's son Mikey to continue his law career, which was cut short when his father misinvested his law school tuition. She said Mikey had promised to jumpstart his law career and investigate those legacies. It is hard to tell whether he meant it. He is an obliging soul.

So far so sane for my mother. Periodic mention of injustice done to my aunt would have been natural. But my mother started straddling the thin line between sanity and insanity. She could not stop talking about this injustice for a month.

My mother also vented her ire at my Uncle Ken. He was not husband to my Aunt Dora but to her sister Esther. Nonetheless, she felt it was in bad taste that one of his mistresses should appear at the funeral, especially since he had remarried. Was one of Uncle Ken's mistresses there? My mother is sure she saw one.

Of course, even if one of his mistresses was there, it looked like it would only be for old time's sake. Uncle Ken did not look well. My cousin Louise suggested that he must have been stockpiling Viagra if he still had an active sex life.

My cousin Louise was one person I had not seen in 15 years. I noticed something: medical science had corrected her scoliosis. She no longer looked part spider part human. She was no longer partially crippled. Just very short -- stunted in growth -- and very thin. Or was it stringy? She seemed an active soul not a sedentary one. I believed her when she said she was addicted to swimming.

She has been confident, take-charge person, no matter her body. Her mother, for who knows what reason, had let her scoliosis fester until it could not be helped with the

medicine of the time. But if anyone was to conquer it completely, it was my cousin Louise. If anyone was to overcome her infirmity and marry twice, it was her too. If anyone was to have a healthy daughter, as cute as a pin, it was her.

In this way, she takes after her mother. However, she seems more intelligent than her mother; and, despite knife edged sarcasm, can't be bothered harboring all the grudges her mother did.

My cousin Diane, her sister, was there. She is her polar opposite, an affable soul. I was saddened to hear her husband, who had always struck me as a decent husband and a decent human being, had had to retire because of disabling arthritis.

Everyone saw that Diane remained as fat as ever. I noticed her face. It seemed to have gone from homely to almost attractive. Her nose seems to have shrunk.

On the other hand, her daughter was fat and homely like the way I remember her mother. However, that did not seem to slow the daughter down. She had the same breathlessness of teenagers more favored by nature and society. I bet she, like her mother, conquers with her mild disposition.

The daughter was the center of a scandal in a teapot. She brought a book to the funeral. In the gauche style of teenagers, it was one of those proliferating sagas about vampires. My mother thought there must be something wrong with her mentally. Mark this up not to incipient madness but the generation gap. You could not convince my mother of that, though. She refused to believe that that is normal teenage reading these days.

After the funeral, there was a party at son Ira's house. That was when I got to know my Aunt Dora's sons better. Mikey, who had been curt with me when I

mentioned Chaim Cohen during my aunt's illness, proved an affable individual who had been overburdened at the time. Apparently, he was even somewhat interested in the outcome of my researches.

The only son of Aunt Dora's who was not completely cordial was the schizophrenic son. He didn't seem to be crazy, just into himself. He periodically spoke and it seemed to make sense. Of course, his observations were very mundane, but you don't expect deep thoughts when you are sitting down to eat lox, white fish and several brands of herring.

By the way, that was what people noticed about the schizophrenic son. He ate a lot. He ate the whole four hours of the feast, only stopping for short comments. Another thing people noticed was that he was thin as a rail. He apparently needed that food.

One surprise at the party was my Uncle Lou's son Henry. I didn't even know my Uncle Lou had a son named Henry. But he did and I liked him. Much better than the son who took his life. God rest his soul.

Of course, I brought up the subject of my Uncle Lou. Henry told me that, despite the ravages of cancer, he was still continuing to garden, doing whatever he physically could. Good for Uncle Lou.

There are my relatives. I hope I haven't bored you overly with them.

MY NEW SCANNER

I got a new play thing, a scanner. Working with its own and my other software, I can scan pictures into zines when I write them. I can place them in a document as illustrations. Or I can print them out like I would in a photocopier. Or insert them on my web pages. Or I can fax them. Or just

watch them for my own entertainment. (We won't say which ones I watch for my own entertainment.)

Purchasing it and setting it up was an adventure. I got a Microtek Scanmaker v310. I was told Microtek made a good inexpensive product. Plus technological progress was on my side this time around. Scanners have really gone down in price. What I got cost \$135.

Actually, I may have paid more than I had to. My friend Larry took the first bargain that came down the pike and his cost \$60. I do not know how good his scans are, however. I would imagine they were alright.

I fear I can be a nervous sort, and was scared that care had to be taken in purchasing and maintaining this machine. That is why it had to be Microtek and I had to use PC Mall, which treated me well last purchase around.

Apparently, I am not the only nervous nelly when it comes to scanners. The salesman over the phone plumped for a whoop-de-doo warranty that entailed 33% added on to the price. Probably geared to the nervous nelly market. I said no. But I was concerned so I emailed Steve Hughes, and he set me right that this was the con I figured it to be.

Not only have scanners become cheaper; they have also become easier to install. Several years ago you had to have a whole new card in your computer. I knew that was no longer true. But I was wondering what obstacles remained when the instructions warned some people would have difficulty. And they might need some expert help. I found out later that those who could not install the scanner must be green indeed.

For one thing, installing the scanner is a matter of plugging things in.

What I was afraid would be a roadblock was installing the scanner's software. And not because I do not know how to install software. I can't say I learned that from my mom, but I have as a byproduct of the computer revolution. No, I was afraid my CD-ROM drive would not work because I had had a tough time with it in the past.

However, the situation did not prove as bad as I expected it to be. Once I got the CD-ROM detected by playing a music CD and a game CD, the software installed from it just fine.

So far I am happy with my scanner. All the software being Twain Compliant, it works similar to other scanners I have used, one at Kinko's and one at work. You have to use the "acquire" command. And you scan pages and preview than in the format you want.

My Photo Plus software gets me graphics files. To get a decent one, you have to use the right setting. Line Art does not work for cartoons with shading I found out to my chagrin. I need to use 256 Shades of Gray. Everything works better with Millions of Colors, even though I do not have the video card to display them in full. Unfortunately, the more colors, the more space a graphics file takes up on the computer. There is another problem as well. Given my printer is ancient and has very little RAM, some of these file are impossible to print out.

It is true I get very few formats I can save files in on the software provided by Microtek. And GIF, part of the life blood of the web, is not one of them. However, that does not matter. Long before I purchased this scanner, I purchased Paintshop. I save files to one of the formats provided and bring them up in Paintshop. Then I can copy them in any one of an assortment of file formats. I

can save them to GIF of course. And WPG so I can place them directly in a Corel Wordperfect document.

I can also cut down a lot on the file size in Paintshop. The files are often a couple of megabytes after I scan save them. For some files resizing helps. For most others, cropping does. I often end up cutting the file size by 90%. Then I have no trouble printing it out, or inserting it into a publication or on the web. I can even copy it to diskettes. What is strange is that often there is no change in picture quality.

The graphics I get this way are not perfect copies by any means. Cutting and pasting an object physically yields a far better copy. But the copies I get will do, and you can position a graphics files in a document better than you can a physical clip. They seem to come out a little less crooked. Also, you can size graphics to fit your publication rather than you having to size your publication to fit the clip.

Of course, photographs do not look like the real thing either. You have seen the photographs I get from my scanner. If I wanted a professional looking job I would get the special software and the special printers advertised. Plus a digital camera. But the ones from my scanner seem OK to me.

There are two more tricks I can make my scanner do. First, I can use it as a photocopier. No heavy duty photocopying, though; that will ruin the machine. My second trick is if I scan with my OCR software, Caere Omnipage, I can save pages from a book or articles from a newspaper into word processing files. This has the same problems as other OCR software. It will mistake one letter for another. "I"s will come out exclamation marks "!"s or "1"s. Also, like them, it has other strange quirks. Maybe

there is a way to correct these problems. I will have to print out my manual one of these days and see. On the other hand, maybe I have to shovel out the \$100 for the whoop-de-doodle software Caere has been pushing.

Still, as I said, I am having a lot of fun with my new toy.

CONNOISSEURS OF SIDESHOWS: GOULD AND PYLE

The book I am going to review this time is *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (1897). I have fond memories of this book. I remember reclining in my father's office on his overstuffed chair, reading it and gazing on the ghoulish pictures.

Actually what I read in 1998 was supposed to be an adaption of the book. The used book stores charge too much for the real thing, no matter what the edition or year. But it wasn't an adaption either. It was a facsimile of 633 pages of the book. 328 had been cut off. As far as I am concerned, this book may as well have been the original: it had all the chapters that I remember as a high school kid.

Gould and Pyle give what they are writing a fancy name, Teratology. But all that means is that they are connoisseurs of sideshows: teratology means the study of freaks. In fact, many of the people they discuss were on the sideshow circuit of their day, or had been a few decades before.

Many of us have heard of these roadside attractions: people like Merrick the "Elephant Man", Chang and Eng Bunker the Siamese Twins, General Tom Thumb the dwarf. Some are less well-known to us, however. There is a picture of a very dignified man in evening dress -- except for bare feet encased in casts, which are huge

from elephantiasis. Gould and Pyle assure us that he is quite well-known. In fact, they say that elephantiasis was quite the thing in sideshows of their day.

Sideshows are very un-p.c. in the 1990s. The assumption is that something like this could only be done for exploitation. And exploitation, it is. Of course, exploitation was necessary in those pre-welfare days. There was no other way for freaks to eke out a living. In fact, a few favored ones made a lavish one. General Tom Thumb, AKA Charles Stratton, built a mansion. And Chang and Eng latter settled down to being gentlemen farmers.

Also, there is exploitation and there is exploitation. There is exploitation by low lifes, like Jerry Springer, who ridicule freaks as being just another species of fool.

This is not Gould and Pyle's attitude at all, as far as I can see. Their attitude is there but for fortune go I. They go into the etiology of the different diseases. How nature has played a vast joke on these poor people. Of course, in the state of medicine at that time, it was more description with high fallutin' words than explanation and cure. Still, their treatments are surprisingly similar to ours.

Also, Gould and Pyle try to humanize these people when they describe them at all. They give them personalities. A few they describe as abject idiots. They do so in discussing an early 18th Century freak with a humongous gorka, 7 ½ inches long, Thomas Weddens.

Other freaks they describe as intelligent and articulate. They report that the 16th Century surgeon, Ambroise Paré, whom they respect, claimed that he saw in Paris an armless man whose cleverness was beyond understanding. He could hold and work a whip and an ax with his head and

neck. With his feet, he ate, dealt and played cards, and threw dice. He showed so much dexterity with the last his companions refused to play with him. Eventually, he was proved to be a thief and a murderer and hanged. His agility got the better of him.

Gould and Pyle also praise the intelligence of

Pépin, whose real name was Marc Cazotte and who lived during the 18th Century. He did have hands and feet, but no arms, legs or scrotum. He was celebrated for his dexterity, which did not get him into half as much trouble. Pépin was celebrated for his erudition too. In addition to writing, he was credited with writing in several languages.

A freak much admired by Gould and Pyle, from their own time, is the 'snake' boy of Shepherdstown, VA, Jim Twyman. He grew scales and shed his skin each year. Gould and Pyle quote a newspaper article. It described him "as bright as any other boy his age." This, despite the fact he possessed what would be universally recognized then as a "throwback" in evolution. And thus a badge of inferiority.

Not only did he shed his skin; he was reported to have other throwbacks. He was reputed to eat enormous amounts of food at



Pépin

one sitting and fall asleep for two days. Also, he was reputed to manipulate his tongue and hiss like a snake. I think some of these throwbacks were bogus. Mr. Twyman and his parents apparently had a sense of humor.

Still, that Gould and Pyle accept all this does not mean they disrespected the young man.

Despite being Victorians, I cannot say Gould and Pyle are 100% dignified. When they humanize freaks, there is sometimes prurient interest involved. They are fascinated by their sex life. Especially how they could have a active sex life under impossible circumstances. In fact, because they are writing about sex under the guise of medicine, they can write about it with, for the era, relative abandon.

Chang and Eng gave the language the term Siamese Twins. Yet Chang had ten children by his wife Addie and Eng eleven by his wife Sallie. They had to do it by sleeping three days in one wife's house and three days in the other's. Pépin, who looked vaguely like a seal, was credited with coitus. Of course, he seemed to have had the ingenuity to do everything else.

Another man had a penis the size of a boy of eight, which would have been insufficient for an active sex life. Also, he had no sexual desire whatsoever. However, after he met his wife to be at age twenty-six, he suddenly found himself with sexual desire and ultimately his penis grew to normal size. Ultimately he became the father of a family.

One man lacked a penis altogether. Somehow, he succeeded in marrying a woman. He feigned sex with her. He never appeared naked in front of her, and instead used a homemade dildo covered by his clothes. But he could not keep up the ruse too long. He was drunk one night early in the marriage and she found out.

Of course, none of this could you see in a sideshow of the 1890s. Another individual unlikely to be found there was a Fiji Islander who looked like he had one hundred and twenty pound testicles. Unfortunately, the testicles were actually hidden and it was elephantiasis of the scrotum we were seeing. And, yes, it did weigh one hundred and twenty pounds.

Gould and Pyle were not the only sideshow watching physicians. There were medical sideshows. 'Anomalies' of medicine would go around the country and doctors would show them off to other physicians and explain their conditions. Gould and Pyle report about a French woman with polydipsia, abnormal thirst. She was in her 40s and claimed to drink four pails full of water a day. A special 'scientific commission' was formed to look into the matter. They watched as she drank 14 quarts of water and passed ten of colorless urine. This is a case that could fascinate only a physician.

Also only a physician would be interested in gawking at Barney Baldwin, a switchman of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. He exhibited himself about the country with a device that kept his broken neck in place. Who else would be interested in something like that?

On the other hand, the public gawked at some pretty strange phenomena. There was J.R. Bass, the "Ossified" man of the 'dime museums.' He had ankylosis of all his joints, except for his toes and fingers. In short all his bones had fused. Pretty horrible but not very susceptible to visualization. All the crowd got to see was an emaciated man laying there dressed to the nines except that his feet and lower legs were bare. Maybe what was astonishing was, as Gould and Pyle comment, he remained cheerful and

intelligent under the circumstances.

Physicians of the 1890s have not been alone in their fascination with sideshows. Modern physicians, more secretively, are fascinated by sideshows as well. The librarian at the National Library of Medicine assures me that their 1896 version is dog eared. And so popular they won't let it out of the library under any circumstances. I asked the librarian what physicians at this late stage used it for. Historical purposes, she answered. Then she giggled and said, "For fun."

PRIMARY COLORS

This was one of the few products of the mass media that I have broken down and seen in quite a while. I broke down because the movie was about one of my pet obsessions, Bill Clinton.

It was of course based on the bestseller by Joe Klein, *Primary Colors*. He wrote it anonymously and Washington wondered for months who its author was. Finally, Joe was revealed as the real author. I can't say Joe is a venomously anti-Clinton writer, not with all the competition. However, he rarely has had a good word to say about Bill and Hillary in public. As far as he is concerned in public, they are moral pocks on the political universe, and he has to hold his nose even to talk about them. So much for his public views.

Now for his views as Mr. Anonymous, his views when Mrs. Grundy isn't peeking and tch-ing. Most people ended the book liking the Clinton character, Jack Stanton. And Jack is worse than Bill. Jack had an affair with a 14 year old, the daughter of a friend no less. Monica has been at least of age.

If the book follows the movie, I can see why people liked Jack. The idea is that he, though flawed like Bill Clinton, is a Yogi Bear in a world of grizzlies. He may not be 99 and $\frac{44}{100}$ % pure but he is on the side of the good guys. The issue that is supposed to make or break him among the idealistic is whether he is going to smear Freddy Picker, who is competing with him for the Presidential nomination. Picker has a snow white image, but the snow in years past was the stuff he has snorted. And then there is the matter of his secret gay lifestyle in years past.

At first, Jack intends to smear him, and it appears he has gone over to the bad guys. The idealists are stunned. However Jack has a persuasive argument which makes him look a little better. If he doesn't expose Picker now, the Republicans will in the Fall election. The information was too easy to come by.

Ultimately, Jack proves to be almost a complete good guy. He backs off from smearing Picker -- although it takes a tragedy to do it -- and gets Picker out of the Presidential race by means that are almost honorable.

The novel was a bestseller. Which is why Mike Nichols and Elaine May made the movie. Unfortunately, for them, as a movie, it bombed.

Why? It wasn't the acting. It is true Emma Thompson seems out of place as the Hillary character, Susan Stanton. She has the mannerisms and the inflection right, but an English accent always threatens to break out.

However, the Hillary character does not play a big role in the movie, so it doesn't matter. The actor with the biggest role is John Travolta. Strangely enough, he does a bang up job as Jack Stanton. In fact, the *Atlanta Constitution* is right: the spirit of

Bill Clinton seems to possess him at times -- even though Bill is still alive.

Also, Kathy Bates does a bang up job as Libby Holden, the lesbian 'dirt buster' for the Stanton campaign. She seems to be one of the few actresses on the American scene who acts. She was great as the mouse of a woman in *Green Fried Tomatoes*, who has a lion inside. She is just as great as the old cowgirl, full of life, woman of action. Not even mental problems stop her. Only the ending, which crushes all of her youthful ideals.

Furthermore, Adrian Lester does a good enough job as Henry Burton, the Stanton campaign manager and straight man for the manifold characters that dot the screen.

Just as with the acting, I do not think it was the profanity that made the movie bomb. However, I cannot say it makes the movie better: in fact, to me, it is a turnoff. Do people this articulate have to say the word "fuck" every other word? I doubt it. Nichols and May are, I hear, being true to the book; yet they are being false to the characters. I know profanity is supposed to lend realism, but for me it takes it away. By the metric ton it belongs in bars and pool halls. Only as a sprinkling does it belong on the campaign trail; no matter what you think of politicians.

Still, the public is too used to profanity, and worse, to make this movie a bomb.

Is it that the movie is a talkfest that killed it. Even I, with all my patience, wondered, during particularly long explanations, when the movie would end. I bet they were being true to the book here too. You can get away with far more verbiage in a novel than you can a movie. We read novels at a more leisurely pace.

However, by justice, it seemed to me that that wouldn't have KO'd the movie.

No, by justice, this is what killed it -- or at least should have -- there was no Joe Klein. Or, should I say, no Mr. Anonymous? Mike Nichols and Elaine May were saying all this in public. The book was what Joe Klein was saying in private. You can't advocate the mundane half-good and half-evil of real life in public. And you can't do it with the amount of solemnity, they are doing it with.

This conundrum that dare not speak its name has ramifications far beyond this movie. It gives us a clue about Bill Clinton's mystique. Nobody is willing to say in public why the real Clinton has prospered, and even grown to top dog, despite the truckloads of trivia that have been dumped on him. It is of course because so many of the public accept his giant sized flaws, which are broadcast hourly to the nation. They regard his virtues as far more important.

COMMENTS ON SFPA MAILING #203

JEFFREY COPELAND

JEFFREY HAEMER

work

♥▼♥ For some things, a **computer program** is inappropriate, like evaluating us SFPAnS. To give a truly good evaluation of our performance, you need human flaws. Preferably MY human flaws.

NED BROOKS

new port news 179

♥▼♥ ct. Me. If L. Sprague de Camp is correct, the Lemur in **Lemuria** does indeed come from the Lemure, the ghost of the Romans. However, it happened in a roundabout way. Because the animal Lemur,

a foxlike tree dweller distantly related to the monkeys, is nocturnal, it was named after the ghostly Lemure. In turn, according to de Camp, late 19th Century biologists explained how animal lemurs came to live in Madagascar, India, African and Malaya by the existence of a lost continent. The zoologist Philip L. Scalter named it "Lemuria."

👁️▼👁️ There were lots of other things than depressed me about Vonnegut's *Galapagos* than the downfall of civilization or the idea of our brains being too large. In fact, I stopped reading it long before those became an issue.

👁️▼👁️ ct. Hlavaty. Most people who advocate the **survival of the fittest** as nature's course, only do so as long as they see themselves as the fittest. Military men see themselves as the fittest because they are better prepared for battles. The rich see themselves as fittest because they have more bucks and are more powerful. However, when they stop and think about it, it is the peaceable who will survive because they do no fighting. And it is the poor who survive because they have more children. Then we hear people advocating the draft, forced sterilization, euthanasia, and other measures to help nature along.

👁️▼👁️ ct. Hughes. It is a neat idea that there is a **face on Mars** and that shows a great interstellar civilization left its mark. However, I find this idea even neater. I hear a feature on Mars looks a lot more like Mickey Mouse than the celebrated Face looks like a face. So Disney has been there ahead of everyone else and has been covering up. Probably they are looking for a Martian to compete with Warner Brothers' Martian.

👁️▼👁️ ct. Lichtman. I fear I don't have the patience anymore to go through

Goodwill's bins looking for **bibliophilic treasures**.

👁️▼👁️ ct. Schlosser. I can't believe the top people in the government purposely planned the incineration of Koresh's followers at **Waco**. The whole world was watching and their incineration wouldn't look good. I think Koresh was copying the Solar Temple, who had incinerated themselves some months before.

👁️▼👁️ ct. Binker. Just bringing this theory out so it can be shot down. I think there were several **big bangs**. I hear matter isn't by any means as evenly distributed in the universe as it should be. And I hear there is no proof that it is slowing down as there should be. In fact, the universe appears to be speeding up.

👁️▼👁️ Too bad you've **moved**. I had heard your old home was astonishing in its way and I wanted to see it one day. But I had been putting off and putting off the trip, so I have no good argument why you should have waited for me to visit. Faint heart never saw fair house.

NED BROOKS

it goes on the shelf 18

👁️▼👁️ ABOUT DISPUTATIONS ON ART, ANARCHY AND ASSHOLISM. The picture of the **king** on his throne and the men about to beat his brains out could be political. Or it could be an alchemical allegory.

👁️▼👁️ ABOUT BAD RONALD. You're right that **Vance** could have been both parodying fans in the evil character of Ronald Wilby and revealing a dark portion of his soul. There could be other inspirations as well. I know my fancies and fantasies mix several different portions of my self. Often so homogenized are they that I can't tell what portion inspired them.

🍷▼🍷 ABOUT THE PLACE CALLED DAGON. I'm being picky here. I thought **Dagon** was a Philistine God. And the Philistines most likely had Mycenaean, i.e., Greek, origins not Phoenician. Archaeologists tell that from their pottery and their looms.

🍷▼🍷 ABOUT THREE CHILDREN'S NOVELS. I wonder if the Legend of Dr. Theophilis had anything to do with the **Theophilis** legend from the Sixth Century, about a man who made a pact with the Devil.

🍷▼🍷 GEORGE LOCKE. Picky, picky again. I heard the Haitian dictator was not Henri Christophe but **Henry Christophe**. He was brought up in an English colony and decided to keep his English name.

NED BROOKS

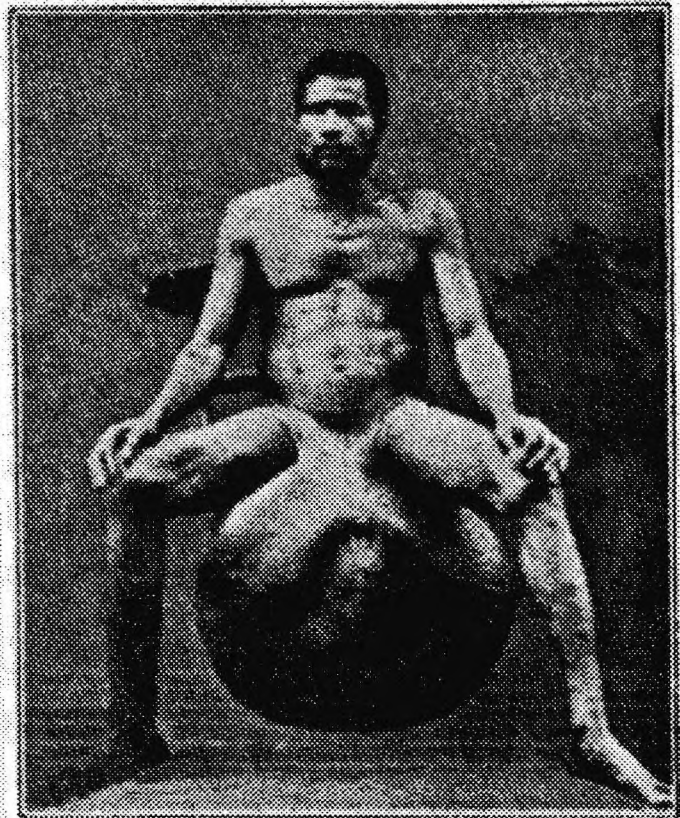
an island in the moon

🍷▼🍷 Actually, the book is by William Blake and it has been edited by Gavin O'Keefe. But I take it Ned included it in this mailing and Ned is Purple Mouth Press. So I give the credit for it to Ned.

Basically, I cannot make heads or tails out of this book. However, this is SFPA and we are all supposed to have opinions, so I will take a gander.

William Blake seems to be having fun playing around with the literary traditions and fashions of his time. First the traditions. Having men representing different philosophies enter into a dialogue, along with common folk, goes back to Plato. Of course, the only reason these philosophers are here is to be shocked and tongue tied at the cheek of the somewhat crazy, common folk.

Also, including poems and songs in novels and plays was traditional. I don't know when nonsense poetry, like here, came in. About century later, Edward Lear was to



Poor fellow with the giant scrotum

make the nonsense poem famous. Anyway a lot of the poetry and songs as far back as the Elizabethans were far from serious.

Now for the fashions. Obviously Blake's mention of Voltaire was fashionable. Also, his mention of Chatterton was. Thomas Chatterton was a poet and forger who committed suicide in 1770 at eighteen, and had a cult following among the romantics. Of which Blake was an early example.

Well, that is my take on *An Island in the Moon*.

BINKER HUGHES

seasons #32

🍷▼🍷 It would be better for your mother to make **priorities** so she can allow time for sleeping and other neat things like that. It

would probably be best for her to estimate how much time each task takes and only undertake tasks there is time for. But this is the era of spontaneity. We feel chained if we cannot go where fancy takes us every second of the day. Of course, she has taken it a little far if she can't even plan to sleep.

🍷🍷 I have never been a **hermet** like you but my circle of friends is usually very small. I have my wife, a few acquaintances at work, a few acquaintances in farflung places, and now my relatives. But that seems to be it. I used to hate myself for being so unpopular but more and more it has dawned on me that all along I preferred solitude to interaction.

🍷🍷 ct. Me. I think we got the email situation under control. You know now never to believe **America Online** under any circumstances.

🍷🍷 **My fiction** is a bust because I can never decide which audience to shoot for. So I try for all of them, which means I try for none of them.

🍷🍷 ct. New Port News. The same thing happened to me, with **piano lessons**. I didn't practice and got very little out of them. Of course, I have always known the piano was never my calling.

It took my father a little more time to be convinced. When I gave the lessons up, my father warned me that I would regret never having gone on in piano. To prove he was correct, he asked me years later in my 30s, and even 40s, whether I didn't regret not having gone on in piano. I never did. Finally, he gave up and admitted my piano lessons were a waste.

🍷🍷 In the 17th Century, people took **oaths** all the time. I wouldn't doubt that's when the Quakers acquired their oath. And oaths were, like now, done out of peer pressure and atmospherics when they

weren't required by law. On the other hand, they were not casually discarded, as you suspect they are nowadays. If you made an oath to God, it was widely believed he would strike you down if you violated it in any way.

🍷🍷 You're right that women have lost some of the protections they used to have. But they had broken down long before the current phase of **Feminism**. In fact, they had been breaking down since some time in the 19th Century. A later cause of the breakdown was the Playboy Philosophy. There was no need to stay with any woman more than one night. In fact, there was no need to stay with any woman after the ten second sex act. Slam, bam, thank you mam.

MEADE FRIERSON

the lawyer at tenth court south #2

🍷🍷 Don't worry that you aren't in great demand as a lawyer. Even the best of us have been **forgotten** at times. My sister told me about what happened to Tim Hardin. Even someone who wrote songs as beautiful as he did in the '60s had been forgotten by the '80s.

Anyway, I see you haven't been completely forgotten. You are getting business. Just not as much as or the kind you want. Of course, you're just re-starting out, aren't you?

🍷🍷 A **knish**? Potato or meat?

🍷🍷 The scenes you mention remind me of a *Mad* magazine parody of "**This is Your Life.**" When it is announced to Melvin Cowsnofsky that 'This is your life.' He says, "No, it ain't." And runs away.

RICHARD LYNCH

this is not a minacine #86

🍷🍷 Your account of your previous **trip to Eastern Europe** was a SFPA classic.

This isn't as much of a classic. It doesn't seem like it was meant to be. But I certainly would have loved to be in your shoes for all the concerts. Even the less than great concerts. Even the Victor Borge simulacrum.

☺▼☺ You notice that no matter how lost we are, we have a tendency to find ourselves. Could all those coincidences be dumb luck? Or do you think it is **PSI**? Do you think we are psychic? That we would do well in the Psychic Friends Network?

See what conclusions we can come to when we haven't the foggiest notion of the factors involved.

☺▼☺ It doesn't matter if you would have had a great career as a concert musician; not if you hated it. Even even if you became another Piatigorski, it wouldn't be for you. Whereas if you have loved engineering, that has been your **calling**, no matter the lack of fame and acclaim.

☺▼☺ The **subway machines** in Prague may be difficult to figure out if you don't read the instructions. But you don't have to go to Prague to have that problem. You can have it in D.C. with the newer metro card machines. They include a few moves that aren't quite intuitive. Of course, reading the instructions there, as opposed to Prague, is a distinct possibility; just that I'm too lazy.

☺▼☺ ct. Me. You're wise to take the **subway** most of the way to D.C. For one thing, you avoid being buried in traffic. For another, you get a lot of reading time and, if you have a laptop, a lot of writing time. Reading is how I spent my time when I used to commute into D.C.

☺▼☺ ct. Binker. You only use Javascript and CGI programming for more sophisticated **websites**. I put mine up with only regular HTML and some graphics files.

☺▼☺ ct. Steve Hughes. Of course, **Clinton** has a economic policy. People think

he doesn't because they don't expect to find one. The stereotype is that he is the man who stands for nothing. But not quite. His health care plan, whether you think well or ill of it, was a massive economic policy initiative. One which got shot down massively. Right now, his economic policy can be described as Internationalism. To keep trade free and to keep the Asian crisis from pulling down America. A policy that is totally un-Clinton like: it's not very popular: so critics have double reason to ignore it.

IRV KOCH offline reader

☺▼☺ Who knows? This **Kay Pinckney** may be the woman out there for you. There are a lot of people out there for the lonely, but social and psychological obstacles far stronger than Victorian strictures of propriety keep them apart. With you and Kay, the strictures may have broken down.

☺▼☺ ct. Me. Sorry, I should have realized that **DUFF** meant Down Under, and **TAFF** meant Trans-Atlantic.

☺▼☺ No, the **undertaker** I was talking about is Black and he buries mostly people of his own race. The exception seems to be one or two white paupers each year.

☺▼☺ ct. Richard L. I do things completely differently. I usually don't bother with my browser's Cache. I remember the website where the **web graphic** I like is, and right click on the graphic and save it. Then I use it on my publications, website, etc.

Of course, you seem to find exploring the Cache fun.

☺▼☺ ct. Ned B. I think I have succeeded in making **Ned's bookmarks** into my own. If I have, does anyone want me to email them?

☺▼☺ You provide a real service in selling a good stock of noncollectible but choice, used **science fiction**. Goodwill sells

used science fiction, but, like Ned and his sister, you have to look hard for choice titles. 🍷▼🍷 I agree with you for the most part about **World War I**. The only place where we might disagree, and where there might be a comment hook, is your tentative cause for World War I. I doubt that if Francis Ferdinand hadn't been assassinated, World War I would not have taken place. From what I gather, the big powers were hot to trot. All were sporting for a good fight. It was only later that many suspected the war wasn't giving them the glory they presumed it would.

GUY H. LILLIAN III spiritus mundi 165

🍷▼🍷 I bet I had **my flu** the same time as you did. That was some disease. I vomitted for a night, and then was semi-comatose for three days. I didn't feel so hot the rest of the week either. But, knock on wood, I only got it once.

The next big health crisis did not start for me until the Summer when I had an attack which made most of my joints stiff along with some aches and pains. And gave both my hands rotator cuff syndrome; they both tingled awful and were very sensitive to hot and cold. Since then Motrin has helped greatly with the stiffness and aches, and special exercises with my hands.

I get the feeling this is our initiation into old age. You have high school or college graduation to initiate yourself into adulthood. And this for old age.

🍷▼🍷 I'm in Toastmasters and they have strict rules about how you can speak and how you can't. But the right **technique for speaking** depends on what you have to say. There is a woman in Toastmasters, who, while not being retarded, has mental problems which makes all public speaking

difficult. Also because of them, she breaks all the rules. Says more "um"s than our um-counter can count, hugs the podium continually. But it always struck me that if it came to a speech that required sincerity, she would be more effective than a sophisticated and glib speaker. It would be impossible for her to give the impression she was lying.

I bet it is the same with Cindy speaking.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Me. Scofflaws will discover a way to cheat using the **food assistance cards**, you can be sure of it. Why not? Car thieves, I hear, have found out how to open the engine locks with no sweat. Probably what needs to happen is the system gets changed periodically so wouldbe cheats have a hard time keeping up.

🍷▼🍷 It was very appropriate that **George McGovern** presided at the 20th Anniversary of the Food Stamp Act of 1977. He was one of the fathers of the legislation that transformed Food Stamps. And made it a program for the poor rather than the farmers.

🍷▼🍷 I fear **Gore** won't stand a chance in the 2000 Election. He's a liberal and the electorate finds liberals irrelevant these days. But, not to worry, I believe the electorate will soon find the conservatives irrelevant too.

🍷▼🍷 It's as I've said: they're **terrorists**, we're freedom fighters. It's a matter of who sympathizes with whom. Of course, since so many of us don't 100% identify with the government, maybe the dichotomy should become a triplicity. They're terrorist, we're freedom fighters, the government is a bozo.

🍷▼🍷 It's true. Seen from raw reality, the **Love Generation** seems like a sick joke. But, seen from ideals and hypocrisy, the Love Generation is a great notion. Loving one another is both a great hypocrisy and a

great ideal.

♥▼♥ It's true that **Heinlein** was up to his old sexist tricks in *Friday*. But the old codger had learned a new trick, a female heroine.

♥▼♥ I think Philip Dick wrote a story similar to Jim Carrey's *Truman* in an eery way. The best I can tell it was *Time out of Joint* (1959). It concerned a man who thought he was supporting himself winning newspaper contests in the 1950s. But it turned out the '50s town he was living in was all backdrop, and he was really helping the Earth fight the Moon in the year 2000 or thereabouts.

♥▼♥ ct. Brooks. I think it's time that you **backed up** your computer. You risk losing everything if you don't have any system for backing up. I would at least put my most important files on diskettes.

♥▼♥ ct. Lichtman. Are there any writers like Tennessee Williams or Robert Penn Warren living today? We probably won't know for twenty or thirty years. It takes time to separate the **classic** from the bozo.

♥▼♥ ct. Copeland. It's not true that incompetence would be a sign that there was no **Republican conspiracy** against Clinton. Incompetence has been the deciding factor in every government conspiracy I know about. In fact, since the conspirators are convinced their conspiracy is hidden from view, they feel free to be more incompetent than ever.

It is only in the conspiracies of conspiracy theorists that conspiracies work like clockwork. In the real world, they work like broken clockwork.

♥▼♥ ct. Weber. I disagree. It is best to have a dog if you're to keep warm. You've heard of a Three Dog Night. And it is best to have a **cat** if you want things to be hot. You've heard of a Cathouse.

♥▼♥ Not only do the petty criminals

you defend have nothing but **attitude**; their attitude seems to have stripped them of everything else.

DAVID SCHLOSSER

peter, pan & merry #17

♥▼♥ ct. Me. **Kenneth Starr** doesn't have to win in the courts to justify all the largess he is receiving. Nor does he have to get Clinton impeached. Judged on his prospects for either of those things he would be back defending Big Tobacco and GM in no time. All he has to do is get the rightwing Clinton haters out of the Republican Congress' hair.

♥▼♥ I still disagree. The way some hoity toity, artsy fartsy types look at Modern Art: abstract painting, atonal music: it is **veneration** very similar to religion. As puzzling as that veneration may be to we outsiders.

♥▼♥ Why couldn't the **stock market** still be based on sympathetic magic even if it was a matter of personal experience and luck. Isn't that where sympathetic magic comes from?

♥▼♥ I'm sure you're right that **knock out drops** are technically any drops that knock you out. However, traditionally, Arthur is right: they were mostly choral hydrate. At least that's what I heard in the '50s.

♥▼♥ We've gone a little too far to the opposite extreme. From the **powers-that-be** being all knowing and all good to them being all knowing and all evil. And, to be frank, it is better to believe that they are all good: we couldn't do a damn thing about all knowing powers that were evil.

♥▼♥ Jeffrey Russell in his book *The Devil* claimed the **Sons of God** in the *Bible* were an incipient pantheon. I don't know what his proof was.

☺▼☺ ct. Arthur Hlavaty. I know the **RICO** law allowed some anti-abortion conspirators to be knabbed but, even here, it's overused. It was meant to be used against organized crime but now it seems it can be used against any one of us. The civil libertarians have been right in this. When one person doesn't have rights, none of us does.

☺▼☺ ct. Steve Hughes. What does the **Monica Lewinsky affair** have to do with Whitewater? Whitewater looks like it is going to bomb, and the Monica Lewinsky affair looks like it is playing in Peoria. Or at least Clinton having sex is playing in Peoria.

☺▼☺ ct. Harry Warner. I can understand why libraries might not like to pay to process and catalog **donated books**. They may get them for free but they are likely getting a pig in a poke. Donated books are old. Yet it is primarily the new that move, and you do want books in a library people will borrow.

On the other hand, there are number of reasons why libraries should take donated books. So I disagree with libraries that refuse.

☺▼☺ ct. Janet Larson. There is a problem with talking about **taxes** without talking about programs. We know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. We may get more money if we cut taxes. But we get less of something. And it is not a matter of indifference whether it is Social Security, Medicare, Defense, space travel or roads.

☺▼☺ ct. Gary Brown. I hear there is a form of **quackery** alternate medicine that claims you can diagnose all diseases by looking at the eye, iridology. So **ATMs** that do retina scans can not only distribute money, justice and Three Stooges gags. But promote health -- I guess.

☺▼☺ **Random** must be a good little boy to travel 350 miles without complaining or fidgeting.

STEVEN ANDREW HUGHES
SUZANNE JEANNE LAFERRIERE
our wedding

☺▼☺ You two look great, as does **Anguilla**.

STEVE AND SUZANNE HUGHES
the marsh creek gazette

☺▼☺ You had a **big wedding**, so did my brother. We all had to wear tuxs. He even had a big "pre-engagement" party for chrissakes. I on the other hand eloped. I think the whole process was over in three hours despite a gabby justice of the peace. Then we went to the zoo. My wife occasionally pines that she didn't have a bigger wedding but it does not seem to weigh heavily in her life.

☺▼☺ Your **Anguilla eating** sounds great. Unfortunately rolls and muffins are out for me. Diabetes.

☺▼☺ **Politicians** are usually considered an anathema. But I'm not so certain about that. I have had experience with office politics, like the type you mention; and I have had, albeit limited, experience with the politics of politicians. And I have come to the conclusion that politicians do it better than ordinary people. And are more humane.

☺▼☺ Usually in modern times, people have considered **myth and fact** to be diametrical opposites: myth is falsehood and fact is true. I have read I don't know how many pamphlets where they write **MYTH** in big letters to point up what is false and **FACT** in big letters to point up what is true. This was not the case for the Greeks. Aristotle said that in every debate you should balance each argument from reason with one from myth, or at least emotion.

You and Ed seem to have recognized that too. You had myth to sell and motivate, and the facts to keep from falling into open

manhole covers. That is why your company did so well.

👉▼👉 At least all you have had to do to get what **you wish** for is to make time. To get what I wish for will take more guts than I have. Guts enough to write a manuscript and send it in within a reasonable amount of time. And not worry too much about its imperfections.

STEVE HUGHES

Comments

👉▼👉 ct. Me. Any way of locating rogue DLLs? Or just prayer?

👉▼👉 It is no secret how **Clinton** has manipulated the public into ignoring the weekly accusations against him. He has remained President. The anti-Clintonites have long since started to sound like the little boy who cried wolf.

👉▼👉 Guy H. Lillian III. We think we should deal with issues like **capital punishment** purely based on fact. But basically it is a gut issue. In the end, it is in our gut to decide when we 'should' execute a murderer. Facts cannot tell us what 'should' be, only what 'is.'

Guy argues that Karla repented so she shouldn't be executed. In his gut, repentance is sufficient to commute the sentence. For you, it is not sufficient. In your gut, it is practically ignoring the crime. In my gut, on the other hand, any time Karla spent in the hoosegow is not ignoring the crime.

My own position is that the workings of justice do not run smoothly enough to exact something as permanent as death. It is a gut feeling of course.

👉▼👉 ct. Harry Warner Jr. I hear even **old computers** are now collectibles. A friend of mine has been raving about the market for the ancient Timex-Sinclair computer. Fortunately, that ancient piece of junk is not

commanding big bucks yet.

👉▼👉 ct. Jeff Copeland. I have heard contradictory things about the transfer of missile technology to China. In one account, **Clinton** was practically legally required to do it. Be that as it may, this issue has an advantage over the Monica Lewinsky affair. Treason is a crime of importance. Far more important in my mind than sex with Monica Lewinsky. Far more important even than generic accusations of perjury and subordination to perjury. Dig, dig.

👉▼👉 ct. Don Markstein. Once **computers** get a decent screen, they may replace TVs and maybe even movie theaters. (This is an exaggeration of course.)

JANICE GELB

trivial pursuits #77

👉▼👉 ct. Me. On re-reading my comment, I am not 100% satisfied with it myself. But a **mutual nonaggression pact** is a mutual nonaggression pact. No more will be said to you on this issue.

ARTHUR D. HLAVATY

confessions of a consistent liar 66

👉▼👉 ct. Me. I know it is said over and over again that Scientific laws are particularly well established theories. The text books especially spout this party line. Also, it helps that the media have given the impression that science can, and must, explain everything -- instantaneously. It is no wonder so many believe that 'laws are theories' is as true as $2+2=4$.

It turns out it is as true as $2+2=5$. Just think of anything regarded as a law and you will see that it isn't true. A theory explains something; a law only describes. For Every Action There is An Equal and Opposite Reaction explains nothing. It only describes what happens when there is a

reaction. Similarly, the Inverse Square Law of Gravity doesn't explain what gravity is. It was first formulated in the 17th Century and we still don't know what gravity is.

The Laws of Quantum Mechanics not only do not explain why the infinitesimally small quanta act the way they do; I hear one of them says in effect it is impossible with current technology to explain why. That is the idea behind "acausal" phenomena.

All this is clearer if you know the history of the debate between **Laws and Theories**, the Aristotelians and the Neo-Platonists, and the advocates of seen causes and unseen, occult, causes. Debates of which Sir Isaac Newton was a part of late in the day.

♥▼♥ ct. Steve Hughes. So Microsoft could make an even greater improvement than **Windows 98** by merely placing the top five ignored features in the Start Menu or a Program Group. It would certainly have a greater impact than integrating the Internet Explorer into the desktop.

♥▼♥ I think **Clinton** realizes that there will be no glory for him in war, no matter what he does. The chorus of Clinton haters will insure that there won't be. For once in this century, these normally militaristic rightists are the best friends the anti-war movement has.

♥▼♥ You better believe that the **Methodists** were considered a dangerous cult in the 18th Century. They were considered too "enthusiastic," i.e., emotional, which sounded to the upper crust like they were fomenting another religious war. Also, Methodists were considered low class. In addition, I hear they had the habit of using Anglican churches without the parson's permission.

♥▼♥ That piece on Gays in the Boy Scouts from the *Onion* reminded me of an



When elephantiasis was all the rage.

idea of mine, for the North American Man Cow Association (NAMCA). You call it and a voice says, "If you are a man or you are a cow..." Plus it sponsors phone sex. You call up and a voice on the other end says, "Moooooo!!!!"

RICHARD BRANDT

souf paw

♥▼♥ ct. Me. Real **stupid criminals** who leave their ID at the scene of the crime would work in a comedy. I remember something like it worked in Woody Allen's *Take the Money and Run* (1969). Of course, in a serious crime film, forget it.

♥▼♥ So they saved the crew member in

Destination Moon (1950). So much for my memory. If I read my reference work right, the cosmonauts found out that they could jettison their heavy space suits.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Liz Copeland. I have no problem with **Spam** but my wife does. She gets sex spam. And it annoys her. Yet she is afraid to complain because that will get back to the spammer. And tell them she is a live prospect and to keep on bombarding her.

I think she's being silly: a sex spammer might stop because otherwise he might end up in the spammer. But I doubt my opinion carries much weight.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Jeff Copeland. **Geocities** has decided to be competitive with Xoom since then, and now gives you 11 meg free too.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Gary Brown. People want to **hire** only those with the image of winners. You were lucky that El Paso Natural Gas had no memory that you were part of a project that failed. Or you wouldn't have gotten a job out of it.

Of course, maybe El Paso did remember and hired you as hush money.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Brooks. I like the idea of the **Hogu Awards**. It gives us some forum to vent our desire to be corrupt. At least to do so out in the open.

GEORGE H. WELLS

stomp your hat like uncle ned #1

🍷▼🍷 Normally, we think people only respond to snob appeal. But there is a **slob appeal**, at least if we fear we ourselves are slobs. Part of the attraction of fandom is that people fear they are geeks and like the idea of a refuge for themselves. On the other hand, they don't fancy rubbing shoulders with other geeks.

🍷▼🍷 It is attractive that we, like that cop, all have senses, talents, potentials, resources beyond the norm. The idea is that

the spiritual within us, which moves us, is more powerful than the less inspiring material outside us, which so far has proven the only source of power. This is the reason positive thinking and the belief in psi are so popular.

Of course, people looking for spiritual power are looking in the wrong direction. Spiritual power is to material power as apples are to oranges. You hit the nail on the head. It motivates us to act, gives us hope; something the facts can never do. In that respect, the spiritual is indeed more powerful than the material.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Guy Lillian. With "**goof**" **karma**, you come back as a comedian.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Jefferson P. Swycaffer. Do we have to prove the existence of **God** scientifically? Isn't faith enough? Doesn't that we are hungry for faith prove we should eat?

GARY ROBE

tennessee trash #33

🍷▼🍷 ct. Me. My belief has been that the **anti-Clintonites** cannot accuse him of anything serious. At least the mainstream ones can't. My prediction is that the Chinese technological transfer will go off them like a duck's back. And we will be back with Monica Lewinsky and sex before you know it.

🍷▼🍷 If you're a **tourist**, it's probably just as well if you didn't see the real Miami. I thought the idea behind tourism is taking a break from real life.

🍷▼🍷 People tell me that **arthritis** comes in attacks, like your wife's. All of a sudden it will grab you.

Whatever I have comes in attacks too. It doesn't precisely fit arthritis. Fortunately, it is not as bad as your wife's: it is more stiffness than pain. But, for a few

weeks or a month, it can really put a crimp in my style. Fortunately also, I have some relief. When my attacks happen, I can reach for the Motrin and that cuts these problems down to manageable size in a week or two.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Steve Hughes. Whether I could **work at home** would depend on the job. Some of my hobbies, like writing or fiddling with the computer, I can concentrate for hours on and don't realize the time has flown.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Steve Hughes. Do we have the same **problems** as in our youth: overpopulation, pollution, poverty, etc.: because we have made no headway against them? Or because we have the same number of doomsayers as then?

🍷▼🍷 ct. Guy H. Lillian III. **Your dream** of seeing Nick fall off the roof betrays the rightful fears of any good parent.

GARY BROWN

oblio no. 116

🍷▼🍷 My niece Pam graduated this year like your son did. I will tell SFPAnS about it next ish. She may not be the great academic prospect your son is; plus she lost her driver's license. But we never judge flesh and blood on that. In fact, something horrendous has to happen before I judge flesh and blood at all.

🍷▼🍷 "Kenneth Star, Crime Fighter" is a great cartoon. He doesn't rate as Mr. District Attorney, does he? More like Mr. Political Hatchet Man.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Me. There is no problem in page three or four of the copies of *Twyg* I checked. These things, of course, could easily have happened among the unchecked. Say the word and I will send you another, cleaner copy.

🍷▼🍷 I'm sure it worked for you that you had less responsibilities in college and

thus fewer **problems**. That did not work out for me personally at all. Once again, what seems objective is very subjective.

Responsibilities are very objective, it is true. We got to work. We got to make our budget balance. We got to take care of our kids. Problems, on the other hand, are very subjective. For some people pipes banging are a problem. For others, not even liver cancer or death is a problem.

🍷▼🍷 You're right dusting Mars with gold might send Bill Gates **into space**. Either that or some way to kill Netscape.

🍷▼🍷 What entails screwing up in **horoscopes**? Randi claims he did them in the '50s for a newspaper called *Midnight*. And he claims he made them up and recycled them. And heard ne'er a peep about it. Other newspapers have claimed that they did essentially the same.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Binker Hughes. You are so right. **Hiring** so often happens by mistake. I know I was hired by mistake. Realizing this, my boss tried to fire me. But, fortunately for me, my firing got entangled in politics. To some extent due to my boss's own stupidity. And I have spent twenty-one years in government.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Steven Hughes. I bet your co-worker said that you achieved **balance** in your layout by luck because he doesn't see much balance by design among his fellow journalists.

🍷▼🍷 ct. Harry C. Warner, Jr. Let's face it, **Mother Teresa's death** was second page while Diana's front page because we have a different idea of Holy in the 20th Century. It used to be that Jesus, Moses and St. Francis were holy. Now it seems our 'saints' are amoral creatures of the media: St. Lenny Bruce, St. Elizabeth Taylor, St. Kurt Cobain. Diana's only problem with being a saint in the here and now may have been that she

was too nice a person.

☹▼☹ ct. Jeff Copeland. Who is to say what is **correct English** and what isn't? As you say, for a lot of things, the best you can do is be consistent so people will understand what you are saying.

ROBERT LICHTMAN

the northern californian

☹▼☹ It seems like you did some fancy **car swapping**. I would be lost in that world.
☹▼☹ Alright, alright, believe it or not I have read the latest *Trap Door*. And a response is forthcoming first chance I get.

NORMAN METCALF

tyndallite v2, no. 77

☹▼☹ ct. Binker G. Hughes. In short, the idea behind **Scientology** is to replace your mundane, boring problems with sensationalistic, scientific problems.
☹▼☹ I heard Sidney Reilly, 'Ace of Spies,' was one of the inspirations for **Ian Fleming's** James Bond books. Fleming was asked whether he made a mint when he gambled with the Nazis in Monte Carlo. And he confessed he lost his, and the British treasury's, shirt. Then he added. "I'm not Sidney Reilly, you know."

In addition, I heard a head of British intelligence existed around the World War I period whom you only addressed with an initial, like M.

Ian Fleming seemed to have mined World War I and the period between the wars for his models, as well as World War II and the Cold War.

☹▼☹ ct. S Hughes. It seems that **Hitler and Goebbels**, in their faith in amoral expedience, forgot something: you get into trouble when everything you say is a lie.

☹▼☹ ct. Guy H. Lillian III. '50s SF is so

good because mainstream literary techniques and concerns were added to science fiction. Concerns like character, plot and the human condition in general. SF became more than the domain of science or pulp types. And the fruit grew well from a tree so watered.

☹▼☹ From what I gather, by rights the popular based **Narodniks** should have taken over. Not the more industrial, more ideological Bolsheviks. This is so whether it happened in the heady atmosphere of Tsarist defeat in World War I or during the world wide Depression.

I get the impression that the Narodniks would have established a regime similar in many ways to pre-World War II Poland. And been less ideologically committed to socialism and more ideologically committed to nationalism, and maybe democracy.

TONI WEISSKOPF

weisskopf's wall

☹▼☹ The **bondage party** you noticed at Coastcon reminds me of the S&M freak I met at the bustop once. How could I tell he was an S&M freak? He was wearing a button that said: "I haven't had sex in so long I don't know who ties up who."

☹▼☹ That experience at DSC should learn you. Don't **volunteer**. Don't even look like you might volunteer. Don't even show up for programming meetings. ...Actually, what can I say? I have been cajoled into volunteering several times recently.

EVE ACKERMAN

guilty pleasures

☹▼☹ And the garbage man who saved the heroine turns out to be a member of British nobility who is slumming. Right?

Not only are some professions farfetched for **romantic heroes**. Some

people are farfetched as **romance fans**. Joe Celko, one would think would be one. I remember when his philosophy was a little to the left of the Playboy Philosophy. Still, he is less farfetched than a scuzzy dwarf I knew who always came to work with a used Harlequin. It always had a rubberband in it as a bookmark. Of course, the dwarf was even less farfetched than this one tough looking Black bus driver I saw. He copped a page or two whenever his bus stopped.

☹▼☹ Too bad in that wondrous future of **Miles'** that physicians can't fix his body. However, it is forbidden: it would ruin the whole idea behind the series.

☹▼☹ ct. B. Hughes. I at least did finish **my novel** (or should I say novelette). But otherwise I am not much more fit to be a published writer than you are.

☹▼☹ Telegraphing your **villains**, like that writer did, happens a lot on movies and TV shows. Often all you have to do is look for the character who is fat. You can do this even on *Masterpiece Theater*. I am surprised at the end the fat person doesn't say: "I did it because I was fat."

☹▼☹ ct. Gelb. I think writers of non Romance historicals are rebelling against the **Regency formula** and the era is usually portrayed by them in a very gritty way: social unrest, worker exploitation, Byronian rakes.

MIKE WEBER

you're not pressing hard enough

☹▼☹ ct. N. Brooks. Did that guy with the **autogiro** kit sell any? Maybe he should have added the guns and missiles.

☹▼☹ ct. J. Copeland. According to the *USA Today* site, the tale about the Alabama legislature legally setting **pi** is a hoax. Supposedly, the Indiana House enacted legislation like that in 1897 but a mathematician convinced the Senate to let it

die.

☹▼☹ I will also stupidly admit that I LOVE **watching women** at a distance. With most females that is the best vantage point. Come to think of it, with most humans that is the best vantage point.

☹▼☹ Also, the **Jeep** in Popeye could make itself invisible. It was often drawn at those times in outline with dashes.

☹▼☹ In short, **commercials** are louder. For most of us civilians, loudness is subjective and, as you say, whatever they do to the commercials makes them subjectively louder.

LIZ COPELAND

home with the armadillo

☹▼☹ My third youngest **niece** has dyslexia. And real bad. She is a teen yet she has grave difficulty reading. Still, she may yet make her way in life. She is pretty, and handy for kid that age with a computer.

☹▼☹ I'm amazed at how much stuff I have accumulated over the years even though my wife Heidi has worked vigilantly to throw things out. Of course, I am not as bad a **pack rat** as my parents. I opened a drawer in their house one time in the mid-80s and found a 1953 *Ladies' Home Journal*.

JEFF COPELAND

ceci n'est pas une pipe

THIS IS NOT A
PICTURE a la Magritte's
Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

☹▼☹ I hear Jonathan Winters wanted to

be a painter at one time and his inspiration
Magritte.

☺▼☺ Maybe it's great that I don't know
my astral body from a whole in the wall
about **computers**. I never get mine into the
same trouble knowledgeable people, like
you, do.

☺▼☺ I seem to disagree with several
points in your review of *Primary Colors*. I
felt Emma Thompson was about to break
into an English accent any second. On the
other hand, John Travolta, like the *Atlanta
Constitution* said, seemed to possessed by
the spirit of a still living Bill Clinton.

☺▼☺ How much can any **gesture** do for
us? Apologizing for slavery isn't going to do
much for Blacks or Whites at this point.
Neither will it do much for a first grader if he
says the *Pledge of Allegiance*. Especially if
he does not understand it. In fact, we make
gestures partly because effective action on an
issue for one reason or another is
inappropriate.

☺▼☺ Making a right click on a **web
graphic** works most of the time if I want to
save it to my hard drive. I am sure I can be
blocked from doing it but I rarely seem to
be. On the other hand, I have come upon one
or two sites where I am blocked from
printing.

☺▼☺ ct. Binker Hughes. Do a **married
couple** even have to be friends? I have
known enough who aren't. All a married
couple have to be able to do is live with one
another.

