

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(4): Fitz

Send

From: terrible person

To: Honor! Chivalry! Faith!

this reminds me of a story I once heard about a famous studio head of the 1930's, famously ornery, uneducated, and impatient with those who were educated. once, when a group of screenwriters were showing him a screenplay for some medieval epic, he launched into a towering rage. "Nold on, hold on now!" he shouted. "I may not have gone to college like you #\$\$%^&*, but I know that they did not say 'Yes, Siree' in medieval times!!" No one had the bravery to point out that it was actually "Yes, Sire."

When we talk of Normans in Ireland, we mean Anglo_normans. These are people descended from Scandinavians who landed in Normandy starting in 911, and took it over, then took over England in a conquest of which you may have heard, and then moved on to Ireland. If therewas any celtic left in them, perhaps from mixing with the natives of Normandy (who were celts who had been overrun by the Romans and the Franks centuries before), there was not much.

As for Fitz, a check of several dictionaries reveals one that is willing to concede that fitz connoted son "especially if illegitimate" (Origins, a Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English, ERic Partridge, greenwich House, New York, 1983, p212) but for instance, in the case of the FitzGerald family, the sons were all legitimate. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 14 thed., or whichever was the last good edition before they started with the micropedia macropedia silliness.) So maybe we should all be a bit careful about impugning the ancestry of all Fitz's, or we might end up like the friend of my father's who thought that chancre was another way to spell cancer...

« »

Subject: Re(2): Sorvinos In the Movies

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

in fact, seeing her limited acting talents, Mira's career must be attributable mainly to her father's influence. while still in college (Harvard, as if you did not know by now), she appeared in an episode of Paul's TV show "The Oldest Rookie", as Paul/the title character's niece. Her first film, "Amongst Friends", was bankrolled by her father.

well, there are also her physical assets. but I don't think she would be where she is if her name were Mira Schwarzenfeld. (She would probably be using her chinese language skills in international business or political influence peddling. I wonder if she and Chow Yun-Fat were able to communicate on the set of "The Replacement Killers". His first language would presumably be Cantonese, while she would probably have learned Mandarin....)

« »

Subject: Re(6): Sorvinos In the Movies

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Steve Omlid writes:
, *a change of pace.*

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

wait, since when did Mira have a pace? she had a couple of small, forgettable parts in dramas and comedies(such as "quiz show", "smoke") an award-winning comic role, and since then schlock like Romy and Michelle, Norma Jean and Marilyn, etc. that does not sound like a pace from which one needs a break. it is not like Meryl Streep switching from accented heavy drama to "The River Wild".

Steve also wrote in another post:

Again, I don't doubt that her dad's name opened the door for her. But she walked through that door herself, IMO.

I think we can agree there is a finite number of opportunities -- chances to get one's foot in the door -- for new actors/actresses in Hollywood. As with places at UC. Every one of them that is taken by a name or a legacy is denied to someone who might be equally talented but will never have the chance to show it because he or she doesn't have a famous name or parent. They will never get their feet in the door, never have the chance to walk through themselves. Compare Mira and her childhood playmate, Hope Davis ("The Daytrippers" and a lot of stage work.) Hope is a much better actress but struggles along in the trenches. Mira has not advanced much since high school while Hope definitely has. Of course, there is that physical thing....again, to compare to UC admissions, didn't Ward Connerly propose taking names off application materials to avoid even the chance of affirmative action? Imagine if that were the case in Hollywood.....it would have spared us Bridget Fonda, for instance.....

on a related matter, one finds in epic literature constantly repeated the idea that sons are not as good as their fathers. does this apply in Hollywood, to both genders? how many children of major, first-rank actors and actresses have gone on to become their equals? ok, ofcourse this is highly subjective (what defines a first-class actor?) but it's a good parlor game...I would say isabella rossellini, you're no ingrid bergman, and michael douglas, you are nothing to your father, but jeff bridges, perhaps.....

« »

Subject: Re(4): Sorvinos In the Movies
From: terrible person

To: film
Steve Omlid writes:

just because her dad would provide a Touching Oscar Moment by sobbing when she got it.

um, remember, that the Oscars are a choreographed spectacle to celebrate conventional Hollywood, and that all the people there showing such great emotion -- are ACTORS.

and if Mira is such a great actress, why is she doing Mimic and Replacement Killers instead of dramatic or even comic roles that require acting and not just looking scared or determined?

terry

« »

Subject: Re(8): Sorvinos In the Movies
From: terrible person

To: film
Cc:
Steve Omlid writes:

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Why should I? [compare Mira and Hope Davis.] I think they're both really good. yes, but look at the roles they are getting.

Which isn't Mira's fault.[that Hope struggles along in the trenches.] it is, partially. it's a zero-sum game. every role Mira gets through connections and dyed-blondness reduces the pool available to people like Hope.

(And again, I have to point out that Paul Sorvino is a character actor Paul Sorvino was thoroughly enjoyable as Henry Kissinger and great in Reds too. Being italian american, of course he plays a lot of gangsters. but it is not his fault these are the roles offered him, but rather that of hollywood stereotyping. he is capable of a wide range of roles. he did not have a famous father or a fabulous bod to rely on in his rise.

terry

« »

Subject: Re(10): Sorvinos In the Movies
From: terrible person
To: film
Cc:
James M. Courtney writes:

If that is true then how would you explain the John Malkovichs, or the Gary Oldmans of the world? Who had neither a family connection or a good looking mug to get them ahead?

because, as I said, it's a pool, a matter of probabilities. every role someone like Mira gets reduces the possibilities for someone who looks like a normal human being and whose father sold insurance, but it does not, of course, eliminate them entirely. I never said that it did.

probabilistically,

terry

« »

Subject: Re(10): Sorvinos In the Movies
From: terrible person
To: film
Cc:
Greta Christina writes:

I don't understand your point, t.p. Because it's a zero-sum game, Mira Sorvino (and presumably any other actor with famous parents) should drop out of it 'cuz they have an unfair advantage? That doesn't make sense.

please don't call me t.p., g.c. it's a term I reserve for toilet paper. not that I would mind being as needed as toilet paper, but I am not that soft, and plus, i would meet too many assholes. "terry" is preferred. just as we weirdos are tired of being called 'freaks", and prefer the more politically correct 'eccentric americans."

I did not say they should drop out. i tried to envision ways to reduce the importance of family connections, to allow all to compete on the basis of talent and let the best person win.

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in all fairness, i should admit that one of the reasons so many children of actors become actor is that the public likes to see them. they like to see the relatives in movies played by real relatives, and in gneral, that adds to the qualiti y of the performance. also, as beloved actors grow old or retire, the public looks for replacements who recall them in their youth and glory. who better than their children? same reason the teamsters brought back Jimmy Hoffa's son. though this does not really apply to Mira. plus, they want to find out what their favorite actors' kids are like. will they follow in their parents' footsteps, or go their own ways like the Fondas? so it is not just Hollywood that perpetuates this, but the public.

terry

« »

Subject: Re(12): Sorvinos In the Movies
From: terrible person
To: film

Cc:
Steve Omlid writes:

So are you saying that if Mira didn't get the role, that "someone who looks like a normal human being" would? I don't think so.

I don't think so either, because that is not what I said. I said that every role Mira gets reduces the possibilities for others. it's a matter of statistics and probabilities. like the position of an electron. or the outcome of a coin flip. I am not saying that "someone who looks like a normal human being" WOULD get the role. I am saying that the normal looking person would have more of a chance at the role.

terry

« »

Subject: Re(14): Sorvinos In the Movies
From: terrible person
To: film

Cc:
Steve Omlid writes:

Again, looksism in Hollywood is a seperate issue. If Mira Sorvino was a Chinese language professor at some college somewhere instead of an actress, you can bet that someone just as cute as she is would be getting the roles that she's getting.

probably. but she would not have needed to rely on her father's last name. looksism IS a separate issue, which you (or Greta Christina, i don't remember) injected into this discussion. the issue here is nepotism.

terry

« »

Subject: Re(14): Sorvinos In the Movies
From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: film

Cc:

James M. Courtney writes:

terrible person writes:

I don't think so either, because that is not what I said. I said that every role Mira gets reduces the possibilities for others. it's a matter of statistics and probabilities. like the position of an electron. or the outcome of a coin flip. I am not saying that "someone who looks like a normal human being" WOULD get the role. I am saying that the normal looking person would have more of a chance at the role.

It sounds like your problem is not that Mira's family background has connections but rather she is very attractive looking and that gives her an unfair advantage.

well, then you have not been reading so carefully because until you and Steve introduced and began harping on the looks issue, I never brought it up, and I have avoided it. as far as Mira's looks go, it is true, I do not particularly like the way she looks. I never did all that much. and I find it a little annoying that she should be hailed as the blonde of the '90's or whatever when she is not even blonde (unlike Hope Davis, whom I've liked for a long time. who also does not stick out her chest the way Mira does.) but as far as the looks issue goes, I am all for actors/actresses (I will hereafter use "actor" to refer to both or all genders) being beautiful. just as I like singers to have nice voices and books to be well written even when they describe terrible things. movies create visual beauty and a good way to do it is by putting beautiful people onscreen. (and of course, a lot of people feel as I do.) also, beautiful actors are a lot more flexible; it is a lot easier to make a beautiful person look ugly than vice versa. now, it does get a little silly when beautiful actors play characters who were ugly in real life. but then again, most people whose lives are worth portraying were nice looking since to get anywhere in life, you have to be. I mean, beautiful people just have more interesting lives, because they are loved and have affairs that they unattractive just don't have because no one wants to be involved with them so I am all in favor of actors -- especially the female ones, being as beautiful as possible. what bothers me about Hollywood nepotism is that is REDUCES the amount of beauty on the screen. think about it. how many beautiful people do you know -- who can act, too, maybe --who will never get anywhere in Hollywood due to lack of connections? like my friend Darla in NYC ...it's like the Indonesian government or ours, for that matter, in which power is in the hands of a very few (often familially connected) and used mainly for their benefit. ok, maybe the rest of society benefits too, enough that they do not question the ruling order (if they even can.) just as the indonesian government provided economic growth to a lot of people, enough that they did not complain about how much more they could have had were it not for the abuses of the government, we don't complain as long as hollywood provides us with enough beauty, and don't ask how much more we COULD have. maybe we should.

« »

Next Unread

Reply

Thread

Subject:

Send

From: terrible person

To:

Cc:

Like the guy in "The Long Goodbye".

I got my mojo working now!!!

"This battle station is now fully operational." -- Darth Vader

caught between the supplier always dreaming of money
and the demands of the man with money who needs a little help to dream. -- joe jackson

not just an enfant terrible

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Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I get knocked down
but I get up again
You're never going to hold me down.

(I finally checked out the website to see what I was missing on the liner notes. it's just a bunch of explanatory quotes. in fact, it looks like a resume here!)

that song reminds me of a better time.
a not altogether appropriate theme song for this new year.

ignore all the stuff way at the bottom; I can't seem to delete it.

cool.

they just recarpeted and repainted my apartment. and my roommate left. so now I can put desk, books, files -- all the distracting stuff -- in his old room. in the other room, just a bed. ok, and a laptop. blank walls. it's the concentration room.

I saw someone today wearing blue suede shoes. two tone. I asked if I could step on them in memory of Carl Perkins. She had no idea what I was talking about. had never even heard the song.

"bad TV that insults me freely
still I know what I'm dying to be" -- Iggy Pop

"aren't you ever going to bed, Boss?
No, I'm waiting for a lady." -- Casablanca

anyone read "endgame"? I am about to.

O'Brien was a large, burly man with a thick neck and a coarse, humorous, brutal face. In spite of his formidable appearance he had a certain charm of manner. He had a trick of resettling his spectacles on his nose which was curiously disarming -- in some indefinable way, curiously civilized. It was a gesture which, if anyone had still thought in such terms, might have recalled an eighteenth-century nobleman offering his snuff-box. Winston had seen O'Brien perhaps a dozen times in as many years. He felt deeply drawn to him, and not solely because he was intrigued by the contrast between O'Brien's urbane manner and his prizefighter's physique. Much more it was because of a secretly held belief -- or perhaps not really a belief, merely a hope -- that O'Brien's political orthodoxy was not perfect. Something in his face suggested it irresistibly. And again, perhaps it was not even unorthodoxy that was written in his face, but simply intelligence. But at any rate he had the appearance of being a person that you could talk to, if somehow you could cheat the telescreen and get him alone.

walrus update: I found out that the Russian term for people who go swimming in the middle of a frozen winter -- we call them "polar bears" -- is "walruses.". maybe one of them once owned the pen.

once upon a sign I read a warning and it said
"When in rome don't feed the lions"
What it meant I can't hazard a guess.
But now I've learned my lesson, I'm a [TERRIBLE PERSON]
I'm filled up with high hopes and I'm fed up with soft soaps
Long in the tooth but short on wisdom
Up to here with the ache of it

If a matchmaker calls hand in hand
With a catch of the day I'll rise to the bait
But it'll still be more than a heart can take
More than feeling great

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More than a tongue can tell....

I need to take leave of my senses, to get a moment's rest
Following in footsteps, footloose in fancy dress
Head in my hands, I'm making plans
Hoovering up for the day....

And the itch to get rich quick
Has never been so hard to reach
With my hands tied behind my back
Shin deep in cement and sand
Just like an anchor-man I broke loose
And crashed to the sea-bed
Clutching the shortest straw
And if you threw me a line that's as smart as you think
It wouldn't stop me sinking down to cry
On what flashed before my eyes.

(Trash Can Sinatras)

« »

Next Unread Reply

Thread

Subject:

Send

From: terrible person

To:

Cc:

On a grey morning

Full of whiskey

God came to the City of Nets

Full of whiskey

We saw God in the City of Nets

"Go to hell all of you!

Throw out all your cigars!

Forward march, boys! Straight to hell!

Straight to black Hell with your baggage!"

The people of the City of Nets looked at each other.

The people of the City of Nets said: No.

On a grey morning

Full of whiskey

You came to the City of Nets

Full of whiskey

You start in the City of Nets

Let no one stir an inch!

Everyone's on strike! You can't

Drag us by the hair into Hell

Because we have always been there!

The people of the City of Nets looked at each other.

The people of the City of Nets said: No.

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The people of the City of Nets looked at each other.
The people of the City of Nets said: No.

For this whole City of Nets
Existed only because everything is so terrible
Because no peace reigns
And no harmony
And because there is nothing
On which one can depend.

We don't need any hurricane
We don't need any typhoon
Since any terrible thing that they can do
We can just as well do ourselves.

And the bed that you make is the one you lie in
No one comes to tuck you in!
And if someone does any kicking, it will be me!
And if someone gets, it will be you!

the City of Nets
(Bertold Brecht. Translation available on request. References too. It's a résumé, remember?)

Major Strasser: "I understand that you came here from Paris at the time of the Occupation."
Rick: "There seems to be no secret about that." -- Casablanca

An einem grauen Vormittag,
Mitten im Whisky,
Kam Gott nach Mahagonny,
Mitten im Whisky,
Bemerkten wir Gott in Mahagonny...

"Gehet alle zur Hölle!
Steckt jetzt die Virginien in den Sack!
Marsch mit euch in meine Hölle, Burschen!
In die schwarze Hölle mit euch, Pack!"

Ansahen sich die Männer von Mahagonny,
Nein, sagten die Männer von Mahagonny.

An einem grauen Vormittag
Mitten im Whisky
Kommst du nach Mahagonny,
Mitten in Whisky
Fängst an du in Mahagonny.
Rühre keiner den Fuß jetzt!
Jederman streikt
An den Haaren kannst du uns nicht in die Hölle ziehen,
Weil wir immer in der Hölle waren.

Ansahen sich die Männer von Mahagonny,
Nein, sagten die Männer von Mahagonny.

Ansahen sich die Männer von Mahagonny,
Nein, sagten die Männer von Mahagonny.

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Aber, dieses ganze Mahagonny
War nur, weil alles so schlecht ist
Weil keine Ruhe herrscht
Und keine Eintracht
Und weil es nichts gibt,
Woran man sich halten kann.

Wir brauchen keinen Hurrikan
Wir brauchen keinen Taifun
Denn was er an Schrecken tun kann
Das können wir selber tun.

Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man
Es deckt einen keiner da zu.
Und wenn einer tritt, dann bin ich es
Und wird einer getreten, dann bist du's.

« »

Subject: Re: Dangerous Beauty
From: terrible person
To: film

Cc:
bernard thomas writes:

I will ask one question of you history buffs out there, though. Did they really have bananas in Renaissance Venice?

bananas, according to my encyclopedia, though associated with central and south america, come originally from Asia, and have been around since forever. the venetians traded pretty much with everyone (think marco polo, though there is some doubt now as to the veracity of his travel tales.)my latin dictionary even lists a word for banana, but I don't know if that is classical or medieval or if it really means plantain. I don't know if Harry Belafonte was around then yet. or if slipping on a banana peel had been introduced into the comic vocabulary.

daylight come, and me wanna go home!

terry

« »

Subject: Re(3): Marie Laveau/New Orleans
From: terrible person
To: film

Cc:
isn't Pretty Baby New Orleans as well? and that vampire movie of course. and I think "Miller's Crssing" was supposed to be LA or filmed there but never identified as there. (the book on which it is based in apparently set in hartford, conn.)

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also "hard target" with Jean-Claude Van Damme and "Tightrope" with Clint Eastwood and Genevieve Bujold. (Mmmmmm. I just like saying that. Genevieve Bujold. Genevieve Bujold.)

Notice that in three of the movies Eva mentioned, Cat People, Angel Heart, and Zandalee, the leading ladies spend a huge amount of time naked. Ok, it's hot in New Orleans. In the first two, people get killed in really nasty bloody ways. Mysterious and magical. See, most movies involving unusual sex are set in SF, but I guess New Orleans is considered #2. But for mysterious gruesomeness, o Crescent City, no one else can do do that voodoo that you do so well.

« »

Subject: Re: The Wedding Singer
From: terrible person
To: film

Cc:
well, one reason that there are not a lot of movies about nice people is that they -- both the people and the movies -- can get kind of boring. at least, they are hard to structure a good plot around. think about it: plots are about someone struggling for something against resistance. if he or she has it all already, it's kind of dull. whatever they are struggling against is the villain. if you have just nice people, you can't have a human villain. so you have to have a non-human villain, like a white whale or a tornado or aliens or godzilla or tuberculosis. but very likely, some of the nice people are going to get killed or hurt by this non-human villain. otherwise, things would get boring and the villain would not seem too dangerous. but who wants to kill off the nice people? the audiences don't like it. so you have to have some terrible people to kill off. sometimes these are the guys who are collaborating with the villain. examples: aliens (or alien), twister, jurassic park....there is almost always a human villain making the non-human one worse.

nonetheless, my nominee for a film about really nice people: "My life as a dog". don't read the book, though; they were not really so nice.

terry (not really so nice either)

« »

Subject: Re(3): The Wedding Singer
From: terrible person
To: film

Cc:
I don't have a problem with good or nice people, just those who try convince themselves or others that they (the convincers) are good when they aren't or better than they (either the convincers or the convincees) are and want some special treatment as a result.

concerning plots, don't you think that characters who are entirely (or almost entirely) good are a bit one-dimensional? that it is more interesting to view a complex character with the good and the bad mixed so that his or her actions are not entirely predictable? as for characters whose moral dilemmas are interesting, well, there must be something evil that imposes this dilemma. for instance, for a good example from a sort of all right movie, I was watching "crimson tide" the other night, and bascially moral Denzel Washington had to decide whether to seal off a flooding compartment of the submarine after a near miss by a torpedo, thus dooming the men inside, but saving the ship. now, the villain in that situation was the situatio itself that forced him into this dilemma or the evil russians who had fired the torpedo. but there has to be a villain. in a perfect world, people would not have to make moral choices. many movies have two good guys

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who don't realize they are on the same side until the end when they get together and kick villainous butt. (the fugitive being a prime example, i.a. confidential too. they are, in a way, male-male versions of the when harry met sally story, of two people who are perfect for one another but do not realize it until the end if ever. the theme of the two ideal mates who are prevented from getting to together is a common one, and in each case whatever prevents them is the villain. it can be war, or their own psychological hangups[so it's their parents' fault] or illness or geography or prior commitment or jake's being impotent or....)

maybe this is a matter of semantics and I should just use the word 'antagonist' to mean whoever makes the protagonist's life difficult. even beach party movies have some villain, don't they, so that the movie is not just about the beach party but about the difficulties in setting it up.....?

there is definitely a difference among nice and likeable("the lovable rogue") and interesting characters. I often have to put down books and turn off movies when bad things happen to characters I have come to like, imagine having lunch with, come to think of as deserving of good; I can't laugh at them, down on their lower level of reality. it's different when they actually happen to me....the villain may be interesting and fun to watch but we are glad of his downfall, though we may hope he will be revived for the sequel....

gettin' all terry-I'd....

« »

Subject: Re: J.T.Walsh Dies

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

this makes me very sad.

J.T. Walsh was never a leading man, but he was never bad in his small roles. I wonder if he really was the slightly slimy, certainly sleazy, somewhat spineless, generally terrible type he usually played, but he did it well. I think of:

--the asshole Sgt. Dickerson in "Good Morning, Vietnam"

--the studio bigwig Alan habel in "The Big Picture"

--Annette Bening's previous partner in con/ boyfriend who later goes nuts in "The Grifters"

--Jimmy's rival Frank Fitzsimmons in "Hoffa"

--Bar-owner/would be wife killer Wayne in "Red Rock West"

and so many others. Please remind me.

I had always hoped he would make a movie with that other great initialized character actor, M. Emmet Walsh.

Putting on a black armband,

terry

« »

Subject: Re(7): The Wedding Singer

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

James M. Courtney writes:

On his own, Sherlock Holmes was some what dry and boring. Yet readers never really complained about that since the plots and the stories were so interest dispite that.

would you really describe Sherlock Holmes stories as "plot driven"? I would interpret "plot-driven" as meaning "trying to show something about the human condition". Whereas most Sherlock Holmes stories were technology driven, like Tom Clancy stories, trying to show off some new possible technique for solving a crime. (the most plot driven one is "A scandal in bohemia", about how women really are smarter than men.) Now, the border is fuzzy. for instance, the technology will not work if not for the foibles of human beings, their carelessness or overconfidence that leads them to leave clues around. but in the case of Sherlock Holmes, I would tend to the procedural, not the artistic. Perhaps that's just my opinion. Not that I don't love the stories.

Mysteries tend to be plot driven stories but that isn't to say you can't write a mystery that deals mostly with character. Silence of the Lambs seemed to me more a story about the relationship between Agent Sterling (Jodie Foster) and Hannible Lector (Anthony Hopkins) than solving the mystery of the murders. Actually, Silence of the Lambs is, I think, one of those cases in which the character and the situation coincide somewhat unbelievably. a woman becomes involved in murder case, largely because of her appearance, and it just so happens that the case triggers a response in her based on her personal psychological makeup! how about that! now, I suppose, if the woman in the story had not had Clarice Starling's psychological makeup, it would not have have been as interesting a story. Perhaps there were lots of cases like this, they just did not bother filming them! (this is a bit like the answer to doubters of evolution, who say, isn't it unlikely that intelligent (?) life evolved here, on our planet? well, if it had not, we would not be here to talk about it!

Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry and Man with No Name movies were like this too. They don't seem to play characters but forces of nature blowing through people's lives.

In th e case of the Man with No Name, there is nothing to indicate that he is really the same character in each of the three main movies (and similar ones like "high plains drifter" and "pale rider") in that he never makes reference to the previous plots as characters usually do in sequels. it adds tothe superatural feeling of the films (actually literalized in "drifter" and "rider".) only the clothes and the manner (and the lack of name) identify him. so I would definitely agree with your force of nature characterization.

terry (inspiration for "the bad")

« »

Subject: Re: theory (was: The Wedding Singer)

From: terrible person

To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

Well, Laura tried to change the thread name a long time ago, but it didn't take.

a long time?? oh my god!!! TWO WHOLE DAYS ago!!

actually, I don't have a problem with the name of the thread. I kind of like the idea of these vestigial names that remain when the subject matter of the thread has long since changed from that of the original post. it reminds of the way words often change meanings over time simply because their referants have changed; for instance, "gun" does not mean the same thing as it did four hundred years ago, nor does "computer" mean what it did five decades back. in Casablanca, the term "concentration camp" is repeatedly used in its pre-liberation-of-Auschwitz meaning of "prison camp", not "extermination camp". i would not be surprised if it is soon forgotten that film once meant a thin layer of something, not the narrative artwork preserved in images; "Terrible" meant not extremely bad but fear-inspiring, as Ivan could tell you, and Person a mask used in plays. many institutions have maintained their quaint original names while totally

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. changing their function (or while the names came to be used differently.) this is especially true in Britain, where the names of what were basically the sovereign's household staff still survive as cabinet offices with quite different responsibilities. In the US, the Secret Service is concerned not with spying as in most countries, but with protecting the president and the currency; the department of the interior maintains public lands instead of, as in most countries, enforcing public order. Israel's formerly feared, recently stumbling intelligence service, Mossad, literally "the organization", is short for "the organization for the second Aliyah", devoted to bringing jews to palestine in the 1930's, only later absorbed into the government with a new function. The Sandinista Army, the military arm of one party, became the national army of Nicaragua. The Special Prosecutor for a minor land deal in Arkansas has become the national inquisitor with virtually unlimited powers, much as a the junior senator from wisconsin did in the 1950's, or the head of the law enforcement union in last year's "Children of the Revolution". Deng Xiaoping ruled China with only the title of Vice-Premier.

No, I think it is neat to retain the original title of a thread, for the same reason I oppose spelling reform: to keep a sense of history, and not just the type you learn from highlighting and pressing control H, and a sense of wonder, so that people will not just judge a thread by its name, but inquire as to its actual content and function.

Resume for Elpenor

Disposable Hero

"So I spoke, and the proud heart in them was persuaded.
Yet I did not lead away my companions without some
loss. There was one, Elpenor, the youngest man, not terribly
powerful in fighting nor sound in his thoughts. This man,
apart from the rest of his friends, in search of cool air, had lain
down drunkenly to sleep on the roof of Circe's palace,
and when his companions stirred to go he, hearing their tumult
and noise of talking, started suddenly up, and never thought,
when he went down, to go by way of the long ladder,
but blundered straight off the edge of the roof, so that his neck bone
was broken out of its sockets, and his soul went down to Hades."

The Odyssey, Book X, ln. 550 - 560

"His form is ungainly, his intellect small,"
(so the crew would quite often remark),
"But his courage is perfect! And that, after all
Is what's needed when hunting a snark."

Lewis Carroll, "The Hunting of the Snark", Fit the First

"Beam down a landing party consisting of the Captain, the First Officer, the Chief Medical Officer, and Ensign Jensen."

Fredo's going fishing on Lake Tahoe....

"Les opinions sur son talent sont partagées: lui, il trouve qu'il est génial, tous les autres pensent qu'il est innommable. Mais quand il ne dit rien, c'est un gai compagnon, fort apprécié...."

They were expendable.....

Subject: Re(9): The Wedding Singer

From: terrible person

To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Cc:

James M. Courtney writes:

I think that is where we differ: to me a Character-driven story is one where the author is trying to show something about the human condition and a Plot-driven story is one where they are trying to solve some problem or puzzle. None of the Conan Doyle stories went into his drug addiction (Holmes was a cocaine addict) or his relationship with Watson, or why he felt the need to be a detective in the first place. Few Holmes stories ever really went into why Holmes did what he did. (the only exception to this is the Seven Percent Solution that was writtin long after Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's death.) Instead they went into his solveing the mystery at hand (who did it).

The book is much more belivable than the movie. Nietzsche wrote "If you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back." I think Silence of the Lambs was trying to illustrate this point. Lector was the abyss Sterling was staring into. She could not deal with him without his making connact back. Because this was her first case, she was not yet harden to the reality of evil. Thus of course she would have a responce to it. Jodie Foser herself said that she thought the story was really about three father figures in her character's life and how they shaped her into what she was to become. Her father's death shaped her by it's suddenness, the Scott Glenn character shaped her by mentoring her into the world of the FBI and the Lector shaped her by showing her the heart of what it was she was really after....the face of evil.

Thus even though much of the book was about the hunt for Buffalo Bill: the real heart of the story was about Sterling's (and our's as the readers) education into the heart of the abyss. So I would say that it was less a plot driven story (where the solving of the puzzle is most important aspect) but rather a Character drivin story (where the author is trying to show you something about the human condition.)

what you have said is fair and well-spoken. i salute you. however, I think that we are using different terminology and until then we will not be able to clash, as we said in high school debate. (I mean, if you are going into combat, you want to clash, not blend in in camouflage.) so let's get joe strummer and mick jones and adjust our wording: since this seems to be a friendly argument, i hope you will allow me to take one step back before charging forward.....

if you are following the scheme of rita mae brown, that is fine. I am following a scheme I call my own since I cannot remember where I picked it up, though according to my theory of creativity, it had to be somewhere. I see the first distinction in movies to be made among those that are trying to say something (about the human condition) and those which are just entertaining, just giving the performers a chance to dance, or sing, or tell jokes, or take off their clothes, or do kung fu, or kill each other (or the technical people a chance to show off their stuff.) of course, the dancing, singing, etc., can have meaning, but would have just as much outside the narrative. ok. so I would call movies of the first type plot-driven. now, of what do plots consist? since we are discussing the human condition, we want to see how humans (characters) react in situations. if the characters are fairly ordinary people placed in extraordinary situations, i would call the plot situation driven. if the situation is a familiar one but the characters are unusual, it's character driven. we can mix and match characters with situations to create plots. the hardy boys can search for buried treasure or their missing chums, or nancy drew can search for buried treasure: three different plots. (I know, these hardly ilumine the human condition. neither does the next example.) bruce willis singlehandedly saves first a building, then an airport; two different situation driven plots. either can show you somethin about the human condition. perhaps another diehard movie could have been made in which a wimpy geek saves a building. same situation, different character.

now, when I talk about the unusual, that either the characters or the situations are but usually not both, i mean that the audience demands some familiarness (or else it is confused -- think of movies that create a whole new world from scratch, with no explanation, not even a lot of implication-- the best example I can think of is Brazil) but not too much, or it isbored. (you might as well put a camera on main street all day.) which is why the one usually sees a new sort of character in a familiar situation, or vice versa. when the first movie about say, alien invasion, came out, it was shocking, the idea was so strange. the characters were rather normal. but as the idea of alien invasion became more familiar in movies (or when other things, such as political scandal, become morefamiliar in real life), the protagonists could become more and more interesting. let's see how a dog reacts to the aliens. or a mute unicycling clown. it is all like a sort of controlled experiment, where one element is changed at a time, only here the point is not really to prove anything, not even about the human condition, but rather to stay within the audience's

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

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tolerance of the new. but as situations become more normal, characters become more important, and vice versa.

to look at some current examples: you have this guy who's really smart but has psychological problems and doesn't care and his math professor just happens to know a psychiatrist from the same neighborhood originally, who also did not apply himself though he was really smart! how about that folks! on the other hand, you take some young lovers, of different social classes -- certainly a familiar theme -- and you put them on a huge boat that sinks!!! seems a nice combination of the familiar and the un- to me. or take a bunch of desperate unemployed guys. all right, we have certainly seen enough of them. in one movie, they are musicians. in another, they are strippers. ok, I can believe that.

the silence of the lambs was one of the first with a really psycho killer or rather two. ok, there was psycho, but cannibalism? cutting off skin? ick!!! and it was also one of the first with a heroine with really interesting psychology. now, everyone has really interesting psychology. everyone has their hangups from hearing lambs screaming or whatever. what I find odd about silence of the lambs is the odd coincidence of a really psycho killer, another psycho *who just happens to know him*, and a detective whose personal hangups impel her to get involved. (remember, Mr. Bond, once is happenstance, twice is a coincidence, and three times is enemy action.) isn't that kind of stretching things? iving a character hangups adds verisimilitude, but clarice's would just as likely have been about huge pink jurassic bunnies as about lambs to be saved. perhaps this hangup drove her to the FBI behavioral science division, but only her looks, her being just lector's type, got her chosen to talk to him and involved. the point is, this story is driven both by an unusual character and an unusual situation. it is plot-driven because it has a point.

it's like, would you accept a movie where just when things are blackest, the hero finds exactly the tools and the book he needs, lying by the side of the road, with no explanation? ok, if he didn't, there would not be a plot. but still, things are based on a pretty big coincidence.

by the way, what Nietzsche said was, "stare not", not "if you stare.."

and sherlock holmes stories? I stil maintain they were designed to show things about detection, not the human condition, so are not plot driven, but this does not make them character driven, or drivel.....

Subject: Re(7): The Wedding Singer

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

can you give an example of a movie that was truly about ordinary people doing ordinary things? even in "Ordinary People", if I remember correctly, there was a lot about the family that was not too ordinary. I mean, a movie about people and events that were like (and like those that happened to) most of the people you know?

incidentally, if you made a movie about a totally average person, it would not be realistic. (in other words, someone with 2.5 kids, 3 tvs, whatever the statistics say.) because the average person has some interesting characteristic, and this statistically mean person wouldn't.

and all those movies with titles like "a man and a woman" that pretend to be about an average person never are. did 'clerks' depict a typical day in the life of clerks? no. movies are always about the extraordinary. I ever see a movie version of "one day in the life of ivan denisovich"? of course not. nothing happens.

I'll be glad to discuss the specifics of this if you can provide some.

as for french films, as mr. s.f. applet teased, yes, when a movie is in french or other foreign language or setting, the most mundane characters and activities can seem interesting.

terrible person (easily confused with [statistically] mean person.)

« »

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(6): horrible

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Eva Luna writes:

Getting into morality....I don't know, sounds a little sticky to me. Your and my morality is not everyone else's....

Maybe "moral right" wasn't the best term I could have used. But free speech is the closest thing to a moral absolute that I can think of. And IMO, you don't go and hire legal teams just because you don't like something that someone said, in a free society. You ignore it, or you respond, but you don't try to squelch it. Unless it is truly libel, I suppose, and for reasons I've put forth before, I don't think this is. (And it seems like Courtney knows it really isn't either. Otherwise, she'd file a straightforward libel suit instead of getting funding pulled and threatening film festivals and movie theaters.)

And the other thing is, as James has pointed out, not only are Courtney's actions not right, they aren't smart. She's ceded the moral high ground to a tabloid journalist by trying to squelch him. Dumb, dumb, dumb.

what you are forgetting, Steve, is that it is always better to take preemptive action to avoid being damaged than to wait, be damaged, and try to get it back in court later. in fact, the law basically expects it. this fall, my ceiling leaked. now, i could have just stood back, told my landlord to take care of it, and waited until he did, meanwhile just toting up my damage to my furniture and lifestyle and demanded he pay me back when done, or sued for it. but then I would have had no guarantee I would actually be awarded what I felt I had lost -- maybe the judge would have been in a bad mood that day, despite all my evidence -- and I would have a lot of wet furniture. instead, i did everything I could to minimize my damage, moving my furniture, constantly telling my landlord what was going on, threatening, cajoling, whatever, because I knew that no matter how much I could win in court, it would not make up for what I had lost (especially when court time and costs were factored in.) now, courtney love could just let herself be libelled. she could let lots of people see a movie which, I understand, though I have not seen it, strongly implicates her in the death of her husband and thus, I suppose, harms her reputation. she could then sue. she might or might not win -- there is after all that principle that a public figure basically cannot be libelled. (New York Times vs. Sullivan, 1964, held that a public official -- later broadened to any public figure -- partly, I think in the Falwell vs. Flynt case -- had to prove that a statement was false, defamatory [damaging], and deliberately done with actual malice, reckless disregard for the truth in order to harm. my source is "The War Against the Press", by Peter Stoler, dodd, mead, new york, 1986, p 135ff) or she might win, and get a lot of money which supposedly makes up for what she will have lost due to loss of reputation. she might even get an apology, or the filmmaker might have to make another film saying, ok, I made it all up, she had nothing to do with Kurt's death. but she would still have been damaged and nothing could make up for that damage and it would have been better for her not to have been damaged. (consider some injury you have had, a broken leg. it healed and you can walk on it now but would it not have been better not to have had it?) and a lot of people will think, no matter what the decision of a court would be, no matter what the filmmaker recanted, that she helped kill her husband. it's like when the police search your place with a warrant and they do not find anything they were looking for but they do find some embarrassing personal things you would prefer no one, especially a cop, know. ok, you are off the hook, you are made whole, as they say, but you still have been damaged.

no, I think Courtney is smart to try to head off damage to her reputation in advance rather than try to make up for it later. (a stitch in time saves nine. better not to eat so much in the first place than to eat too much and feel you Have to exercise it off later, or throw it up.) if you don't do so, a judge will say, what did you do to resolve this matter before bringing it to my overburdened court? what did you do to keep your damages to a minimum? did you warn the defendant that you thought his film was libelous and intended to would sue him if he did not withdraw or revise it? if you can't say yes, I did everything I could to avoid this courtroom, the court will not look with favor upon you. it will think you just sat back and let yourself be damaged in the expectation of going to court. I know we are a litigious society, so much so that it is

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assumed every matter will go to court, but it is not supposed to. If I had taken my landlord to court without having made every effort to reduce mydamages and settle beforehand, but instead sat back, let the rain fall, and pinned all my hopes on the court decision, the judge would have found this out very quickly and lost any sympathy he might have had forme, and not awarded me more than the bare minimum. If you are driving and you see another car is about to hit you, you are obligated to take evasive action if you can, rather than, counting on your airbags to protect you, allowing yourself to be hit and figuring on collecting a big settlement. you would not collect.

now, if she could not win in court, she has to do everything she can to preempt court. which means she may be bluffing the filmmaker with threats of legal action. in which case, he is free to call her bluff and risk that she might take him to court and win.

i suppose she could make her own film in reply. it might even get a wider audience. it is ironic that larry flynt could be taken as taking the opposite stance to her. but that was just a role, remember. perhaps the best thing WOULD be for her and the filmmaker to meet in a public forum and debate his charges against her. but don't they have such public forums already? aren't they called courts?

every right has a responsibility. free speech entails taking responsibility what you say and speaking the truth and not using the right to hurt the innocent. and those who think they are innocent have the right to defend themselves. she is using her lawyers to explore legal venues, as far as I know, not sending thugs to break kneecaps or firebomb offices. this is quite within her rights. after all, in this conference, if I were to accuse some other user of something horrendous with little evidence, or just slyly suggest it, you would probably delete it or banish it to the salt mines of film processing. there are , and have to be, moderators in real life, too; they are called judges. or should we use your absolute moral right to free speech argument here the next time the flaming gets hot?

980304

Subject: Re(2): KLATU VERATA NICTO!! To The Apostles Of Raimi

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Chris A. Hall writes:

Don't wanna come off as anal, but it's:

Klaatu barada nikto!

It's originally a line from The Day the Earth Stood Still.

yes!!! glad someone got this.

In larry shue's hilarious play "The foreigner", the main character is a proofreader at sci-fi magazine. commenting on the pointlessness of his job, he says "Who cares if there are two k's or three in Klaatu barada nikto!?"

Now, how do you spell the other example of alienese from the movie, the final line, "Gort, beringit"?

Subject: Re(10): The Wedding Singer

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

concerning "a single girl", well, I have not seen it. I seem to remember, though, that the plot involved a convergence of multiple crises in one day, so that it was a bit more than just "girl's first day of work, nothing special."

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also, going by what mr. applet and mr. omlid have said, this actress is so beautiful that that makes her pretty unusual. in other words, the movie is not just about a young woman on her first day of work, it's about an extraordinarily beautiful young woman on her first day of work. and though most people are familiar with a first day of work, not that many of them are familiar with being an extraordinarily beautiful young woman.

or, to fall back on the distinction of which I am still working on convincing James Courtney, perhaps this is not a plot-driven movie at all. perhaps it is not really about a beautiful young woman on her first day of work, but just a series of pictures of a beautiful young woman for those who like to look at beautiful young women.

980304

Subject: Re(11): The Wedding Singer

Send

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Realism vs. familiarity

I've come here for an argument.

Will that be the five minute, or the course of ten?

James Courtney writes:

What would you call a movie on insects then? Or something like Riverdance, which had neither characters, storyline or plot, just dancing? Take the classic West Side Story. It had singing, dancing and people killing each other but it was basically about two star crossed lovers and what happened to them because of that love. Stories are either plot-driven or Character driven. Movies on the other hand can be just about anything. A famous Andy Warhol picture was just filming a man sleeping for eight hours. No story, no plot, no character.

a movie about insects would probably be a documentary, and we are talking about fiction here (or fictionalized history.) although the documentary could, i suppose, be arranged to make a point about the insect condition. but we both have been talking only about the human condition so I don't see why you are raising this. in a movie like "the twilight of the cockroaches", the insects stand for humans and thus illuminate the human condition.

riverdance does not have a plot so far as I know. it's just people dancing. a concert. I think "lord of the dance" has a plot if you want one and you like michael flatley. I think you are missing the distinction between realism and familiarity. When I say that there can only be a limited amount of extraordinariness in a plot (by which I mean the sum of the characters and situations). as for west side story, the singing, dancing, killing all serve to move the plot along or are part of it. I never said that anything with singing, dancing, killing, clothes oftaking, etc, automatically was plotless. I just said that some works focussed mainly on these, this is what they existed for in themselves.

of course we are talking about stories (plots) not just movies. but as this is the movies conference and we talk mostly about movies here, I have tried to focus on them.

To me a plot drven story is one where solving or acting on the problem is the main story. (How do we stop the terrorist bombing or catch the serial murderer before he strikes again.) In an character driven story how the person response to the problem and how they react to it, is the whole story and not weither the solve it or not. (How do I stop the terrorist if it was my lover and I'm not too sure they should be stopped. How do I catch the serial killer if in doing so I have to become just like them?) In a character driven story, the response to the problem may be that they don't solve it at all but just have to learn to live with it.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

if a character has to deal with something involving his lover, that is part of a situation external to the character, not part of the character. a character driven story might be, i have to go to work today, like everyone else. unfortunately, i am schizophrenic and know it and am trying to deal with it but gee, it makes work awful hard. a situation driven story might be, gee, I am an ordinary guy, but the workings of some strange force have disrupted reality around me. the examples you cite -- such as "how do I catch the serial killer without becoming like them?" do not say anything about the character. how you deal with the serial killer would depend on whether you were weak or strong, moral or not. all you have specified is a situation -- I have to face a serial killer.

You can have either extraordinary people in extraordinary situations or ordinary people in ordinary situations and still the story can be either about plot or character. It's not what you put into the story (ordinary vs extraordinary characters or situations) but how you handle it (is it about moving the plot along or showing us something about the characters) that is the difference. Thus you can have a story about nuclear war that is either plot driven in that it favors keeping the action going over developing the characters as people (like Peacekeeper) or characters driven in that it is how various characters act and react to what is happening (like Failsafe or On the Beach).

I would probably place Peacemaker (it IS peaceMAKER, isn't it?) in the category of not even plot driven movies, just fun stuff to look at, not really trying to say anything about the human condition. but I have not seen it. i don't know how well the characters were developed or how unique the situation was, but it seems that both took second place to fast chases and big explosions. but if you want to talk about nuclear war movies, both the ones you mention, failsafe and on the beach, take a cross section of fairly ordinary people, or at least familiar ones -- and show they confronting an unthinkable situation. testament is the same, with an ordinary american family, as was the day after. there really have not been too many character driven movies about nuclear war because it is so difficult to grasp that it demands ordinary characters for the audience to hold onto, and because it overwhelms any character with its enormity. the road warrior might be an example. ok, by now we are used to the idea of postapocalyptic barbarism. but what if you had a sort of moral guy there, with some major psychological damage, how would he react?

Would you except that a woman of class would fall in love with a poor immigrant in steerage enough that she would stay on a sinking ship for him? (Titanic) Or that a New York Cop would happen to be visiting his wife (who is operating under her maiden name) just when terrorist take over the building and know exactly what to do to stop them. (Die Hard) Or that if another terrorist stole nuclear weapons and were planning to explode them in America, that the U.S. government would turn over the job of stopping them to an attractive woman under the age of thirty who looks like she is only a year or two out of grad school? (Peace keeper) Anyone even remotely familiar with law enforcement or the F.B.I., should know that in real life Scully and Mulder would be finish up their careers out in some Indian reservation somewhere for all the shit they have pulled. Nearly all movies require a certain amount of suspension of disbelief for them to work.

Please don't confuse realism with familiarity. the two have something in common but are not the same. You can have realistic movies in unfamiliar settings; I have never been in outer space, but the space ship of 2001, or alien perhaps, seems like a pretty good evocation of what space flight would be like, unlike, say, Star Wars. You can have unrealistic movies in familiar settings, like grosse pointe blank. a suburban high school is familiar to me but there is no chance I would believe that movie would happen. or flashdance. or a lot of movies. I know that there are FBI agents, I understand what they do. if I did not, x-files would leave me saying "who are these guys?" but this does not make it realistic. same with Titanic. I am familiar with the idea of young lovers from different social classes. you don't have to spend a long time explaining it to me. and I have heard of this ship the titanic, or I understand the concept of big ships and the danger of sinking. whether I believe this could happen is a different issue.

the important difference is that lack of realism leaves audiences in disbelief, but lack of familiarity leaves them not knowing what is going on. of course, people will more readily believe what they have experienced themselves or are familiar with. but people will believe things that are not familiar if they are well told. for instance, take the movie Breaker Morant. many people who see it don't know much about the boer war or the status of australia within the British empire at the time. this could get confusing. who is fighting whom? why can't people understand each other? etc. but there is no doubt that the film is realistic

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(even if the events depicted were not true, which they are.) so it will be accepted even if not completely understood.

in silence of the lambs, there are a bunch of un- or semi-familiar concepts thrown at us at once: the specialties of the psycho-killers, the hangups of Clarice, the FBI behavioral science department, etc. there is not that much explanation. that is why it helps to read the book. but this is just to understand it, not necessarily to believe it.

incidentally, the tradeoff of odd situation versus odd character (thank you, Tim Walters, for that great quote) is not absolute. it does not have to be one or the other, but the more of one, the less of the other. for instance, in Unforgiven, neither the idea of the reformed gunfighter nor that of the sex workers hiring killers is that familiar; I certainly would not call them established. but each is half established, so that together, they provide enough familiar for comprehension and enough unfamiliar for interest.

Matt Stowell suggested several films to discuss in terms of ordinariness. Unfortunately, I have not seen smoke or barfly, but I have seen Shorts Cuts, and though that was four years ago, it happens I watched part of it again just the other night. the question is, are these ordinary characters and situations. well, ordinary for what? if this is supposed to be a complete portrait of life in LA, then it is not too complete, since all the characters are white. but let's say they are all ordinary middle class white people. well, a lot of them are extraordinarily good looking. and the sisters looked nothing alike. but maybe that is just the actors, not the characters. and of course, everyone is connected, but six degrees of separation and all, even among three million angelinos. but maybe that is just the point, to focus on a small, connected group. to whom a lot of things happen in a small time!!! including an earthquake! ok, maybe that is what makes them worth making a movie about. I don't want to be like the philosopher who professes amazement that cats have two holes in their skins just where their eyes are.

looking at the individual plots, well: I don't know anyone who has found a body on a fishing trip. I don't know any phone sex operators and I doubt most of the public do, though others here might. I don't know anyone who has raped and killed anyone and gotten away with it because of an earthquake. I don't know anyone who has cut everything in his ex-wife's place in half with a chainsaw. I don't know any terrorist bakers.

now, I am not saying these things are impossible, could not happen. on the contrary, they seemed quite possible, so I was willing to believe them, though I had never seen them. I am just saying they were not familiar. but a good director or writer makes the unfamiliar seem possible.

I suppose, by the way, I should have said, instead of the statistically mean person, the mode or median. he would have 2 or 3 children and thus possibly exist. mean just had a nice sound.

980305 Not Sent

James Courtney writes:

But a plot driven could just as well be about the schizophrenic going to work, choosing to focus on the situation of such a character trying to take control of his life and the ordinary guy facing the altered reality could be a character study of this guy in unfamiliar territory. It is the focus of the author that makes a story either a plot driven story or a character driven story not the unfamiliarity or realism of the settings.

The thing I'm trying to point out is that since all stories feature some sort of plot and character to them, what sets them apart as plot driven or character driven is just what the author chooses to make the thrust of the story, the plot or the characters. A realistic story can be mostly about the plot or about the characters.

MASH was a realistic story about the horrors of war but it was mostly about the characters and didn't really have a set plotline (other than they came they did their jobs and then they left.) What made the story interesting was the characters Hawkeye, Trapper John and the rest. There really wasn't any plot to follow. Apollo 13 on the other hand, the characters took a back seat to the solving of the problem. It wasn't that they were bad or poorly written but just that the authors focused mostly on the suspense and excitement generated by their attempt to solve the problem of getting them down.

A plot (what I mean by plot, since we can't agree on common terminology, I'll try to understand yours and you can try to understand mine) is like a division problem: characters into situations give outcome.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

The problem with trying to make a story about an unfamiliar sort of person (a schizophrenic) situation driven rather than character driven (an examination of schizophrenia) is that if the situation became odd or unusual, it would be hard for the audience to tell why things were happening. Because of the character's insanity or because the situation is getting weird? If the audience cannot understand why things are happening, they cannot get any point the film is trying to make. Same if you took a very complicated person and put him in a disturbed reality. Are things different now because he has changed or because the world has? Now, the movie could just be about how confusing and random things are, but that is kind of a copout point.

the way authors make something the thrust of the story is by keeping pretty much everything else constant and normal so you can pick out what is changing and watch it change. think of a big musical number on stage; the main figure is usually the person who is dancing while everyone else is standing still or standing still while everyone else is moving.

I would analyze the plot of MASH thus. Take a group of somewhat normal, somewhat eccentric characters. Place them in a setting somewhat known (a war, in fact, the Korean War) and somewhat new (a hospital in that war) and see how they react. You could say that there was not much plot and the movie was just there to tell jokes. Or you could say that they plot was driven both by the eccentricities of the characters and the absurdity of the situation.

apollo 13 took fairly normal characters and used them to explore a unique situation. because we can relate to the characters, we can, by watching them, get an idea of what it would have been like to have been in that situation (in a crippled spacecraft 240,000 miles from home) ourselves, a situation which is otherwise totally alien to us. (even if our vehicles have broken down in Castro Valley at some point.)

Actually much of what Unforgiven portrayed was more realistic and accurate picture of the "Wild West" than any of the more familiar westerns made. What Eastwood did was simply take the familiar stories that movies have feed us about the west and show how they really were like. (Most of the women out west were sex-workers or mail order brides. The town sheriff was hired mostly for his carpentry skills as his gun fighting ability. The great gun fighters mostly a creation of the pulp novels popular at the time than reality.) Thus the fact that they were realistic is also what made them unfamiliar.

I would say that whether this was really what the West was like does not matter all that much since this is a drama not a documentary. It is more important to match the audience's expectations so that they know what is going on. For instance, we are used, say, to seeing Vikings in movies in horned helmets. (Or if not, let's say we were.) The fact is that almost no Vikings actually wore horned helmets. if I made an authentic movie, and my Vikings were unhorned, I would know I was right, but I would run the risk of my audience having no idea who they guys in the hornless helmets were and thus missing any point I was trying to make about them.

Also, I don't get why a sheriff would have had to be a carpenter. To make coffins for the guys he killed? Seems they could find someone to do that. By the way, the Sheriff in Unforgiven, you may remember, was totally incompetent as a carpenter (though the only thing he was building was a house.) So I don't quite know what the point was here.

Also, Unforgiven was not the first realistic or revisionist western, showing the things you mention. Starting in the '60's, the mainstream of westerns split into the antirealistic (spaghetti westerns), the humorous (Butch and Sundance), and the newly realistic, this is what it was really like sort -- McCabe and Mrs. Miller, The Wild Bunch, Doc, even Little Big Man to some extent. Now in pretty much all Westerns, most of the women are prostitutes, most of the men are violent drunks, most of the clothes are dirty, most of the lawmen are crooked ex-gunfighters.....So I would say the west of Unforgiven was pretty familiar to audiences.

Greta Christina writes:

I don't think "ordinary" and "extraordinary" are simple, either/or concepts. I think they exist on a spectrum. And when I say that I like movies about ordinary people doing ordinary things, I mean movies where the people and the stuff they do are significantly closer to the ordinary end of that spectrum.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

If ordinary and extraordinary are not simple either/or concepts, than one cannot really say "I like films about ordinary people." What one should say, and here is one of those examples in which mathematics can be applied to daily life, is "the more ordinary the characters and situations in a film are, the more I like it." in other words, create a sort of analogy or graph or function. One can also allow for other factors; "unless Gene Hackman is in the movie, in which case his presence overrides all consideration of ordinariness, the more ordinary a film, the more I like it." this formulation recognizes the relativeness of ordinariness, not its absoluteness, and also the relativeness of your enjoyment, and the connection between the two. it's sort of fuzzy logic and it's as comforting as a teddy bear.

Matt Stowell writes:

If you liked Short Cuts, you'll probably like Smoke as well. It's a really good movie.

Actually, i did not much like short cuts, (except for Lyle Lovett) but on your recommendation, i will check it out, and try to read the Carver.

If you took 50 people at random off a downtown street and rounded them up and asked them at length about their lives, you'll more than likely find stories and characters similar to the ones featured in Short Cuts. And hey, some of them might even be connected through friends-of-friends or something, too.

Some of the characters and situations were quite ordinary, i agree. I picked out the less ordinary ones -- the lives less ordinary? -- as counterexamples. of course, on the bell curve of ordinary life, there is some extraordinariness. statistically, just as everyone has *something* extraordinary about them as I said before, if you surveyed 50 people, at least some should be quite extraordinary.

I've known (or at the very least had long conversations with) all sorts of people. I've known (or still do know) waitresses, artists, adulterers, people who have found dead bodies, phone sex operators, murderers, junkies, drug dealers, pimps, lawyers, rock stars, politicians, cops, strippers, yuppies, scholars, thieves, alcoholics, arsonists, prostitutes, pool sharks, teen mothers, suicides, actors, limo drivers, gang members, middle-class "soccer moms", bums, telemarketers, writers, murder victims, doctors, real-estate agents, psychotics, Croatians, perverts, gamblers, teachers, bartenders, the list goes on and on. For the most part, I never have sought out these people--they have just wandered into and out of my life through coincidence. And I'm only 26 years old. In fact, I've known plenty of people who are a few of these things all rolled up in one. Say, an alcoholic lawyer who is also a real-estate agent as well as a pool-shark and a pervert.

I am quoting your list for no other reason than it is a great list and I love lists as a literary form. (would you call it a granfallon? or are the elements too associated.) almost as good as "It's the end of the world as we know it (and I feel fine.)" some other good lists I've encountered recently: the lists of items accepted and rejected by the entity Lack in Jonathan Lethem's "As She Climbed Across the Table", the list of pictures shown to the Frank Sinatra character in "The Manchurian Candidate" for him to pick out the Soviet and Chinese scientists, most of the book "la Disparition" by perrec. long live commas!

the only thing I will say is if you have a character in a movie who is as complex as your last named, it gets hard to use him to make a statement about anything because you are not sure what aspect of his character causes him to act a particular way.

Terry, wait, that's all?

980306

Subject: Re(15): The Wedding Singer

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

well, others have explained very well what a granfalloon is.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Matt Stowell writes:

To go back to the "alcoholic lawyer who is also a real-estate agent as well as a pool-shark and a pervert.", I met this guy in a bar one night. I found out he was into real estate, so I asked him if he knew any affordable rental properties since I was fighting off an eviction at the time. He then stated that he was also a lawyer and started giving me legal advice. When he went to take a leak I asked the bartender (who was an old friend of his) if the guy really was a lawyer and he told me yes. The guy was kind of an asshole. He seemed to alternate between giving me legal advice and insulting me—"You're an idiot! You better start packing, because there's no way you're going to win that case!" Two minutes later, he'd be telling me "You're a really sharp guy!" After a while, we started playing pool, and I figured out pretty quickly that he was sharking me for drinks. Before long, we got to "talking dirty," and I ended up learning more than I'd ever want to know about his particular kinks.

*To get to the point, I think that he *would* make a good character in a movie. Hey, sometimes the character is a statement in itself. Let's just say (off the top of my head) someone makes a movie about this guy. Let's say that in the movie, he was a lawyer, but too much of a drunkard to handle his job, so he quit practicing law and started selling real estate. He hangs out in dingy bars, shooting pool (you could use this as a sort of metaphor--being able to see the proper angles and use the exact amount of force necessary to make a shot--reflecting the same skills he needed as a lawyer, perhaps...this shows he's not "all the way gone"). In his spare time, he picks up prostitutes and, oh let's say he puts them through some hardcore violent sex routines--which could show that he's got a problem with losing control over his life and the only way he has to exercise his "power" is by abusing prostitutes. Now, we put him in some situations that might pop up in his everyday life. His ex-wife is suing him for back alimony payments, he's not doing so well on the real estate job, and maybe the cops are trying to find out who's been leaving the bruised prostitutes all over town. What does he do? He could find some sort of "redemption," he could "go down" (suicide, arrested for beating up whores, his ex-wife kills him, whatever), or he could "do nothing" (go about his life without changing any of his behaviors and get away with it--could be a commentary about the depravity of modern society). At any rate, I think a fairly compelling, complex, and interesting movie could be made out of this.*

if you think about it, matt, what you did when you created a story around your lawyer-pool shark-pervert was to find a common theme in several of his characteristics. he is good at pool for the same reason he is a good lawyer and abuses women because his life is in the toilet. if the characteristics are related like this, you only have to explain one, not each one individually. there is no coincidence in all these traits; there are strong causal reasons why they should coincide. so he could really be very simple character with only one motivation with many manifestations. or, each one of his traits could be for a completely different, independent reason, in which case he really would be a complex character.

I like your plot, but how about this one: he's playing pool in a bar and he meets a femme fatale. (much visual double entendre with cue sticks.) she goes home with him and submits to his tastes, even enjoys them. then, she wants him to handle a land deal for her....

what did this guy look like? who would play him?

yes, I see a movie in everything too.

980307

Subject: Re(17): The Wedding Singer

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Matt Stowell writes:

But that wouldn't be too interesting. So....I suppose there has to be something "fishy" about the land deal? Is he an accidental partner in whatever the "scam" is, or is he fully informed of what she's trying to pull?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

oh, I just assumed that the femme fatale (and I assumed that you would assume this too) being fatale, would have picked him out and played on his weaknesses in order to get him involved in a crooked land deal and take the fall for it. (see, this plot is so common -- ok, usually she wants him to kill her husband -- that I assumed everyone would see it coming a mile away.) or perhaps it will be set up that the deal is totally immoral (selling brownfields to Section 8 families) but profitable, so that the lawyer has a chance at redemption by exposing and ruining it, even though it means losing money and girl (who may have planned to dump him as soon as the deal went through, because she does not actually like rough sex with him, or him at all, but needed to inveigle him into the deal.) perhaps, since men with guns have become involved, he can only get this redemption at the cost of his life, which he realizes is meaningless so he does a sidney carton and saves the poor residents -- for a day. the irony would be that the land deal would go through with someone else.....maybe pool comes in at the end where he has to stretch out a game to delay the bad guys (as the checkers game in "Our Man in havana") or he gets to play to save the piece of land or whatever, but if he loses he will lose 8 million bucks or so that there is no way that he has and so it will be taken out of his flesh....

I guess we agree that it would have to be about redemption, because whenever you start with a pretty awful character, it sort of has to be (or about self-destruction, finishing himself off when he was really finished years ago...)

would john hurt work?

we could title the movie, "the wedding singer", just so it matches the title of the thread where it was invented and discussed....it would be like "reservoir dogs", an apparently unmotivated title...

980308 Subject: Re(15): The Wedding Singer
From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

sorry to quote so much, but i could not do the movie publicist thing and pick out the key words.

James Courtney writes:

Not really, a plot is just a sequence of events. A man getting up to work, going to work, coming home, making dinner and then going to bed can be a plot. (Though admittedly a terrible dull one.) Jack and Jill going up the hill to get a pail of water then falling down is a plot. A plot is just how the actions of the characters happen for the viewer or the reader of the story.

Nor does there have to be an outcome to a plot. In some epic novels by Mitchner (the ones that are the size of a phone book) that cover eons of times, the main character is the land and the plot is just what happens to the people who live on it. The people live and die but the story continues beyond them and their children into the grandchildren and even their great grandchildren until they finally run out of time. There is really no outcome since the land is eternal. Situations don't always led to an outcome, sometimes they just led to more situations.

Wait, then why did you say before that MASH did not have a plot? It has a sequence of events.

First of all, I was using "outcome" in the broadest sense -- what happens. You have two characters, Jack and Jill. You have a situation: they need water. You have an outcome: a fall down a hill. The outcome does not have to be huge and significant; it is just what happens. There can be barely any change; for instance, in "on the waterfront", things end up just the way they were, despite Terry's (no relation) efforts to change things. In th Michener novels you cite, the outcome is thelack of change, because this is just the point, that men come and go, but the earth abides. What happened was that nothing happened; the curious behavior of the dog in the night, Watson. If situations just lead to more situations, there has been a temporary outcome. it is a bit like a dialectical argument; a in which a thesis is analyzed and modified in light of a counter or antithesis to yield a synthesis which becomes the new thesis and on an on.

But now that we are talking about arguments (or at least I am), remember that there are plots and Plots. Everything has a plot, if a plot is just a sequence of events, because we watch a movie or read a book

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

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in a certain order (not like, for instance, most but not all art exhibitions that can be viewed in any order.)
But what I mean by a Plot -- let's call it a real plot since I cannot be counted upon to capitalize properly to distinguish -- is the sort of plot that drives a plot-driven story, as opposed to one that just keeps all the car chases and explosions and sex scenes from happening at the same time. It is more than a sequence of events. It is a well told tale, a sequence of events with a beginning, a middle, and an end, where not only is a friend a friend until the struggle is won, but in which the events happen in sequence to show something about rules of cause and effect, about the human condition, which, I believe we agreed a while ago, is what distinguishes a plot -driven story from eye candy. just as an argument is a connected series of statements intended to prove a point, not just flat contradiction or the automatic gainsaying of the other's position, a real Plot is a series of causally connected events which lead somewhere in order to say something. If the somewhere is nowhere, or at least no change, then the point is "Nothing the characters or any mere human can do can change certain things; nothing you can do can help a dead man." And this is a very good point.

Hmmm....you haven't been to any musicals that have big production numbers where everyone is dancing?

Sure. my referring to the ones with a single central character standing out from a chorus does not mean they are the only kind. when everyone is dancing together, they act, in effect, as a single character.

But if you continually match the audiences expectations than you make a pretty dull movie. Following an established formula is a sure path to boring stories. In the Unforgiven, Eastwood knew what the audience expected in a western. But he stepped beyond that by giving them a picture that was little more closer to what the west was really like than playing to the established western cliché's. Thus the audience was willing to see what else was next in the movie since their expectations were changed.

yes, of course. every character was just the reverse of what the audience at first expected. but if those expectations had not existed in the first place, the movie would not have made any sense or had any point. imagine if I made a movie about, say, the ibo of west africa around the turn of the last century, but with all the characters ironically changed from what was expected in that society. unless you knew something about the ibo, this would be lost on you, and so would the irony. you might say, oh, you mean they are not SUPPOSED to be like that? if you don't know the context, you don't get the parody.

The problem with stuff like Vikings in horned helmets is that it is a cliché' and everyone knows what a cliché' is. So by putting horned helmets (and thus using that cliché' to show the audience that these are Vikings) I distance the audience to them as characters by telling them what they are already know. Now, I may want to do this if my goal is to shoot down those expectations later on but if I don't then the audience will be bored with my characters since they already know what to expect from them.

Another problem is using characters that are just archtypes and not real people. Sherlock Holmes was a victorian archetype in that he was basically the victorian ideal of a man rather than a real man. The same with James Bond being more the romantic ideal of a secret agent than actually coming close to what one real is.

but you can't make a statement about something without identifying it. we can't agree on what sentences mean unless we agree on what the words mean. if we are making a movie about vikings, something has to tell us they are vikings, preferably with a minimum of fuss. this is where clichés are useful sometimes. otherwise, you have to have a voiceover or words flashing on the screen or some character say "Look out! THE VIKINGS are coming!" or some such contrived contrivance. You can keep the audience's interest in unoriginal characters if you have them do original things, put them in original situations, and vice versa. This helps direct their attention to what is important, the forest and not the trees. Having things that the audience does not have to think too much about saves the capacity of their sometimes small minds to concentrate on more important things like the point of the movie.

I won't really address james Bond since his movies are not plot driven but just escapism. but take a character whose movies at least claim to say something or think they are, Jack Ryan of tom clancy novels and movies. because we know jack is the epitomy of bravery, decency, americanism as embodied by the fortieth president of the United States, Ronald Wilson

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. Reagan, winner of the Cold War, etc., etc., we can judge all the other characters in relation to him. it saves a lot of thinking, so that you can't but agree with Clancy, and that, after all, is what his goal is.

In the days of the wild west the Sheriff really spent more time on public works than law enforcement. Thus he was most likely given the job because he was good at fixing the town sidewalks than with a gun.

again, so what is your point about Unforgiven? in that film, we never saw the sheriff engaged in public works, just incompetently on his own house. mostly he enforced the laws. so are you saying Unforgiven was realistic or not?

980308

Subject: Re(6): MUSTY TV March 7th-13t
From: terrible person
To: film

Cc:
the "book" of "the third man" was written at the same time as the screenplay. the nationalities of the characters were all different (the main ones were english, not american) but changed in the movie to avoid giving offense. (some of the other nasty characters in the book were american. Graham Greene did not like Americans much.)

one really interesting thing: when occupied Austria was being denazified, allied authorities were eliminating what they saw as oppressive institutions. they heard about "the underground police" and assumed they were a sort of Gestapo. it was only with difficulties that the austrians were able to explain that they were the special sewer police seen in the film. (from Greene's intro to the novel.)

me, I just really like the idea of looking for a long lost friend and finding out he has become a lord of evil, or or looking for a master of evil and finding out he is a long lost friend, and wondering why, i you once had so much in common, he went one way, you the other.

terry (a lord of moderately annoying)

980309

Send

Subject: I've seen things.....
From: terrible person
To: film
Cc: Sci-Fi & Fantasy

you people wouldn't believe.

I am going to discussnow something I realized the other day about Blade Runner. If you don't much care for Blade Runner and are tired of hearing about how great it is I respect that and you can skip this post and go and try to figure outwhat I meant in my other one. If you like Blade Runner, whether you feel guilty for doing so as I do (because of the many people like those in the last sentence who roll their eyes when I start talking about it) or not, you might find this interesting. OK.

Just before he dies, Roy Batty gives his speech about the things he's done that no human has ever done. "I've seen things you "people" wouldn't believe", etc., etc. In essence, what he is saying is, "*I* (Roy Batty the Nexus 6 replicant) am BETTER than YOU, and yet I have to die. Dieu, que c'est con." What makes him better is that he has seen and done all these things. They are enshrined only in his memory and when he dies in a few moments or hours, they "will be lost in time like tears in rain".

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

But wait!!! Wait!!!! what do we know about replicants' memories???? At least of the latest models?? They are implants!!!! Remember how Rachael has the memories of Dr. Tyrell's niece? So who knows whose memories Roy Batty has? Maybe he never watched attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion at all, he just thinks he did! so his whole claim to superiority, the whole tragedy or irony of the film, has the rug pulled out from under it!!!! Man, I hate it when that happens!!

this hit me like a pile driver when I thought of it!!!

Now, it could be argued that it's not all Nexus 6's who have the memory implants, it's just Rachael, the "experiment, nothing more", which is why she lasts so long on the Voight-Kampff test, as opposed to Leon. Leon may have photographs, but they are recent ones of the other replicants, not ones of childhood like Rachael's. So that Roy's memories invoked in his final speech really are his and really do make him better and really give the movie a point.

It could be also argued that Blade Runner is not really a film worth dissecting and analyzing and arguing about in this manner (by people in the second sentence of the second paragraph who make me feel guilty) and that I should, film critically speaking, get a life.

OK, you can go back to figuring out what "Characters are nouns" means.

terry (who has never seen c-beams glitter in the dark by the Tannhauser Gate, wherever that is)

980313

Subject: Re(2): I've seen things.....

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Greta Christina writes:

I do think the "memory implant" theory may be overanalyzing, though. For one thing, the whole point of making replicants was so they could do dirty, dangerous work that humans couldn't/wouldn't do, and the things Roy describes having seen make perfect sense as things he would really have seen in the course of doing that work. Also, the reason they implanted Rachel with the memories was to make her seem more human, with a childhood and everything. Nobody was trying to make the other replicants deceptively human, and the memories he talks about aren't childhood memories -- they're memories of his life as a replicant.

It's interesting what you say about superiority. I never saw that scene as being about Roy's superiority, or even his believing himself to be superior, over humans. I saw it as being about the tragedy of any death -- that the experiences of that person, the things they've seen that no-one or almost no-one else has seen, disappear when they die. That moment, the moment of his death, actually struck me as the moment when he was least convinced of his superiority, and most conscious of his humanity and what he had in common with other people. (I'm not saying you're wrong -- it just never struck me that way.)

P.S. Have you ever read the book, "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"?

What you have said is fair and well-spoken; I salute you.

You can say I'm wrong, if you like. You realize, of course, though, if you do, that I will bury you (<---- banging shoe on table) under page after page of impenetrable, repetitive and even pretentious pettifogging and nitpicking, or at least try to...

Basically, my interpretation depends on how Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer) says one word. "I've seen things you PEOPLE wouldn't...". I had to check this; I had not seen Blade Runner for a long time, almost two weeks! and I was not sure. He definitely stresses people more than you, so that people does not just emphasize you

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

(YOU people -- we're all people here, but you are different) but stresses people (you PEOPLE -- you are people, we're not. you think you are PEOPLE because you empathize and stuff, but then why don't you have any human pity for us?) I had even thought there was a small pause before people to set it off further, but there isn't. the stress is enough though. sure it could just be a batavianism in Rutger's speech, or a slurring reflecting Roy's breakdown. but I think Roy is definitely contrasting himself to humans, talking about how HIS death is sadder than an ordinary human's, because he is better than an ordinary human. If he had wanted to show how his death was just like any other human's, he would have tried to include himself with humans, and put the stress on you to make a connection rather than people to make a contrast.

I don't think it really matters whether the memories are of a childhood or an adulthood. the replicants' memories are like theatre or movie sets constructed of painted flat backdrops with three dimensional solid items placed in front and seemingly emerging from it or continuing back into it. from a distance, it is impossible to tell which is real and which painted on. since life span is so short, if Roy had the memories of someone his apparent age, some of his adult memories would have to be implanted. also, the memories Roy invokes at the end are kind of fantastical, not real like Rachael's. I doubt that star travel "to the shoulder of Orion" was envisioned by 2019. My astronomical studies are by no means complete, but I have never heard of the Tannhäuser Gate. I think that like that other famous artificial person, HAL 9000, Roy is feeling that "his mind is going...."

I have read the book, a couple of times. I have also, a month or so ago, read something that purported to be the shooting script. Since it was bought at that store on Market that has a lot of screenplays, and I had heard references to many of the scenes it included that did not make it into the film in writings about the film, I have every reason to believe it authentic. About the book, I can say that in 200 pages it packs a lot that did not make it into the movie. There are three main stories in the book; the synthetic religion of Mercer (which consists of hooking up to an "empathy box" and undergoing the sufferings of a symbolic figure), Rick Deckard's struggle to find an animal pet now that almost all animals have died in a nuclear war, and lastly Deckard the bounty hunter's hunt for the androids (the terms "blade runner" and "replicant" are not used.). Really, the religion, the animals, and the androids are three different ways of asking the question: what makes us human? The killing of the androids does not have the drama it does in the movie, and is hardly even the centerpiece of the book. And I would agree that the androids are not as sympathetic, though they are also less superhuman seeming. When it is revealed that androids have infiltrated many powerful positions in human life, and when one of them kills Deckard's pet, the androids seem much less like sympathetic underdogs just trying to survive. But basically, the movie picked out the adventure plot and focussed on that, because that looks good on film without taxing the mind too much. (in the book, Deckard does not even get Rachael; he stays with his wife and the book ends, like several other dick novels I have read, such as Dr. Bloodmoney and The Man in the High Castle, with a hope of renewal.)

If you don't like what they did with the novel in making the screenplay, the writer, David Webb Peoples, lives over in Berkeley and is in the phone book.

The screenplay (if it is -- I can check with Peoples -- I've seen things, I'll say, you Peoples wouldn't believe) contains a number of interesting differences. There are scenes in which Deckard visits Holden (the blade runner shot by Leon in the first scene) who is in an enormous iron lung sort of thing in the hospital. They speculate about the nature of replicants and these replicants. The scene around JF Sebastian's breakfast table is longer. Roy tells JF he wants to thank Dr. Tyrell "for such nice arms" (and bashes holes in the wall), "for such nice legs" and stomps holes in the ceiling, for various other body parts, until he gets to "such nice brains" and stares at some water until he telekinetically sets it to boil. The Dr. Tyrell killed by Roy is revealed to be just a copy; the real one has been cryogenically preserved after falling ill several years before -- and it turns out the preserving device has actually broken down, so that god is really dead. the voice over is only at the end, when Deckard eulogizes Roy Batty, and decides on his escape. "we were two of a kind," Deckard says, "combat models", though I don't think that is meant to be taken literally, seeing the punishment Rick takes. at the end, he is zooming away with Rachael -- but with Gaff in pursuit, and the promise of combat to come.

I still don't understand if the four year lifespans of replicants are an inevitable result of the manufacturing process about which the makers can do nothing even if they wanted to, or designed in as a control feature. the book, and Dr. Tyrell, seem to say the former. Bryant's briefing of Deckard (which contains much that does not fit in well with what flashes on the screen at the start) and the fact that Rachael has no termination date suggest the latter.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

finally, on the matter of Deckard's humanity: I can't remember where I read the argument that the addition of the unicorn dream scene in the director's cut, which ties in with the last origami left by gaff, to prove that deckard is a replicant, takes away a lot of the potential meaning, which is the irony that a replicant like Roy can be more human than human, have more genuine humanity than a human. on the other hand, there is plenty in both versions to suggest that Deckard is a replicant, allowed to live by the police because he is useful, in the way Bryant can push him around, and Gaff says things like "you've done a Man's work". (but then why does he not have super strength, speed, and smarts like Roy? is he only a Nexus 4 or earlier?) but without the dream, this conclusion is still avoidable, and I think it is preferable, more meaningful. and since I have memorized the voiceover from repeated viewing and hear it anyway in my head, not having it in the director's cut does not make any difference to me, so I think if I had to choose I would go with the original cut, and perhaps just leave 30 seconds early. but after all, the original ending is not that happy; just because deckard has promised not to pursue rachael north doesn't mean gaff won't, as in the screenplay. I vote for the original.

terrible person (or thinks he's a person.).

980313

Subject: silent films: a modest proposal

Send

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Last weekend, in order to get ready for my anticipated viewing of "The Man in the Iron Mask", I borrowed the old silent "The Iron Mask" starring Douglas Fairbanks. It was great (though I did not get to finish it.) Well, the music was really annoying in its repetitiveness, and the black and white kept changing to green and white or red and white, but what really made it work for me was the intertitles. They really got me thinking. I think that, just as things which were believed to be obsolete or worse years ago are brought back for new uses, like WWII battleships in the '80's, or Thalidomide today, or Robert Forster, perhaps silent movies with intertitles have a use. Because one thing a silent movie makes you realize is how little you need dialogue, especially in an action movie. Intertitles translate the really important stuff that moves the plot along, while the rest, we get to use our imagination on. So that when D'Artagnan scowls at the Cardinal and lunges, we can guess it's something like "Have at you, you out of wedlock male child of a female sex worker" but we're free to make it something else.

In today's action movies, for some reason, directors (or whoever) insist on giving lines to actors either too wooden or too foreign to do anything with them but mangle them. Schwarzenegger and Van Damme, Seagal and Norris -- why do they bother talking at all? Or think of hong kong movies. One reason they seem so cool is that we cannot actually understand how stupid and stunted most of the dialogue probably sounds. (apologies to all you Cantonese speakers) It doesn't matter if the subtitles read oddly because we can pardon stiltedness and artificiality in writing. I read a lot of epic poetry, with hifalutin' language, like the Bible. On paper, it is all right, but read aloud, boy, is it goofy. One figures that the original sounded a lot more colloquial to its audience, but to translate it that way, and have Achilles saying "screw you, man", is even worse. No, if I were making a film of the Iliad, I would have everyone talk in the original ancient greek and convey their emotion by tone of voice and expression. Then I would put the translation, a good, direct one in subtitles where its stiltedness would be forgiven.

the point is, why not sub- or intertitle Arnold and Steve and Jean-Claude and Chuck? most of their lines would not need it, since they could be guessed. everyone could read Arnold's lips when he said his inevitable signature line. I think it would make for much less silly action movies, and romantic movies too.

The only problem is the rest of the soundtrack. soundmen work really hard on the explosions and they look cool so we want to keep them in. but why would the explosions be audible but not the dialogue? maybe the explosions could obscure the dialogue...elimination of dialogue would allow even more songs to be squeezed onto soundtracks, selling even more OST albums....

In this season of awards, I am now accepting nominations for the film which would have been most improved by being silent. categories include of all time, of this year, and starring supermodels. in accordance with parliamentary procedure, all nominations must be seconded.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

980313

Subject: Re(13): I've seen things.....

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Eva Luna writes:

Well, yes. Narration is bad when it's done badly!

As far as narration in noir being a cliché, well, you say cliché, I say convention. Plus I happen to love it when noir narration is at it's cheesiest.....

Howard Johnson is right!!! Eva Luna stands up before a convention purporting to defy and decry convention and replies unconventionally. Like Raymond Shaw, I will try to shoot Johnny Iselin instead of her...

Film is a language. Languages work because we all agree on the meanings of words. Or rather, they work to the extent that we agree on the meanings of words. When, for instance, we all give our own meanings to words like "love" and "peace" and "democracy", conflicts result. to communicate, we must have a common set of meanings. This is convention, not cliché. We can't invent a whole new language that has never been used before every movie. I can think of several books written in invented languages and it creates a lot of variables; it makes it hard to know what is being said about x if you are not sure what x is. not everything in a movie can be new and different. at the very least, this requires a huge amount of explanation of new stuff which usually takes away from the real point, whatever it is. we assume gravity and conservation of momentum, that bullets kill and that people want to have sex with one another. are these clichés? otherwise, every movie would have to start with the big bang and explain the entire universe, before it had a minute at the end to say something new about it.

Oh, everyone wants to deride conventions and clichés but we are so immersed in them its useless. It's like saying, isn't it boring that almost all movies seem to be about -- human beings?? conventions are like a firm solid surface on which to start your car. not having any is like trying to do so in mud or on ice.

also, there is tradition and reference. Using the same conventions as other films puts the new film in its historical context and salutes its predecessors. this is why we have genres. we know what to expect of westerns, cop dramas, etc. if the filmmaker, knowing our expectations, turns them on their heads, we are pleasantly surprised, but they had to be there and he or she had to know them first. but this idea of films free of convention, which some call cliché but I call context, is a pipe dream. they simply don't exist. I suppose that those who are arguing with Eva never listen to pop songs with three verses and a bridge and refrain, and decide that four movement symphonies are cliché, and wonder why classical sculptors always showed people in classical dress -- if anything. I mean, really!! it's so cliché!! why not portray them in modern dress and let us guess that they are gods?

the only thing that could be said is that in a 40's noir, the narration was a natural device, whereas to put voiceover in a modern film is to postmodernly allude to old noir, even though we have new techniques today. but the modern is not always the best; which is why some people actually prefer typewriters and natural fabrics and do not just use them because people did years ago, to be retro, though retroness (retrocity) is cool and gives one a sense of being tied to one's roots.

and if Steve appeals to "realism", I would remind him that realism in any time is just another set of conventions based on what the society holds real. stiff sculptures were real to the Egyptians; they saw beyond the conventions. impressionism did not seem realistic at first, until people realized there was a higher realism in the not-quite-representationalism. My, my: there is mimesis and that's ok, but I would rather meet semiosis halfway any day.

terry person (a conventionalized name, not a real one)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Resume 980313

Welcome, strangers....
....to the show. I'm the one who should be lying low. I saw the knives out. I turned my back. I heard the train coming. I stayed right on that track! In the middle, in the middle, in the middle of a dream I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings. I've done all the dumb things. I caught the fever, heard the tune. Thought I loved her. Hung my heart on the moon. Started howling! Made no sense. Thought my friends would rush to my defense. In the middle, in the middle, in the middle of a dream I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings. I've done all the dumb things.

Some people have only disdain for song lyrics on resumes. I don't, but I will try to lessen the offense by writing them in paragraph form and omitting the titles and author names.

No one liked the German?

You've got to pick up the pieces. Come on, sort your trash now. Pull yourself back together; maybe you've got too much cash now. You'd better call, call the law. When're you gonna turn yourself in now? You're a politician; don't become one of Hitler's children. Bonzo goes to Bitburg, then goes out for a cup of tea. As I watched it on TV, somehow it really bothered me. Drank in all the bars in town in an extended foreign policy. Pick up the pieces. Ah, no, no. My brain is hanging upside down. Ah, no, no. I need something to hold me down.

I once thought that I stood on solid ground. But the world has moved, and I've been turned around. And the only thing left to hold on to is myself, myself alone. Alone! Hey, Love Barge, let me on the boat. Nothing I can do but stay afloat, cling to the pieces, try to find a reason why. I would settle down and then the plates would shift, and it's all my fault that I've been set adrift. From a place that looks a lot like San Francisco I sail, I sail alone. Alone! Hey, Love Barge, let me on the boat. Nothing I can do but stay afloat, cling to the pieces, try to find a reason why. You said "Get a life," so I built a raft that was tossed aside by your charging craft. In a broadside crash all the dancing stopped and I sank, I sank alone. Alone! Hey, Love Barge, let me on the boat. Nothing I can do but stay afloat, cling to the pieces, try to find a reason why.

980314

Subject: Re(4): I've seen things.....

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Permit me an encomium:

"Sweeney pondered and Sweeney planned

Like a perfect machine 'e planned

Sweeney was smooth, Sweeney was subtle..."

Regarding what you said:

I wish I had said that. Perhaps, like Oscar Wilde, someday I will.

Michael D. Sweeney writes:

*And then I throw my hat into the ring....(see my resume for what happened when *I* did that.)
it is a religious experience.*

I am not sure of this. After all, his God still seems to be the Creator, Dr. Frankenstein/Tyrell. (in the script, the words "god is dead" are used as his epitaph.) *He comes from there with more than his designers expected; he comes back to Earth with a soul.*

but I would say his sould comes mainly from his forming relationships with his fellow replicants, that allows him to take revenge for Zhora and weep for Pris.

Roy had been built to survive tasks and places too terrible for a human being.

Speak for yourself!

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Part of what he seemed to be saying to Deckard was "Only we replicants have seen this beauty, only we know it exists." Also; the film is set entirely in the city, a city insular in the extreme, that doesn't even want to acknowledge the existence of the replicants. Roy is hinting of an entire complex world out there that Deckard and the others are completely ignoring (possibly to their later peril?)

When Roy (and Leon) confront Chew, the actual designer of part of them, he says "If you could see what I've seen with your eyes." In the screenplay, this scene is longer as he describes some of the things he has seen. And they are more examples, I seem to remember, of nasty places he found beautiful. (Note to self: borrow screenplay from friend again.)

I don't think anyone in Los Angeles 2019 has ever seen any stars, just city lights under the canopy of cloud and haze.

it is true that Roy has "gotten" to do all sorts of things -- "extraordinary things", as Dr. Tyrell puts it -- but only because he has been forced to. He's a slave. So I think that would kind of reduce his enjoyment of them.

watching the director's cut at this moment, I wonder: why does Bryant say there were six replicants who escaped, minus one who got killed, after having said there are four walking the streets? does he know the fifth one is Rachael? does she come from offworld too, or was she always kept around the factory? does Bryant therefore know this? (she may seem otherworldly, but she does not seem like the type to survive off-world. on the other hand, she does shoot Leon.)

in that same scene, Roy's inception date is given as 2016. it is now 2019. doesn't he have a year left? or is the four year lifespan thing approximate?

looking forward to responses, but remember: reaction time is a factor, so please pay attention.

terrible person

980414

Subject: Re(17): I've seen things.....

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

mr. s.f. applet writes:

If those Metz fans had any sense of Christian charity, they would stop reminding us long suffering Red Sox fans of the '86 Series, which was an Echo of the '75 Series, when the Sox put up a stirring effort (especially in the 6th game), but lost in seven to the Reds, a gifted team led by, among others, Charlie Hustle, who also went by The Name of the Rose.

at that chilly memory I say, um, brrrrrr! to remember the rows of boston fans -- that fou cult -- shouting Eccccccch!!! Oooooooh! at the bucknerian bungling. I have just Red Eco's analysis of the cliSheas of Casablanca (though Che was a red as well). but now I have to go roll on Bart....

you're good, s.f., you're very good.

980314

Subject: Re(13): I've seen things.....

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

James M. Courtney writes:

In Blade Runner though, the point of view jumped between Batty and Decker in the telling of the story. So it seemed awkward. The information it was giving us, sulfurous to the story. (Example: The fact that the street language was a mixture of English, Mandarin and Spanish didn't really further the story. So telling us about it was a unnecessary) At worst it telegraphed what was going to happen in the scene. We could figure out that Decker's boss was an asshole by the way he acted, we didn't need the voice over to tell that before hand. So in the original version of Blade Runner, the voice over took away from the mood of the movie more than it could have added to it.

first, I have to know: what does "sulfurous" mean?? I can guess that "ackward" is either "awkward" or "backward" but "sulfurous"? yellow? burning with a strong sour smell? really mad so that foul smelling smoke is coming out of your ears? is it a portmanteau? you know what neologisms do to some people around here.

one of the reasons films noirs feature voiceovers is that they are based on books that are first person narratives. the voiceover keeps the first-personhood. sometimes too, there is a sort of framework: the narrator is actually narrating within the film, confessing his story to investigators. (in other genres, they may be shown writing in diaries, or writing letters. sometimes this is very much part of the plot, the whole story is about writing letters. in "the onliners", the characters read their email and chats aloud.)

but let me say, that actually, in general, I hate voiceovers. I just did not like your blanket condemnation of film conventions. I was polling my coworkers today as we wasted the first fifteen minutes on the clock in donuts and coffee to see if anyone could think of a voiceover that worked. one proposed "Romeo is bleeding", with which I heartily agreed. I suggested "MY Life as a Dog" and this was accepted by the full committee and passed on to the House. what makes the first one great is 1) Gary Oldman's voice, accent, intonation 2) the cleverness of what was said -- more particularly, the fact that he did not tell the story, which told itself, but simply commented on it, describing what was already obvious except in perhaps a more compact way. In "Dog", the kid's melodic voice in melodic swedish could have said anything, and again, he did not tell what was happening, but simply add comments that were sometimes only barely related to what was going on, putting them in perspective.

there are also documentary style VO's in which the speaker is not a character. (Dr. Strangelove, The Killing, Citizen Kane.) and those in which you do not know until the end which character was narrating ("the hudsucker proxy", "the road warrior")

I think that John Hurt was good as winston reading from his diary in "1984" works, and Malcolm McDowell wasreal horrorshow narrating "A Clockwork Orange".

the parts of the Blade Runner narration I like are the lines which tell us what we already know or could easily figure out but emphasize it by putting a new twist on it. for instance, the first line, from memory "they didn't advertise for killers in the newspaper. but that's what I was. ex-cop, ex-blade runner, ex-killer." we have been told about blade runners in the intro and we will learn more about them when deckard talks to Bryant. but to say "they didn't advertise for killers..." just puts a pathetic point on it as we imagine looking under K in the want ads. when deckard talks of his growing feelings for Rachael, they are obvious, but the voiceover underlines them. I agree that a lot of voiceover lines are pointless. the one explaining cityspeak (in the screenplay, gaff speaks Japanese and deckard doesn't get a word) of course, sometimes the obvious does not need to be underlined. at the end, when deckard says of gaff, "he had been there, and had spared her life", yes, duh, what else would the origami mean?

so as Eva says, voiceovers are bad when they are done badly. to do them well, have a good voice do them, and don't have them tell the story, just add to it.

980315

Subject: Re(15): I've seen things.....

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

James M. Courtney writes:

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Actually the reason the first person narrative exists in the books is so the authors can avoid having to use another convention, the side kick, to show what the main character is thinking. The main role of Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories was to give Holmes a chance to tell how he figured out the various clues of the mystery as he went along. In the more gritty and dark plup detective fiction, it would take away from the whole rugged individual mystique to have the hero prattle on about every clue or observation they made to his best friend. Having the stories in first person help convey how the main was figuring out the crime character without having to create a sounding board for him.

the sorts of characters who end up hard boiled detectives are, if believable as introspective, not the sorts of guys who share their feelings readily, or who trust others with simple facts. (usually that is the point, that the hero is standing alone against a whole corrupt conspiracy.) since he cannot talk to anyone within the story (it would just be too invraisemblable) in order to get the info on his thoughts out, he has to talk to us outside the story. some people keep journals on their computers; some can't bring themselves to, so instead make sure to tell their cyberpals what they are doing and thinking and then save the mail. (how politically correct.) I guess most detectives would be in the first group.

In Blade Runner: they had a voice over to invoke the feel of a first person story instead of actually writing the story that way. It's just lazy story telling.

so what you are saying is that the Blade Runner VO would have been ok if there weren't so many scenes that Deckard could not have known about? That basically makes sense. I can live with that. I am trying to imagine if they could have done it that way. The opening scene was videotaped which is why Deckard can keep watching it. But I don't see how Deckard could have known about many of the scenes in which only the replicants had appeared. Unless there were bugs on all Tyrell employees and suppliers. It would have been interesting to have two narrators (has that ever been done?) Deckard and Roy, though the latter's actions usually spoke for themselves, so we would be back to the same movie. Also, it's weird to have a character narrate in the past tense when at the end of the movie he is dead and no longer around to narrate. occasionally there are omniscient 1st-person narratives in which a character just seems to know everything, even stuff for which he or she was not present. it is assumed -- or explained how -- he or she learned them later.

Another narration that works: "The Shawshank Redemption". Mainly on the quality of Morgan Freeman's voice. for the same reason, the prologue and epilogue of "The big Lebowski" were most welcome.

980315

Subject: Re: U.S. Marshals (but really Wings of Desire)

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Heyer writes:

they've gotten bored with doing lame remakes of The Fugitive and have gone on to do a lame remake of Wings of Desire with Nicolas Cage as the angel. I saw the preview for it.)

You don't really mean this literally, do you? I mean, it refers to anyone in the dairy industry? You are saying that City of Angels is very much like Wings of Desire, oh please please please be saying this, not a literal remake.....I loved Wings of Desire. I provides the perfect metaphor for all of us skulking around, invisible and separated from people, not being able to take part in their activities but curious about what they are thinking and thriving on finding out, yet unable to intervene to help. I mean, who are they going to have play Peter Falk, who was not just a performer but a character, since he was playing himself? will they have Peter Falk again? Tom Selleck playing Peter Falk? also, wings of Desire was set in a divided Berlin and the Wall was a not unimportant symbol. Well, i guess most american cities are pretty divided....

bleah. I've got that sinking feeling like my father or my dog just died.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

980316
Subject: Re(6): Wings of Desire (reall
From: terrible person
To: film
Cc:
"Gorbymania"

Heyer writes:
*Wow, there was a *sequel* to Wings of Desire? Wow. Did anything happen in that one?*

Mikhail Gorbachev, the coolest human being of this or any other century, played himself. Nastassja Kinski was lovely as always and made me wish I had a guardian angel who looked like her even though I would never be able to see her. Peter Falk did his ruffled thing as well as ever. Willem DaFoe was menacing as Time. Yeah, with a capital T. But the ending was overlong and silly. don't see it on a double feature with "Wings" because whole episodes of ER have been built around emergency patients suffering from Wenders overdose.

If Meg Ryan is playing Peter Falk (or is she just playing the Peter Falk role, which would mean she was playing Meg Ryan?) it would not be such a stretch -- didn't she play an old man in "prelude to a kiss"? or did the old man play her? who was that old man? was he masked? Armin Mueller-Stahl? Why not have Mikhail Gorbachev play himself again in Peter Falk's role? Everyone would recognize him as they did Falk in the movies. I mean, he's experienced; he's done Pizza Hut ads. And I don't think he is busy running any superpowers right now. We've had an actor who became a President? Why not a President who becomes an actor? He'd be at least as good as Fred Dalton Thompson; in fact, he could take all the authority figure roles that have been going begging since Thompson became a Senator.....

980316
Subject: Re(3): More Lebowski
From: terrible person
To: film

actually, what I really liked in the movie was the burial scene, when after Walter screwed up and poured the ashes out into a strong wind and got them all over the Dude, provoking another really angry argument. finally, Walter just seized the Dude in an enormous bear hug (being himself like an enormous bear). You realize at that point that although these two guys appear to hate each other and drive each other nuts, they really have a deep bond, which has been brought out again by the death of the one likeable (besides the cowboy) character in the movie, Steve Buscemi's dim, hapless, Donny.

I am thinking of other scenes in other movies in which a delayed reaction to grief at death brings people together. Or at least brings a person to himself. A great example is in "Stand By Me", in which the Wil Wheaton character finally breaks down and confronts the death of his brother and is comforted by the River Phoenix character. (And then his older self remembers that moment when he hears of the friend's death. And we, seeing it now at least, think of how River Phoenix is dead and we miss him....)

I seem to remember something similar in "Bright Lights, Big City", in which the Michael J. Fox character finally accepts the death of his mother....

other examples of this theme?

terrible person (whose name, like "the dude", is said more like a general description that could just as well apply to anyone than a name)

980317
Subject: Modifications

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

I noticed this morning that my last post is listed as posted at a time I was not online. Wondering how this could be, I checked the history, and found that the post had been "modified". Now, because I had saved my original, I was able to tell that the "modification" consisted only in the addition of the word "spoilers" to the title line. Still, I object strongly to this. Exile to the formless void of the Cutting Room Floor is one thing. But the power to modify is scary. How do we know the moderator will not simply delete or change lines from posts that disagree with him (as many, especially many of mine, do?) I have never seen him do so, but then, I have never had any of my posts modified in any way.

The President's line item veto has been ruled unconstitutional. The power of modification should be also. If the moderator feels a post contains inappropriate material, he should send it back to the original poster with an explanation of his objections, and leave it up to the poster to decide whether to make the demanded corrections or simply choose not to post it. Like Roy Batty, I do not wish to be modified in some way; I had in mind something more radical.

Finally, this whole issue of "spoilers" seems a little silly. Heaven forbid that when reading about a movie you should actually find out something about it.

980317

Subject: Re(11): Modifications

From: terrible person

To: film processing

Cc:

Peter Stone writes:

Jefferson, say something.

What else is there to do?

Well, man, you're the one that wrote it.

I wrote ALL of it, Mr. Adams. He goes to Thomson's table, picks up the pen, scratches the passage from the Declaration.

Pope John Paul II writes:

Quod scripsi, scripsi.

Edmond Rostand writes:

Impossible, Monsieur, mon sang se coagule

En pensant qu'on y peut changer une virgule.

Peter George writes:

Foreign substances, Mandrake, introduced into our precious bodily fluids. Without our knowledge.

Certainly without our consent.

William Shakespeare writes:

Who steals my purse steals trash...but he that robs from me my good name, takes that which avails him nothing, and leaves me poor indeed.

Now, I am not aiming to put myself in the league of a President (who owned slaves and exploited them for sexual purposes), a Pope (whose policies have caused untold suffering to women, non-heterosexuals, and other groups), a French swordsman (who loved a woman mainly for her looks and could not bring himself to tell her the truth), a mad Air Force General who unleashes World War III, and a destroyer of a noble friend. However, seeing the response to the question I raised this morning, and feeling a bit like Delilah, the sex worker whose cutting unleashed the events of "Unforgiven", as she sees Clint Eastwood ride away having killed half a dozen men, or like Ellen James, I thought I should weigh in again.

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The point here is not the nature of the modification. Of course the actual modification was small and not to the text. I could argue the whole spoiler issue and I will, below. But the sacredness of a post cannot be compromised. The idea that someone else can change the words that go out under your name in intolerable and undermines this entire system and what it stands for. What I mean is that most of us are just names here, perhaps with resumes attached that say more or less about us. Many of you, I guess, meet each other in real life or chat or exchange email here; I, whether because of geography, lack of invitations, or my own choice, do not. I am known to you only by my posts here. Since you have no other standard by which to know me, only the name at the top of the post assures that it is one of mine. And then it must be 100% one of mine. In this environment where anything can be fakes and all is uncertain, there must be this to be sure of, that names on posts are those of their authors. I do not want my posts saying "terrible person (with help from Steve Omlid)" leaving you to guess who did what. It is as if someone had caught the sysops who check new accounts sleeping and had managed to start an account with the same name as mine, and thus post messages under my name containing things I never wrote or thought. "At least leave me my reputation -- it's all I've got" says the Vice President to Dave in the eponymous movie. My reputation may not be the best one, but at least it is mine, which I have made myself and for which I am responsible, no one else. I would really not mind that much if the moderator or anyone else lifted material from one of my posts and claimed it as his or her own. But to do the opposite, for someone to have the power to make me answerable for words I never said, scares me. I would not have known that my post had been modified if I had not noticed that it was no longer above another post of mine and listed as posted at a time I had not been online. I generally do not read my posts after I post them so I would not notice if they had been modified that way. I don't always post several at once. I often post very early in the morning, not long before the moderator logs on, so that he could immediately modify and repost and I would not see anything amiss in the time. I don't want to get paranoid, constantly checking my posts to see that they are still as I wrote them and not someone else. But as I said, I am scared. It could scare me right out of here.

Concerning spoilers specifically, I find the policy a little vague, mainly because it is not written down anywhere, even on the "Welcome to Film" pop-up. Apparently it concerns not revealing the endings or late developments of films, as if this was all a potential viewer of the film would want to avoid knowing. But there is plenty of other information that could reduce the cinematic pleasure -- SPOIL it -- if known in advance which seems to be posted freely with out warnings. Just knowing the cast, the director, the book on which the movie is based, the general mood, can reveal lots about it, as much as those fifteen minute previews they show now. The policy seems to rule out revealing the outcomes of plots, but since the outcome is the product of the situations and the characters, just talking about them could "spoil" things. The point is, no one can go into a theatre tabula rasa, with no expectations about a film, unless he or she has chosen it at random. Maybe it would be nice to; maybe it wouldn't, since most films are made with the assumption of a certain amount of background knowledge and do not entirely explain themselves. But if the label of spoiler should have been applied to my post, it should go on just about every one here. Caveat lector. Let the reader beware. I read the posts here to learn whether I actually want to see a film or just read about it. I think most others do to, and are not afraid to read about all aspects of the film. I think the best policy is that of the astute and practical Eva Luna, that if you begin to read things you don't want to know about, you stop reading. Aren't we trained to do that in life in general?

Steve Omlid writes:

terrible person writes:

The President's line item veto has been ruled unconstitutional. The power of modification should be also.

Huh?

Hello? do you ever read the papers? last year, for the first time the President was granted the power to delete individual items from appropriations bills passed by congress, instead of simply vetoing the bill (as presidents have done for 200 years) and vetoing the good and necessary with the bad and wasteful. But a court recently ruled this power unconstitutional, that only the congress has the power to write legislation, not the president. By the same token, only posters have the right to write posts; not the moderator (except under his own name.) similarly, courts have ruled that if a piece of artwork is commissioned for a public space, it cannot later be modified without the consent of the artist.

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"Sending it back" is something I can't do, or if I can, I don't know how. I could delete it, but again, I would never do that. I could just leave it there and ask people to modify it, and I have done that before when the poster is still online. But if I just leave it there, unmodified, while waiting for a response from the poster, it defeats the whole point, because people will stumble across it and have the movie ruined for them.

Please. This is a poor excuse. You could simply reply with quote or cut and paste the original post to a new message, then delete the post and send the quoted or pasted post back with your request to change it, specifying what offends. The original poster would also still have a copy in his or her mailbox. He or she could then decide to make the modifications or not post at all. but like Jefferson, the final decision would be his.

Oh, come on. Are you really that cavalier?
More than you know. But see above.

Oh, and Terry, please put the post in question back up. I really liked it.

My my. I have not been asked so quickly and nicely to reconsider an action since I changed my long distance service. I have never heard of a boycott by a single person -- of a single product -- having such effect! The San Francisco and Berkeley City Councils must be told. but it was a nice post, wasn't it. But it was nice AS I WROTE IT. do you see my point?

But ok, I am a practical person though I stand on principle. The point here is to say what I want to say and to get others' reactions, and I can't do that unless I post. So I will make you a deal. I will put the post back up. I will even put an appropriate anti-spoiler warning and space on the body of the text, since this seems to be the general if unwritten policy. I have appreciated the support I have received in this matter and I have no desire to lose any goodwill I have secured. The title line will be as it was, before modification. In all future posts, I will do my best to obey the rules on spoilers, even before they are written down, erring on the side of caution to protect people's film experience. The moderator, on the other hand, will promise never to use his power of modification again (since apparently a request to the sysops that it be eliminated like the Count Almaviva's droit de seigneur would not work) on anyone's posts, either sending them back as I described above, or putting them in a spoilers folder, a plan which seems to have met with general approval. Fair enough?

If the moderator does not accept this proposal, and if anyone is interested in the actual content of the post, which concerned the ending of "The Big Lebowski" and its parallels in other films, please email me and I will be glad to send it along.

Oh, and Steve, as part of the deal, *I* will give up any right to search of your cavities (or cede it to whomever you would like.) I am sure your dental hygiene is fine.

terrible person (like I said, a description, not an appellation, thus lower case.)

980318

Subject: Re(13): Modifications

From: terrible person

To: film processing

Cc:

Steve Omlid writes:

I really wish you'd address the notion of WHY you think adding one word to your subject line - NOT the body of your post - compromised your sacredness. You didn't seem to have time to talk about that, or didn't care to.

Hello? what did I say? the point is that YOU, the moderator going under the name Steve Omlid have the power to change the words that go out under my name without my or anyone's knowledge. This time it was just the subject line. who knows what it could be next time? You say you would never abuse your power, but we have only your assurance for that. You act as if everyone knows you and what you are like but I don't. You are just a name, as I am; I know you only from here. Just as no invented weapon has ever failed

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to be used in war, powers have a way of pulling their possessors into using them. You yourself are involved in the debates here, a player as well as an umpire, and thus have the temptation to use your power to support your side of any argument. It's as if the prosecutor and judge were the same person. If you did not post yourself, that would be a slightly different matter.

I feel as if my parents just read my diary.

Another person who disagreed with me gave me a suggestion for a better way to do it, which I'm going to take.

and I gave you a suggestion for a way to do it too, one you should have thought of yourself before.

For the umpteenth time, "the moderator" - I - would never do that.

How do we know that? Scout's honor? You have shown you are willing to use the power at least in some circumstances. This is how the Russians felt during the cold war. The US swore, took it as a given, that it would never attack with nuclear weapons. But the undeniable fact was that the US had shown it was willing to do so, had done so.

*No reason to be scared. I would never modify your written text, not ever, never. (If you choose not to believe that, after I've said it over and over and after I have *never* modified anything that anyone's written, then I can't help what you choose to believe.) And now, I won't even modify the subject lines anymore - now that I have a better way of dealing with the situation.*

Is that the abjuring of your power which I stipulated in my proposal? (man, dealing with my landlord was good experience for this.)

*A valid point, and as I *also* said before, I'm going to rectify that.*

Fine then. As long as the policy is clear, I can decide for myself whether to post in accordance with rules, or not post at all.

I just added one word to the subject line, which you didn't even write.

I chose it though. I don't hesitate to change inherited subject lines when it suits me. in this case, it did not. I wanted it kept the same, and you changed it.

But I don't see that I'll have any call to modify subject lines in the future, and since that is the only way that I'd ever use my "power of modification", I guess that rectifies the problem.

Again, better than "I would never" or "I will have no reason to" would be a simple "I won't".

--practically terrible person

From: Elpenor
To: terrible person

Cc:
don't forget....

dogs in the yard dog dog dog jst like the sound

gilliam fight sheinberg his way

small change this time, bigger ones soon

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every weapon, every power has been used

this edge of the wedge
and then they came for the jews...
elephant gets nose under tent
"you could not possibly object"

as a matter of fact, I do have a life outside this BBS.

OUTSIDE. this BBS.

but terrible person doesn't. he doesn't exist out there. no one - at least in principle -- knows anything about him. and no one here, in principle, knows anything about me. and I don't know Joshua T., except here. I don't know Steve Omlid there; I only know "Steve Omlid" here. which is why, Steve's protestations that he would never do censor a post to the contrary, that he is not that sort of person, I can't believe that. because here, the Army is done one better: you can be all that you can convince people you are. oh, there are the easy ones like men posing as women and vice versa, kids posing as adults and vice versa, the harder ones like dumb people posing as smart ones (and the not quite as easy as one might expect, smart people posing as dumb ones). and we tolerate this; it's part of the game. we can choose what to believe or not and make decisions on whom to talk to accordingly. the problem arises when we are asked to believe that dishonest people could not possibly present themselves as honest ones.

and yes, like General Ripper, I do believe in a life beyond this one. which is why I constantly try to bring it into this one through analogies and quotes.

is that what you meant?

or do you find my posts so unbelievably rich and complex that you just cannot believe that anyone's real life could be as rich and complex?

or is it just the word sacred? don't you get it? like "sacred" at the beginning of the paragraph creates a symmetry with "scared" (describing me) towards the end? since my posts are me? get it? no? don't feel bad, it's ok, you probably felt it subliminally.

but see, now that steve has said he will not modify anything, I can be happy. if steve made mistake without thinking, then defended it, so did I, and I defended mine but ON DIFFERENT grounds. it's over now. a principle has been established, that a post can be rejected or moved but not modified. great. let's talk about movies.

<----buying Neo Sanchez a case of whatever he drinks

nice sidelong insult -- seems -- at Joshua T. I would respond but you have not raised your head above the trench, said enough, for me to shoot back. at least twits has wits in it.

this universe is tangential to that one, like lack

980320

Subject: Re: moles

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Sirin N writes:

just watched 'the paper cutter' last night. why is it that the mole is always the guy with the big forehead. as it happens, in this particular case, the mole was also the guy with the mole (on his chin), so there was never

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really any doubt in my mind. it strikes me that he might have taken the time to have the mole surgically removed, thus lessening the chances that suspiciously-inclined people might look at him and think: mole. he might have had his pathological friend zip it off for him with an 8 1/2 in. length of that deadly paper. does anyone know whether moles have a different cultural significance in france? ie, are they considered 'manly'?

sirin.

I think you missed the boat on this one, Sirin. first of all, it loses a lot on video. the colors, the pinks and reds, don't show as well. I saw it in the theatre at the Angelika in NYC. also, I guess you don't speak French or know much about French culture? ok, well I do speak French (and Russian, German, Basque, and most of the other languages in the film, including some Berber, which is what they were speaking in the Moroccan scenes, not Arabic.) You really can't depend on subtitles. especially when video cuts them off. Someone recently suggested subtitling movies even in english but I would have to disagree. you can't trust translation. this is a prime example.

for instance, the title in french is "coupe-papier". it translates as the paper cutter (incidentally, spymasters in both "hopscotch" and "clear and present danger" were named cutter, while I have never met anyone of that name) but really means "letter opener" which is basically what a spy is, but also what any translator or literary critic does. (and anyone who reads. it is still not uncommon for french books to be sold "uncut", that is, after the quartos or whatever are folded, they are not cut apart at the tops, so you have to read your new book with a knife to separate the attached page tops.) the french word for mole (animal) is taupe and for mole "beauty mark" is "grain de beauté". no confusion there. (though actually, one of the characters had a marilyn monroe poster. he also had a james dean. probably mocking french worship of american pop culture icons.)

but remember, french government agencies, including the SDECE and the Deuxieme Bureau, naturally, fall under the laws that pretty much ban the use of english words when french ones are available, even if they are cumbersome. most of the time in the paper cutter, the idea of a mole is expressed by "joueur de double jeu situe pres du centre", pretty much a dictionary definition. (this is also needling the mole ridden french security services, who were in such denial, they would not even allow for the existence of a word for mole.) this is why the actors often seemed to be talking with no subtitles, since they would still be saying the above while the subtitles could just say "mole". when the characters begin just saying "mole", it is subversive, violating the language rules. also, mole sounds something like "molle", a feminine adjective meaning "soft, weak" - basically a big insult for a man in macho french culture.

another cultural issue: why would the French use 8 1/2 paper? inches? in the country where the metric system was born? come on. the fact that they keep mentioning it should tip you off. it's just an homage to Fellini. and a pretty clunky one, I would say. but Coursier (the director) revels in obscure references. did you notice that the shady spanish guy in Morocco was named Avogadro?

basically, the film is about the perceived sellout of the French intellectual left in the 80's, too busy deconstructing to have any political force anymore. high foreheads have always been symbols of intellectualism. (eggheads, adlai stevenson in this country.) the left is no longer to take risks, risk its life, as in spain or in the resistance or in 68. (the director was a 68 veteran.) that is one of the jokes about the paper cutter -- the big table top model, not the letter opener. the old guy in the supply room keeps quoting robespierre and the camus' meurseault, people who were guillotined. and the guillotine was eliminated in the '80's. he is lamenting the lack of risk anymore. imagine if the last line of "l'etranger" (the outsider) by camus were "I hope there will be a lot of people at my life without parole [which means speech in french but that is another issue]...." without the risk of death, commitment loses something....

I have also heard a very plausible analysis of this film in terms of sexuality, that the moles are just people with secrets, i.e., closeted gay. this is possible (I think molle can be a derogatory term like "sissy", and pink can have sexual as well as political sense.); I prefer the political interpretation because it is less obvious. you watch the movie, you make your choice.

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but be careful about understanding the language.

980321

Subject: Re(4): moles

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Eva Luna writes:

sirin:

speaking of thieves, can anyone tell me whether the thief ended up giving back the booty to the young heiress in 'the daunted'? my insatiable vcr gobbled the tape.

yes, he did. And way to ruin the only copy at my video store, you jerk. I was planning on seeing it again!

as for "paper cutter" you (and terry) might as well of ruined that one in the vcr as well. same difference!

Asthma my ass!

take a chill pill, Eva. there's a store on every corner now. and it'll be on TV someday. no need to taunt us and flaunt your knowledge, sauntering through this conference, pontificating as the font of wisdom. don't complain about this vaunted "daunted"; it will come back to haunt you. make a quantum leap; be spontaneous!

as for "the paper cutter" (which I have heard is going to remade in an american version with Nicholas Cage called "mole station"); it's not as if it's not obvious....I mean, the bald woman who had lost her hair to chemotherapy and her voice to laryngitis had a big poster from the comedie francaise behind her desk, advertising a 1984 production of "Le Misanthrope" by ---- hmmm? Moliere? the movie is not about the plot, since it's so obvious; it's about the atmosphere, and global warming.....a metaphoric "Waterworld" where everyone is if not under water, underground.....

here, I'll let you know, there is a mole in "The Wind and the Willows"!!!!

sucks to your ass-mar, piggy!

980322

Subject: Re(9): Wings of Desire (reall

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

having Dennis Franz in the Peter Falk role in the Wings of Desire remake would not be so bad -- an updating, as it were -- as long as he is playing Dennis Franz, to keep the analogy. After his years on NYPD Blue, Franz is pretty recognizable. People must come up to him all the time and say "Hey! Detective Sipowicz! How's it going?" just as they address peter falk in "wings of desire" as "Lieutenant". also, Sipowicz has the same very human schlumpiness that endeared Columbo, though he is not as smart and uses blunter means than the Socratic pseudo-simpleness of Columbo. He is however somewhat more realistic. The movie wil still be awful, but they could have done a lot worse with this bit of casting.

I always like a good analogy.

terrible person

980322

Subject: Re(6): More Lebowski (spoilers)

Send

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

James M. Courtney writes:

Even the fact that he kept on mispronouncing his own name seemed to point to this.

wait, you mean people aren't allowed to pronounce their names however they want to? who made that rule? and who decides what the proper pronunciation is?

terrible person (pronounced "aww-ful in-dih-vih-ju-all")

980322

Subject: Re(7): moles

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

there are certainly PLENTY of examples -- PLENTY!! PLENTY!! -- in which moles get away with it. (note: I have just seen the new movie "the burrowers" and there are NO MOLES in it whatsoever.) Kim Philby gave away the keys to the Kingdom and got away with it and a dacha on the scenic Moskva and all the potatoes and vodka he could eat. Aldrich Ames copped a plea and saved his wife, got sent to a cushy federal pen and might just make parole if he lives to 134. The moles in the CIA in the '60's got a good laugh while James Jesus Angleton practically destroyed the agency (which some would applaud) looking for them, like Gene Hackman (control yourself, Eva) in "The Conversation". In movies, "NO Way Out" gave Kevin Costner a way out when a gay man conveniently showed up to take the fall. (Again, the gay-mole connection.) John Le Carré is famous for his upbeat endings. In "tinker, tailor...", as soon as Bill Haywood is unmasked, Smiley is all smiles and the Circus gang heads to the pub for a (Sir Alec) Guinness and a laugh. In "The Russia House" Barely There -- no, Barley Blair -- (Sean Connery) betrays his country and ends up with a villa in sunny Lisbon and sunny Michelle Pfeiffer. "The spy who came in from the cold" lets Richard Burton lay down his burtons, shoulder up his cross and become the priest of the sandpiper and night of the iguana. the undercover cop (police equivalent of a mole)(Tony Leung) in "hard boiled" avenges the death of Chow Yun-Fat, the much better man, and is left to consider his own moral worthlessness while standing at Chow's grave.

It is true though that generally in movies, moles are dead meat and know it. (so are undercover cops.) this is for two reasons: because no one likes them, not the side they are hurting for obvious reasons, not the side they are helping because they assume that if the moles will betray one side they will betray the other, and because they sort of undermine the rules of the game, like people here who read under other names or without appearing on histories. but moles are like people in diving bells deep underwater, with crushing pressures on every side. they have put themselves in opposition to the overwhelming forces of society, like Winston in 1984, and will eventually be crushed by it. partly because, after all, they want to be; they cannot stand to be in opposition, want to come back into the fold and be like everyone else like Berenger in Ionesco's Rhinoceros. usually they are surrounded by propaganda telling them this though sometimes they really hate the system they work in and are glad to help destroy it. also, moles and undercover cops are often forced by situations or superiors to do things against their moral nature. but basically, the movie industry is trying to tell us: conform. don't secretly hate the system. don't try to undermine it, because you will lose.

interesting though this idea that moles always die. I myself am quite fond of, in fact prefer, stories in which I actually know the ending in advance and can concentrate on why and how things happen rather than what. remember, that for most of human history, endings were known. Greeks watching tragedies knew the myths on which they were based. Vikings listening to sagas had heard the story a million times but wanted to hear what this bard would do. (the way we go to concerts to hear songs we already know, but maybe with a new twist.) we all know that Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius, etc. etc. die. but we watch Hamlet anyway. (does anyone remember the first time he saw Hamlet, not knowing what would happen?) Casablanca too. I

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was just asking my cousin once removed if he really didnt know whom Ilsa would go with when he first saw Casablanca, and he said yes, and I could barely conceive of that. recently, it seems, more and more movies have adopted the ending first approach, with most of the film told in flashback. sid and nancy, e.g.. in some movies, like the day of the jackal, expectation of conformity to history allows us to know the ending. degaulle did not die in 1963 so the jackal must be stopped somehow but how? a 1990 movie I really liked, "before turning the gun on himself", is a prime example. from the opening shots it is clear that someone has gone postal. the question is just who and why, explained by the flashbacks. everyone thinks it's going to be the high foreheaded clerk played by vincent schiavelli or maybe the high strung admin. asst. (madchen amick) harassed by boss j.t. walsh. when schiavelli does go nuts and start to threaten to shoot, it's kind of surprising when the cold fish guy gets so mad to have his day ruined that he brings out his own weapon and begins to empty it. it really works. process, not result.

terrible person

980323 Not Sent

Subject: this is not fair

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

now wait a second.

first of all, I never would have thought in my wildest dreams that anyone actually read my bloated posts in their entirety.

second, all the films I mentioned were fairly old. people who were going to see them would have by now. I know that the new policy is "label everything no matter how old", but that gets a little silly. besides, the moderator has allowed enough exceptions that the policy becomes pretty meaningless. no one complained when I told the ending to blade runner in "I've seen things....". I revealed the ending to "unforgiven" and lots of other movies, as did James Courtney, in the "Wedding Singer" thread. You told about the shocking revelations in "Kurt and Courtney" -- not an ending, but pretty surprising. and just today, you have not objected to Eva Luna's revealing the ending to Grease. Certain films, it is just sort of assumed that one has seen them....or is this just favoritism to your pal Eva?

and you don't object when Barrymore spoils the surprise of whether Leonardo DiCaprio shows up at the Oscars. there are all sorts of spoilers.

make a policy, if you like, but make it uniform. otherwise, it becomes arbitrary. it's like pornography laws that leave it up to the judge to "know it when he sees it". if you know a spoiler when you see it, fine, but you can't expect the rest of us to based on your behavior.

and third, I'm not trying to do reviews, I am trying to do criticism and comparison. there is a big difference. you can't talk about movies without revealing the endings. you might as well forbid posters in politics to reveal who won elections for fear of ruining the news for them. people who read me should know me by now and I don't apologize.

980323

Subject: Re(2): Wiping up the Grease

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Greta Christina writes:

If he's a greaser and she's a nice girl, she becomes a greaser.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. but I love the irony that Danny Zuko HAS given up his world for her, and she for him. He lettered in track, remember? The whole thing is based in entirely on O.Henry's "The gift of the magi."

Off the top of my head, I can think of one, and only one, exception, and that's Say Anything. In fact, it's one of the reasons I love that movie -- the guy leaves his life behind in order to be with the girl.

what life? it's not as if Lloyd is going anywhere in life. his other choice was to join the army as Dad wanted. he really does not have much choice. it's not as if he were King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Emperor of India, and gave that up for the woman he loved. (though Edward did not really make much material sacrifice.)

in films noirs, male characters are always giving up everything they have, totally compromising their lives, to do what the femme fatale wants in order to get her. of course, then the femme fatale turns around and abandons them while they go to jail or worse. (body heat is a prime example.)

It bugs the fuck out of me.
which I suppose is better than vice versa.

980324 Not Sent

Subject: Re(3): Wiping up the Grease

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

The truly bizarre thing is that as I was reading this post, I was listening to the song, "Midnight Train to Georgia."

I have to question your methodology here, finding universal significance in this "coincidence." it's not a coincidence; simply an incidence. it is entirely un-bizarre that of all the people reading this post, someone should be listening to "midnight train...", just as it is not bizarre that someone should be listening to the BBC news, which is what I was doing. think of all the times you opened a post and nothing a propos was on the stereo. we simply tend to notice the "bizarre" rather than the normal. movies seem to include a disproportionate number of fantastic coincidences because that is what people like to make movies about; it's more interesting. I maybe have cited before the joke about the fool who is amazed that cats have two holes in their skins just where their eyes happen to be. unless you think it is coincidental that they just happened to have a movie camera around to record it, but since it was set up....

also, we all presumably chose what to listen to. so there is a causal relationship here and not just a coincidental one. maybe if someone had walked up to you on the train and started singing....or:

if, for instance, you and Greta both, independently had chosen to put "midnight train..." on your record players, or rather if you and someone with whom you did not have anything obvious in common also had chosen to put the record on, and had then happened to read the post, there might be something fishy going on and you could claim the universe was really talking to you.

finally, we tend to see things only from our own perspectives and forget that there is no reason, statistically, why a certain percentage of odd things should not happen to us. if you were listening to the radio, many other people were too to the same song and they did not happen to open any a propos posts at that moment. the universe is not talking to you. my father used to like to talk about how when he heard about the Kent State massacre of 1970, he was driving through the town of Weimar, Texas. All he could think of, he would say, was the chaos of the Weimar republic of Germany that led to the rise of Naziism. He would say this as if this had some universal meaning, for the whole country, not just for himself. He ignored the fact that lots of people had been in other towns when they heard the news, and that the people of Weimar were there even when the news was good.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

But I am sure you know all this cause and correlation stuff from your academic studies.

980324 Not Sent
Subject: you heard it here first
From: terrible person
To: film
Cc:
ACADEMY TO END SEPARATE GENDER CATEGORIES

HOLLYWOOD, March 24 (United Press Association) -- The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which awards the annual "Oscar"™ awards, announced today that it would no longer award separate "Best Actor" and "Best Actress" awards, but would substitute two "Best Performance" awards to be given to either gender.

The announcement was made at a press conference today, the day after the awarding of the "Oscars" in a star-studded ceremony, by Academy spokesman David Lindley. He shared the podium with Christine Campbell, a lawyer of the firm of Baker, Lewis, and McInerney, which represents the Academy. Although he conferred with her several times during the press conference, Ms. Campbell did not address the conference directly.

The decision was made by the Academy's Committee on Awards, which consists of representatives from the Academy's various sections for actors, directors, writers, and technical artists. It must still be approved by the general membership of the Academy, but no Committee decision has ever been overruled. In explaining the decision, Mr. Lindley said:

"The present structure and categories of the Academy Awards were put into place when the movies and society were very different. In those days, gender roles in society and in film were very well defined. There were men's roles and women's roles. Today, this separation has broken down. We in the Academy see this as a positive evolution, and we want our awards to reflect this."

980326
Subject: Re(4): chris marker
From: terrible person
To: film
Cc:

I did not think "12 Monkeys" was a "bastardization" of "La Jetee". Granted, I saw "12 Monkeys" first. But remember, Gilliam's film was only "inspired" by Marker's. He took the basic outline and filled in a lot that Marker did not put in his movie (part of whose goal was to say what it had to say as quickly and briefly and sparsely as possible.) "12 Monkeys" concentrated heavily on Gilliam's favorite (as in the Fisher King) issue of sanity versus insanity, how you know you are insane and if it matters. It also gave him the chance to work in a lot of his retro-30's/dark modern gothic art direction and his general hatred of scientists (some also saw an anti-gay message.) I think that there is enough in "12 Monkeys" to judge it on its own and not just as a version of "La Jetee". (by the way, like Blade Runner, it was written by Berkeley resident David Webb Peoples (and his wife), so that any complaints can be laid, literally, at his doorstep.) when a movie claims to be "based on" a book or a true story, it is usually trying to use and build on the fame and credibility of the original story. But "La Jetee" is not all that famous; I doubt most people who saw the movie saw the "inspired by..." line at the beginning and thought "oh, it's based on the marker film!! it must be good then!!" in fact, probably for copyright reasons, Gilliam could have gotten away without acknowledging marker at all. Or maybe he could not and that is why he did. anyway, it seemed mainly a gesture rather than a statement or a claim of strong connection.

that being said, I think 12 Monkeys would have profited by greater similarity to "La Jetee" in the only respect possible, that is, plot. (I am about to discuss the ending of this movie. Be warned.) I never understood why the future technocrats, the ruling scientists, would want Cole to kill the germ-spreader, which would not only have created a terrible time paradox whose results no one could know, but would have put the scientists out of power. (Presumably, if things had just gone on normally, we would be rules

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
by an 87 year old bill Clinton and not a bunch of guys in white coats.) It seems much more likely that Cole, having found a conscience, would want to kill the germ-spreader and save the future, while he himself stayed in the present with kathryn (and by not returning to the future, avoided most of the consequences of the time paradox. how he got back to 1996 would still have been a problem, but...)He was half convinced he really belonged in the present anyway. This was the plot of La Jetee; the traveller wanted to stay in the past. IN my version of 12 Monkeys, Cole would be shot not by airport security guards and detectives to whom he was just another guy with a gun or an escaped criminal, but by Tiny and Jose, back from the future. This would have made a strong antiauthority statement ("Gee, we could make things better if the powers that be did not want them kept the same because they are in THEIR interests.") It would also have maintained marker's strong statement on memory ("You can't live in the past; the future[your real present] will come and get you.")

I guess that is what they mean by only "inspired by....".

980326

Subject: Re(4): Wiping up the Grease

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

this post may discuss certain films in their entirety. the names of all films discussed have been boldened for easy identification.

there are also a lot of examples of characters giving up their lives for their loves' lives (say that three times fast) when the love's life is BETTER or seems to be (is more socially acceptable.) for instance, pretty woman -- she gives up her life as a prostitute to be a rich kept woman. now, some people might think this is as bad as giving up being a nice girl to be a leather pedal pusher slut. it's a reasonable argument.

I mean, in Say Anything, hanging out in Oxford with Diane Court seems like a much better option for LLoyd Dobbler than his current life. Except we know he will just walk out on her, join the army as his dad wanted, become a hit man, and walk back into her life ten years later for their tenth reunion.

The other thing that is so evil about Grease is the way it makes the '50's seem just so great!! hey, no problems!! (I did not remember any african americans in that movie.) Good thing Rizzo did not turn out to be pregnant, since she would have had a hell of a time getting an abortion or bearing the child on her own! I am reminded of the "Mad" magazine parody of the final song of the movie, "We go together".....

Those were the fifties,
when everything was really great
and folks were going crazy!
(i forgot the rest of this verse)

But we won't mention
The crazies like McCarthy
and people like him around
And Cold War tension
with war in south korea
and bomb shelters underground
Things now are a whole lot
Better than the way they were then!!

Ah, Mad! Ever eloquent.

terrible person (ever mad, ever eloquent?)

980326

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(9): chris marker

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

this post may discuss certain films in their entirety. the names of all films discussed have been boldened for easy identification.

'the fieb writes:

Monkeys' seemed closer to 'the terminator' than 'la jetee',

yes! the plots were very similar in structure. actually, the original plan was like terminator -- go back to the past but DON'T CHANGE ANYTHING but just try to do things or gain information to allow humans to take over again in the future. (i.e., Cole was not going to prevent the plague, just help humans recover, anymore than Reese in the Terminator was trying to stave off the nuclear war, just make sure John Connor was born to lead the reconquest.) then the plan was changed to that of Terminator 2 - Cole was supposed to change the future by killing the virus carrier just as the Terminator and friends were going to change the future by destroying the basis for the construction of Skynet. this would of course create a massive time paradox by eliminating the sending back in the first place.

and his general hatred of scientists (some also saw an anti-gay message.)

I'm not sure what you're talking about here, it's been so long and i sort of drifted off in the middle. (not a good sign, unless it's a warhol film) Expound, please?

you mean my post was so long? yeah, sorry. try to stay awake.

I used "some" in the mathematical sense, meaning "one". One person I know, an English graduate student (didn't that win the oscar last year? HE is not english by the way) who is REALLY SMART held this opinion, which I did not really agree with, but who am I to argue with someone who is REALLY SMART? his reasoning was that the virus spreader guy's homosexuality was indicated by one of the scenes with the nobel prizewinner scientist and that he reflected the stereotype that gays want to wipe out humanity because they are so frustrated that they can't reproduce. He said this with such authority I assumed it must be a somewhat widely held view.

I am remembering now in the Marker film the rather droll moment when they contacted the future people, and the future people had no real interest in helping their ancestors, even though one wonders how the ancestors (the underground postnuclear folks who sent the time travellers) made it to become the future people. Again, a social comment, probably on how certain groups in society act as if they do not need others....

I also liked to imagine the marker film as a sort of sequel (though it came before, i guess) to "dr. strangelove", you know, with the mine shafts? Too bad "12 monkeys" used a virus and not a nuclear war....

I also thought the opening of "12 monkeys" was lame. it made it clear too quickly that Cole really did come from the future and was not crazy. i would have preferred being in doubt for a while. just as I would have preferred not knowing in advance that Schwarzenegger's "Terminator 2" character was good instead of evil.

I agree with whoever liked Brad Pitt's performance. Tim?? yes. ok. many young actors start out with a great nervous energy and lose it as they become established idols -- statues, actually. kevin costner was fun in Silverado and now he seems to belong on mt. rushmore. Pitt was fun in "Thelma and Louise" and has frozen since then to "7 years in tibet"; in "12 monkeys", he was deliberately unsexy. I mean, that is how I am in real life and I assure you no teenage girls are swooning over me. As for Bruce willis, i kept thinking, "wow, this is a pretty uncool role for Bruce Willis. Not what I would expect. I am almost starting to respect Bruce Willis". But I always knew it was Bruce willis. even at the end when he looked like james le gros or something.

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did someone say this already, that marker was at the Pacific Film Archive in '97 or '96?

I don't see gilliam doing "Fear and Loathing...." either. cox would have been better. I am still pissed that gilliam did not do "Watchmen".

terrible person (has markers out)

980327

Subject: Re(11): chris marker

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

the fieb writes:

Maybe it's just cause i'm a girl, but i can't get past the science fiction conotations associated with time travel. (Waiting for the outraged cries of "I'm a girl and I looove science fiction") And I know they are certain arguments for fantasy/science fiction, but you have to also admit there is a lot of cheap , uninteresting dreck out there which can tend to wear one out.

it's true, a huge amount of science fiction is written for 13-year old boys and I am so glad I was once a thirteen year old boy to appreciate it. but some is for adults as well. or girls. it's a matter of whether it is plot driven (attempting to say something about the human condition, such as about how humans relate to technological change or its implications) or technology driven (theauthor just wants to talk about some invention he dreams of) or laser gun shoot out driven. or drivel, for that matter.

this is all encapsulated, so well that nothing more need be said after quoting it, by Sturgeon's law (formulated by sf writer Theodore Sturgeon, parodied by his friend Kurt Vonnegut as Kilgore Trout): Ninety percent of science fiction is crap, but then, ninety percent of everything is crap.

980328

Subject: Re(11): chris marker

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

this post may discuss certain films in their entirety. the names of all films discussed have been boldened for easy identification.

it's always interesting to see when a small concept is expanded into a big one. hemingway's "the killers" is a rather short short story, and it has been made into two movies by adding to it and filling in. one might claim that the beauty of the story in the first place was that it was so short and lean. "the man who would be king" was also a short story expanded into a whole movie. there are lots of other examples. (I am not talking about films based on a group of short stories, such as "short cuts." almost any of those stories could have been made into a reasonable length movie though maybe that would have gone against carver's point, part of which was creating full characters through sketchy sketches even more than the film might have anyway by intertwining unrelated stories or moving them to LA.) "La jetee" can be seen as another example of this.

I actually thought that La Jetee was just another Hollywood on Hollywood film, like LA story or LA confidential. Then I thought that LA confidential was french. I think I am ok now, thanks.

on the other hand, perhaps a short story or short film has just the right amount of material for a movie,leaving plenty of room for the director to add and not have to edit, since when whole books are made into movies, something almost always has to be cut.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian

Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

interesting also: "La jetee" in french means the jetty, or in this case the observation/embarcation pier at the airport. but it can also mean 'the thing which has been thrown', e.g., through time. the only problem is that "La jetee" would have to refer to a feminine thing or person, not a masculine one like the main character.

terrible person (does not blanche at anything, except dubois)

980403

Subject: Re(3): Movie Quotes Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

chris hall writes:

Give it time. It'll come. I'm curious about who'll get 2 and 5, myself.

what, was everyone waiting for me on this, saving it for the chief sci-fi geek? 2 is Blade Runner of course (Leon Kowalski (Brion james) to Deckard (Harrison Ford) when he is beating the crap out of Deckard preparatory to killing him after Deckard has just retired Zhora); 5 is 2001; HAL (douglas somebody) being electronically lobotomized by David Bowman (keir dullea.)

I always enjoy contrasting my two favorite scenes in all film; the lobotomization of HAL (person versus non-human; person wins) to the opening scene (not the quoted one) of Blade Runner, the voight-kampff interrogation of Leon (person versus non-human; noh human wins.)

I remember each of these lines slightly differently (for instance, isn't there a "dave" in the middle of 5? or is the line repeated several times in variation?). I am much more sure, though, that the tag line of the Thing is not "Keep Watching the Skies" but "Watch the Skies" in the first place.

this quote thing is a nice idea. I would like to see in the future quote quizzes with more trick questions or on specific themes (not criticising a general one like this for starters.) "what do these quotes have in common?" sort of thing, or "here are three quotes about sheep. identify."

here is my favorite trick (have to name actor, it's part of the trick) in what film does bob hoskins say "I'm looking for a rabbit with long floppy ears."?

I'll try to think of a theme in the shower.

980403

Subject: Re(5): Movie Quotes Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

terrible person writes:

I'll try to think of a theme in the shower.

How about films with shower scenes?

well, in most of the shower scenes I can think of, the showerer is alone, possibly singing but probably not talking. except in moans, perhaps, which is also the majority of the dialogue in most shower scenes with more than one person. although in movies such as "the shawshank redemption" the shower scenes are pretty quiet, with just a lot of wary looks. locker room scenes sometimes generate some interesting dialogue -- I am thinking of the ones in "the paper chase" but can't remember what was said. you can't

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really put much dialogue of importance in a shower scene since the audience will be too busy paying attention to other things to catch it.

psycho and psycho parodies(high anxiety) are perhaps exceptions. does glenn close say anything in "the big chill"? doesn't the divinity visit the late john denver in the shower in "oh, god"? malcolm macdowell gets a cold shower in "if...."....

980404

Subject: Re: Meg on Sylvia Plath

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

wait a second. I was promised a meg on Sylvia Plath. all I got was a lousy two K on Meg Ryan.

why not have Catherine Deneuve play Sylvia Plath? She is a bit old. But the film could be called "Bell de Jar." or she could play Emily Dickinson in "Belle of Amherst du Jour".

I thought the poet Stallone always wanted to play was Rimbaud. (whose life was pretty adventurous.)

but Leonardo DiCaprio has already played Rimbaud, and Jim Carroll, so he has the poetry credentials to play Ted Hughes?

at least Superman, despite what they say in Stand By Me, is not a real person.

980405

Subject: Re(12): Movie Quotes Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Steve Omlid writes:

I write:

Another great early Hoskins film , again with him as a London gangster but the boss this time, is "The Long Good Friday".

One of my favorite movies, hands down. If anyone out there has never seen it, go to your video store and rent it. And do it today.

and Helen Mirren is hot as always. one of my favorite plots: the guy who has everything set, which then, beginning with the seemingly most insignificant of events, suddenly begins to unravel and spiral chaotically out of control....

what got me to see it was a preview narrated, it sounded like, by James Earl Jones or someone as basso, over the scenes of cars exploding. It was completely apocalyptic. cf. "the Long Hot summer". Uh, oh, I sometimes find myself thinking, as the day opens with bad news, it's going to be a long good friday. It's going to be the end of the world as we know it and I don't feel fine.

and it must be the end of the world if Steve and I are agreeing.

terrible person (does a great Darth Vader voice.)

980405

Subject: Re(14): Movie Quotes Quiz

From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: film

Cc:

Steve Omlid writes:

Nope. It's just a sign that you're growing as a human being. :-)

whoa. so you're saying being an adult means being like you? in that case, I'll decline the honor and stay an enfant terrible. but in the more likely event that you're wrong, I think if I am looking for a model of adulthood to follow, I can find better, even around here. it's not a basis on which I have tried to insult anyone, or claim superiority, since about third grade, but you wil have a tough time convincing me that you are in any way a more fully developed human being than I. what is your criterion? that you post more touchy-feely brown-nosings to your friends here than I do?

don't get a swell head just because I agreed with you once. it's utterly coincidental, not reflective of a wish for compromise or reconciliation on my part, or some epiphany that we have something in common. it's just that I liked that movie so much that even knowing you liked it does not ruin it for me.

Laura will no doubt remove this and I will not object as long as the original insult is removed as well.

980406

Subject: Re(18): Movie Quotes Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Steve Omlid writes:

Thanks, Pierre and Joshua.

QED.

to my drinking buddies Pete and Josh:

wait, wait. maybe YOU'RE the ones missing the joke!!!

even though you know me so well and can so accurately speculate about my motivations, I will lay out the possibilities for you:

- 1) having been the victim of Steve's patronizing, "I am more mature than you and I know best" attitude before when it was expressed in deeds, I am trying preemptively to protest its unacceptability while it is still in the verbal stage
- 2) not having seen Gary Cooper in "The virginian" in a while, I forgot that any insult said with a smile becomes a FRIENDLY insult. However, I think I am pretty good about accepting FRIENDLY teasing -- I offer enough to myself -- and I have accepted and would accept it from just about anyone here, including you two, who have never shown themselves UNfriendly. It's just that Steve and I have never been exactly FRIENDLY, so a little smile does not go a very long way..
- 3) some other reason entirely about which you could not hope to speculate, or if you could speculate, I would not confirm it
- 4) maybe I simply enjoy scathing mockery and general tearing down of Steve Omlid, and I was just overjoyed, could not believe he had dumped an opportunity for it right in my lap!! (maybe I even set him up in the first place, with my earlier post!!) if you don't see the conspiracies, the manipulations, you have NO IDEA what's going on....

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

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and you should always flip things to see who profits. it's like asking whether bill clinton might not have welcomed the monica lewinsky scandal as a distraction from his impending genocide in Iraq or his spending lots of taxpayer money to bail out his Riady friends in Indonesia.

to paraphrase Dennis Hopper's peroration to Christopher Walken in "True Romance", and in exactly that tone of voice, who's the bigger satirist now?

have I got a sense of humor or what?

YEESH!!

terrible person (who REALLY enjoyed watching Cindy Crawford in "Fair Game" on NBC last night.)

980406 Not Sent

Subject:

Send

From: terrible person

To:

Cc:

oh, I GET IT NOW!!! it's the converse of the rule enunciated by Gary Cooper in "The virginian", that any insult with a smile added becomes a FRIENDLY insult.

but isn't that only among friends?

mssrs. le fou and T.: though we have never been particularly friendly, I would take this sort of joke from either of you, and assume no harm was intended, that all was in fun. in fact, I frequently make similar jokes about myself. however, as I have in the past been the victim of patronizing "jokes"(?) by the ex-moderator ("the Duke of Windsor", perhaps, who gave up the throne for the -- what? the mental health he loved?), such as having it assumed that I was not "adult" enough to modify my own posts if they were unsuitable, I can't assume the same in this case.

but I think the systems works. action yields reaction. I am attacked; I defend myself. you reply; I reply. the only argument against this sort of process is that it distracts from other more important topics. but it seems that despite all the recent hoo-rahs, posting has gone on normally, at least, mine has. so why do you object to my defending myself?

so now you-all can decide whether I am being satirical, or if I just felt I was responding to an unfriendly friendliness from my GOOD FRIEND steve. (like good bad ugly)

best to combine the two somehow....

5th possiblity: that until tim's post about Dark city, things were getting so boring around here, no good arguments, that I decided to start an argument myself!

980406 Not Sent

Subject: Re(20): Movie Quotes Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Steve Omlid writes:

Maybe I was trying to hold out an olive branch with some FRIENDLY teasing,

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sorry to sound schoolmarmish, but in this case, it's necessary, as in the emphatically wagging finger:

if you want to extend an olive branch to someone,

DON'T
STICK
IT
IN
HIS
EYE!!!!

980406 Not Sent

Subject:

Send

From: terrible person

To:

Cc:

AWWOTS (which is "And while we're on the subject" for those of you not as cyber-hip as I): when I noted that the typeface and tone made Heyer's post seem like one of Barrymore's, I meant this OBJECTIVELY. Really!! I was not saying either was BAD, just that it was DISTNCTIVE. Many people here, whether just out of habit or out of some desire to distinguish themselves from other users, have a certain signature style or just a signature. Eva Luna posts "Musty TV"; no one else does. Greta Christina tends to write authoritatively about sexuality issues, and used her trademark "adverbially....queen of Norway" signoff until others started imitating it with their own titles. the fieb writes about obscure experimental films. Steve Omlid talks about emily watson and how great his friends are. I write long-winded pun and quote filled ramblings that no one reads all the way through, much less understands. and (John) Barrymore writes in boldface, usually either about Hollywood gossip or to insult people. (he is not the only one with a distinctive typeface; Kelsey Gadoo tends to be distinctive as well.)

I have no problem with using different typefaces. especially, as Barrymore says, to increase legibility. I am too lazy to change the default each time.

And I am not sure I have too much trouble with the idea insulting people either. I don't think people should necessariy refrain from doing it, if they are prepared to be insulted back, and prepared for the loss of credibility it may entail. If heyer or barrymore or I for that matter want to insult people and take the consequences, or if they (or we) think we can hold their (our) own, why not? this is a big enough river; a sunk ship in one channel will not really impede traffic in the others....we watch hockey games to see if fights break out -- more to the point, we watch Siskel and Ebert to see if fights will break out....

so the idea was simply that Heyer seemed to be borrowing Barrymore's distinctive style, without saying whether that style was necessarily good or not...

it's funny to find myself agreeing now with Barrymore. a sort of déjà vu all over again! who knows what HE will say! I remember hearing "Roger and Me"'s Michael Moore described recently as being in danger of becoming a bombastic fact-distorting "Rush Limbaugh of the left" -- will I become the "Barrymore of the self-considered (and possible but not necessarily) smart"? only time will tell. but meanwhile, <sob>, Barrymore, <sob> I love you, man.

980408

Subject: Wenders on 'City of Angels'

From: terrible person

To: film

Pushing the outside of the envelope on fair use, I quote from the New York Times, sunday, 5 april 1998, section 2, p 29 (national ed.):

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

"For his part, Mr. Wenders -- who in 1992 made a sequel to 'Wings of Desire', the lest noteworthy 'Faraway, So Close!' -- seems pleased with how 'City of Angels' turned out. It was his choice to sell the remake rights to 'Wings of Desire', and he says his faith in the filmmakers has been rewarded.

'The number of music videos and commercials that have used 'Wings of Desire' as a model is astonishing,' he said. 'With this film, I feel much less violated. It's done with respect, with a sense of discovery all its own. It's not just, "Look, Ma, no subtitles!"'

'I feel quite proud that a film shot without a script was considered worth redoing by a major studio,' Mr. Wenders continued. "'Wings of Desire" could never be remade in the conventional sense; it could only be used as a point of departure, and that's exactly what [the filmmakers] did.'

.....

In Mr. Wenders' mind, 'City of Angels' enhances rather than detracts from his picture. 'The two films reflect on each other in interesting ways,' he said. 'I was a little anxious when I got the script. But with every page, I felt [the scriptwriter] had done something intelligent and respectful, translating my 'poem' into an American 'story'. It's still a film about love, but a very, very different one.'

Well, that could make you lose all respect for Wenders or gain it for Ryan and Cage and co. But here's my fave quote, from Meg Ryan: "'I'm interested in spiritual matters', she said....More vocal than Mr. Cage about such things, she stated, 'I don't know if angels are floating around, but the idea that there is a guiding force is something I embrace.'"

so meg, would that guiding force be Creative Artists Agency, or movie gross receipts?

terrible person (would like to drink a cup of coffee. might even sell his armor for it. and remember, compañeros, you can see me, even if I can't see you.)

980409

Subject: Re(2): Wenders on 'City of Angels'

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Sirin N writes:

i was just at the supermarket the other day, having occasion to linger at the magazine rack and study the gods, and noticed with a doubletake the tiny, upsidedown figure in each of meg ryan's hyaline eyes. there is reason to suspect that it is these mysterious imps, clutching either eyelid with powerful toes, who are responsible for every word that floats from ryan's pretty mouth.

i'm finding the cashiers are disturbingly effusive, these days. is this true elsewhere?

in the ads for "city of angels" her limpid eyes are quite closed and her eyelids limp. the imps are impeded, at least that is my implicit impression.

for more on cashiers, you might want to read "Time and Motion Studies of the Dynamics of Supermarket Checkouts: Are Express Lanes Worth It?"(L. Kidder and R. Newsome, Quarterly Journal of Business, Social, and Organizational Studies, vol. 19 # 2, Summer 1993, pp.137-154) The basic conclusion: go for the line with the fewest customers, even if they have the most to buy.

terrible person (recently found "mentally competent to be executed")

980410

Subject: Re(2): Da Grail

From: terrible person

To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Cc:
well, this thread seems already, as most threads do eventually, as people try to outdo the previous joke(or the previous serious statement) and reach for the more outlandish, to have reached the plane of the absurd (where python typically started), so that a serious statement now seems passé, but it seemed to me that a film that owed a lot to python was "the last temptation of christ".

but what interests me more than the influences of Python are the influences ON Python. Had the lads really been reading a bunch of Beckett, Ionesco and Stoppard, or does it just seem that way sometimes?

Can anyone watch a "serious" king arthur film now, such as "excalibur" or "first knight", and not expect the characters to say "ni" and clap cocoanuts? perhaps the genre will resurrect itself. after all, i can still watch westerns without thinking of "blazing saddles". but just as a really ridiculous mocking post can destroy a thread and make the topic impossible to discuss forever, a really good parody makes it impossible to take a particular genre seriously ever after.

as my late lost lamented six foot French poster for "Sacré Graal" said, "Renvoie le cinéma 900 ans en arrière!"

980410

Subject: Re: McQueen!

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

IAC (which means, for those of you not so cyber-hip as I, "if anyone cares") all this talk about McQueen reminded me that not only do I not know anything about -- excuse me, not know nothin' about -- birthin' babies, but that McDonald's very nearly brought out a hamburger called the McQueen last year. It was going to be "the hamburger for women", the virginia slims of hamburgers. I read this in Adweek last November or December; I don't have the exact cite; it's probably on the Web somewhere. Anyway, it was another of those great ideas like the arch deluxe, based on market research showing diet conscious women were ordering the chicken burgers which have a lower profit margin. they wanted women to buy burgers, so they produced one with less meat, a thinner bun, skim milk cheese, lots of lettuce, and about three-fifths the calories of the regular. And it went in a "prettier" styro-box. They test-marketed it in Oxford, Mississippi and Davenport, Iowa. But the response was less than overwhelming; it was hard to differentiate from the supposedly "healthier" burgers they are already marketing. (and without samuel jackson here to tell me, i don't know what they would have called it in France.) also, Burger King already holds the trademark rights to Burger Queen and Queen Burger, and this was treading dangerously close. So you'll never be able to sink your teeth into a McQueen.

Funny, isn't it, that someone so macho as McQueen had such a feminine-associating last name? Funny they did not have him change it to something more straightforwardly "masculine" associating. Maybe I am the only one who makes these associations. Gene hackman sounds like an ax-murderer to me.

Personal highlight from "Bullitt": the man from U.N.C.L.E.'s double breasted vest with the angled buttons. Man, where do I get one of those?

980411

Subject: Re(11): Bearse

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Joshua T. writes:

Sharon E. Everett writes:

By any means necessary, I would suppose, as the batteries must be the legendary (recounted in story and song) "bear necessities."

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Joshua T. writes:

pierre, am i allowed to administer punishments in your conference?

Steve Omlid writes:

Sorry, we can't wait for Pierre's permission. That pun was just too egregious.

Johnny Vann writes:

I know, I can barely stand it!

Joshua T. writes:

this is getting too grizzly for my tastes.

Sharon E. Everett writes:

But it was all such a kodiak moment . . .

Sorry to KO al a your efforts, but I can say from experience that trying to panda to the lowest humorous instincts with puns the way UR's a major mistake. people just don't go for it. you should have taken a polar something first to determine tastes. but this sort of trying to be gli bruins a post; better to forbear. Anyway, more to the point, what's Amanda going to do now that "Roseanne" is over?

I'll leave it to Matt Stowell to change the thread name to "Beers". Frankly, or un-, I prefer a market for bull myself.

980411

Subject: Re(4): Da Grail

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Greta Christina writes:

terrible writes:

>Can anyone watch a "serious" king arthur film now, such as "excalibur" or "first knight", and not expect the characters to say "ni" and clap cocoanuts?

I kept thinking of "Holy Grail" during the third Indiana Jones movie, whose makers could not have been ignorant of it. It's interesting that except for the one song, there is little in Holy Grail that is a parody of the Richard Burton/Julie Andrews musical "Camelot" or the Richard Harris/Vanessa REdgrave (is that right????) movie. which is certainly eminently parodiable. It is interesting that while there is a standard "Robin Hood" reference point, the Errol Flynn version, there is no "standard" old King Arthur movie that I can think of except the Bing Crosby parody ("A Connecticut Yankee...") though there are plenty of Ivanhoes (Ivan sex workers?) and other less mythical medieval epics.

They're Oxford boys, after all...or is it Cambridge? I forget which.

Three went to Oxford, three to Cambridge (I forgot which ones, but the Cambridge three met in the famous "footlights" review), and Gilliam went to Occidental College near L.A.

So are you, in fact, serious about The Last Temptation of Christ owing a lot to the Pythons? If so, explain, please. I'm dying of curiosity.

appropriate for easter...ok, basically, the elements of "last temptation" that showed up earlier in "brian" (though of course, post hoc is not propter hoc) are the political ones, of the various anti-roman groups with their own agendas skulking around and not really helping thinsgs, the idea of an unwilling Messiah, someone who is not really thrilled about having the burdens of Messianity on his shoulders, who might really prefer to hang out with this really nice girl he has met. I don't know how extensively these ideas were represented in the Kazantzakis novel that underlay the movie, or if any of these ideas showed up in things like "The Greatest Story Ever Told", though in the latter case I would think not since they adhere pretty closely to the gospels which do not include ideas like the ones above.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

terrible person (who really, really likes Jesus even as he denies Jesus' divinity. in fact, rather identifies with him. and is consequently planning to become a priest. yes, really. why would I say something like this if it were not true?)

980411

Subject: Re(2): McQueen!

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

Eva Luna writes:

the fieb:

I posted before how since my Mom and I aren't big into xmas, I suggested a Steve McQueen christmas, putting my shrine to a good use...she informed me we would not be celebrating wife-beaters in her house.

Of course he was married to Ali McGraw, so who can blame him?

who, after his death, married the former Cat Stevens, became a Muslim, and now calls herself Muhammed Ali McGraw. (though without the eponymous fighting skills which would have been useful against "Float Like a Butterfly" McQueen.)

But brain damage from his beatings must have been what led her to make "Convoy".

980412

Subject: Re(6): Da Grail

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

pierre le fou writes:

terrible person writes:

terrible person (who really, really likes Jesus even as he denies Jesus' divinity. in fact, rather identifies with him. and is consequently planning to become a priest.

Okay, whoa, back up. Don't you have to like, take oaths that you really believe in the divinity of Jesus in order to get to be a priest? And swear that you believe in the resurrection?

And I would think that people to whom you would minister as a priest would come to expecting someone who had believed these oaths when he had taken them, not someone who was going to use their religious feelings as a basis to work out some personal problems and exorcise his messianic tendencies.

*Has had many many messianic tendencies,
pierre*

well first of all, I kind of thought that the things one puts after one's name in signing off were sort of meant to be throwaway lines, with no real relevance, just thoughts not really expecting any response. but since you are interested, I will respond:

basically, I don't believe in any sort of God but I believe that being a priest would be a good way for me to help people and perhaps redeem myself in my own eyes.

since any oath I would take would be before a God in which I don't believe, who doesn't really exist, i don't see a big problem there.

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the important thing would be what I do vis a vis people. now, up till now, I have been working on developing my lying skills, but mainly for entertainment purposes --entertainment of myself and others (and for the experimental exploration of the philosophical issues lying raises). now, I know you probably think no good can come from lying to people, but I think a lot of people can't handle the truth. (not just Lieutenant Daniel kaffee.) if they were told the literal truth, they would see no point in going on. so you have to lie to them, to trick them into going on. call it the placebo effect for the soul, not the body. or don't call it lying, call it metaphor.

now, I know this is not totally the right thing to do and in time my soul, my self image, whatever, would become burdened by this. but someone has to make that sacrifice. someone has to take that responsibility.

I don't identify with jesus in the sense of thinking myself the messiah sent to save the world, because I do not think he did either. I think that he hoped to bring a message of hope and simplicity to a small number of people through personal contact, which is what I would like to do, though in his case this got obscured by all the hype due to the desperate times.

it is true I would be using this as a way to work out personal problems -- well, I don't believe in personal problems. i believe in personal characteristics that can be problems or assets depending on how one uses them. for instance, I have a sort of compulsion to find things out about people, which has sometimes gotten me into trouble, but I was recently able to put it to good use when a friend wanted desperately to find again someone she had met at a party and instantly developed a crush on. if you get lemons, make lemonade. if you have a short attention span, make music videos. if you feel a need to be like jesus, become a priest and comfort the afflicted.

please don't think I am an enthusiastic supporter of the positions of the RomanCatholic church on various social issues, because I am not. and I am not really a fan of organized hierarchical religion in general. it's the dress code that attracts me; I look good in black. no. but a priest need not explain anything; everyone knows who he is and what he does. it's just the simplest. there is also another reason, which I don't feel like going into.

and when I say I am planning, i am making planning very slowly and deliberately. it will not be until long after I get my VW Beetle (silver, with grey interior.)

I need to reread "the power and the glory".

anyway, pierre -- pierre sur lequel il va fonder son église? -- those are my reasons. what are or were your messianic fantasies? I'd be interested to know.

terrible person

980412

Subject: Re(3): Movie Quotes Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

Chris A. Hall writes:

Anyone interested in matching your wits against another (harder) quotes quiz? Or is this sheer self-indulgence on my part?

well, I think it IS sheer self-indulgence on your part but so is most of what is written here (certainly most of what I write) so I don't have a big problem with it and will do my best to answer whatever you pose and post. I think that I can speak for most people here in saying that I can forgive self-indulgence if it is clever, amusing, and interesting. I would say that the pretty strong response to the first quiz proves this. I like the idea of more "columns", "regular features", like Ian Shoales' commentaries on NPR years ago, or Eva Luna's "Misty TV" here.

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however, as with most things in life, there must be some parameters, especially if you want to consider this a competition in which we will "match wits" with you. you can't ask hopelessly obscure quotes or we'll give up in frustration; you can't be like Bilbo Baggins asking as one of his riddles to Smeagol "what have I got in my pocket?" or Calvin asking of Hobbes "I'm thinking of a number between one and five trillion -- can you guess?" you should limit yourself in some way. I'll repeat my earlier suggestion to get a theme; I think that "HI, I am chris hall and here are some movie quotes I like" is not as good as "in celebration of the Irish peace accord, here are some quotes about not blowing each other up and power drilling into each others' kneecaps anymore." but go for it, do.

980413

Subject: Re(7): Da Grail

From: terrible person

To: film

Cc:

back during the "Modifications" debate, someone (please don't take slight, whoever you are, from my having forgotten who ; I hope you are flattered that I remembered the substance of your message) cited an old online rule that any debate has gone as far as it can go, and must come to a complete halt, as soon as one participant has compared another to Hitler.

Seeing that almost no one has posted in 24 hours, I am wondering if the rule applies just as well when someone compares himself to Jesus?

if so:

um, sorry.

terrible person (believes things have gone about as far as they can possibly go when things have got about as bad as they reasonably get. who had better get working on that end-of-the-world quiz before the world does end.)

980414 Resume

No soup for you!!!

Recently judged "mentally competent to be executed."

Lying Doggo. Doggone dogged. A dog chasing cars. Every dog has its day. Dog tired. Bad dog, no biscuit. Writing doggerel. Want to run crazy like the dogs in the yard. Dog dog dogadogadog...just love that word, the sound, love those voiced plosives.....but I'm getting interested in cats, too. and VW Beetles.

Dear Jack: What a pisser. All these years fighting the bullshit, only to find out you're part of the bullshit. Jack, you broke our hearts, and you done us to fucks. And we mean that sincerely. Yours, the Boys.

I will leev in Montana, and I will drive a peeckup truck, or perhaps, a recreational vehicle.

No. I will live in the Richmond, near 20th Ave. and Geary, and I will speak Russian with all my neighbors. And I will listen to Chumbawamba's "Tubthumping" and a compilation of WLIR's 1984 playlist while I drive my silver VW (new)Beetle, with my black Labrador named Woof sticking her head out the window, or his head out the window, it hardly matters, while my grey cat Yekaterina sits in the back, happily scratching the paint of my circa 1989 Wicked Fat Chance. Wait, is something still missing?

Since this is a fantasy, I will make the back seat of the Beetle big enough for Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Vaslav Havel, my sister, my friend Suzanne restored to life, Steve Manka, Sarah Blanke.....but something would still be missing.

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There must have been a moment, at the beginning, when we could have said -- no. But somehow we missed it.

I don't mind being told I have a dark side. It's just I would like to know whether I am the dark side right now, or the good one. That is, does it get worse from here, or better? You see, I just can't tell. Not that I always feel the same. But I wish it would correlate. with something. You know?

Here I end this reel. Box -- (pause) -- three, spool -- (pause) -- five. (Pause.) Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back.

Anyone hear about that guy in Virginia, somebody Gentry?

Welcome, strangers, to the show. I'm the one who should be lying low. I saw the knives out. I turned my back. I heard the train coming. I stayed right on that track! In the middle, in the middle, in the middle of a dream I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings. I've done all the dumb things. I caught the fever, heard the tune. Thought I loved her. Hung my heart on the moon. Started howling! Made no sense. Thought my friends would rush to my defense. In the middle, in the middle, in the middle of a dream I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings. I've done all the dumb things. I threw my hat into the ring. I've done all the dumb things. I melted wax to fix my wings. I've done all the dumb things. I felt that I just had to sing. I've done all the dumb things.

980424 Resume

It's a test, ...
designed to provoke an emotional response. Shall we continue?

Lying Doggo. Doggone dogged. A dog chasing cars. Every dog has its day. Dog tired. Bad dog, no biscuit. Writing doggerel. Want to run crazy like the dogs in the yard. Dog dog dogadogadog...just love that word, the sound, love those voiced plosives.....but I'm getting interested in cats, too. and VW Beetles.

Dear Jack: What a pisser. All these years fighting the bullshit, only to find out you're part of the bullshit. Jack, you broke our hearts, and you done us to fucks. And we mean that sincerely. Yours, the Boys.

To the tune of "The Minstrel Boy":

He laid a strip for the Jersey shore, preparing to cross the line. He could see the bridge was lined with bears but he didn't have a doggone dime. He met the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's bloody mane. He bowed his head his death to feel. Who follows in his train?

Right now!!! I think I'm gonna start a new trend, because the line on the graph's getting flat, and we can't have that. And you think you're immune, but I can sell you anything, anything from a thin safety pin to a pork pie hat.

I will leev in Montana, and I vill drive a peeckup truck, or perhaps, a recreational vehicle. No. I will live in the Richmond, near 20th Ave. and Geary, and I will speak Russian with all my neighbors. And I will listen to Chumbawamba's "Tubthumping" and a compilation of WLIR's 1984 playlist while I drive my silver VW (new)Beetle, with my black Labrador named Woof sticking her head out the window, or his head out the window, it hardly matters, while my grey cat Yekaterina sits in the back, happily scratching the paint of my circa 1989 Wicked Fat Chance. Wait, is something still missing?

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Resume

"Tarzan Boy", by Baltimora

What's that? you ask. (Anything in bold italics is you.)

It's an old 80's song I heard the other night for the first time in over a decade and have been humming since. It's up on the all time list with "Tubthumping".

Got anything else to say? you ask.

"The first time I laid eyes on Terry Lennox he was drunk in a Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith outside the terrace of The Dancers."

What's that? Is that where you got your name?

No, because my real name is not really Terry. I just say this because I sometimes get the feeling people think it is, and it isn't. I mean, I like it and all and I might even start to use it in real life and you can feel free to call me that but just know the truth, ok? In fact, I don't drive a Rolls-Royce either, or for that matter, drink. But I nevertheless have much in common with Terry Lennox, or wish I did.)

So who are you, then? I hear you ask.

A nerd (of the worst type, the one without even redeeming technical knowledge) with (as is the definition) more book learning and theories (and in my case, time to think and write about them) than practical or social skills or life experiences, who has read too much (or rather, the wrong) science fiction and seen too many (or more precisely, the wrong) movies; a fuzzy-faced fuzzy headed Fozzie-like fuzzy thinker; an underemployed psycho freak smartass who one day if he isn't careful is going to get himself killed by an irate motorist.

To which you'll reply:

Wait, could you tell us something we don't know already???

ok:

call me an analogical man in a digital age (who is trying to be even less digital and more analog.)

Naaah, you say, that's pretentious and we knew it already too basically.

Then:

If they were making a movie about my life, Peter Lorre would play me. He actually does not look anything like me and of course he's dead, but it's not as if anyone is making a movie about my life either.

That, you say edging even further away, is just friggin' WEIRD.

Nevertheless:

"...but yes, I understand, without condoning or condemning. Human affairs cannot be my concern. I'm leaving this galaxy for one less complicated.

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--But you'd regained interest in human life...

--Yes, I have. I think perhaps I'll create some. Goodbye, Adrian.

--Jon, wait, before you leave...I did the right thing, didn't I? It all worked out in the end.

-- 'In the end'? Nothing ends, Adrian. Nothing ever ends."

Oh, what, now are you comparing yourself to the smartest man in the world or the most powerful being in the universe? What's this supposed to mean?

Nothing really. How about this?

"They think that the reason the Unabomber went six years without striking was that he wasn't satisfied with the results he was getting from his bombs and he wanted some time to work on them and improve them." -- Gillian Black

This conversation has become extremely stupid.

Can't really argue with you there.

"Tarzan Boy", by Baltimore

Changed my hairstyle so many times now, I don't know what I look like!!!!

So I knocked on his door and called his name. When he answered, I turned the knob and went in. I said hello and he said hello back and then I said, "I thought you'd want to know immediately." Then I handed him the report and told him what I had heard. He barely looked at the paper. He looked mainly at me, right in the face. Like he thought if he stared at it long enough I wouldn't be able to keep a straight face. Like I would start cracking a smile and then laugh out loud and then admit it was all a joke. But I didn't because it wasn't. The only laugh was the bitter, resigned one that came from him after a minute. "Hell", he said, and laughed again. "Well, better get ready." I slumped into the chair in front of his desk and hooked one boot heel under the overhanging edge. On the other side of the desk he was yanking out stubborn, squeaking drawers. It made the desk shake. I could feel it through my sole. He finally gave an "ahhhh" of triumph, and produced a half-drunk bottle of scotch and his old revolver. "I think we'll be needing both of these," he said. He slammed them down on his blotter next to one another. Next came two glasses, one large, one small, and they landed next to the bottle with a thunk. He poured a couple of fingers into the large glass, and pulled it towards him. Then he tilted the bottle towards the small glass and looked up at me. I waved him off. He looked a bit surprised but shrugged and capped the bottle. He took a sip of his whiskey and then picked up the pistol. He swung out the cylinder and looked through each chamber, then through the barrel. Then he brought out a box of cartridges and began loading. It was quiet in the room. I could hear each shell click into place and the ratchet of the cylinder. When he was done he slapped the revolver down on its side on the blotter under his palm, and I winced. He put his elbows on the desk on either side of it and took his chin in his hand. He shrugged again, with his face. This means he kind of wrinkled his lips and chin and raised his eyebrows. You know what I mean. "Well," he said finally, "It's going to be a bad day in Black Rock." "Yeah," I answered, "And a rough night in Jericho."

There was really only one rule and that was Rule Number One. The reason why it was called "Rule Number One" and not simply "The Rule" was that there had been and still were many other rules, but they had all been determined so clearly and obviously to be derivatives of, or corollary or subsidiary to, Rule Number One, that they had quickly fallen into desuetude and consequently oblivion. Rule Number One had actually not always been Rule Number One, but within living memory had been Rule Number Two. But then the Rule that had been Number One since time immemorial was promoted to the special honor of The Name of the Game, and Number Two had moved up into Number One's spot, still remaining subordinate to it. After all, The Name of the Game was: "Don't get yourself killed." Whereas Rule Number One was more enigmatic. But you knew what Rule Number One was. Everyone knew what Rule Number One was. Rule Number One was: "Don't be stupid." Of course, these three words had been the subject of great debate since before anyone had bothered to write down the debates. One scholar explained them as meaning, "Do not deceive yourself." Another preferred, "Never confuse what really is with what you wish were." And it was this ambiguity that gave Rule Number One its particular appeal, its cult following. For while The Name of the Game was specific, knife-edged, clear, Rule Number One was a cloud forever blowing on a soft breeze, forever just within reach and always just out of it. Which is why it is with Rule Number One that this story concerns itself.

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ok:

call me an analogical man in a digital age (who is trying to be even less digital and more analog.)

Naaah, you say, *that's pretentious and we knew it already too basically.*

Then:

If they were making a movie about my life, Peter Lorre would play me. He actually does not look anything like me and of course he's dead, but it's not as if anyone is making a movie about my life either.

That, you say edging even further away, *is just friggin' WEIRD.*

Nevertheless:

"...but yes, I understand, without condoning or condemning. Human affairs cannot be my concern. I'm leaving this galaxy for one less complicated.

--But you'd regained interest in human life...

--Yes, I have. I think perhaps I'll create some. Goodbye, Adrian.

--Jon, wait, before you leave...I did the right thing, didn't I? It all worked out in the end.

-- 'In the end'? Nothing ends, Adrian. Nothing ever ends."

Oh, what, now are you comparing yourself to the smartest man in the world or the most powerful being in the universe? What's this supposed to mean?

Nothing really. How about this?

"They think that the reason the Unabomber went six years without striking was that he wasn't satisfied with the results he was getting from his bombs and he wanted some time to work on them and improve them." -- Gillian Black

This conversation has become extremely stupid.

Can't really argue with you there.

Oh, wait. To reflect my new philosophical ideas, I am changing my name from "terrible person" to "person who does terrible things" or better "person who has done terrible things". (Homo terribilis >>>>> homo qui terribilia agit >>>>> homo qui terribilia egit.)

Reaction? Hello? Hello? Oops.

> 51

Message 51 4/18/98 12:30 PM

Subject: Re(3): MUSTY TV April 18th-24th

From: terrible person

To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

psychological correspondent Kelsey Gadoo writes from Vienna: Aside from the Sybil situation, there is a huge debate in the psychological community about whether what is now known as Dissociative Identity Disorder (it was previously Multiple Personality Disorder) even exists. Like the Repressed Memory debates, those who argue against this disorder believe (as Greta mentions) that psychologists who believe in the disorder can unconsciously influence their clients into believing they have "alters". Others believe that clients actually "fake" multiple personalities in order to get treatment or disability benefits.

The possibility that people with "multiple" or "dissociative" personalities may be faking it is interesting. But it raises a number of questions. Though I have not read or seen the classic books and movies on the subject, my understanding is that the multiple personalities are usually very varied, representing a great range of ages, personalities, genders, etc. Strange as it may seem that someone should actually have all these different people vying

for control of her (or his) head or peaceful coexisting there, it seems at least equally strange that anyone could make up all these characters and play them. I mean, there's only one Anna Deavere Smith (and her characters are based on, even quoted from, real people.) How many professional actors have the range that a dissociative personality sufferer would have to have if she were acting? (I mean over a range of movies, though of course some, like Alec Guinness and Peter Sellers, could pull off multiple characters within a movie.) Ok, maybe they do have the range but just don't get to show it. Maybe Robert DeNiro could play Dustin Hoffman's roles and vice versa and to some extent have. (though could DeNiro play Meryl Streep or even Sharon Stone's roles? now that would be a tour de force.) I'm not sure. Perhaps the actors in repertory companies, who have to play different roles every night, are a better comparison. Still, we must ask ourselves the same question we have to whenever anything does not quite ring true: "Could someone really have arranged for it on the other hand to look as true as it does?"

The whole issue of multiple personalities also has an interesting resonance here online. Here, of course, many, even most people take multiple names, but through all these names the same personality shines. They are men going around taking names no matter who they claim to be. Some people act differently depending on what name they are using, either because they want an outlet for a certain side of themselves, or because they are deliberately trying to simulate or dissimulate. (or because they find people react differently to them when they use different names, and they take their cue and self-definition from others' reactions, being all others expect and want them to be.) Imagine, however a true multiple personality online, logging on with a different name each time her personality changed, surprised to see the old name and password saved in the settings file (and incapable of remembering it now in the new personality). the various personalities would never be online at the same time, always call the same modem from the same line, and yet, not be recognizable as each other, or if recognized, truthfully, to the best of the current personality's knowledg, deny any connection with any others using the same computer.

terrible person (having a personality crisis, or lucky to have no personality whatsoever.)

> 50

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 50 4/18/98 1:20 PM

Subject: Chow Yun-Fat (was: Re(3): Wishing I were his McKing)

From: terrible person

To: film

speaking of chow Yun-fat, I heard that his latest project is based on a sketch of a story that Raymond Chandler never finished. (Robert parker, of "Spencer" fame, who wrote a sequel to "The Big Sleep", is doing the screenplay.) The story was called "chinatown" but that name has been retired like Babe Ruth's number 3 so they don't have a title at themoment. Chow plays the Chinatown detective to whom Phillip marlowe (gabriel byrne. hmmm. is that good?) goes whenever a case involves that part of town or its inhabitants, either to get some help, or to hand the case over to him entirely (as in this movie. byrne's part is pretty small, mainly to establish the connection to other Marlowe movies.) So chow gets to wear really nice 1940's clothes and hats, beat up tong lords and opium den proprietors and getbeaten up himself, and kick butt at the end. The name of the femme fatale did not make an impression on me, someone new, but the Nice Girl is vivien wu from "The Pillow Book". lot of the cast is HK veterans, and apparently a lot of the movie is in cantonese with subtitles. well, I'm looking forward to it!!!!

> 49

Message 49 4/19/98 10:25 AM

Subject: The Apocalyptic Film Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

With acknowledgements for inspiration to Chris A. Hall and Laura Deal, and apologies to Marcellus Wallace, I'M GONNA GET *APOCALYPTIC* ON YOUR ASS!!!

But first, an etymological note. (I'M GONNA GET *ETYMOLOGICAL* ON YOUR ASS!!!) When most people say "Apocalyptic", they mean "having to do with the end of the world". This is because the Book of the Apocalypse (of St. John), the last book of the New Testament, concerns a vision of the end of the world. But the word "apocalypse" simply means "vision", "revelation" (the alternate name for the book), literally "uncovering". Lots of other people had apocalypses (hebrew prophets, St. Paul, etc.) about other things but they were not as famous (maybe not as cinematic.) But St. John could have had his hallucinatory trip (moldy bread?) about anything, nice big fluffy pink bunnies or something, and it would still have been an apocalypse. Going by the strict etymological meaning, an apocalyptic film would be a very revealing one, like "Showgirls". But the films on this list are generally Apocalypitics with a capital A, concerned with the end of the world.

Warning: Most movies concerned with the end of the world end with the end of the world, since there is not that much you can do afterwards. So it is possible that some revelation of the end of the film will occur along with that of the end of the world. But that won't be my fault, since I am only asking the questions, not giving the answers.

Though I thought Chris' single quote per film format was elegant, I will furnish more than one line when I think a single one would not be distinctive enough or I really like more than one line. I have tried to cite a wide variety of films with a wide variety of disasters, though if I missed your

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

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favorite apocalypse, it may be because I have not seen every one (you are welcome to write your own AFQ.) Have done best to make this legible. Believe it paints a disturbing picture. Have appreciated your recent support and hope world survives long enough for this to reach you, but tanks are in East Berlin and writing is on the wall.

1. "Are you a *tribal* aborigine?"
2. "I wish you would stop talking in the past tense about things than haven't happened yet."
3. "I've seen the Pearl."
4. "I uncover my true face before thee."
"AlphaOmega. Oh my God....they finally built one with a cobalt jacket."
5. "That's what we need, a bit of water on the back of the neck and the code."
"Do you think I go into battle with loose change in my pockets?"
6. "Are you an assassin?""I'm a soldier.""You're neither. You're a errand boy..."
"What do you know about surfing? You're from goddam New Jersey!!"
7. "Have you heard? It's in the stars! Next July we collide with Mars!"
8. "Captain, San Francisco is Yeoman Swain's home town. He'd like to take a look."
"I've got a date on Market Street. I'm going home."
and I had to include this (?????):"Watch the suck of the props, now."
9. "She had exceedingly good taste."
10. "Nothing like a nice piece of hickory."
"Come back, _____! We love you! *I* love you!"
11. "Remember lingerie?"
"You're a maggot. You're living off the corpse of the old world....you're *nothing*."
12. "I represent law and sanity."
"Beware the concussion!"
13. "All in the valley of death rode the six hundred...."
14. "It's happening. We're locked into it, fifty minutes and counting. They'll pick us up in five or ten; we'll could get it back in an hour and ten. Wait...is this 310?"
15. "You've been shot. Where did you get that wound?""Some war..."
"Where's the gun?""I must have lost it at the party.""You went to a *party*?"

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Personally, I am a bit excited about the Apocalypse, because I figure it will

be an apocalypse; in other words, there will no longer be any point to keeping secret all those mysteries of life, so they will be revealed, everything from "Is there a God?" and "Who built Stonehenge?" to "What happened to Jimmy Hoffa?", "Did Debbie really like me in fifth grade and whatever happened to her?" and "Where did I leave my keys this morning just before the end?"

Answers to this will be revealed as appropriate.

> 48

Message 48 4/19/98 1:56 PM

Subject: Re(2): The Apocalyptic Film Quiz

From: terrible person

To: film

and I opened the fourth seal, and behold:

Laura is right about number 7, trick question though it be. Oh Great Wizard Tim, you know much that is hidden, but after all, this one rhymes....it's Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, though I actually prefer Iggy Pop and Debra Harry's version on the "Red, Hot, and Blue" Cole Porter tribute album....

Well, did you, Eva, get numbers 3 and 6 right? yes you did....The Rapture, with "Lost in Space"'s Mrs. Robinson (coo coo coo choo!) Mimi Rogers and David Duchovny, already wanting to believe....and that Coppola film of which no more need be said....

Heyer is right on 2, though some might attribute as well to a movie quoted elsewhere on the quiz...another movie on the quiz features a character who talks in the present tense about the past....

Tim the Enchanter was yes on 1 (wait, is that destroy russia, or is that the other one?) and on 4 (had to get Heston in there somewhere) and on 9 (the squares of the first three numbers and the proportions of the monoliths of 2001). But on 7, see above; on 8, I don't think you can really consider "Star Trek IV" apocalyptic because Kirk and the Gang DO end up saving it; anyway, it's a good guess but not quite it. Trust your instincts, Tim....

THERE IS STILL TIME LEFT!!!!

The Omega Man and The Quiet Earth I know about but have never seen, but what is The Final Programme?

Message 42 4/20/98 6:21 AM

Subject: Re: Blazing Families

From: terrible person

To: film

if they cut out the "N-word", did they leave in the joke about the ringing bells obscuring the lookout's cry and causing to be interpreted as "the Sheriff is *nearer*?"

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

What did they do about the scene with Lili trying to seduce Bart, with its attendant references to the stereotype concerning the endowments of African-descended males?

I always thought that the movie cleverly skewered the stereotypes about certain groups with characters who went beyond them. But then, I am not really a member of the groups involved, so it is not really for me to say whether people should be offended....

I am sure they thought of something, though, and did it so subtly that it was hardly noticed. After all, when I watched "Pulp Fiction" on TV, I was not offended by the constant use of the word "goddamned", or of "mother" followed by a beat of silence.

then out of the sun rode a man with a gun and

-- terrible person

was his name. (he conquered fear and he conquered hate and turned dark night into day, as well.)

Message 39 4/20/98 6:17 AM
Subject: Re(2): The Apocalyptic Film Quiz
From: terrible person
To: film

Tim Walters writes:

terrible person writes:

8. *"Captain, San Francisco is Yeoman Swain's home town. He'd like to take a look."*

*"I've got a date on Market Street. I'm going home."
and I had to include this (?????): "Watch the suck of the props,
now."*

OK, second guess: On the Beach. (never seen it, but...)

Well, you might or might not want to -- it's about the most depressing film ever made. But you're right (you mentioned it on your original post; you were so close). As the fallout that has wiped out the whole northern hemisphere heads south for Australia and the remnants of humanity, the one remaining US nuclear submarine, having been placed by its captain at the Australians' (humanity's) disposal, goes on a recon cruise to see if anyone is alive in the north, and stops in SF, passing under an empty GG bridge (that universal film identifier of SF) and pulling up to a 1964 skyline. Swain jumps ship in order to die of radiation at home rather than far away...

And Gregory peck, as the captain who cannot accept the death of his family, keeps referring to them as if they had a present and a future....

THERE IS STILL TIME!!!
(anyone catch me on KALW's "Minds over Matter" last night?)

Message 38 4/20/98 9:01 PM
Subject: Re(2): The Apocalyptic Film Q
From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: film

Nine says *"I'M GOING TO GET ESCHATOLOGICAL ON YOUR ASS!"*

and I would say "I'M GOING TO GET ENTOMOLOGICAL ON YOUR ASS!" but that might bug people.

Message 36 4/21/98 6:48 AM
Subject: Re(2): The Apocalyptic Film Quiz
From: terrible person
To: film

Nine writes:

So are you telling us that we ought to say, "I'M GONNA GET ESCHATALOGICAL ON YOUR ASS!!!"?

that's good!!! but then would you be studying world's ends or rear ends? I would say "I'M GONNA GET ENTOMOLOGICAL ON YOUR ASS!" but that might bug you. and sex is "in" here, but not insects.

Message 31 4/21/98 8:27 AM
Subject: Re(4): The Apocalyptic Film Quiz
From: terrible person
To: film

Nine writes:

Oh scat, you terrible person!

ARE YOU GOING TO GET SCATOLOGICAL ON MY ASS?? (wait, too literally possible for joking?)

by now, we have almost a complete catalogue of jokes on this theme ... so I" M GONNA GET CATALOGICAL ON YOUR ASS!!!

Message 28 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

not to beat a dead horse, or a live ass, but to continue one silly thread and revive another, I keep thinking of what Jesus said to the friend from whom he borrowed his mount for his ride into Jerusalem:

"I" M GONNA GET MESSIANIC ON YOUR ASS!"

synecdochially though not parochially,

terrible person

Message 18 4/22/98 6:23 AM
Subject: Re(5): The Apocalyptic Film Quiz

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person
To: film

not to beat a dead horse, or a live ass, but to continue one silly thread and revive another, I keep thinking of what Jesus said to the friend from whom he borrowed his mount for his ride into Jerusalem:

"I'M GONNA GET MESSIANIC ON YOUR ASS!"

parochially though not synecdochially ,

terrible person

ok, I'll invoke the Jesus rule and stop now.

Message 15 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(7): The Apocalyptic Film Quiz
From: terrible person
To: film

Tim Walters writes:

Or, as Jesus said in the disco, "Help! I've risen and I can't get down!"

maybe he was listening to "Tubthumping".

man (or son of), I hope this conference gets resurrected on the third day of almost nothing but non-film-related puns!

Message 14 4/23/98 12:01 AM
Subject: Mr. Cat Poop
From: terrible person
To: film

A friend pulled this off the Net and sent it along; you all should be receiving it as spam from your friends soon enough. (Also heard it on NPR's "Wait, Wait, don't tell me" on Sunday and on the BBC last night.)

I have long wondered what the original Cantonese names for such films as "hard boiled" were. But I may have to extrapolate from learning just the opposite. Here are some names given to American films when they were shown in Hong Kong:

In Mandarin, "The Full Monty" is "Six Naked Men" or "Six Naked Pigs"; in Cantonese it is "Six Stripped Warriors"

The Cantonese version of "The English Patient" is "Do not Ask Me who I am, Ever"(the alternative would have been "the sick englishman".)

"Fargo" in Cantonese is called "Mysterious Murder in Snowy Cream" (note: snowy cream is pronounced "Fah-Go" in Cantonese.)

"Boogie Nights" is "Instant Fame", which in Hong Kong is a slang term for a large male sexual organ (I also heard that it was called "His Great Device Made him Famous".)

Oliver Stone's "Nixon" is "the Big Liar"(no one knew the chinese like nixon,

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
and, apparently, vice versa.)

"As Good as It Gets" is "Mr. Cat Poop"(!?!?)

"Secrets and Lies" is "Dreadful, Difficult People"(surprised it's not "God of Difficult People" or something.)

Respectfully submitted,

terrible person

Message 8 4/24/98 6:42 AM
Subject: Mona Lisa
From: terrible person
To: film

I watched "Mona Lisa" (of the famous line about the rabbit) again the other night. I was struck by the fact that the lead actress, Cathy Tyson, looks EXACTLY like Jaye Davidson (at least in pictures -- I have not seen "The Crying Game". But I saw "Stargate"!!) Considering that both films are Neil Jordan's, is it possible that Cathy Tyson is Jaye Davidson before it was "ok" to admit that Davidson was Davidson? I have never seen Cathy Tyson in anything else. There is one scene in which "Tyson" is wearing only a few very brief strips of leather and does not have a voluptuous, obviously "feminine" body. She has no nude scenes. Hmmm.

However, why would I be the first person to notice this? (apparently.) Why would this not have been brought up during the biographical frenzy over "The Crying Game"?

also, I think this is a Neil Jordan film it is easy to argue is prett good.
even great.

Now,, you may not want to read this part if you have not seen "Mona Lisa":

as in the Crying Game, the end has a surprise . in this case, it is that Simone (Tyson) is a lesbian or at least loves another woman. I am not sure what the point would be in having a man play a woman in this case. unless the idea is that Simone was not really a lesbian, but a guy (within the film?) making the bob hoskins character's love for her/him? even weirder? huh? um?

unless the man is just a better actor. but then isn't that discrimination against women in film? it's not as if there are a million good roles for women. though some say the only roles given to women are prostitutes are tired of prostitute roles for women (and that is what simone is.) me? I dunno.

but hey, want to know something funny? the rabbit lives at the end!! and michael caine dies!!!

Message 7 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(9): Mr. Cat Poop
From: terrible person
To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Chris A. Hall writes:

More Spoilers:

Rosebud is a sled.
Soylent Green is people.

Ruining it all,

Chris

wait!!!! Soylent Green is a sled?? Rosebud is people? huh??? Rosebud is green?
People are sleds??

awake, but very confused.

terrible person

Message 1 4/25/98 9:36 AM
Subject: Re(10): Mr. Cat Poop
From: terrible person
To: film

laura deal writes:

*Of course I knew there *was* a secret, and it didn't take me long to figure out what it was, but still I had those 5 minutes or so of not knowing and figuring it out for myself.*

well, I think my views on spoiling surprise endings are fairly well known. but I will say this: I remember reading at the time "The Crying Game" came out a commentary saying basically, "What's teh big deal about keeping the secret?" Because, after all, it pointed out, there is only a finite number of really big secrets. A character thought to be good turns out to be evil (or vice versa), a character thought to be dead turns out to be alive (or vice versa), a character who seems minor and marginal turns out actually to be driving the whole plot (or vice versa) or a character thought to be XXXXXX turns out to be XXXX as in "the crying game" (censored for security reasons. it now occurs to me that I could have said a character thought to be XX is really XY but if I did that laura would get deoxyribonucleic on my ass.) so as soon as you know there is a secret, you can start guessing what it is. unless of course the good dead person turns out to be evil and alive. and XY.

but Chris, what is this about Rosebud being people? Or is that Rosebud is green? What movies are these from

Message 52 4/25/98 9:53 PM
Subject: Re(3): Mona Lisa
From: terrible person
To: film

Imagine Jaye Davidson and Cathy Tyson in a movie together! What would it be

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

about? This is a fantastic naturally occurring coincidental resource that should be made use of, like a total eclipse of the sun, or the riots at the '68 democratic convention in Chicago in "Medium Cool". I am trying to think of movies in which remarkable physical resemblances between performers have been memorably made use of, either to play related characters or those coincidentally lookalike like Charles Darney and Sidney Carton in "A Tale of Two Cities." (Or did they have the same actor play both in the movie version? this is often a tactic, as with Sheryl Lee playing both Laura and Maddie on "Twin Peaks." This is not what I am looking for.) I am excluding biologically explicable familial relationships, which (when good), except in movies like "The Krays", featuring the non-twin Kemp brothers as identical twins, tend to rely on the real-life chemistry of the related actors showing through their roles rather than their appearances. After all, I don't think the Bridges boys resemble each other much, but they were wonderful together as the Bakers. Neither do the various duos and trios in that fraternal fest "The Long Riders"; perhaps it's just our knowledge that they are all brothers that adds to the credibility.

Off hand, for me, two come to mind quickly:

1)the otherwise (except for Charlton Heston) drecky Kenneth Branagh "Hamlet". Claudius (Derek Jacobi) and Hamlet (Branagh), both with blocky heads, blond beards, and tightlipped expressions, resemble each other greatly, thus supporting my theory that Claudius may well be Hamlet's real father, or if he isn't, Hamlet certainly thinks he is, even wishes he might be. Certainly Brian Blessed (as old Hamlet did not look anything like Branagh. Julie Christie? a little...)

2)the offbeat comedy "Outlandos D'Amour" in which K.D. Lang and Kyle MacLachlan play fraternal (or sororal, not to discriminate) twin travelling country singers using their great physical resemblance to con people a la "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels". Bait and switch, as it were. (Other great things about this movie: Lyle Lovett as another singer who seems to be pursuing Kyle and K.D. from honky tonk to honky tonk for mysterious romantic, legal, or professional reasons, and the cameo appearances by such non-country artists as Social Distortion, Kim Gordon, and some of the Fine Young Cannibals in fringed shirts and cowboy hats doing country tunes.)

>

Message 49 (Unsent)

Subject:

From: terrible person

thanks to HAPPY Squirrel!!! for inspiring this format:

Why are you called terrible person?

You mean, why do I call myself terrible person? No one else really calls me that. The answer is, that I am one.

You mean it has nothing to do with your name, Terry?

Terry is just a shortening of terrible person, which came first, though I like the connection to Terry Lennox, the hapless friend of Marlowe in Raymond Chandler's "The Long Goodbye".

So then what is your real name?

um, wait, why would I use an alias if I wanted you to know that? Ed's a good name. Not necessarily for me, but a good name.

Ok, then why do you call yourself terrible person?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 48 (Unsent)
Subject: Armageddon
From: terrible person
To: film

From the Apocalyptic correspondent:

I am suing to force a change in title of this movie. I know that it is only months or weeks to release and all the advertising is already made up (and Steve Buscemi's line in the preview is great). But that is their fault; if they had consulted with me or any other Apocalyptic correspondent, a few months ago, they could have avoided this whole thing.

The fact is that "Armageddon" refers specifically to a battle. The nam
>

Message 44 4/27/98 10:21 PM
Subject: Re(2):Bonham Carter as Morgan Le Fey
From: terrible person
To: film

first of all, the woman's surname is Bonham Carter. "Bonham" is not a middle name or a maiden name. Such double surnames are more common in England than here. But look at the posters for "Wings of the Dove"; they say "helena BONHAM CARTER" and "linus ROACHE" -- though I am not crazy about this fetishizing of last names on movie posters, it does help show what the last name is. People who like to refer to stars only by their first or surnames as if they were personally acquainted should at least get them right! For a while, I wondered whether we were dealing with ex-wonder woman Lynda Carter (soon to make a guest appearance on Xena) or ex-first Lady Rosalynn (or daughter Amy) or...or...or....

Second, Arcturus is a star. The Arthur legend is derived ultimately not from any pre-Roman chieftain but from the true story of Ambrosius Aurelianus, a Romanized Celt (hence the latin name) who tried to hold off invading Saxons after the Romans abandoned their remote province (they had problems at home; barbarians, you know) and actually gained a short lived victory over the Saxons at Mons Badonicus (Badon Hill) in a.d. 499.

It's been in all the papers!!

terrible person (who nearly fought the dragon of Angnor)
>

Message 40 4/28/98 7:01 AM
Subject: Re(4): Bonham Carter as Morgan Le Fey
From: terrible person
To: film

pierre le fou writes:

Bah and likewise humbug, terry. You wouldn't know Britain if you were living in it.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Cum forsan verum sit me numquam pedem in insula Britannia posuisse, linguam Latinam resque Romanas, ut videri potest, bene scio, (num meministi me esse eum qui pontifex fieri velim?) et numquam --dicam iterum, numquam -- nomen "Arturum" occurri. Non est "nomen Latinum vulgare", ut scripsisti.

Now, just so you might understand a word or two of this (or do you know any Latin? if so, please use it. we could have a duel like that between Doc Holiday (Val Kilmer) and Johnny Ringgold (Michael Biehn) in "Tombstone", but with better pronunciation, I hope) I will switch to English. I know It is considered bad form here to ask what others' sources are (the answer generally being "the Net", which, it seems, has replaced "they say" in the Will Rogers quote as the ruler of this country) so I will just cite some of mine: "Who Was Who In the Roman World", by Diana Bowder, "Familiar Poems: Annotated", by Isaac Asimov, and the Encyclopedia Britannica -- the last named of which DEFINITELY knows Britain.

oh, and what language would be the "language of the day"? is this Latin again (the language of Roman Britain?) or some Celtic language which you will be pleased to identify for me?

I'll be glad to hear your sources, and the examples of other famous "Arturi" from Roman history.

Ponens pecuniam ubi est os meum,

homo terribilis

Arthur was Riothamus, a post-Roman King of Britain who fought off Saxon invaders, restored order, albeit briefly, to the chaos of Dark Ages Britain, and was heralded with the title "restitutor" for his troubles. Then he marched into France and tried to restore order there, and lost his head for his troubles. The parallels with the Arthurian legends are of course, immediately obvious.

And what does Riothamus mean? In the language of the day it meant "High King". King High King? I don't think so. Like saying "Mount Fujiyama." Arturus being a common Latin name, from whence we derive the name of Arthur, and with a hero bringing order out of darkness, it's a foregone conclusion that the people of his day referred to him as Riothamus Restitutor rather than the name we know him by today: King Arthur.

Message 39 4/28/98 8:53 PM
Subject: Re(7): Bonham Carter as Morgan Le Fey
From: terrible person
To: film

pierre le fou writes:

Sharon E. Everett writes:

"The Quest for Arthur's Britain" and "The Search for King Arthur," both by Geoffrey Ashe. Numerous editions of the International Arthurian Society's annual, which has abstracts and papers from scholars all over the world. "The Arthurian Encyclopedia," ed., Norris J. Lacy. "The Arthurian Reader," ed., Norris J. Lacy. Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." Shall I go on? It really will

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

become tiresome if we keep playing the "my source is bigger than your source."

Yes indeed! The first two that Sharon mentions are my sources.

I have not read these two books. However, they must indeed be REMARKABLE, if Sharon and Pierre can read them and come to OPPOSITE CONCLUSIONS, Sharon that the historical Arthur was pre-to early-Roman, and Pierre that he restored things after the Romans left. Would you two care to negotiate a common position twixt yourselves before getting back to me??

And Malory's "Le Morte D'Arthur"? as a serious historical work? Oh yeah. Up there with "Superman". I won't say my sources are bigger, just perhaps more reliable.

Sharon Everett also writes:

I do feel I must point out, however, that in anthropology we don't use encyclopedia for anything but a way to get to the original source material -- by reading the notes at the end of the article.

Ah yes, that reminds me of a joke, the one that goes, at Haaahhhvaaahhhd we don't finish our sentences with prepositions....I really don't know what you in anthropology do. But I agree with you about checking the sources, which the Encyclopedia writers helpfully provide. So I did what "we in Latin" do -- read Nennius' "Historia Britonum" and Gildas' "De Excidio Britanniae". In Latin, natch. I won't even bother to explain who they are since I am sure you both know....

And finally, the terms "Gael" and "Gaelic" refer to Scots and Irish (and Manx) but not Welsh, which is what Arthur presumably was. Do you mean Celtic? Brythonic? (My source for this is the American Heritage Dictionary. The etymologies editor is Prof. Calvert Watkins, a man who knows his Celtic.)

so.....

.....long?

terrible person

Message 38 4/28/98 8:52 PM

Subject: Re(9): What conference is this, anyway? (was Bonham Carter)

From: terrible person

To: film

If I could bring myself to begin a post "what she said" I would do so now, but...well, I haven't declined that far yet. But Eva is absolutely right. (So is Howard Johnson.) Laura has done a great job as moderator through the old practice of "salutary neglect". See, either because Laura (I hope it's all right to call her by her first name) is involved with lots of other things here online, or more probably, because she is involved in a lot of things offline, she really does not have the time to micromanage a conference that does not need to be micromanaged, as she might feel she needed to do if she had more time and no way to fill it. The fact that she does not post much herself allows her to stand outside any controversies that may arise. I say, Laura is all the moderator we need. "Deal with it in '98!! " -- that's my slogan.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

On another note, what's wrong with bickering -- and what differentiates it from arguing except that it is generally the losers of the argument that call it that? It's awfully fun, and you can learn the damndest things. There is no space restriction here. It's not as if actual film discussions are being driven out. Truth comes out of clashing viewpoints -- it's dialectics. Fun does too. Why does everything have to be all sweetness and light here? To bring film in here somewhere by paraphrasing Gordon Gekko -- "Bickering is good!!" Do we want the Disneyfication of film? I trust the judgement of the moderator -- well, the current moderator -- to keep things from getting out of hand, or rather, too out of hand. I think we all can and should.

Now, I am the last one to say what should and should not be discussed here, what is really a film topic and what is not. As far as I am concerned, anything for which film was a starting point, or which touches film at any point later on -- and everything I think of does one of the two -- is fair game here. But I would point out that "Merlin" was a television show, and there IS a TV conference.

>

Message 35 4/29/98 10:40 PM
Subject: Re(11): What conference is this, anyway? (was Bonham Carter)
From: terrible person
To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

The thing is, though, she took on the moderating job as a favor to me while I didn't feel I was able to do it, due to stress in my life.

(and I do think that some of my excesses in that area were do to my stress, which has abated somewhat), but I will do things my way. And, as has always been the case, you're welcome to give me your feedback.

me: "Deal with it in '98!! " -- that's my slogan.

Well, you'll be able to put your slogan into effect, because I will be back soon, and then you can deal with that. :-)

I hate to interrupt the biggest and most disgusting display of triumphalism I have seen since the last time the Orange Order marched in Portadown (and at least they had nice bagpipes), or the 1991 Gulf War victory parade, but I thought I might ask you:

Are YOU prepared to "deal with it"?

Are you sure you want to?

I mean, things get, y'know... stressful here, you know?

I'd hate to see you get...overstressed again.

Since you seem to think that this conference needs a moderator so badly, is it quite appropriate for someone who was forced, because ofstress.... to abandon the moderatorship so precipitously and in the midst of a grave conference crisis to take the job again? How do we loyal subjects, crying out for guidance and moderation, know it won't happen again? Does the 25th

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amendment apply?

tonight, call me....

troubled person (who just shakes his head every time he sees Steve talk of "taking over" the conference again.)

Message 33 4/29/98 11:30 PM
Subject: Re(11): What conferenc
From: terrible person
To: film

Jeff K. Thomas writes:

It would be a better if the purpose was to help others understand the strengths and weakness of the film and instead of spotlighting the academic prowess of the participants.

If this is an accusation against me, and I gather from the tenor of the rest of th epost that it is, I would simply point out that I was not the one who began the "academic" discussion.

I am somewhat baffled by Terribles (if I may use the first name)

I actually prefer the full "terrible person", if you have time to type it. *arguments. Terrible seems to be saying that anything that comes up during a discussion of film is valid for conference (the first post was an analysis of the choice of film actors in Merlin), THEN suggests that the Merlin discussion should be in the TV conference, THEN continues the Arthurian string in the Film conference.*

I simply pointed out the existence of theTV conference, with no suggestion stated or implied (except perhaps that the TV folks might be interested and that it COULD have been discussed there but by no means HAD to be.) again, I continued to reply to posts in reply to my replies to their original posts.

Bickering is a good thing, Terrible.

yes!!! my point exactly! see, when you criticized me, I did not bawl "unfair!" or demand your post be moved. I have responded to your points. perhaps you will respond to mine. eventually, perhaps, whichever of us has the better argument or greater verbal facility will convince the other (or one of us will find the argument no longer worth his time.) perhaps we and whoever reads us will even learn something!

I mean, I do not watch hockey games to see the fights, but (and this is more relevant) I do enjoy watching Siskel and Ebert argue.

terrible person ("I am an old campaigner, and I love a good fight.")

>

Message 32 4/30/98 8:52 PM
Subject: Re(14): Very Hush Hush (was What conferenc
From: terrible person
To: film

This post may discuss aspects of certain films which those who have not seen it may not want to know. Caveat lector.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I saw "L.A. Confidential" in the theatre and I enjoyed it quite a bit. Now, I had very little idea what was going on, and afterwards, what had happened. For whom was the David Strathairn character working? What did the surgically altered call girls have to do with the drugs? And at the end, had Ed Exley sold out? How had he explained things? Who killed the young (gay) actor and why?

However, I enjoyed the atmosphere, the mood, the pacing of scenes, and, in particular, the characters. perhaps it was because I was paying attention to

them that I was missing plot details, or that I did not care about them, while I did care about the characters. One thing I liked was that I had never seen either guy pearce or russell crowe in anything so I had no associations for them -- they really were their characters as far as I was concerned. I liked the way that Ed Exley(pearce) and Bud white (Crowe) were in effect two halves of one person, incomplete in themselves, complete only when they worked together. (The third detective, Jack (kevin spacey) was sort of part of the group personality as well. I am sure there is a freudian analysis of this...) they kept showing up at the same places right after each other, almost like the two souls sharing a body in Angel Heart; they seemed to think the same thoughts. They loved the same woman. Each one changed towards the other; Ed got his hands dirty, and Bud got a conscience. Jack changed too in the conscience gaining direction. The first two, at least, each had a key moment where they realized something about themselves; bud confesses to the KIm Basinger character "There is an answer, but I can't figure it out. I'm just not smart enough." Ed is informed by Jack that the woman he had insulted as a call girl surgically altered to look like Lana Turner actually was Lana Turner. I imagine Jack had such a scene too but I can't quite remember it. The important thing is that when Ed and bud, catalyzed by the death of Jack, finally get together, they are unstoppable. (e.g., the good cop/bad cop on the DA.) One could take this as a sort of homoerotic or at least homoattractive romance like "The Fugitive", where at the end, boy gets boy not girl.

(Casablanca would be an example too, but there is a girl largely involved.) As for Jack, I like how he gets involved first largely out of curiosity and amusement, and then realizes that, though he claims not to remember, he joined the force for a reason.

However, the same things I really liked about the characters, that is, the sort of structural arrangement of oppositions that made them so interesting, also seemed a little too much. Too much coincidence. I don't know any people with such simple motivations as Ed and Bud, the first of whom became a cop because his father's killer escaped, while the second's father killed his mother and abused him horribly. The fact that they were so opposite -- yes, I know, if they had not been, there would not have been a story - did not seem terribly realistic. But then, I am not a big fan of realism...

Anyway, I thought the action scenes were appropriately fast and horrifying, and the interrogation scene, when we are invited to compare bud's method of beating a confession out with Ed's of lying it out, and realize Ed may simply be a Bud with more ambition, was very disturbing, both for that reason, and because innocent people were being manipulated and nothing could be done.

As always when big thick book is condensed into a movie, much is lost, and much will be misunderstood. And Basinger was all right but not really Oscar worthy. But that's just MY opinion. And all in all, I thought it

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was quite a good piece of filmwork.

terrible person

Message 28 4/30/98 7:46 PM
Subject: Re(9): Arthurian films (was Bonham Carter as Morgan Le Fey
From: terrible person
To: film

not to get early-medieval on ... oh, just wanted to complete the circle.

Seriously, what I find really interesting about the Arthur legend, the more historical side rather than the later literary tradition, is that it is basically Apocalyptic. Civilization, that being the Roman Empire, the only world anyone has ever known, has collapsed; it's the end of ...well, you know the song. It is as if the Roman Empire has been nuked by their rival superpower the Persians instead of being overrun by barbarians. And Arthur and his band are trying to maintain a small outpost of civilization (mixed with native traditions) against the onrushing barbarism represented by the Saxons. (Sorry if I am insulting anyone's ancestors, but those saxons could get pretty nasty.) They know that they cannot hold out for ever, and that anything they build might well be wiped out, since barbarism and chaos have the momentum, but they intend resist it as long as they can.

I would like to see an Arthur movie that looked a lot more like "The Road Warrior", with the Saxons as the Lord Humongous and the gang. Or a postnuclear motorcycle gang movie with a king and a holy grail (some power source that can help rebuild civilization?) I guess "The Road Warrior" had something of that....

One film that sort of conveys this end of the world idea is "Excalibur", but here it is the war among the knights that destroys civilization. One scene that really impressed me was the one near the end when a knight, riding through a town devastated by the war, is set upon by a crowd of blood-mad townspeople. "He's a knight!! he brought this on us!! Kill him!!" and his armor does little good once they have him down. The other scene, of course, that impressed me was the one in which Uther mounts Arthur's mom-to-be, who is completely naked, wearing full plate armor. I mean, talk about safe sex. At least for him. For her it would have been more -- heavy petting?

Message 27 4/30/98 8:23 PM
Subject: Re(13): What conferenc
From: terrible person
To: film

Jeff K. Thomas writes:

My real point was made before instead of I just added the rest to bicker.

bicker. that's such a cool word, too. bicker bicker bicker. as in:

"limericks on an insulting post"(NOT YOURS, JEFF.)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
when I read it, I started to snicker.
that last line, well that was the kicker.
your barbs are as dull
as that brain in your skull.
(hmm. you, or your skull, which is thicker?)

now, I who would fain be a vicar
bethought me, "it's good for my ticker
to take this, outlive it.
forgive him, forgive it;
the man's just insane, or in liquor!

so I won't try an answer that's slicker.
you're sick, and you're just getting sicker.
in mind, not with cancer.
so I just will not answer.
with you there is no point to bicker.

but a little bickering isn't the end of the world. if it were, I'd do it!!

jeff thomas: *Greater verbal facility -- and who might that be?*
well, today it COULD be me. or it could be you or someone else. and tomorrow
it could be one of us or someone else entirely. some days you eat the b'ar,
somedays the b'ar eats you. it would be like one of those british radio game
shows where they have the same contestants every week. that kills me. I can
never get it. it must be like Sartre's "No Exit". However, I don't think
anyone is keeping score here, though I suppose that could be made one of the
moderator's responsibilities. which is better to have, verbal facility or
verbal felicity? does anyone ever pull over to use the felicities?

always looking for some illicit felicity,

terrible person

Message 25 4/30/98 8:12 PM
Subject: Re(9): Bonham Carter as Morgan Le Fey
From: terrible person
To: film

bernard thomas writes:

Quo usque tandem abutere, terribulis, patientia nostra?

Dum nulla patientia vobis remaneat!!!

"Quoniam quidem circumventus, ab inimicis praeceps agor, incendium meum ruina
exstinguam!!!"

Te capiam, Marce Tulli, et caniculum tuum!

Message 24 4/30/98 8:59 PM
Subject: Re(2): Another great thought from Nine
From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: It's a le fou World

I was talking to a friend who owns a small dog, and expressing my view that with all due respect, I considered that REAL dogs were the size of golden retrievers or labradors, that a lap dog was not a real dog as it could not do any of the practical things for which dogs were domesticated, that is, hunting, guarding, etc. and you can't go running with it. He objected, of course, suggesting that a pack of chihuahuas would be excellent for hunting purposes. We enjoyed this image for a moment, imagining what sort of beast we would hunt thus, but had to content ourselves with a laugh as we wandered off to try to waste more of our respective companies' time.....

>

Message 23 (Unsent)

Subject:

From: terrible person

designed to provoke an emotional response. Shall we continue?

Lying Doggo. Doggone dogged. A dog chasing cars. Every dog has its day. Dog tired. Bad dog, no biscuit. Writing doggerel. Want to run crazy like the dogs in the yard. Dog dog dogadogadog...just love that word, the sound, love those voiced plives.....but I'm getting interested in cats, too. and VW Beetles.

Dear Jack: What a pisser. All these years fighting the bullshit, only to find out you're part of the bullshit. Jack, you broke our hearts, and you done us to fucks. And we mean that sincerely. Yours, the Boys.

To the tune of "The Minstrel Boy":

He laid a strip for the Jersey shore, preparing to cross the line. He could see the bridge was lined with bears but he didn't have a doggone dime. He met the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's bloody mane. He bowed his head his death to feel. Who follows in his train?

Right now!!! I think I'm gonna start a new trend, because the line on the graph's getting flat, and we can't have that. And you think you're immune, but I can sell you anything, anything from a thin safety pin to a pork pie hat.

I vill leev in Montana, and I vill drive a peeckup truck, or perhaps, a recreational vehicle.

No. I will live in the Richmond, near 20th Ave. and Geary, and I will speak Russian with all my neighbors. And I will listen to Chumbawamba's "Tubthumping" and a compilation of WLIR's 1984 playlist while I drive my silver VW (new)Beetle, with my black Labrador named Woof sticking her head out the window, or his head out the window, it hardly matters, while my grey cat Yekaterina sits in the back, happily scratching the paint of my circa 1989 Wicked Fat Chance. Wait, is something still missing?

Since this is a fantasy, I will make the back seat of the Beetle big enough for Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Vaslav Havel, my sister, my friend Suzanne restored to life, Steve Manka, Sarah Blanke.....but something would still be missing.

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Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

There must have been a moment, at the beginning, when we could have said --

no. But somehow we missed it.

I don't mind being told I have a dark side. It's just I would like to know whether I am the dark side right now, or the good one. That is, does it get worse from here, or better? You see, I just can't tell. Not that I always feel the same. But I wish it would correlate. with something. You know?

Here I end this reel. Box -- (pause) -- three, spool -- (pause) -- five. (Pause.) Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back.

Anyone hear about that guy in Virginia, somebody Gentry?

Welcome, strangers, to the show. I'm the one who should be lying low. I saw the knives out. I turned my back. I heard the train coming. I stayed right on that track! In the middle, in the middle, in the middle of a dream I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings. I've done all the dumb things. I caught the fever, heard the tune. Thought I loved her. Hung my heart on the moon. Started howling! Made no sense. Thought my friends would rush to my defense. In the middle, in the middle, in the middle of a dream I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings. I've done all the dumb things. I threw my hat into the ring. I've done

all the dumb things. I melted wax to fix my wings. I've done all the dumb things. I felt that I just had to sing. I've done all the dumb things.

>

Message 9 5/2/98 12:08 PM
Subject: Re(6): Moderating
From: terrible person
To: film processing

Eva Luna writes:

laura deal:

How do you see that as being different from my post points of clarification on 3/31?

well, I think it's different because you never really actually DID anything that was objectionable....(in fact the only time you did something I hated was when you weren't even moderator--if you'll recall that "because she can" folder bit.....)

As far as trying to please everyone. Can't that be done by just doing the basic things a moderator needs to do, like I mentioned before?.....People may ask, well, isn't that what Steve did? To which I would reply: No. Here's an example of what he did that was outside of the main duty: this Film Processing Folder. I think it's fine for it to exist. If people want to post to it, they can. But I really disliked having threads moved, or having my own posts moved there. I feel it can interrupt the flow of a thread, and sometimes drive it to a screaming halt, or cause the unneeded screaming to begin. If a topic begins in film, and tends to stray, I think that's fine. I enjoy seeing that change. It may be not "shit all about film" but so what. If that bothers people then,

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

as everyone here is so quick to point out, they don't have to read the rest of the posts. I also think that moving stuff just encourages the endless tirades that bug a lot of people. I haven't seen that happen in film for the last few weeks, and i may be wrong about this, but I don't think laura has moved anything over to processing....thus.....my conclusion is, light hand good. Heavy hand, bad.

I think it is very simple. the moderator should not be the person who posts the most. it should be the person who READS the most. when you watch a political debate, the moderator -- let's say, Tom Brokaw -- does not interject his own views, but lets the candidates, the debaters, present theirs. umpires don't pitch, referees don't go out for passes. At least in the British parliament, the speaker is nonpartisan and simply maintains order. This is not the McLaughlin group, in which the "moderator" cuts off those who disagree with him and picks his favorites to speak. as I hav said before, one of the things that makes laura such a good moderator is that she does not post much her own, does not take sides in discussions. but it is a bit intimidating to try to argue with someone who can move or alter your posts at whim. those of us who often disagree with steve feel we are fighting City Hall. I am glad to engage in an argument with opponents who have the advantage of numbers, but not if they can change the rules midway through the game if they find themselves behind.

Steve himself said when he began his leave that he would be glad just to be posting. Steve, if you want to post, great. But then give up the moderatorship. Or if you so enjoy moderating, stop posting. You may reply to what I said above by saying that you are not using the moderatorship to advance your opinions and agenda. If that is the case, you should have no trouble giving up one or the other. Make the choice.

REad the history of any post and you will see there is a fair number of zealous lurkers who read practically everything here without posting themselves. Why not pick one of them, a sort of Judge Landis, one known for fairness and intelligence, to take care of the fairly mechanical tasks of archiving, etc.? An outside impartial non-interested arbitrator, like George Mitchell?

as for just what the rules should be, well, I am with Eva Luna, who once again shoots for the heart, that pretty much everything should go. just as people can tell by spoiler warnings, or the apparent direction of discussion within posts, that they do not want to read them further, as soon as they see insults or material that is irrelevant or insulting, they can stop. Posts basically should not be moved, no matter what is in them; the "exile" conferences should be maintained though, for posting, not moving.

I think that most people in this conference are trying to get the approval of their fellow onliners. They want people to agree with them, validate them, like them. Most people only flame others when they think they have a certain amount of support in doing so, and the chance of getting general support. I think the way to control flaming and irrelevancy is by social pressure. if someone keeps posting irrelevant things, if they are truly irrelevant, no one will respond and the poster will no longer find it any fun. if someone flames someone or acts out of line, those offended should offer stern rebuke and then ignore him. (this was done a few months ago, when a well-respected onliner for no apparent reason posted a rather unpleasantly worded critique of another's post and character. laura did not move the post, but joined with several

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others in expressing dismay and disapproval.) ok, some people just want attention, even negative, or have other motives. but I think in most cases, it is better to leave the post for the original poster to unsend once he or she has realized how stupidly he or she was acting or so that others will be more wary of him or her in the future. but this place does not have to be "nice" for the sake of those who are timid, any more than the Net has to be family friendly and exclude anything inappropriate for ten-year olds. this is a public forum, not a small circle of buddies (much as some people try to make it that way.) people who post should understand that, that the world out there is not always nice in its criticism, but that in a public forum, public opinion rules and the moderating should reflect this.

now, I really do not expect this post to do much good. I appreciate Greta's starting this thread, but as far as I know, she does not have the power to put any consensus of this round table discussion into effect. it's just to make us feel good, feel as if we are doing something. I suppose it might express to Steve some of the various opinions on his moderating, but like the Chinese taking over Hong Kong, he has made it clear that he will do things his way with little attention paid to dissenting voices. a poll on presidential performance does not really affect the actions of a president not facing reelection. But even if it did, I who generally oppose Steve's moderatorship am well aware of the strong and vocal support for him. It may well be a majority, if there were a way to measure that. I am probably in a minority. Now, the rights of minorities should be protected, but the will of majorities rules. I can only hope that some of my arguments might sway some of the majority or the uncommitted to my views, though the moderator, receiving his power by divine or system right, would be under no compulsion to heed this new majority. Instead, I would hope that they will express their new position, so that again, by social pressure rather than the fiat of a moderator or SysAdmin, change might be effected.

my two cents (all that for two cents? yes, talk is cheap, and so am I.)

terrible person

Message 8 5/2/98 6:10 PM
Subject: Re(16): Very Hush Hush (was What conferenc
From: terrible person
To: film

One other thing that bothered me about "L.A. Confidential" was the matter of Exley's glasses. As a Bespectacled American (or Person of Lens), I found his denial of the wholly natural blessing of optical glass, in fact his self-loathing, even if in response to the unenlightened comments of stereotyping co-workers, to be insulting to the rest of us who see nothing shameful in our horn- or wire-rimmed status and regard contact lenses as on the order of aversive therapy.

Moreover, there were no consequences to this denial. In one scene, before going into combat, he looks (unsuccessfully) for his glasses with one hand while holding a shotgun with the other; when his partner asks him if anything is wrong, he assures him that all is fine. And indeed, everything is; he gets through the bust all right, without, for instance, shooting the wrong guy by accident. Not only does this seem to trivialize Exley's visual problems, make it as if he does not really need the glasses and they are just some sort of

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lifestyle choice, but it violates Chekhov's rule of the gun on the wall in the first act. Though the glasses bit does serve to illuminate Exley's character somewhat, it is really a piece of business that does not lead anywhere. In such a dense, condensed plot, there was not a lot of room for material that did not advance the action significantly. I really wish that his denial had had some consequence, to tie the plot together more strongly, and to help those of us who have been called four-eyes to hold our heads up with pride.

terribly myopic person

Message 7 5/2/98 6:21 PM
Subject: Re(8): Moderating
From: terrible person
To: film processing

Auntie Em writes:

terrible person writes:

At least in the British parliament, the speaker is nonpartisan and simply maintains order.

like the Chinese taking over Hong Kong

Wow! Can we get a little perspective here? It's only GOL ...

What's wrong with getting analogical on ... I can't stop now!!

Steve, if you want to post, great. But then give up the moderatorship. Or if you so enjoy moderating, stop posting.

This makes no sense to me whatsoever.

Yes, the concepts of fairness and a level playing field, those are pretty difficult ones, aren't they?

Most people only flame others when they think they have a certain amount of support in doing so, and the chance of getting general support.

I sure hope not. That has a creepy kind of "Lord of the Flies" feel to it.

Possibly. But it is a lot easier to get away with flaming one of the less popular, perceived-as-unpleasant-for-whatever-reason people, such as Barrymore or myself. This is not a bad thing; if Barrymore or I want to be supported and not flamed, we should be nicer to people to get them on our side. If we don't care, so be it.

In any case, that has nothing to do with the real "problem children" of GOL. See "Village Idiot" discussed below.

I don't know if you consider this "enfant terrible" as one of the problem children in a category with "Village Idiot", but there are always extraordinary cases, and fear of them should not result in curtailment of liberty for everyone. There are psychos on the highways but we still allow most people to drive. We don't let them scare us into a fearing state; we calculate the odds, accept them, and take what precautions we can.

Basically in response to Greta Christina's stateswomanlike post(s):

Again, I would like to question the definition of "irrelevant post" (that, it is implied, should be moved.) For instance, there are a lot of posts that say only "I agree with so and so" or "I thought so and so's comment was really funny" or "I saw/like that movie/actor too!" and nothing else. Many others are

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Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

basically invitations, how serious the rest of us cannot know and but are supposed to wonder, to friends to engage in bondage and domination activities or sadomasochistic sex. These sorts of posts serve mainly to reinforce preexisting private relationships by flaunting them; they could easily be handled in personal email. If an anything goes policy is to be followed here, I have no objection to these. However, if posts are to be means-tested for relevance and moved if they fail, then these should be among the first to go.

Another frequent occurrence is that a fairly serious thread will be taken off on unserious or...bickering? squabbling!!...tangents. This is somewhat different than when the initial post of a thread really belongs in processing, as do all the subsequent posts. As Eva Luna pointed out, I don't really think it's right to interrupt a thread to continue it in processing (or some other conference) unless that is where some replier chooses to post his or her reply. Where has it gone, people will ask? oh, processing? will that icon ever come up and that window ever open? On the other hand, I don't think it is unreasonable to ask people to consider the most appropriate posting location before starting a thread, or, if they are going to take a pretty directly film oriented thread in a new direction, to consider starting a new thread in an appropriate place.

Putting in my two cents again, but the two cents in invested in Microsoft in 1980 that are now worth \$709,545.63.

terrible person

Message 2 5/3/98 10:15 AM
Subject: Re(10): Moderating
From: terrible person
To: film processing

Greta Christina writes:

*"Re Terry's comments on off-topic posts: Basically, I agree with you. One person's off-topic irrelevancy may be another person's main reason for coming to a conference. And I think moving posts solely for being off-topic is generally a bad idea. I do think there are occasional exceptions, though; namely, if a thread has gone completely and unquestionably off-topic, *and* has gone on for such a long time and is taking up so much of the conference's space and energy that it's overwhelming it, then I think moving the thread may be, not a good choice, but the least bad choice."*

According to the "Welcome to film!" auto-open, there is no space limit here, only time limit. It's not as if a frivolous post excludes serious ones. No one is obliged to answer either for fear of looking bad; he who declines to continue a frivolous thread will probably only gain respect.

Auntie Em writes:

"terrible person writes:

'I don't know if you consider this "enfant terrible" as one of the problem children in a category with "Village Idiot", '

If you're referring to yourself, the answer is no.

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tp: 'but there are always extraordinary cases, and fear of them should not result in curtailment of liberty for everyone. There are psychos on the highways but we still allow most people to drive.'

"But if the psychos start shooting at other drivers, then you do have to take temporary strong measures (as long as we're using overblown analogies here ...)"

I actually agree with this too. I think, generally, posts shouldn't be moved unless they're *really* threatening to completely derail the conference (which, btw, did happen with the "Village Idiot" in Politics -- but nothing that bad ever happened, as far as I've seen, in Film).

But I don't think a moderator should be silent -- I don't see why a moderator can't be as prolific a poster, and as opinionated and cranky as anyone else."

So then, psychos don't really seem to be problem here, if I am not one, and if Village Idiot was never here, but in politics.

How about this -- we have a moderator, but no one knows who he or she is, and he or she promises to keep the secret and never throw his or her weight around. That way, no one is strongly intimidated, but not knowing who might be the moderator, people would avoid insulting anyone. It's like in Texas where anyone MIGHT be carrying a concealed weapon.

Or, we could have two moderators, as the romans had two consuls (chief magistrates) to prevent either from making himself king. they would be able to agree on extreme dangers to the conference, but in purely partisan matters would cancel each other out. These would be full equals, not a moderator and a vizier or a President and a Kenneth Starr.

I think that if the conference is in danger of being derailed, then it is up to participants to get it back on track through new on-topic posts. Listen, I thought we had a bunch of anarchists here who would support me on this, who see solutions in people, not in government. Despite the opinion of most Westerns, like High Noon or The Magnificent Seven or High Plains Drifter, I believe a town CAN band together against a threat and does not need a sheriff as savior, who could well become a tyrant once the threat is passed.

Winnie Chan writes:

"What's wrong with being nice? Or do you think people on GOL are only nice because they want to avoid being flamed?"

Actually, believe it or not, I am a big fan of nice. but for niceness to have any meaning, it must be a free choice. It should not be enforced. People should have the option not to be nice, to be not-nice, and to take the consequences in terms of general disapproval, if they so desire. But there SHOULD be consequences.

"You make a certain amount of sense about the level playing field. But this is only a place to post about your opinions on film. It's not a competition. There is no right or wrong. "

It is true enough that this is not a competition in the sense of a game show. But as I have said before, it IS still the same old story, a quest for love

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Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. and glory. The fundamental things of human nature do apply. People here want to gain approval, win friends, influence people, reinforce their sometimes frail egos, be well thought of as nice or cool or smart. Now of course, there is no inalienable right to post here. it's a private organization (if a public forum) owned by Bruce Brugmann (dammit!) for which we do not pay taxes, fees, or even have to read advertising. I just think that Mr. Brugmann's vision was that everyone should be equal here and no animals should be more equal. Or maybe that is just how *I* would like it to be, my vision.

wc: "Somebody likes a film, they write about the whys. Others don't, they write about their reasons for disliking. There really is no need to feel threatened about "fighting the authority". Once that impartial pact is broken by the moderator changing a post on someone else he/ she is having a debate with, I highly doubt the other party is just going to sit around and let it happen to themselves. They'll either scream bloody murder, or stop posting there altogether. This happens enough time, the whole conference will probably die from sheer boredom. Having everyone totally agree with you is a pretty boring thing. In either case, it's a pretty natural selection process."

Now, your argument about the potential for abuse by the moderator being limited by public opinion is a valid one, an extension, in effect, of my argument that the potential for abuse by users is limited by social pressure. However, since the moderator has the power to blunt criticism of him or herself, which an individual user does not have, it is not quite analogical. (ana-live ana-long and ana-prosper!) As Greta Christina points out, screaming bloody murder is what we are doing right now. And this is fine if everyone has similar sound equipment. But when one person can turn off other people's microphones or turn off his headphones, screaming bloody murder does not work as well.

We must never forget the words of Barry Goldwater after he had had a few: "Moderation in pursuit of vice is no liberty!!!"

terrible person (In your heart, you know he's right. In your guts, you know he's nuts.)

>

Message 49 5/3/98 2:21 PM
Subject: Re(12): Moderating
From: terrible person
To: film processing

Since I know that J. Mark Andrus is a very powerful and privileged person here, a Cardinal of GOL as it were, I hesitate to take him on, or piss him off, here, lest he use those powers and privileges against me here or in some other conference in which I might want to post. Call me terrible judgment person, but I will.

J.Mark Andrus writes:
terrible person writes:

How about this -- we have a moderator, but no one knows who he or she is, and he or she promises to keep the secret and never throw his or her weight around.

This has got to be the dumbest idea about "moderating" that I've ever heard.

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Aside from the obvious accountability problems this would have, it also would make the whole thing a game of "figure out who the moderator is"...and on a BBS of this size, it wouldn't be very hard to figure it out.

Well, first of all, if the moderator were doing his or her job well rather than annoying people with partisanship and pompousness, no one would care who he/she was. They'd worry and write about movies instead. Or even if true anonymity is not possible, more an ideal, if a moderator is light-handed, uncontroversial, and self-effacing, the way a moderator should be, the way Laura is, he or she might as well be invisible and anonymous. Laura has shown this. I don't understand your objection about accountability. You supreme sysops would know who the moderator was and could receive complaints. users could post complaints in the conference or in processing and know the moderator would read them since he or she would read everything.

>*tp:Or, we could have two moderators*

We've had enough trouble finding ONE moderator to cover all of the various conferences. And trying to compare moderating conferences to the Roman Empire (!) is absurd.

Aren't you the moderator of Politics? I would think then you would know your political history, and realize I was referring to the period of the Roman REPUBLIC, not the Empire. By the time of the Empire, the elected consuls had lost all power to the Emperor (hence the name Empire) and his favorite flunkys. Which I would like to avoid here. (Also, if it is absurd, isn't absurdity what film PROCESSING is all about?)

Now, to answer your points, I know that several conferences have or have had co-moderators. (Commodores?) So why not film?

As to the possible difficulty of recruiting a co-moderator, why couldn't we just ask for volunteers and nominations, see if anyone MIGHT want and be qualified for the job, before dismissing the idea out of hand?. Would that be the worst thing in the world?

>Putting in my two cents again, but the two cents in invested in Microsoft in 1980 that are now worth \$709,545.63.

It's say more like the two cents invested in Atari or Commodore in 1980. (Hint: both companies have long since gone out of business).

Wait, I am afraid I don't get you, though you favored those of us who have not attained your level of erudition (and who could?) with a hint. What were Atari and Commodore? I mean, I know the former is a Japanese phrase meaning "Prepare to be attacked" and Commodore makes me think of Dewey at Manila saying "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley" or Perry at Lake Champlain saying "We have met the enemy and he is us" or Farragut at Mobile Bay saying "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" So are these all some sort of warning to me of further attacks, using words or system powers? Or is it just about that singing group? Or some commode humor?

I could be wrong, but I would imagine that you, Cardinal Andrus, are the only one who did not get another of my frequent references to the great quantity of my online writing (which is indisputable, though of course the quality is legitimately disputed.) perhaps if you read more of my posts in film, of

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Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. anyone's, you would catch this, and have a better understanding of the issues in that conference as well before giving sweeping opinions on how it should be run.

terrible person!

Message 48 5/3/98 9:53 PM
Subject: Re(18): Very Hush Hush (was What conferenc
From: terrible person
To: film

this post discusses the ending of "L.A. confidential" and other films whose titles are in bold. If you have not seen these films, please proceed accordingly, and at your own risk .

James M. Courtney writes:

terrible person writes:

I found his denial of the wholly natural blessing of optical glass, in fact his self-loathing, even if in response to the unenlightened comments of stereotyping co-workers, to be insulting to the rest of us

If you remember, early in the movie he is told TWICE (once by his Captain and another time by the Chief) to ditch the glasses because no-one else on the force wore them. In the fifties, no-one who wore glasses would have been allowed to be a cop. The fact that Exley could wear them may have been because that his father was a respected cop that was killed in the line of duty, and so as his son, they made an exception for him.

Exley's glasses are a symbol in the movie how different he is from the other officers and at the same time how he wants to fit in.

uh oh, I sense that a sequel to James Courtney's and my previous debate, "Character, Situation, and Plot II: The Rematch" is coming. What I hear you to be saying, James (Sir James, to be courtly to Courtney?), and correct me if I am wrong, is that the glasses were simply important to establishing Exley's character, and did not need to have any significance in moving the plot (meaning the sequence of actions) along. Now, this is a valid point and I sort of acknowledged this in the passage you quoted. However, I think it is better when details that help establish general character also have some particular significance in the sequence of actions. (Narrative efficiency, let's call it.) For instance, to stay with the same movie, when Ed tells Jack about Rollo Tommasi, the semi-allegorical "guy who gets away with it", who gets away with things like killing Exley Sr., the stopping of whom is Exley's reason for joining the police force, I could have accepted this as simply a throwaway line, illustrating the sort of person Exley is, that he is so obsessed with his quarry that he has given it a name. Had Rollo Tommasi had no further plot significance, that would not have been the worst thing in the world (any more than the failure of the glasses to have any further significance really reduced my enjoyment of the film, though it bothered me a little) and I quite forgot about it (as I would have forgotten about the glasses had it not touched a personal nerve.) When it (or he) did have significance, it was a great and welcome surprise, leaving me thinking, wow, that was a nice plot twist. I wish the same thing could have been done with the glasses. The wearing of them, or the not wearing of them, symbolized how Exley's ambition, his desire to impress superiors and colleagues, took precedence over practical considerations (like being able to shoot the right person.) At the climax of

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the movie, Exley rejects ambition and seeks justice, (having formerly thought he could fulfill his ambitions by seeking justice and now realizing those at the top whom he would like to impress prefer corruption) by taking on the crooked cops, DA, etc. Now, what I can't remember is whether he wears the glasses during the final shootout and subsequent scenes. If he did, it would be most appropriate, showing that how he saw was more important than how he was seen, and that now, it was pretty important to shoot the right guys. But I don't think he did. A few minor changes could have accomplished this, made full use of the material they had at hand, at least; I was just a little disappointed that they did not choose to, and advanced only character, and not the sequence of actions, when they could have done both.

(Of course, it could be said that the others were right, that he really should not be wearing glasses to a shootout or anything else rough, and that people with less than 20/20 vision really don't belong on the force, no reflection on their characters, but they don't, any more than one-armed people do. Then the glasses show how good Exley must be to survive and advance on the force despite his disability or perception of disability or both. Or what connections he has, though I don't recall much mention of his father before the Rollo Tommasi scene with Jack; he definitely seemed to be advancing on his own merits and ruthless ambition, not his father's memory, if my own memory serves. But the ending of the movie contradicts the idea that his glasses make him not up to snuff; at the end, he survives the shootout through sheer physical courage and the grilling through sheer...maybe not courage, perhaps more cleverness. But connections do not enter into it.)

In short, whoever you might be, to this conclusion you'll agree: killing one bird with one stone is ok, but killing two birds with one stone would have been better. Unless you are that guy who climbed the Berkeley bell tower to protest animal mistreatment.

Is that an acceptable analysis within both our analytic frameworks, JC (man, I envy you those initials)?(I mean, within yours -- obviously, it is within mine.) Or should I buy the film stock and book the catering for the sequel?

Still discussing this movie: something that bothers me, about the ending -- while I don't think, as Eva Luna does, that it sucked -- is that it turned out happy through no action of Exley's. In order to take down the Captain, he was prepared to lose everything. But he did not. There were no consequences -- he became "the guy who gets away with it", and that did not seem to bother him much. It was as if he had bet all his life savings on a double or nothing roll of the dice, but when lost (having gained the fun of playing), they let him roll again. It was as if in "Fail Safe", after the US President offers to nuke New York himself to show that the upcoming nuking of Moscow really is an accident and not a first strike, the Soviet Premier said, that's ok, the fact that you offered is enough. If someone volunteers his life for another, he should lose it, or what value is there is the offer? He should not be magically saved just for having made the offer, because then making such offers becomes purely rhetorical, as if just saying you are sorry is enough, and not taking the punishment. How can you respect someone who risks all, accepts to lose all, for something in which he believes, when he does not really lose it? Even if he had no way of knowing that he was not actually going to lose; it sets a poor example for the rest of us. A somewhat bizarre not quite exception to this is "Romeo is Bleeding", at the end of which a cop, in front of other cops in a courthouse, shoots an incredibly dangerous criminal who has supposedly agreed to cooperate with the Feds, but is nevertheless mocking the cop and threatening the only person who matters to him anymore. as he shoots, he expects that his life is over, that he is

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exchanging his for hers (the criminal's) to save someone else. In fact, after firing into her, he tries to shoot himself, only to find he has already emptied the cylinder. But instead of a life or death sentence, the embarrassing death of the unsympathetic victim is covered up and the cop gets a medal for valor and a new identity in the Witness Protection Program. The irony of course, is that he will spend the rest of his life in the middle of nowhere waiting for someone who will never show up -- in effect, in living Hell, which is worse than any legal punishment. Now, on the one hand, it was the cop of "Romeo is Bleeding"'s own fault that he even got involved in the situation and he deserved whatever he got, even worse. Whereas Exley, though a jerk in some ways, certainly would not deserve hell. He was ambitious, and if it were true, it was a grievous fault, but not grievously did he answer it. He got off very nicely, thank you. And though, of course, he went through a certain amount of nastiness to get there, since he was no better than Jack, who got killed, and Bud, who got maimed, (since they were all basically the same person, how could one be better?), I think he got off too nicely. He got away with it. He became Rollo Tommasi. Or was that the idea?

Message 47 5/3/98 11:18 PM
Subject: Re(5): Moderating
From: terrible person
To: film processing

I am not sure if it is appropriate to comment on this matter anymore, now that it appears to have been resolved, at least for now. But how many ages hence shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er, in states unborn and accents yet unknown? So in possible anticipation of that, I will state a few principles:

1) that a conference's even having a moderator seems to be of concern mainly to moderators (kelsey's unconcern the refreshing exception)

2) that film being a much broader area than say, witchcraft, with many more participants in the conference, the need for the moderator to keep things from going silent is much less, even zero, here

3) that no one should forget that online personalities, expressed through intonation-less writing of this sometimes clunky West Germanic dialect called English, under technical or living conditions others can't even guess at and certainly can't verify and which really are not their concern, are but shadowy reflections of our real selves. What is true of how we seem here may be true, based as it is on a substratum of reality, of ourselves, but as it is filtered through a technical medium which like all such media subtracts and adds, it may not be. It is possible to say of someone here, You SEEM like a jerk, but not to say, You ARE one. Steve is casting me as principle (the only named) adversary in this matter, though I have thankfully enjoyed support to some degree from several individual from all parts of the stream, including Greta Christina, whose criticism of Steve seems almost parellel to Time magazine's 1974 editorial recommendation that Nixon resign. And I have criticized Steve by name enough. It is true, I think many of his posts are stupid, and some of his conduct as moderator has been patronizing. I am glad he will no longer be moderating and am even a bit proud or self-satisfied or something that I may have helped to convince him to step aside. (And he no doubt thinks my posts are long winded, snobbish, ostentatious, pretentious and often irrelevant. But that is fine, as long as we are both users on an equal footing -- nothing obliges us to read each other.) But I do not think I have ever tried to draw

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or rather jump to conclusions about his true character based on his online conduct, or at least, posted them. I am sure that in real life, there is a nonzero number of people who like Steve quite a bit and would not understand why I do not like him here. We do a lot of things here we would not do in real life; some might assert that online is more real, that we show our truer selves here. I am not so sure. One of the reasons why I use an alias here is to separate my online identity from my real life one; with people who use the same name in both places this is not as easy. When I say I dislike Steve Omlid and attack him, I mean I dislike "Steve Omlid", the online persona; I really can't have any idea what Steve Omlid the real person is like.

To those of you, Steve, or rather, "Steve", I presume, included, to whom I am obnoxious and disliked, or just very strange, I will answer like Claus Von Bulow in "Reversal of Fortune" -- "You have no idea." But as far as I am concerned, this is a game, if sometimes a contact sport, like hockey. But those guys on the ice aren't TRYING to break each other's heads, though there is something satisfying in slamming someone into the boards -- they are going after the puck, after the goal, after the game. When it comes down to it, Michael Corleone still said it best: "It's not personal. It's online."

terrible person

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Message 46 5/3/98 10:40 PM

Subject: Re(3): MAY DAY the most important, inspiring, humanistic holiday

From: terrible person

To: politics

on Friday my work unfortunately took me into the entirely corporate funded, corporate logoed, corporate oriented, business school library of a large local public university. as I used the photocopier, some fresh faced MBA to be, who no doubt considered her time vastly more valuable than mine, asked me if she could just go ahead of me to make one or two copies. When I asked her how much it, that being the privilege, the favor on my part, the lease of my place in line, was worth to her, she seemed not to understand, even when I turned to her in my red sweatshirt with Russian lettering and asked her how she, a capitalist, expected to get anything for free, without paying for it (except of course for government tax breaks and other corporate welfare to beg her to "create" a job or two), when she would never give anything "free" either to third world suppliers or workers or consumers....well, she still seemed not to understand. But it made my May Day.

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Message 34 5/6/98 11:25 PM

Subject: Re(20): Very Hush Hush (was What conferenc

From: terrible person

To: film

Man, I keep forgetting these things. this post discusses the endings of a number of movies whose names are in bold. If you haven't seen these movies and don't want to know about their endings, you may not want to read all or part of this post. (You may not want to read it anyway.) It's up to you.

Michael J. Blum writes:

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One of the commoner reasons this century for getting the Medal of Honor is "throwing yourself on the grenade to protect your buddies." Lots of these guys in the lists, mostly dead or maimed ... along with at least two or three guys who threw themselves on grenades which turned out to be duds. Same situation -- the enemy tosses a grenade, or some fumble-fingered idiot drops the pin -- but no boom. Everybody thought these guys were heroes; they just didn't have to get dead or blown apart also. Was there no value in their offer? Would you value their act if it happened near you?

Yes, of course!!! Because you are talking about REALITY!! And I was talking about MOVIES, FICTION!! I don't know what percentage of grenades are duds -- let's say, just for argument's sake, ten percent -- but I don't think that anyone who in reality has jumped on a live grenade was thinking "Hey, maybe it's a dud, and I won't get blown to bits, and I'll get the Medal of Honor too!!!" If someone jumps on a grenade with no thought for his own life, especially when he could have sought cover and was not going to die when the grenade went off anyway, and he survives, then more power to him, and he deserves the Medal (though I think he will probably be happy enough to be alive.) That is in reality, where, as Stalin (or was it Henry Kissinger?) put it, the death of one man is a tragedy. (And in REAL LIFE, we don't want tragedy, since these are real people like us)

But in MOVIES, in FICTION, we DO want tragedy, at least I do, at least people since Aeschylus have. Basically, what I was protesting against was happy endings, endings that have to be happy because nothing bad can happen to the main character (or the popular actor who plays him.) If Harrison Ford jumps on a grenade, it will turn out to be a dud, because he is Harrison Ford. If James Bond jumps on a grenade (not that he would ever sacrifice himself that way), it would be a dud. And that is fine in pure escapism, but it rankles in somewhat serious movies like "L.A. Confidential". Exley had hubris. Hubris is supposed to be conquered by nemesis. But his was not. He got out of the shootout with barely a scratch (despite not wearing his glasses) and out of the investigation with a medal not a demotion. and it did not even seem to bother him. Now, some people have said that he is going to be the next Captain Smith, that he has been or will be swallowed up by the corrupt system though his brains will put him on top and that is the tragedy. I just took it as, "No, it's ok, we're going to save him because we like him and we know you do too."

as I think I have said before, I like my movies to be beyond realistic. sure, plenty of random things happen in real life, plenty of unbelievable things. truth is stranger than fiction. but when I hear of such truths, I accept them, because I know they really happened. if they were presented in fictions, I would assume they were just outlandish fictions. movies, fictions, I think, should try to tell us truths beyond the literal ones. generalizations. I want the universe to work by rules of cause and effect that make sense and tell me how I can act to make my life better (or why it is becoming worse) instead of sitting back and waiting for luck to make it better. ok, some very good movies have been made about how life is random, and they leave you with a feeling of "so what do I do now? I mean, surely there is SOMETHING I can do." and the idea that life is beyond our control is popular, and some will mock me and call me pretentious for not espousing it, for thinking I have some control. But what I really hate is that for every movie in which something terrible happens by chance, there are ten in which something wonderful happens by chance. whereas in reality, it's just the opposite; far more people are maimed by motorists than win the lottery. if

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

you jump on a grenade, there is the chance you will live, and if there is no other hope, you might as well cling to the hope that it won't go off, but I would not bet on it. Happiness you make for yourself, misery happens on its own; you deserve as much happiness as you CAN get and as much misery as you DO get. at least I do. and I want the characters I see in movies to do the same. I can't see any way that Exley engineered the end of the movie. It just sort of happened to him. And that bothered me. I can't stand happy endings. In my universe, in Casablanca, Humphrey bogart does not expect to leave the airport alive. he has no idea that Louis will save him -- ok, that could be argued, maybe he was counting on that. like the grenade jumper counting on a dud, maybe. In my "Grosse POinte blank", Debbie rejects Martin for dumping her and killing people and he goes down in a hail of bullets, ambushed by the Dan aykroyd character. but that's just me....

Now, in a MOVIE, I could accept a character throwing himself on a grenade and surviving under certain circumstances. if that were part of the setup of a movie, for instance, a guy leaps on a live grenade and survives and wins the CMOH and now is home and feels guilty, that he should have died, that would be interesting. but to have it come up at the end, out of the blue, well.....It would help if he were not the hero, or if, at least, there seemed a reasonable chance that he could die, so that I did not expect the grenade to be a dud and have no suspense. Or, if the dudding of the grenade did not feel as if it came out of left field, as if the writers had just invented it to save the character. Now, you know much better than I what the likelihood of grenade being a dud is. Most movie viewers don't know much about grenades. so it would have to be explained to them in the course of the movie that grenades don't always explode. it could be heavy-handedly exposed in a voiceover at the start, telegraphing it that this would be important. or it could be worked into the plot deftly, so that we barely notice, and only remember when it happens again at the end. this is what is done in Unforgiven, for instance. At the climax, as will munny (clint eastwood) goes to shoot Bill Daggett (Gene hackman, and Eva Luna goes wild), his shotgun misfires, and this makes the scene take a whole different turn. it was wet, i guess. or something. or maybe shotguns just do that. or maybe the writer just made it up. (with your knowledge of firearms, I am sure you either were gratified at their technical expertise or amused by their lack of it.) now, i could basically accept this, based on my outside knowledge, and the apparent realism of the film. but the writer had already introduced the concept of guns misfiring, in bill's description of one of English bob's duels halfway through the film. (again, i have no idea whether walker colts actually did that, but it seems believable, or not important enough to disbelieve, just a story showing bob's character.) with that fact basically established, at least within the film, I have no problem accepting it later.

which is very similar to the Rollo tommasi device. when it is set up, one takes little notice; when it is used, it seems entirely logical, and not contrived.

Message 24 5/7/98 8:46 PM
Subject: Re(3): more boogie nights
From: terrible person
To: film

This post discusses the ending of "Boogie Nights". Not the fact that he finally shows his penis, everyone knows that and it's no big surprise. What

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. happens, I mean. So, think it over, it's your move.

Steve Omlid writes:

Yep, IMO, Matt gets it wrong here. The bad stuff that happens to Dirk Diggler doesn't happen because he's involved with porn. It happens, pretty directly, because of cocaine. He uses a lot of coke, thinks he's King Shit, can't get it up, and becomes a pathetic loser. Because of coke, and this actually happened to a hell of a lot of people who used coke. And yes, when he's cleaned up, he goes back to his "family" and starts making porn again. And that's the happy (if somewhat ironic) ending. Nothing porn-negative that I can see there, and I'm pretty sensitive to porn-negative.

wait, though -- am I missing something, or was there perhaps a reason why Dirk got involved with cocaine? I mean, maybe he got involved in cocaine... because he had a pretty bleak life in the porn industry? (and he was involved in coke before things went bad, because that was what made him so belligerent and argumentative that he walked out.) could it be that Boogie Nights actually dares to be a bit -- dare *I* even say it -- "porn negative"? isn't this what Anderson himself has said, that he was trying to present both sides? ok, shall we look at the other side??

Ok, I know that people are going to say, "Stick to apocalypses, terry; no one argues with you about them, but you don't know anything about the porn industry so just stay out of this. Plus you did not even see the movie in widescreen, so you missed half of it." Nevertheless.....but first, a disclaimer. I only know one person who is in any sort of porn type occupation, and she basically works when she wants, and has a lot of other interests, and a really, REALLY, cool dog. (they both might be reading this.) So I really don't know what people in the porn industry are like. All I can do is go by how the movie portrayed them.

So let's look at them. Was Amber having fun? She looked like a wreck. Why did she need to snort so much coke? It's not just because it was available. She was obviously, as her husband put it, a very troubled woman, and I would say her being in the porn industry was both cause and effect of that. (as was the loss of her son.) Now, I am told that making porn (or stripping, or other sex work) is great and enjoyable because it allows women to "express their sexuality". But in almost all cases, they have to do pretty much what (male) porn consumers want. Not much freedom of expression there. A great example of this was when Amber and Dirk first perform, and Amber suddenly realizes she is enjoying herself, like a virgin, in Quentin Tarantino's deconstruction of Madonna in "Reservoir Dogs" and that she wants Dirk to come inside her rather than on her chest as is standard procedure. Now jack horner, because he is unbelievably nice and because he thinks he is creating art, thinks this is great, but the technical people, used to standard procedures, are aghast. Let's face it, porn is acting, and you have to follow a script. An actor playing Hamlet can't decide that he really likes Ophelia and doesn't want to reject her. Now, I think sex is pretty important as a means of self expression (particularly expression of emotions toward other human beings.) And to have to subordinate this means of expression to the demands of your work is sad. Because if you look, none of the characters had any sort of sex life outside of work. Did Amber and Dirk ever have sex off camera? No. When she wanted to show him how much she loved him, what did she do? gave him coke. great. the

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only people who actually do have sex outside a movie are the cameraman's wife and her lover, which leads to three deaths. when Todd, a dancer, not a porn star, first arrives at a party and comments that there are hot babes there (with whom he might like to have sex), the others barely react -- they have had them all, and Todd seems silly.

But I have always found that the quickest way to take the pleasure and satisfaction out of something I enjoyed was to do it for a living. When I worked as a bicycle messenger, dodging cars, potholes, smog all day, encumbered by a heavy bag, going wherever I was told not where I wanted, it took away any desire I had to go on long rides in the quiet hills -- the sort of riding I enjoy when I have the choice. (Though I did sort of enjoy the thrill of the messenger work for itself.) I imagine that people who work in PR, writing press releases all day for causes they don't personally care about, have a lot of trouble finding the energy and words to write notes to their loved ones. Maybe I am wrong.

I am told that Anderson shot a scene between Buck and his wife in which they tried to make love in private but could not. On the other hand, they did have the baby. After they had left the business.

Amber does have other interests, such as directing, and she seems to do those whenever she possibly can rather than be in movies...

Jack really wants to make real movies, with plots and production values. I think he might prefer to be in more conventional films but realizes he does not have the talent to compete there. But then again, he is not out there having sex. One wonders about his sexuality; is his relationship with Amber sexual? Or does he just love to watch young beautiful people have sex?

Reed seems to do very well once he finally gets out, as a magician, and it seems as if this is what he always wanted to be. Buck, too, seems always to have wanted to be a stereo salesman, and Becky to be -- well, whatever, married to a nice normal guy who was not in porn. (their happy finishes were based somewhat on lucky breaks that might not happen in reality. very likely they really would not have too many other options and would stay in porn. but at least the hope was held out.)

That leaves Dirk and Rollergirl. Dirk is the one character who seems really suited for porn -- his penis is his one special thing. He has no other interests. Except to have a family again, of which more later. and I would have to say the same thing about Rollergirl.

Now, I am not saying (or saying that Anderson is saying) that porn is bad MORALLY, I am just saying (and saying that Anderson is saying) that it is bad for you, and that most people are a lot happier when they get out. I felt the same way about bicycle messengering; while I was doing it, if anyone suggested I could be doing something better with my life, I would of course reply that this is what I wanted to be doing and who was anyone to question me or patronize me with concern? But in the years since I have gotten out, when I meet old messenger friends, I find myself, in reply to their complaints about the danger, the fatigue, the exploitation, saying "I might know of something else you could do..."

Now, the only thing that seemed to save the lives of the characters was the quasi-family structure they improvised. I don't know if this really happens,

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as the only thing people can do to try to shut out the bleakness. if it doesn't, than I found it interesting as an original idea. outcasts forming quasi-familial relationships is nothing new in films, from Terminator 2 to Rebel without a cause (I know most people see the Sal Mineo character's attraction to the James Dean character as homoerotic, but look closely, it is directed at Natalie Wood as well. Sal has found these two beautiful people and he wants them to be his surrogate parents.) or in real life (ask Charles Manson, David Koresh). and these families are often centered around some activity different from that of most families, not dining together, but, let's say, blowing things up, robbing banks, saving the world from nuclear extinction, or in this case, making porn films. Now, it could be said that this is what makes porn so great, that people form these quasi-familial relationships. maybe they would not have been formed if all the characters were say, running a grocery store. I have always found the friendships formed under adverse conditions, for instance, with my fellow messengers, to be very important and strong and transcendent of differences of background and interests. (The Shawshank REdemption is another good example of this.) On the other hand, Amber desperately needed a son to nurture to replace the one she had lost. Dirk needed parents to replace his weak father and cruel mother (especially after he had been thrown out of the house.) I don't even want to think what Rollergirl's life must have been like but the scene with Amber and a lot of coke revealed what she really missed. And jack seemed to want to be a father to everyone. but I think all these characters were so desperate they would have formed the same relationships at a grocery store. they did not need porn to bring them together. (or the magic of Dirk's penis, which brought happiness to everyone. or his penis just stood for his personality. he had enormous personality. he was a genuinely nice guy. was even with his pants on. this would have shown through anywhere.) what porn seemed to do was just make them more desperat for such relationships.

But how long will that last? dirk will grow old someday, then what will happen? or he'll get AIDS perhaps, which was not the issue in the movie it should have been, even in 1983....I suppose that by keeping it "all in the family", they were somewhat safer....I wondered about the former porn stars, who, I am told have cameo appearances in the movie? are they doing all right? better, or worse now that they are out?

As I said, I don't think and I don't think Anderson thinks porn is bad. it's just kind of bleak. for myself, I don't care if people smoke, drink, jaywalk, fornicate, wear platform shoes. I just feel bad for them for what they are possibly doing to themselves. it's not my business, I know; it's their choice, and it would be my choice if I wanted to be self-destructive and live bleakly. (Bleak. I love that word. Bleak bleak bleak. I should see "Mo' Better blues" again. "And he shall cry out, 'Bleak, bleak!' and smite him his breast and rend his garment." That is in the Bible somewhere, or should be. Ok, that's the third cool word in a week, after bicker and squabble.) It's like William Hurt as the drug dealer in "the Big Chill"; his friends don't tell him he has to quit, but suggest that he might want to, that they will help him if he does. AS I have said in other posts, I like movies to tell me not what is possible but what is probable. I mean, Boogie Nights seems to be saying, sure, the right person can make it big, find his calling, find love, in the porn industry. But probably, he won't. Probably, he or she will be a lot happier somewhere else. I don't think that characters should be punished for being in the porn industry, for moral reasons. But let's face it, if you work in that field, there is an awfully good chance something rather unpleasant will happen to you, because of the nature of the industry, and I think a film should (and

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Now, if this be porn-negativity, make the most of it.

(bibliography on my resume.)

Message 6 5/10/98 12:45 AM
Subject: Re(2): DEEP Impact
From: terrible person
To: film

bernard thomas writes:
there's still Armageddon

Noooooooooooooo!!!!

As the self-appointed Apocalyptic correspondent (yeah, like I had a tough primary fight for the nomination too, like EVERYONE wants the job) I must PROTEST THIS TITLE. Armageddon, from the name of a hill in the Holy Land where several huge empire -destroying battles were fought in antiquity, is named in the Book of Revelation as the site of the last battle between good and evil. so Armageddon must be a BATTLE BETWEEN TWO SIDES FOR CONTROL, not a struggle against a natural inanimate object. an asteroid or whatever just doesn't cut it. Besides, what can be evil about a big hunk of rock? (even if we are rolling it up a hill?) shouldn't we feel as bad for the big hunk of rock getting total obliterated as we do for the earth? I mean, it never ASKED to smash into us, did it? It would have been quite content just to wander aimlessly about the cosmos. (I mean, when I cyclist gets splattered by a bus and maybe breaks one of its headlights in return, do you feel bad for the bus or the cyclist?) Damned gravity. though it does help things stay in place. and it's equal opportunity, fair. ok. anyway, I give Hollywood and all of you full permission to talk of nuclear armageddon (toe to toe with the Rooskies) -- "And this is what he said on/His way to Armageddon/So long mom, I'm off to drop the bomb..." but I urge you to boycott what I am sure is going to be a fine, quality Bruce Willis movie for the misnomer in the title alone.

and if you want to see tsunamis, try Peter Weir's "The Last Wave". though it might make you try to sell off your Sydney 2000 Olympic tickets.

>

Message 1 5/10/98 11:10 AM
Subject: Re: Auntie
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

I seem to remember a reference or two in British literature to Auntie as someone to be feared, perhaps even in Kipling's soldiers' poems?

Riddley Walker is written on so many levels, and its expressions so often represent coincidences of incredibly diverse sources, from folklore to technospeak. Auntie could just as well from "anti-" as anywhere else.

The really interesting thing is not so much the name, but the fact that death is seen as an act of coition with Auntie, who has "stoan boans and irern tits

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and an iern willy for the ladies' (something like that.) There is a folk tale (within the book) about the one man who ever got on top of Auntie....but although an association of sex and death may be seen as a sign of a societal discomfort with sex, the culture of RW does not show this. But then, it's fiction.

terrible person (who is roaring in trubba)

> 74

Message 74 5/10/98 10:54 AM

Subject: Re(5): more boogie nights

From: terrible person

To: film

This post discusses the endings of various movies, yada yada yada, you have the right to remain silent but anything, oops wrong warning, yada yada yada.

Now, in writing my earlier post, I assumed that "porn-negative" meant "having some unpleasant things to say about porn". However, Steve seems define it somewhat differently, so that "non porn-negative" means basically "not sharing in the society at large's knee-jerk prejudiced complete condemnation of porn". And since Steve was the first to use the term here, it's really up to him to define it, though it would have been nice if he had defined it on first use, since on its own it is ambiguous, and if it is in common and understood use among a certain group, not all of us belong to that group. But, fair enough, since "Boogie Nights" is not entirely anti-porn, it is not porn negative by Steve's definition. Steve asserts that instead it is "porn-realistic", giving a fairly accurate portrayal of the industry's both good and bad points. However, not all of us have the same background in the industry; I can not of course match Steve's knowledge of it (any more than he can match mine of Latin or the end of the world) and thus, we are at an impasse, of the sort which cannot be resolved with iocane powder. (Which is colorless and odorless and thus not to be confused with either cocaine or speed.) It is possible, even quite appropriate, for a realistic portrayal to be highly negative if the subject matter is grim. I suppose what "porn-negative" really means is "setting out with a prejudged agenda to discredit the porn industry [even if it requires distorting the facts], rather than to portray it as it is and let the audience decide", and it seemed as if Anderson had no such agenda when he went to research his movie, but was trying to be objective. However, it seems from the way the movie turned out what he concluded about it. Now, everything has a down side so a truly objective portrait of it will always show SOMETHING negative, but I think the result of this objectivity was generally negative. (I think I could prove my assertion that it makes out the porn industry as not exactly the nicest place to work (or have my assertion disproved) by taking a poll here: how many people, after seeing "boogie nights", thought, gee, I'd like to be a porn star? (those of you who already are porn stars will have to disqualify yourselves of course.)

However, to reply to some specific points:

Steve Omlid writes:

He actually had a pretty GOOD life in the porn industry - he was happy, fulfilled and respected by his peers. He got involved in coke because a lot of people in that time got involved in coke.

but he first got involved in coke because Amber gave him some, which she did

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because she did not know how to express her love any other way (except by making a documentary about him.)

(And then, just to make things muddier, many whores consider some of their johns to be friends, so that sex probably has a slightly different feel than sex with a john who's a total stranger, just as it might feel more fulfilling for a massage therapist to give a massage to a friend than to a first-time customer.) It is true that sex does have an extra added charge to it, so it's not the same as, say, waitressing.

well, I am not sure that this is what you meant by 'charge', but the basic fact remains that what separates sex "work" from sex is that you get paid for the former and probably would not do it otherwise and the latter you do for free out of emotion.

*(Hey, my *parents* went to see Deep Throat in a theater.
that sounds like a scene from "taxi driver".*

tp: Or does he [Jack Horner] just love to watch young beautiful people have sex?

Hey, nothing wrong with that. :-)

no, not in itself, and he may find in it all the satisfaction he seeks or can imagine, but if that is all he can do, he is probably missing out on a bit.

Well, that's what I mean by being not porn-negative; he shows the simple truth that people in porn are just as likely to have happy endings as anyone else.

Right, but they only seem to have them once they quit porn!!!

And I especially liked the fact that Buck gets the money to fulfill his dream by pure chance, after being turned down by the bank for a loan because he's a porn star. That's Anderson acknowledging the biases of society, and then thumbing his nose at them.

I found that kind of silly. In a realistic movie, he probably would have had to go back to porn or work at Mcdonald's or turn to crime. I still don't see how he is going to make it in the stereo business, since in the earlier scene, we saw he really did not know anything about stereo. I worry in general about people whose assets are only physical, it kind of limits what they can do in life, and that is sad.

But again, I think that Anderson is saying in the bank loan scene (which is actually a very important scene in the whole scheme of the movie) that it's not porn per se that is damaging, but the fact that it occurs in a society that is so fucking hostile to it.

*When I guest-edited the sex work issue of Black Sheets, I posed this question: is sex work *inherently* degrading, or is the degradation that often comes along with it due largely to the fact that we live in a society where sex work is not respected and often illegal? Not surprisingly, I came down strongly on the latter side.*

I think that the assertion that most of the characters' problems came from

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their being stigmatized for their occupation does not quite stand up. The best illustration, perhaps, was the scene with Amber and her husband before the family court judge. We see Amber, or Maggie, the very picture of composed respectability. But when her husband (that wild thing John Doe of X) points out that she is into all sorts of sex and drugs, she denies the drugs -- and lies. Now of course she does not get her visitation rights. And very possibly a principle reason was her occupation. But let's face it, was Amber in any way competent to be a mother to a small child? Now, it could be asserted that here, again, it was not porn that was bad, but drugs, and yes, the film was anti-coke. But the fact is that there is basically no one in the industry in the movie who is not doing coke. In the movie, it seems, if coke is bad, porn is bad in that it leads people to do coke.

Another "dark side" of porn suggested in the movie is that of child porn, through the figure of the colonel, who gleefully produces Jack Horner's movies until he is caught with pictures of small children. Now, I may be on thin ice here, but I think that even the most "porn-positive" are against child porn, and that condemning it does not make the movie "porn-negative" in the prejudiced sense discussed in the first paragraph. Now, on the one hand, the reactions of Jack to the news of the Colonel's arrest serve to distance "ok", "adult" porn makers from "bad", "child" ones. But the whole sequence shows that the two sides of the industry, the child-centered one which I think pretty much everyone condemns, and the consenting adult centered one to which most people accord a right to exist even if reservedly, are not that far away from each other. And this is not good.

And remember that the characters in the movie spend almost all their time in a rather self-contained world of the porn industry, far from the outside world that codemns them. And yet they are still pretty miserable.

Because, after all, most film plots, all plots, operate by inductive, not deductive reasoning. a single figure stands for all of that class, or is perceived to, especially if that group is small enough to be seen as homogeneous, which is why, when the villain is female or african american or gay or nerdy, it is seen, especially by members of those groups, as insulting to the whole group, and if the hero is, it is seen as a triumph for the whole group. (unmarked, default groups, majority groups, basically white straight males, don't suffer from this as much; either Michael Douglas' latest asshole character is not seen to reflect on them, or they are only too glad to identify with him.) since there are not that many porn actresses portrayed in film, Amber stands for all of them, and will until more movies are made. And the colonel stands for all producers. Though the sense of realism intervenes as well. It's hard to believe that all directors are like Jack or all actors like Dirk.

But then, the first movie on a particular group, or "THE" movie on it, the one that usually has a one-word title that is the name of that group, always focusses on the extraordinary among them. Because while the daily lives of group members may be interesting and exciting to them, they don't lead anywhere, show little change, have no beginning middle and end (unless there is some definite time period that must be outlasted, a term in school or a tour in Vietnam, such as in "the paper chase", "an officer and a gentleman", or "full metal jacket" or "memphis belle".) Messengering may be exciting, but every day, or every hour, is pretty much like every other, unless it's the one in which you get killed. You don't get handed a bootleg tape of a reclusive opera singer, or have to save one comrade from loan sharks by winning him a

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bundle on the markets, and another from an evil drug dealer by leading him on a wild bike/car chase over the edge of a parking structure, so that all three of you can get out of messengering. ("Diva", "Quicksilver") Now, none of those things ever happened to me or anyone I knew. Firefighters face all sorts of dangers, but none especially stand out, until a mysterious arsonist is on the loose ("Backdraft".) Did anyone make a movie about any individual moon shot, when it was obvious they were going to work (whereas the Mercury program portrayed in "The Right Stuff" seemed like a crapshoot, and "from the earth to the moon" portrays the Whole Thing is a zillion hours, and desperately looks for new angles, and happens to have tom hanks' name on it)? no, but they did about the extraordinary time when things went wrong. (good movie, too.) "normal" stories seem like settings waiting for something big to happen; we are perhaps conditioned to expect big things and not to accept the ordinary and quotidian as interesting. in the short novel "one day in the life of ivan denisovich" nothing happens; a prison camp inmate goes through one day like every other. similar (because it's based on it) is "24 hours in the 'life' of john denison", a look at a man whose entire life is simulated by forces unknown for reasons unknown. but in "the truman show", something has to happen; we see the one day when things go wrong and he figures out the deception, not the thousands in which he has accepted it. movies differ from TV series in that they are not open ended even if they are finite. they must stress the effect of extraordinary circumstances to a fairly ordinary situation.

This is the same process at work in "Boogie Nights", I guess "the first movie about the porn industry!!" It could have been about a bunch of fairly ordinary people making triple x movies. look how ordinary the pre-dirk leading man, Reed, is (and lovable for that reason.) He's ordinary looking, not very bright (or at least, does not have a vision as dirk does), and adapts easily to non-porn life. but there are two extraordinary characters: jack, who does have a vision, and Dirk, who not only has a vision, but a spirit, and a huge penis. when he is around, all goes right; he electrifies all he touches, almost messianically. I doubt that there are really too many porn stars with this magic. rather, that the need for an extraordinary plot element led Anderson to create a superhero. So I think that of all the characters, Dirk is the least realistic. and he is the only one who really thrives in porn. so none of the REALISTIC characters did too well unless they got out of the business, reinforcing the idea that this movie has little nice to say about its effects on people.

Now, my impression is that Anderson was actually interested in porn, from hearing as a child that a house across the street had been used for filming, not just using porn to convey other themes. In other words, he had no reason not to give an honest portrayal (and even a reason to give an affectionate one.) He did not start out with a desire to deal with themes of how, for instance, in a bad situation, one person with hope and vision can bring it to everyone (which had already been so well handled in "The Shawshank Redemption") He could have started with a small messenger company being driven off the streets by the fascists on Steuart and brought in a young fellow whose enormous thighs and energy revitalize the company (until he starts taking steroids...). If his theme was that your occupation, what you have to do, can take out of you what you should share for those you love, he could have dealt with coal miners too busy coughing out their lungs to show affection for their families, or olympic skating couples for whom skating was once an act of affection, and fun, and is now too loaded with expectations of perfection from

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judges and spectators to be anything but a job. (I admire patrick swayze and lisa niemi that they still dance together.) He could have taken a writer like Elizabeth Wurtzel, who has spilled and shown so much about herself for her readers that she must have no secrets left to tell a lover to establish trust and intimacy. or onliners who liked to exchange SM-related teasing amongst themselves in posts to reinforce their relationships, and because they enjoyed exhibiting, until they found that the readership they had been glad to build up was now dictating to them what they had to write. (man, imagined if that happened? how would that feel?) Anderson could have shown the effects of drugs in almost any business. he could have shown the same sorts of familial relationships forming in any bleak occupation. so why did he choose the porn industry to talk about?

well, perhaps no one had done it before. and perhaps he knew that people would come to the film in the assumption that a film about porn would have to be almost a porn film itself, full of sex and nudity, which of course were relatively absent in the film. no, he had to have done it because he was interested in porn. but he also had to have something he wanted to say about it, or he just would have read and watched a lot. so he had something to say, and what it was was, "this is not a nice business". Of course he wanted the audience to decide for itself. Artists usually want the audiences to come to the artist's opinions on their own. But if as Steve says, his portrayal was almost exactly divided between good and bad, then many watchers will take very little away, only have their previous opinions reinforced, and like optimists and pessimists confronting a glass, only argue over whether it is half empty or half full. But I think that most people would agree that the glass was actually well below the halfway mark.

one last question: when Dirk rebuffs Scottie's attempt to kiss him, did he do so because Scottie is male, or because he is breaking the unwritten rule governing physical expression of affection?

Message 73 5/10/98 2:24 PM
Subject: Re(7): more boogie nights
From: terrible person
To: film

Eva Luna writes:

Omlid:

. I seem to remember coke, but I could be wrong. (Probably, there was both.)

Well, the only thing they talk about in the movie is coke. And the only thing Anderson talks about on the laser disc commentary is coke.

If it looks like coke, and tastes like coke, then it must be a duck.....I mean, coke.

actually, to quote Gershwin's Law, it ain't necessarily so. In my forensic sciences course recently, we learned that there are two substances, pseudococaine and pseudoalococaine, that have the same chemical composition as cocaine though with the atoms arranged differently, and thus, look just like cocaine, and are even indistinguishable from it on a mass spectrogram! (common substance identifying method.) only through infrared spectroscopy can they be distinguished. true, their effects are somewhat less than cocaine, but

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that is hard to test in the lab, and there is of course the placebo effect with drugs; I'm sure we all knew people in high school who insisted that they were soooooo wasted on what turned out to be oregano.

also, don't you think it a bit odd to cite a law that says basically "appearance is reality", here, online, the last place it is?

pseudoalloterrible person

Message 69 5/10/98 2:35 PM
Subject: Re: MUSTY TV May 9th-15th
From: terrible person
To: film

Eva Luna writes:

Do you know the world is a foul sty? Do you know if you ripped the fronts off houses you'd find swine? The world's a hell.

"It's just a pig."

"Not THIS pig."

That's from "The Advocate", a 1994 film about a medieval lawyer (Colin Firth), costarring Ian Holm, Donald Pleasance, Nicol Williamson, and lots of naked people. And a pig. It was my favorite pig movie ("Muppets Treasure Island" excepted) until I watched "Babe" last night. Man, that pig could act. And James Cromwell was good too, though I am still scared of him from his "L.A. Confidential" role. Good job by the sheep, too. I hear the same Jim Henson connected special effects lab will animate the animals (is that redundant?) for "Dr. Doolittle" with Eddie Murphy. The preview looked pretty good, but will he sing (or even talk through as Rex Harrison did) "Talk to the Animals"?

Perhaps they'll go to Tokyo on the Doolittle raid....bring Eliza along.....

Spoiler ahead:

Baa ram ewe!!
Baa ram ewe!!!

Remember it. It could come in useful. There are a lot of sheep around.

Message 64 5/9/98 11:58 PM
Subject: Re(9): Another great thought
From: terrible person
To: Sirin N
Copies: It's a le fou World

not anthropomorphizing, I don't think, so much as terrible personifying. I know not with what sorts of dogs others may identify, but as for me.....

Message 56 5/10/98 2:50 PM
Subject: Re: coition

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person

To: film

Sirin N writes:

the fieb writes:

I've never seen this word before. Coition. Is that related to coitus? As in Roland Barthes as he views a photograph of himself:

"glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures, forced to navigate in convoy, as though united by eternal coitus."

good heavens. sounds like he overreacted. yes coition is related to coitus. it is generally not, however, related to corpses, condemned men or torture.

do forgive me, terry, if i have opened up the door to tiresome s/m references... readers note: this is a non-whipping thread.

let me just whip this out:

both coition and coitus are latin words derived from the verb "co-ire", literally "to go (or come) together, to meet", and are used in latin in both a sexual and nonsexual sense. while the former word would be more likely to have a general meaning, and the latter would be more likely to denote a specific act of coming together on such and such a day, ("our coitio is generally good, but this particular coitus was fantastic!!")they are pretty much interchangeable. (and though again, this has no effect on their meaning, the first is grammatically feminine, the second grammatically masculine.)

a lesser known work of the poet John Ciardi, who comes from that city on the Shannon in which I also claim roots, despite his last name and my nose:

"Said her grace, 'I impose one condition
Before I assume the position
It's my view that nudity
Cannot excuse crudity.
No fucking. Just tasteful coition."

I have encountered the abovedescribed torture/punishment of tying a live person to a dead one until he too was dead in classical literature -- the Aeneid, perhaps, attributed to Mezentius -- but I have not been able yet to track down the locus. Perhaps some dungeon in the City. But no whipping.

Message 55 5/10/98 6:47 PM

Subject: Re(2): Tarantino: Racist Joke, Punches Black Woman

From: terrible person

To: film

John Barrymore writes:

Lee is defitely a black racist and there's no maybe about it. That is my opinion.

Well, *I* will assert as unequivocal FACT that Lee MAY be a racist. I have

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not studied probability for a while, but I think that multiplies out to the same thing??

I really don't watch Tarantino's films. As someone who grew up in a neighborhood that was 80% black, and attended schools that were 80% black, I would swear in any court and in front of God that I have seen black people use the word nigger more than any other ethnic group in the world. Of course, everyone will probably say that when a ethnic slur is used by its own members that it is acceptable. Maybe, maybe not, but it sure as hell happens. If Tarantino uses the word nigger in his films, in what context? If it was appropriate and realistic, that was his right to do so. So the hell with Spike Lee the angry, bitter bastard.

According to the New Post's PAGE SIX, last week Tarantino was at a New York restaurant when he struck up a conversation with an African American couple. At one point, Tarantino demanded whether the couple knew what common features blacks supposedly share.

"You know what they have? You know what it is," Tarantino said. He then stuck his fingers up his nose to flare his nostrils and declared, "It's the wide nose." And according to New York Daily News columnists George Rush and Joanna Molloy, Tarantino pondered out loud, "I'm surprised that white Americans accept Wesley Snipes because he's so African-looking." Ok, so what? We all should stop watching Tarantino's films. Ok. Let's also stop watching Lee's. And let us assume that Tarantino is an outright racist, what about every other artist? How do we know how and where they stand on racial issues? Also, should we use this as an excuse to condemn him as an artist? You see, Jabari, this entire incident makes me wonder why are you putting this in the Film Conference? I would think it should be in the Politics Conference or the local news.

The discussion was taken outside where it escalated into a fist fight. Tarantino, who apparently was aiming at the man, wound up hitting the woman instead. And now the restaurant, where this all happened, has filed a complaint with the New York Police Department, which is now investigating, according to Rush and Molloy.

Who is the restaurant owner filing a complaint against? And if it is Tarantino, what are the details?

Tarantino could be charged with third-degree assault, a misdemeanor.

Tarantino's publicist told Rush and Molloy that Tarantino made no racist remarks.

I was going to ask the same question myself. Who were the witnesses? Who saw what, etc? I also do not hear single word from Tarantino's side of this entire incident.

Those are my immediate thoughts on the matter, Jabari. Any comments? Any further information, Jabari, would be appreciated.

Barrymore

Message 48 5/11/98 6:47 PM
Subject: Re: Whispering in Movies (was Re: Grrrrrr)
From: terrible person
To: film

well, I am sure that it will be assumed that because I have no respect for the

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sacredness of surprise endings, that I typically whisper revealing comments to my viewing companions as the film goes along. however, this is not the case, simply because I often end up at the movies alone, and whispering comments of any sort to the total stranger in the next seat could cause that person to strike me violently, which would be bad because it might make me spill my large popcorn and lose my \$3.50 investment. however, when I am accompanied, I find it not inappropriate to share observations, respond to questions, to facilitate the viewing experience, at least as long as our voices are kept well out of competition with the soundtrack. of course, at midnight and or cult films, anything goes.

after all, don't we all have stories, from college or elsewhere, of really clever, funny things we heard yelled at the screen, including from our own mouths?

and do others have as much difficulty as I do understanding why one of the noisiest foods in the world, popcorn, has become the food of choice for an activity where silence should be so prized?

during my own years in show business, when I was in pictures -- meaning, when I swept aisles as a theatre usher -- I became well acquainted with the full spectrum of obnoxious patron behavior. this ranged from the aforementioned whispering, or bringing of crying babies, to the ignition of cigarettes of tobacco or moreexotic substances (and in the latter case, not even having the decency to bring enough for everyone). other frequent problems included ingestion of noisy to unwrap or pungent smelling food, imported from outside despite an embargo rigorously and vigorously enforced by the doorman (who knew the theatre's profits and his job depended on maximum demand at the snack bar), drunkenness, leading to sleep and snoring, parking of wheelchairs in narrow aisles rather than in the designated wheelchair spaces at the front and back (limiting, I know, but required by fire codes), and, of course, absolutely uncannily bad personal odor that suggests that the patron is unacquainted with the use of toilets. One thing I never personally encountered, though, and have only heard of from others, is the phenomenon of individuals or couples who find the onscreen goings on either insufficiently or over stimulating and seek excitement in their own laps. (In individuals, this is the "Paul Rubens Syndrome".) Now, I could tolerate the couples who began kissing as the heros and or heroines do in the final shot and remained passionately locked all through the credits and even after the lights came up, as their aislemates climbed over them to get out and I swept up the crushed junior mints, but to have to clean up something stickier would have been a bit much.

one other nice thing about working at a movie theatre, though in the splendid isolation of the ticket booth rather than on the ushering front lines, is that people who have just gone out to see a movie instead of a particular movie will after staring at the reader board ask you what the movie is about, and you get to characterize it for them. I particularly enjoyed this when my theatre was showing "spanking the monkey", a film which many patrons dared not speak its name. it was pleasant enough, when they mumbled "two for that monkey movie" to shout back through the microphone "oh, you mean SPANKING THE MONKEY??", but even better was when they would nervously inquire as to its subject matter, and if it wasearly and I was not tired and I did not have a line out to the street I would answer "it's about a college student obliged to spend the summer taking care of his mother", but as it got later and I

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grumpier and the line longer, I took out my troubles, and took in the sight of their faces, by simply muttering "it's about mother-son incest." yes, even then.....

pssst!! terrible person!!! got any soda left?

Message 47 (Unsent)

Subject: Re: Broken Arrow, on TV

From: terrible person

To: film

pierre le fou writes:

Boy I sure I wanted to like this one. But wow, it is just beyond redemption. Which is totally unfair, considering what a great bad guy John Travolta is. And Xian Slater isn't a bad good guy either.

That said, the "abandoned copper mine" was about the super cheesiest movie set I have seen in many a year, and the desert scenery figured in as "things to fall down. And fall down again. And yet another long fall down a steep rock face."

Too bad.

But it did give a cool line: "Would you please not shoot at the thermonuclear weapons?"

Message 44 5/11/98 7:56 PM

Subject: Re(7): Tarantino: Racist Joke, Punches Black Woman

From: terrible person

To: film

First of all, unless you're a total deconstructionist, you cannot ignore the important, vital connection between an artist's public character and his work. They are both behaviors that draw from his or her basic psychology and will demonstrate the same basic values. A racist will make racist artworks. They might seem somewhat less racist if the artist is actively trying to disguise his prejudice, but it will still be there. (and then the art will show the strain; if truth is lost in one way, it will be lost in others.) An asshole will make asshole artworks; his or her attitude towards the world and people will show through in art just as in life. Though I think I am violating some rule here, I have heard that Pablo Picasso was just awful towards the women in his life, and his attitude towards them is often reflected in his painted depictions of them.

Now, some will argue, why are an artist's personal views important if we can't see them in his or her work? Precisely because you can't see them -- unless you look. But meanwhile you will have felt them. Who has not had the experience of interpreting a work of art a certain way, and liking it, only to learn something about the character of the creator that caused you to reinterpret in completely and feel like you wanted to wash for ever having liked it? (or just the opposite -- I'm not a total pessimist.) It's not unlike starting to interpret the posts and behavior of an online character

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differently once you have learned something about his or her offline life.
It's important to know what people actually thought, because otherwise you will misinterpret what they created. Though again, if you are a deconstructionist, you don't care.

Though of course I don't know Tarantino personally and don't follow his life very carefully in the media (though we have something in common), I don't think he is a racist. What I do think agree with is that he is an asshole about race. What Tarantino's behavior, in this incident and others, and perhaps more important, what his films show, is that he seems, like the character he wrote for Gary Oldman in "True Romance", to think he is some sort of honorary Black person. I don't know what sort of racial environment he was brought up in, there as a poor white in Tennessee, but it definitely seems as if his image of African americans comes mainly from the 70's TV he watched as a kid and the blaxploitation films he viewed working at the video store. (I would imagine he considers himself an honorary Asian from watching a lot of Hong Kong chop- and shoot-em-ups, and, though I did not see "From Dusk to Dawn", and honorary Latino from watching telenovelas.) That he thinks he can pass in the Black community as a member is evident from, or at least, would explain, his assumption that he can throw around racial slurs which are considered acceptable when used by real community members, and his assumption that he can joke with Black people in public about sensitive racial matters as if he were not White. He probably thinks he respects Black people and considers them his equals, so he does not fit the usual definition of a racist, but to think he can become one of them through watching the movies, rather than living the life, insults the experience through which African Americans have had to go. It is true that assholes come from all races, but he was practicing a sort of assholery that can only be practiced across racial lines.
Can anyone imagine this incident taking place solely among White people?

And then, of course, I would LOVE to have seen a toxicology report on Tarantino at the time of the incident. I think it would explain a lot.

Now, as for Spike Lee. Perhaps I am prejudiced because I happen to think Lee is a much better filmmaker than Tarantino. (True, he has been around longer, and I have not seen his more recent movies, which make the comparison either fairer or less fair.) But while Tarantino's movies are, if clever and well made and entertaining, basically derivative of Hong Kong and blaxploitation movies, I have found Lee's films to be sensitive explorations of what it is to be human (and not just what it means to be Black or White.) It is true that Lee's films have contained stereotypes of various White people, from Jewish-Americans ("Mo' Better Blues") to Italian-Americans ("Jungle Fever") to Wasps (the architects in "Jungle Fever".) But he has also created complex and memorable White characters, who might nevertheless be jerks (John Turturro in "Do the Right Thing") or good guys (John Turturro in "Jungle Fever", or David Patrick Kelley as the schoolteacher in "Malcolm X".) And, since most of his characters are Black, and any plot must have good and bad, many of his villains are Black and many of his Black characters are villains.

But there does seem to be one thing that really bothers Lee, and perhaps explains why he is bothered by Tarantino. What seems to bother Lee is the phony crossover, the stereotyping crossover. No character seems less sympathetic than Malcolm when he is trying to act White (conking his hair), or Malcolm's White mistress who seems to like him only for being Black, and whom he likes only because she is White, while there are Black women who would love Malcolm for who he actually is. The same applies to the couple in "Jungle

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Fever", once they realize they have nothing to say to one another, that they had acted only out of the malady of the title. Lee thinks Black people should act like Black people and White people should act like White people and the two should respect their differences (as a step to respecting each other.)

Therefore, people like Tarantino, who don't seem to see or respect these differences, drive him nuts. And I can't say I blame him.

I suppose the thing to do would be to ask Samuel L. Jackson, he's worked with both of them....

Message 35 5/12/98 6:47 PM

Subject: Re(11): Tarantino: Racist Joke, Punches Black Woman

From: terrible person

To: film

someone, Bernard Thomas perhaps, or Barrymore agreeing with Bernard, made the point that sometimes realism requires the use of racially offensive words in movies, and cited "Rosewood" as an example. Now, "Rosewood", as far as I have read, is a fairly realistic depiction of an actual historical incident and in keeping with this of course should use language appropriate to the era and situation. However, I do not think anything of the sort can be said about any of Tarantino's films, which cannot be called realistic by any stretch of the imagination. (I am not saying this is bad; this is the only thing I like about the films, that characters all seem to get what their flaws earn them.) I mean, I don't think anyone really thinks gangsters all wear black suits and chat about popular culture on their way to jobs, for instance. Tarantino characters don't even live in Los Angeles, but in Tarantinoland, a hyperrealistic theme park version of certain parts of it. (Again, this is entertaining, just not realistic.) If Tarantino thinks it is, then like Mr. Orange, he has practiced his pose so well that he has begun to believe it himself. So to justify Tarantino's ad nauseam use of profanity and racial slurs on the grounds of realism is, well, unrealistic. He simply likes throwing the words around and believes they underline his points, and audiences like them if they are to their tastes and if they aren't, don't. I did not really think "Pulp Fiction" lost all that much on TV when every "fucking" became "damned" and every "motherfucker" lost its last two syllables. The story was still there, the intensity, and it was no less realistic -- it hardly could be. REalism is no justification in this case.

Message 34 5/13/98 6:31 AM

Subject: Casting Spiderman (was Re(8): DEEP Impact

From: terrible person

To: film

so we're talking Robert Carradine as Spidey? (too old too. otherwise, Anthony Edwards -- if I could conceive of a friend, of an ideal friend, it would be Anthony Edwards -- would be great too.) how about Ben Stiller?

but remember, Spiderman matters less because he will be under a mask half the time. More important is: who will play Gwen Stacy? Julie Delpy? (I always liked her a lot more than MJ. Was really upset when the Green Goblin killed her.) For Mary Jane some dimpled swedish model such as the one on the cover of this month's Esquire or GQ or whatever, wearing half a bathing suit or half wearing a whole one (someone from "blowup" miraculously preserved. no one has

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MJ's perfectly straight red hair anymore.) Burt REynolds could continue his comeback as Jolly Jonah Jameson, and Samuel jackson could be Robbie (Robie?) Robertson. As Flash thompson, Will Ferrell of SNL. And as Aunt May, of course, Jessica Tandy. (yeah, I know.)

the big issue for me willbe whether the foley men can successfully duplicate

the all-important "thwipppp!!!!"

and whether they can avoid the obligatory World Wide Web jokes. and whether he'll wear the garish though traditional red and blue suit, or the elegant if evil black one. and whether MacFarlane will havve anything to do with the film. (did he actually help with Spawn or just fire and forget?)

terrible person (who does whatever a spider can)

>

Message 33 5/13/98 9:13 AM

Subject: Re(12): Tarantino: Racist Joke, Punches Black Woman

From: terrible person

To: film

though I had not heard of the event which Barrymore describes as evidence of Spike Lee's anger, bitterness, racism and illegitimate birth (excuse me, but is there anyone out there whose parents did not happen to get Government sanction for their union and resent the constant derogatory use of the b-word? if so, please speak up; I at least would like to hear from you). This is his refusal to sign autographs for white kids, saying that they would never respect him as a Black man had he not made a popular movie. (I don't know if this is a commonly known incident, or just, like the Tarantino Affair, an alleged one.) Now let's think about this incident, and what Lee might have been trying to say by it.

One of my favorite moments in "Malcolm X" occurs when Malcolm goes to speak at Harvard, and as he enters the lecture hall, is met by a single (meaning lone) young woman, white, pretty, blonde, who asserts that she has read everything Malcolm has written, believes it, and wants to know how she can help. Malcolm's reply is terse: "You can't." He walks straight by her and leaves her, at a loss, her well-meaning bubble punctured and deflated, staring after him.

In a previous post, I talked about how whatever Lee may think of White people, what he can't stand are White people who think they can be honorary Black people. No matter how good this Radcliffe student's intentions, she still cannot do for Black people what in Malcolm's and Lee's views Blacks have to do for themselves, and it is presumptuous of her to think so, to think she can learn about the Black experience by reading about it, without having to go through the discomfort of living it.

Even worse, in Lee's view, it would seem, are those Whites who sympathize with Blacks to the extent that they see it as subversive and cool, from those in the 60's who went to Black Panther rallies to irk suburban parents (or a parental System), to kids today who wear baggy pants and listen to gangsta rap for the same reason. There are also those who identify with certain Black icons who have crossed over and succeeded, but have no sympathy for Blacks in general. They say, "Of course I like Black people. I love Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods and Aretha Franklin, etc. I listen to jazz and

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blues and rap. I am immersed in Black culture!"

This is what Lee is trying to avoid. If you liked my movie, he wants to say, go out and live it. I am not here for your amusement or to soothe any guilt you might feel. I'm not here so you can get my autograph and take it home and say to your friends, hey, I met Spike Lee!! Although he has seen his movies as educational experiences, substituting for reading or classes, he does not seem to think seeing them substitutes in itself for taking action, but only helps lead to taking action.

Lee has resolutely avoided being coopted into the mainstream culture; if he is going into the mainstream, his actions seem to say, he is bringing Black people with him, and through the front door. Since he has become "cool" to White audiences and accepted, I am sure he has had thousands of offers to direct or act in mainstream movies, meaning White ones, in which Blacks are relegated to supporting roles or at least Black ones, one-dimensional characters whose Blackness is their only characteristic. That he has refused is to his credit. He does not deny Whites fully realized leading roles ("Clockers", "Jungle Fever"). But he is not going to let his Black artwork be taken over by the White mainstream the way all of (Black-created) popular music has, and he is not going to be accepted and admired but only in a non-management role, the way Black athletes are in sports. For movies such as "Do the Right Thing" and "Jungle Fever", he wants White people to see them, but go away irked or uncomfortable, not telling him how wonderful he is and begging his autograph, because that means that they did not get the movies. I could go on. And it's true, to some extent, this moral stance has been undercut by his shameless merchandizing of the "X" logo to whomever would buy it, regardless of skin color. He would say that he needed the money, that if he could get funding the way White people can, he would not have to do these things, but making the movie was more important. And it's true, his actions in the incident discussed may seem rude, even for teaching a lesson. But I think it is important to look at the lesson he was trying to teach as well as the way he did it.

Now, in the interests of full disclosure, I should say what I imagine is pretty obvious, that I am a White person, a European-American. (Well, not by some people's definitions, but let's let that go. By the way, if I have offended anyone by my use of the terms White and Black, capitalized, it just takes an awfully long time to type "European- or African-American", and I don't want any confusion with black and white, colors with other connotations. For me, Chris Rock may be Black comedy, but "Brazil" is still black comedy.) In fact, I am a member of an ethnic group about which Lee and other Black figures have said some unpleasant things. So it might even be said that I am taking the side I am out of self-hatred or the same sorts of false identification I have just been describing and decrying.

But this disclosure brings me to another point, the parallel theme in this thread, as to whether an artist's known characteristics or character flaws color his or her work and should determine our reaction to it. And I have taken the position that it they do and should. However, the subsequent debate on this matter has tended to take all-or-nothing, binary, digital stances, and I favor a more analog, fuzzy logical one. For instance, Jabari said that after reading about Miles Davis' abuse of women, he stopped listening to his music, and Steve, after first denying that outside knowledge affected artistic enjoyment, asserted that after hearing Janeane Garafalo's pornophobia ('misoporny' -- I am making these words up, from the Greek root "porne", prostitute) on TV, he will never watch her again. Now, what I said before was that since an artist's personal views may color his or her art, it is

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important to be aware of those views in judging that art, to ask oneself what effects those views might have had on the art. But the presence of those views, however woven in or encoded, need not ruin the artist's entire oeuvre or any individual work even. We can still attempt to separate the technical aspects we may admire, or even much of the thematic material, as long as we keep asking ourselves what is really behind it. Steve could still like Janeane except when she was talking about prostitution. Unless, of course, he is simply boycotting, for symbolic reasons, saying, "Because of her stance on this issue, I will not give her any money by buying tickets to her movies. (perhaps even, I cannot, in good conscience, do so.)" This is like saying to oneself, because of what someone once said in a certain post, I will never read his posts again. This is very different from saying, because I know this person says stupid things, and I do not want to get his stupid ideas into my head, I will not read him, or rather, I will open his posts, but stop reading as soon as I see any signs of stupidity. In the former case, unless the poster checks carefully who is reading him (and unreadng before reading will of course allow cheating), he will never know or care. But perhaps the moral stance only matters to the boycotter, proves something to himself (or to those he proudly tells about it.) It's hard to send an artist a message by withholding a purchase (unless lots of other people, spontaneously or organized, do the same.) And you miss out on some possibly great art (if it can be great, mixed in with the evil stuff. Just as, though possibly underpaid, overworked labor simply makes worse shoes than well-fed health-benefited americans, I happen to like my new Nike running shoes. I should run in them to the next protest. But one could say that artists and shoemakers alike only understand being hit in the pocketbook. Criticize us, protest us, all you like, as long as you buy our stuff....) Again, this all or nothing thinking is tragic. Isn't there a middle ground, a more effective means to send a message?

Which is why Sirin's call for fora in which art consumers can give feedback to art producers, feedback modulated to the nature of the complaint, makes so much sense. Let us not approve absolutely when things are above some threshold of good, or disapprove absolutely when they are above some threshold of bad (or any other characteristic on a continuum) but rather approve TO THE EXTENT and PROPORTION they are good, and DISAPPROVE to the EXTENT AND PROPORTION THEY ARE BAD. In politics, we can only vote yes or no, either keep Bill Clinton for the good he has done (and the evil the alternative would do) or reject him for the evil and sleaze, but not in our art choices. Which is what is great about book readings, online chats with authors, call in shows. Of course, there are probably far more consumers who have something to say back to the producers than producers who care, due to the indirect process by which feedback turns into payback. I don't know of any local moviemakers reading this conference for our opinions, though I sometimes suspect Eva Luna is really Coppola and I know you all suspect I am Joan Chen. But it would be really nice if instead of cutting off our noses to spite our faces, we could just get nose jobs.

Message 25 5/14/98 12:11 AM
Subject: Re: She's Just a Little Tease....
From: terrible person
To: film

I was very disappointed to miss meeting the famous Eva Luna in person and to

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have her sign the picture of her topless on the cover of my copy of her new book, "Femme Fatale: In Praise of Dangerous Women" (which I enjoyed almost as much as her 1995 memoir, "Musty TV Nation"), at a reading scheduled for A Clean Well Lit Place For Lit. this past week. However, apparently she and promotional tour mate Elizabeth Wurtzel had a bit of a disagreement, forcing the event's cancellation. It just shows the dangers of concentrating too much aggressive femininity in one clean well lit place. I am sure we all wish Elizabeth the best of luck for a speedy recovery.

Message 23 5/15/98 8:15 AM

Subject: Re(14): Tarantino: Racist Joke, Punches Black Woman
From: terrible person
To: film

Sirin N writes:

Steve Omlid writes:

Sirin N writes:

you'd also have a lot less shoes to choose from, if you held nike accountable for their treatment of workers abroad. and what a drag that would be.

So in other words, acting like a jerk in public is comparable to brutal economic exploitation? That's just a touch lacking in perspective.

yes yes. my fault for failing to anticipate this easy parry.

. the question to ask is whether there is any effective difference, in this regard, between 'art' and other commodities. unfortunately, this question seems bound to plunge the discussion into a murky consideration of 'what is art' -- to be avoided at all costs.

terry is here, though, perhaps the best equipped of us all to brave such dark terrain (and just loopy enough to try).

shall I succumb to the sirin song of temptation and be lured onto the wracking, wrecking rocks and shallow shoals (Ian, I hope) of debate? and loopy? do you think me out of the loop, or thrown for one? I'll fly loops around you. get out your loupe and check my argument for loopholes, and if you find any, I'll stand and deliver and give over all my lupines. homo homini lupus, and we'll see who shows more grit.

now, in your zeal to suck up to steve, you conceded a lack of perspective. I don't agree; as far as I was concerned, you were making an analogy among two actions and two reactions, not a comparison. (everyone remember these things from the SAT's?) it may seem weird to compare a canoe to an aircraft carrier, for instance, but to say "a canoe is to a pond what an aircraft carrier is to the Persian Gulf (or the Caspian Sea)" makes perfect sense.

But on the other comparison, your belt does not go through all the loops. It is ludicrous to try to equate commodities like art with those like food, shelter, clothing, sex, etc. I mean, none of the last named are really necessities. In this overweight age, where manufactured food provides no real nutrition anyway, food's only functions are emotional, providing fun and comfort (oh and social, giving us something to gather round and talk about.)

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the same with clothes and shelter -- in this climate, who needs to cover our bodies with cloth or our heads with roofs except for the emotional significance. and sex, well -- everyone knows no one does that except for the emotion. now, often we show our approval for these things by actually buying them, paying money to the farmers, tailors, builders, sex workers, who bring them to us. but just as often, there is no direct way of showing our approval, often, these commodities are free. all we can give back to the amaker is our approval. by eating his food, we give the farmer our approval, and that is enough for him, whether we say so or not.

art, on the other hand, is an absolute necessity -- we can't live without it. how else would we cover our walls, fill our spaces, fill our time, fill our minds?? it's not as if we have any emotional connection to art. and we always pay for it directly, at the box office or the museum or the record store. we just consume it and use it up and excrete it. but we definitely need it, which can't be said about other commodities.

so, is that clear?

I would write more, and of course, I usually do, but I am too upset about Frank. and I am trying to concentrate -- got an application in at the orange juice factory -- on making my style as concentrated as yours.

terrible person

>

Message 22 5/14/98 12:33 AM
Subject: Re(5): Auntie
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Any N. Body writes:

The Grim Reaper now is almost always depicted as male but just because that particular aspect of death is male maybe :)

wait, the Grim Reaper is a skeleton. unless you do pelvic measurements, and who wants to get that close or under that robe, how are you going to tell?

as for the connection of sex and death, remember how many of our ancestor and cousin animals (auntie's children?) die very soon after the reproductive act, their purpose in life fulfilled. on the other hand, for the species as a whole, sex negates death, by perpetuating it. let's call it a union of opposites....

but am I the only one who at the moment of greatest pleasure in the sex act feels as if he is about to die?

it's the end of the world feeling in miniature; at the end of the world, we get the answers. so when we get the answers to life's mysteries, it feels like the end.

and I imagine human beings have felt this way since they started telling stories.

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terrible person

Message 16 5/14/98 6:03 PM
Subject: Re(3): She's Just a Little Tease....
From: terrible person
To: film

Evil Eva (Destruction?) Luna EvaLuates me and gets mediEval:
And terry, I am not Francis Ford Coppola, and any resemblance you find between us is, frankly, offensive.

Ok, ok, sorry. You're right. Of course. Since I am the one who goes on way too long about the Apocalypse, it is obvious that *I* am really secretly Coppola and YOU are Joan Chen.

More seriously, I was interested in your EvaLutionary approach to femmes fatales. In the study of anything that has evolved, from homo sapiens to machine guns to jazz and rock, there are always early prototypes about which -ologists of that field argue, is it a "true" whatever and often decide, no, it's an early form that is not quite there, has some of the characteristics but not all the necessary ones, does not quite meet the definition yet.

What interests me about femme fatales is the classification that can be made based on their motivations and how those motivations are perceived, how well they are perceived. In most films noirs, narrated or at least seen from the point of view of a male protagonist, the woman is just a force of nature, a part of the environment, sent to punish him for his lust and greed and cowardice. We never see her except through the protagonist's eyes; as far as he is (and thus, we are) concerned, she is simply his personal nemesis, existing only for him (like the door to the Law in the Kafka story), and if she is helping herself or hurting anyone else in the process, that seems like a cover story. There are far fewer examples of the latter type, those who are characters, the main characters, in themselves, and communicate their motives directly to the audience. They may have several victims in a grander scheme and the story is not just about the ruination of one of them, nor is the story told from the point of view of just one of them.

Now, Eva Luna is going to kill me for this -- hear that sound? kind of metal on metal? "slank! slank! slank! it's her sharpening the knife -- or maybe filing her nails while they're dragging the lake -- but I haven't seen the movies she mentioned or most of the classic films noirs. So I will have to cite two recent movies which came out fairly close to one another in 1994: "Romeo Is Bleeding" (ok, ok, I know I cite this all the time. Maybe I just have bleeding on the mind. So shoot me after Eva Luna gets through knifing me. But I love this movie) and "The Last Seduction". In the first, although we know something of hitwoman from hell Mona Demarkov's (Lena Olin) desire to be the underboss herself, but she is much more talked about than shown. Her seeming superhuman abilities, and corrupt detective Jack Grimaldi's (Gary Oldman) great failings as a person, combine to give the impression that she is some sort of supernatural creature, an angel of death, sent expressly to torment him. And she is only on screen when Jack sees her (with one brief exception) -- she could almost be a figment of his imagination, not existing outside him. On the other hand, Wendy (Linda Fiorentino) in "The Last Seduction" is often on screen alone, at the beginning, at the end, and often in between, not just seen by the men whose lives she is ruining. She is the focus of audience attention. I know that a lot of this can be attributed to

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

the theorized "male gaze" of the cinema, that everything onscreen is essentially from a male point of view, or that in mysteries, things are only seen as the investigator finds them out. But the question is, is Wendy a true femme fatale? By the definition? Or is she too rational and understandable?

Also, I wonder, Eva Luna, how you would fit into your picture women who seduce women -- not sexually so much, but through friendship or charisma. I am thinking of movies like "Single White Female", or the New Zealand film "Crush" (with Marcia Gay Harden as an out of control city woman who seems very glamorous to a plain teenager), or the title character of "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie", who seduces an entire class of girls (as well as a number of other people.)

terrible person (terrible, not fatal, and doesn't much like that Velvets with Nico song)

Message 15 5/14/98 6:18 PM

Subject: Re(14): Tarantino: Racist Joke, Punches Black Woman

From: terrible person

To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

terrible person writes:

Steve, after first denying that outside knowledge affected artistic enjoyment, asserted that after hearing Janeane Garafalo's pornaphobia ("misoporny" -- I am making these words up, from the Greek root "porne", prostitute) on TV, he will never watch her again.

Ummm....read my post again, Terry.

Oops. Glad that I still follow the rule that Bill Offutt, my high school AP History teacher, inculcated: never have just one piece of evidence or example. And my argument works just as well using your post as an example of the extreme of ignoring the artist's life in judging her art, in contrast to Jabari's extreme of condemnation of art based on life, as when I used it as an example something similar for comparison. (If you don't agree, read my post again.) Why can't you put all your replies together in one huge post where they're easier to keep track of instead of spreading them among a bunch of small readable ones?

terrible person (who wants stir-fry when you can have a nice big steak?)

> 14

Message 14 (Unsent)

Subject: Re(14): Powder Question: WasTarantino....

From: terrible person

To: film

John Barrymore writes:

I would like to ask you Terry and Steve, and everyone else, a question. That is what if a good, or great, artist has done something that is way beyond Lee's refusal to sign autographs or Cameron's arrogance? Specifically, how do you folks feel about the situation with director Victor Salva?

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well, I was totally unfamiliar with the Victor Salva situation until your post; I vaguely remember the film coming out, but I had no great interest in seeing it. so my reply on this will be purely hypothetical.

But I imagine I would probably have responded, or would hope I would have responded, in much the same way I reacted to your post. When I saw it, I said to myself, "There is a post by Barrymore, whose online behavior towards myself and others I have often found offensive." (It is a little harder to separate online "art" from online "life" than their real counterparts, since all we do here, all we have to judge each other on, is create posts; they are thus both "art" and "life".) I could simply have ignored the post. But perhaps the title, or the context in the thread, seemed interesting, so I began to read it. I was prepared to be offended, or bored; I was looking not only for obvious insults or bigotry, but for more subtle ones that I could only catch through my previous knowledge of what the author is like. But in the end, I was pleasantly surprised. After getting a good laugh at the beginning, I found that Barrymore had written a post that seemed to be thoughtful, clear, relevant, and interesting. So I will show my approval for it by responding in the first place and complimenting it as I just did. In the future, I might be less and less likely to ignore Barrymore entirely, more and more likely to read him and respond, and to read with less and less suspicion, as long as the posts remain ontopic rather than offensive. If I found them to have reverted, I would say so, as I have up until now.

Now, Salva, apparently, served his sentence and was released, and has, in theory, paid his debt to society. If he owes a debt to the young man whom he abused, he should pay it -- their are civil court actions that can be brought. I guess he would assert now that he has repented and changed and it is up to him to prove it. We can monitor him closely in both life and work. If his films seem to promote the idea that abuse of children is ok, we should walk out of them and demand our money back. If on the other hand they seem to convey the idea that abuse of children is bad and that those who do it should be sorry, all right. I'll stay in the theatre. I think it is quite appropriate for the victim to bring the crime to our attention, so that we can make our own choices on the basis described above. I don't think he has the right to demand we boycott the film.

As for Polanski, well, I like Chinatown as much as anyone so this is hard. And in this movie the villain is someone who has already had sex with one teenager (his daughter, no less) and plans to have it with another (also his daughter!!) Of course, he's the VILLAIN. But also, this movie was made before Polanski's alleged (? conceded? admitted?) crime. I have not seen many other Polanski films. (See, it is useful to be a film illiterate sometimes, gets you out of all sorts of questions.)

Message 12 5/14/98 7:14 PM
Subject: Re(8): Auntie
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

when I heard of the Indian nuclear testing, all I could think of was how at the first atomic test in New Mexico in 1945, J. Robert Oppenheimer, awed by his terrible creation, quoted the line spoken by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "Now I am become Death, the shatterer of worlds." Since presumably the Indians would be familiar with this line (I mean, it just happened that Oppie was a

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Sanskrit scholar as well as a physicist), I wonder if they got a smile out of thinking of it. One other nice thing about the Indians testing nukes is that they probably drew from their incredibly rich mythology in code-naming them after demons and gods of destruction. They already call their missiles Agni, the fire-god. I am sure they did a lot better than "Fat Man" and "Little Boy".

Which reminds me, speaking of nuclear things, doesn't it seem odd that in a culture in which destruction is everywhere and there are so many ways to die, as in Riddley Walker, that death should be personified as a woman with whom one has sex?

Message 9 5/15/98 7:36 PM
Subject: Re(9): Grrrrrrr!
From: terrible person
To: film

J.Mark Andrus writes:

Nine writes:

It sounds like you need a lesson in hexing the movie theater seat in front of you. I have had good results with the following: tap the seat in front of you with your index finger three times while saying, "No fuzzies, no fuzzies, no fuzzies." That's for bighaired people. Now tap three times again and say, "No tall guys, no tall guys, no tall guys." That's all there is to it.

Urinating on the seat(s) in front of you would work even better.

I would imagine that Nine's plan might work simply because most people don't want to sit too close to someone who appears to be talking to his or herself.

Incidentally, you know that tall guy you don't want sitting in front of you? I AM that tall guy. Why don't you just bring a phone book to sit on?

terrible person

> 7

Message 7 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(11): Grrrrrrr!
From: terrible person
To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

terrible person writes:

Incidentally, you know that tall guy you don't want sitting in front of you? I AM that tall guy.

So am I. So stop oppressing me by telling me to scrunch down, you altitudists.

the proper term is "height-negative people".

>

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
Message 3 5/16/98 12:05 PM
Subject: Re(9): Auntie
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

and, I might add a thought that seems possible but unlikely to this etymologist, that the personification of death as Auntie may be in some way related to the personification, at least in the common phrase, of surrender as "Uncle".

Message 97 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(16): Tarantino: Racist Joke, Punches Black Woman
From: terrible person
To: film

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
terrible person writes in reference to Sirin:
now, in your zeal to suck up to steve

Yes, terry, once again, Sirin is caught sucking up to Steve. It really is getting to be predictable, isn't it?

Now if only the rest of your post had been as sarcastic....then I would have really been amused.

Message 95 5/17/98 1:11 AM
Subject: That's just what they want us to think!!
From: terrible person
To: film

Well, I just saw "The Spanish Prisoner", and I am now going to discuss it, as God and more importantly, the moderator are my witnesses (the moderator being more important since I actually believe in Her), I will now discuss it without revealing anything about the ending whatsoever. Really. Read without fear. Because of the unique nature of this movie, it can be discussed in great detail without revealing anything whatsoever.

See, this is another of those con movies (no, not like "cool hand luke", but like "HOUse of Games" or "The Game" -- not like my favorite old "Mission: Impossible" episodes, where the audience knew who the good guys were even if the bad guys did not) in which, just when you think you have figured it out (or just when the victim of the con thinks he or she has figured it out) that turns out all to have been part of the con, and when he and we have made the next step, then that too is part of the con, and the movie makers and the villains always stay one step ahead, like the tortoise in front of Achilles in one version of Zeno's paradox. Of course this does help us to sympathize with the connee (from whose point of view the whole story is told.) But the whole thing becomes very unsatisfying, with a taste that though crisp, is meager and hollow (like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist, with a flavor of will o' the wisp.) Now, I love a good mystery as much as anyone. And if I can figure out the mystery at the same time or a little before the detective does, well, that's ok, but I like it even better if the fillmmakers distract me with style, the way a sleight-of-hand artist distracts, only temporarily, so that at the end, when the solution is finally revealed, I hit myself upside the head with my open palm and think "D'oh!!!! Am I stupid or what? why didn't I

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realize that? Some detective I'm going to be! And all the clues were right there!!" I mean, heck, I must be the only person on the planet who was surprised at the ending of "Presumed Innocent" -- and who enjoyed being so as well!!! But this can only work when there are several possible suspects (when it's vague.) As opposed to when it is simply ambiguous, when there are exactly two exactly equal possibilities, that either all these people are good, or all of them are bad, but it is impossible to tell by the information given which it is. That hints are dropped that is one alternative is a sure indication that it is the other but this itself is a hint. I feel like Vezzini (Wallace Shawn) in "The Princess Bride", trying to decide which glass to drink. Or I feel as I do when I am dealing with someone who does not want to seem vulnerable and thinks I don't either and will disavow their feelings as sarcasm or irony no matter what they say. Or I feel as I sometimes do here, talking to someone who might be lying about something significant about themselves or whether I have talked to them before, and they say something that sounds like a sure indication one way or the other but then I think to myself, they would never be so stupid as to give themselves away like that, would they? or are they expecting that this is what I would think and counting on it? or are they expecting me to guess THAT and staying one step ahead? Now, the only way out of this is to get out of the system and actually find someone who knows this person in reality. (though are THEY even trustworthy? a whole other can of worms.) And Vezzini's method of escaping the system was the "what's that over there?" trick. But there is no way to escape the system of the movie, unless perhaps you know an awful lot about the psychology of the creators or have read the book or something.

also, in these con job movies how do the con men always know EXACTLY how the mark will react? I mean, there are a bunch of possible reactions, and the one they want is a possible one, but nothing can really be guaranteed even with the best force....I mean, I am about as predictable as they come -- I'll bet you all anticipated every word of this post -- but even *I* am not THAT predictable!! for instance, I'll bet no one would have anticipated that I actually thought Barrymore's "powder" post was quite good, would they? or am I being sarcastic?

So I was not that impressed with the plot. Nothing that wasn't in Mamet's earlier "House of Games" with his earlier squeeze Lindsay Crouse. Not that the current squeeze, rebecca Pidgeon, was not a fine bird, despite all the very stilted and artificial sounding dialogue she was given. (If you are thinking the obvious, well, it would not be THAT obvious, would it?) the rest of the cast was good -- campbell scott makes an appealing leading man, and steve martin handles drama so well I wish he would do more of it -- again despite the stilted, unrealistic dialogue. every character had a huge stock of aphorisms and things their dads used to tell them. finally, the decor was a bit odd -- it was definitely the '90's, but a lot of it seemed to date from the 30's, "brazil" retro style. maybe trying to make it a film noir or something.....

I was also a bit surprised that the title was actually explained in the movie, contrary to mamet habit.

would everyone agree to my nomination of David mamet to play Otto octavius, alias Dr. octopus, in the spiderman movie that is not going to happen?

I ended up sitting in front of some short people but as we say on earth, c'est

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la vie. they could have moved in front of me, as Matt counsels, but then I mighttoo have moved, and, as in an auction, either they or I would have been screwed when we ended up way closer to the screen than we wanted to be.

terrible person (really expected another Almodovar bondage flick)

Message 94 5/17/98 1:27 AM
Subject: a friend of the deceased
From: terrible person
To: film

sneaked into this after "the spanish prisoner". perhaps that is not the word -- an old friend was ushering and cared not what I did, and I had planned to see it anyway. I mean, I will take advantage of any way to listen to people talk Russian (ok, Ukrainian, almost the same) for two hours.

this was ok. it's about a guy in Kiev who looks like a cross between buster keaton and peter coyote and who in soviet days had a nice cushy (by soviet standards, at least) academic job but is now basically unemployed. he still lives with his drop-dead gorgeous wife who still seems to care about him though he sleeps on the couch and she screams when he opens the shower door on her and is seeing some nouveau riche guy. in desperation he hires a hit man tokill him. meanwhile he meets a really cute prostitute who likes him so much better than her usual gangster clients she does not care if he pays. later on he meets yet another really beautiful woman who likes him. must be his soulfulness. there is a lot of interesting stuff about what life is like in post-soviet Ukraine, but in general, if this film had been in english I would never have liked it as much despite all the women.

oh, and the theatre was pretty empty so I had a whole row to myself and could lie back and put my legs up on the chair in front and not block anyone's view, much as I might have liked to.

Message 93 5/17/98 1:35 AM
Subject: Re(2): a friend of the deceased
From: terrible person
To: film

Sirin N writes:

terrible person writes:

he still lives with his drop-dead gorgeous wife who still seems to care about him though he sleeps on the couch and she screams when he opens the shower door on her and is seeing some nouveau riche guy. in desperation he hires a hit man tokill him.

the plot that goes plunk.

oops. I meant he (the main character) Anatoli hires a hit man to kill him, himself, Anatoli. he is too wimpy for suicide.

isn't this also the plot of Warren Beatty's new (and favorably reviewed) "bulworth"?? Movie plots always come in paired realizations, last year volcanoes, this year big flying things in space and hiring a hitman to kill

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yourself.....

>

Message 90 5/17/98 1:47 PM
Subject: Re(2): That's just what they want us to think!!
From: terrible person
To: film

Nine writes:

terrible person writes:

But the character is the biggest patsy on the planet. I enjoyed this movie but I was bemused by the lack of any self preserving instincts on the part of our protagonist. His sincerity was a large millstone around his neck. No chance of him saving himself at the end. Bring on the paternal government force at the end to do that task.

oh, yes, d'accord. conning him was like shooting fish in a barrel. (wait, that's another movie, where female temps are possibly dangerous.) and it was not as if he was so cocky or hubristic, at least in his talents, or his smarts. he had a certain moral cockiness, an assumption that he was more moral than others, that his superiors at work must be screwing him when he would never screw them, for instance. I suppose that this was his tragic flaw, what caused awful things to happen to him and him to deserve it. but he was such a pushover -- he was just so stupid -- for the conners that it became unsatisfying. for someone who seemed to think he was morally superior he had little conception of how evil people could be. at least Lindsay Crouse's psychiatrist in "House of Games" was intellectually smarter and not so morally naive, so that it was more interesting to see her conned and she seemed to deserve what happened to her more.

And don't you think it moved very s-l-o-w-l-y? I think the first two thirds of the movie could have used some boiling down. Lots of pointlessly lingering set up.

and way too much meta-commentary by characters about how you can never trust anyone and no one is what they seem. we got the point. but Mamet has never been known for subtlety. call it inoculation or reverse psychology but it starts to ring false. it became like when people (like David Letterman) constantly make fun of themselves and put themselves down in order to preempt others from doing so, or so that they will never believe he or she is as bad as he or she claims to be -- (s)he couldn't be, could (s)he? why would (s)he tell us then? let us rather give him or her the benefit of the doubt, sympathy, etc.....now, what is neat is when, just as Penn and Teller tell you exactly how they are going to perform a trick and then proceed to perform it just as mystifyingly as if they had said a word, the explanation serving either as a distraction or at least no detraction....it's a bit like when the lone hero or antihero tells the pursuers that he is going to either break out of or break into their stronghold by direct assault, (so that the many have the advantage over the single), rather than by the expected stealth, and then proceeds to do so (as opposed to telling them he is coming in the front door then sneaking in the back while they are not looking....)....because that is the very nature of tragedy, in which characters are told exactly what is going to happen to them ("oh, yes, Mr. Oedipus, you're going to) and yet don't or can't take advantage of it....beware MacDuff, beware the thane of Fife, dismiss me, enough.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

terrible person (who is EXACTLY what he seems)

Message 89 5/17/98 5:55 PM
Subject: Re: "Delmonico's--and hurry!"
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

"Put on your Sunday clothes when you feel down and out...
We'll go downtown and have our picture took...
We'll SEE the shows
at DelMONico's
and we'll DO the town
in a whirl
and we won't come back until we've kissed a girl!!!"

-- approximate quotation from "Put on your Sunday clothes" from the musical "Hello, Dolly", a song whose rendition by some people from my summer theatre program in 1983 is still one of the greatest live musical performances I have ever seen.....

Delmonico's was a famous restaurant in Gay 90's (the first Gay 90's)/turn of the century New York. If it exists today, I think it is a new one in tribute to the old. I think this was another of Addams' "ghost" or "anachronism" cartoons: here is a renegade from 50 years before suddenly materializing in the New York of the 40's, hurrying to a place that does not exist anymore. Imagine a cartoon showing a bearded 49er (the miners, not the team) disembarking at the modern ferry building and racing through Market St. traffic shouting "quick, quick, I've got to get to the gold fields before they give out!!!"

Maybe it's not that funny. Et Homerus aliquando dormitat.

I love that song though. Such energy. Whenever I pass by an Andronico's supermarket I think of it. "We'll SEE the shows at anDRONico's....". Better than thinking of Shakespeare's "Titus Andronicus", especially in a food context.

terrible person (a definite anachronism)

Message 88 5/17/98 6:00 PM
Subject: Re(3): That's just what they want us to think!!
From: terrible person
To: film

just can't say enough about this topic:

conspiracy theorists, however, will always defeat your attempts to out-argue them by going outside the system. they will simply expand the system to include whatever proof you offer as part of the system. in other words, if you cite a report in a publication that proves them wrong, then that writer and publication are of course part of the conspiracy. any evidence against the conspiracy was planted by the conspirators to put you off the scent. any suggestions that there may not have been a God who created everything from scratch 6000 years ago, such as the fossils of innumerable extinct creatures

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

which apparently date hundreds of thousands of years older than that, are just placed by this supposed God to test our faith. Even if you try to argue the apparent contradictions within the system, these are just proof of the system's inscrutability, its existence beyond our poor capacity to understand.

When David Letterman makes a joke that falls flat, he immediately turns it into a meta-joke, a joke about jokes. he acts as if the apparent stupidity of the joke, and not the joke itself, was the real joke. when people catch on and begin making fun of his meta-jokes, trying to point out that he is more stupid than he may realize and that the jokes about jokes are now falling flat (and after all, it is a lot easier to make fun of someone, especially yourself, who makes dumb jokes, than to come up with clever ones), he can simply move on to meta-meta-jokes, making fun of his habit of making fun of himself, and always staying a step ahead. such is the life of the postmodern comic. until, of course, we get tired of him.

did I say that Mamet was "mannered"? that was the word I was looking for, "mannered". not "ill-mannered", though that too sometimes. and not "manly", though he certainly would like to think so. "mannered". which in itself does not bother me, but sometimes I wish he'd let his characters finish a sentence or not repeat the same one endlessly. ok. no more. 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Message 85 5/17/98 10:26 PM
Subject: Re(12): Auntie
From: Heyer
To: terrible person

Oh, the interesting point was the one about "uncle" being used to mean surrender.

Sorry I dropped my end of the conversation in the Auntie thread. I suddenly realized I'd run out of things to say. Also, I get worried about the amount I post in that conference. Enthusiasm is one thing, monopolizing the conversation is another.

H.

Message 81 5/18/98 9:44 PM
Subject: Re(5): That's just what they want us to think!!
From: terrible person
To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

terrible person writes:

When David Letterman makes a joke that falls flat, he immediately turns it into a meta-joke, a joke about jokes. he acts as if the apparent stupidity of the joke, and not the joke itself, was the real joke. when people catch on and begin making fun of his meta-jokes, trying to point out that he is more stupid than he may realize and that the jokes about jokes are now falling flat (and after all, it is a lot easier to make fun of someone, especially yourself, who makes dumb jokes, than to come up with clever ones), he can simply move on to meta-meta-jokes, making fun of his habit of making fun of himself, and always staying a step ahead. such is the life of the postmodern comic. until, of course, we get tired of him.

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I don't know that you could call that "postmodern", being that it's a device that's been used by comics since (I would guess) the dawn of comedy - namely, turning the joke on itself in an attempt to be funny even when bombing. The modern master of it, it seems to me, isn't Letterman (although I do like him a lot), but his idol and mentor, Johnny Carson. Carson used to be funnier when he was bombing than when his material worked. And I think that's fine. It's a legitimate subject of comedy - the absurdity of the joke itself, or the situation of being there joking when the jokes just aren't funny.

I never used to laugh harder at Carson than when he was standing there in a silly costume, suffering through lines that just weren't working, sharing his pain with his audience with just a look, getting laughs on pure attitude. I think there's something pretty great about it. Most great comedians - and I would call Letterman a great TV comic, at least - can do it. Letterman can, but not as well as the master - Carson. (Indeed, I think that Carson was to the talk show what Sinatra was to the old-style pop song - the Chairman of the Friggin' Board. Letterman would be the first to tell you that.)

And as for "making fun of someone", well, most comics do that too, in one form or another. It's kind of the basis of a lot of comedy, and one of the most directly useful things it can do besides entertain - make fun of someone who deserves to be made fun of.

oh yes, of course (is that a sort of cooption, a claim that everything you had said I had already thought of, included in the conspiracy?) the term post-modern is a recent one for a phenomenon that dates at least to Greek comedy if not earlier, which is the awareness and acknowledgement by a work of art that is actually a work of art, done most often by transcending and breaking (even if simply by commenting on) the conventions of the genre. uh oh, the fieb has a knife too, a pointy daggery one. but she does not keep it in her face. let me get her even angrier by introducing the terms "straightforward" or "naive" or "first-order" (as opposed to "second-order", or "meta-art") to refer to art or whatever that is not "post-modern", that stays within the conventions, and in effect, pretends to be reality, not art. now, I have no problem with comedians making fun of themselves with meta-jokes when their first-order jokes bomb. I feel as bad for them as anyone. I mean, it's not as if anyone gets MY jokes. what does bother me is when I have the feeling that they wrote the naive jokes not to have any chance of being funny in themselves, but simply to bomb to furnish fodder for their meta-jokes. It's just too easy. It's setting up a straw man -- yourself, and it is too easy to make fun of yourself because you know exactly what you are going to say or can control it to make it an easy target. It's as if someone online, in order to impress all with his or her arguing skills, set up another alias under which to post all sorts of fallacious arguments, just so the main identity could elegantly skewer them. (And no, contrary to what you might think, I am not just such an alias set up by Sirin N just for this purpose.) It's as if a huge, superpowerful country's government set up some little country as a danger, even subsidizing its military to make it a credible threat, just so that it could defeat it in a jingoistic war and enhance its stature at home and abroad. (That would never happen, would it?) Nothing drives a comedian nuts faster than when a public figure tries to be funny; they prefer them just to go about their business and do their normal thing, which will furnish ample basis for humor. I want the comedian to admit that he was trying to be funny in the first place when he failed. I don't want him to act as if he was far too cool for that sort of conventional humor anyway,

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and would only make fun of himself for attempting it. I don't know about Carson; I never watched him much. But I do feel that Letterman has overused the self-mocking gimmick so severely that it has become an escape for him from the real labor of being conventionally funny.

Of course making fun is at the root of comedy. (Actually, do you think you could quote me a source on that? I kind of doubt it.) But you have to make fun of things outside your control. Now, it seems sometimes that when Letterman makes fun of his own jokes he is making fun of his own joke writers. But they are outside him, someone different; he does not have the same sort of control over them that he has over himself. He cannot set them up the same (unsatisfying) way he sets himself up. But to have standing to make fun of something, you have to admit you have no control over it. Otherwise, there is no reason for it to be absurd -- why not just change it, since you control it?

As for the rest of what you said, including a paean to Carson whom I never really watched, know little about and therefore did not criticize, if I were to answer it I would just be repeating what I said in the previous post. I know that has never stopped me before, but sometimes I get tired. Sometimes I feel like adopting your tactic, with modifications, and posting replies consisting mainly of "What *I* said."

terrible person

Message 80 (Unsent)
Subject: Re: I await with fear and loathing
From: terrible person
To: film

Eva Luna writes:

The previews for "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" have got me thinking I was right. Terry Gilliam's gonna fuck it up. What I loved so much about the book was how it made the drug induced incidents seem so creepily real, like it was all happening in a slightly skewed parallel universe. The previews are making it look like it's all just plain unrealistic and farcial. It looks almost as bad as an Oliver Stone movie.

I think Alex Cox was the guy born to direct the movie, but for whatever reason he left the project shortly after filming began. If you look at his other movies you can see that he was a master of making realistic surrealism. Moments in "Sid and Nancy" (Sid scaring the kids at the end, the kiss through raining garbage in an alley, the burning of the hotel room) and all of "Repo-Man" were all just practice for "Fear and Loathing." But alas, it's been put in the hands of a director who insists on making everything look patently unrealistic.....

I think he would have done fine with "The Watchmen," but I wish he'd never gotten his hands on "Fear and Loathing".....

Message 77 5/18/98 6:07 PM
Subject: Re(9): Auntie
From: terrible person

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: Folk Culture

the Indians did not disappoint me. according to the front page of today's New York Times:

"The scientists...gave technical details of a bomb code-named Shakti-1, after a Hindi word for a power commonly used when referring to the most potent of the Hindu gods."

But remember, the first U.S. test in New Mexico was code-named...."Trinity".

Call this folklore in action.

Message 72 5/18/98 10:21 PM

Subject: Re(7): I await with fear and loathing

From: terrible person

To: film

I really like the idea of discussing the previews of movies as if they were as important as the movies themselves; they are indeed an art form in themselves, with their own very specific creativity-liberating parameters. as one of those people who prefers just looking at thumbnails to double-clicking on them to expand, and eating instant soup and sucking on frozen concentrated orange juice to adding the water, I find that most previews are far better than the real thing. I have now seen the "Fear and Loathing" preview several times, a result of my weekend movie double-dipping. I will continue to respect Johnny Depp's willingness to attempt strange and unglamorous roles; I wonder if Leonardo Dicaprio will be doing the same in a few years. and Benicio Del Toro, it would appear, should be the Academy's unanimous choice for the Robert Deniro/Raging Bull special prize for weight gain for a role. Why didn't they just get Weird Al Yankovic?

as for the issue of who would have been more competent to direct the film, I agree that Terry Gilliam, despite his cool first name, has the endorsements on his license for complete fantasy, or for situations in which insanity, or notions beyond all comprehension such as time travel, produce a feeling of departure from reality, while Alex Cox, or perhaps David Cronenberg ("naked lunch") or Adrian Lyne (he did "jacob's ladder", right?) are more qualified to realize onscreen the effects of various plant alkaloids on someone who otherwise dwells in a reality fairly recognizable to us.

now can someone define for me just what surreal means? is the Dali Lama here? "Brazil" is set "somewhere in the 20th century" in an unidentified everycity. "sid and nancy" is set most definitely in London, New York, and various places in the american south. It contains characters drawn from real life and bearing their names, "sid vicious", "nancy spongeon", "malcolm maclaren", "john lydon". (it also contains other characters, such as "rockhead", whom I presume to be modeled fairly literally on actual people, their names having beenchanged for legal reasons. though on the other hand, they may be complete composites, metaphors. which brings me to...) I don't know anyone named Sam Lowry. I have never heard of anyone named Sam Lowry. I have never read about the Ministry of Information in the newspaper. I have known a lot of people LIKE Sam Lowry. I have known of many institutions LIKE the M.O.I. employing genial torturers LIKE Jack Lint. It's a bit like Lewis Carroll's (wait, should I be quoting him? he was a pedophile and expressed it, even endorsed

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it, in his books. but he made such great puns!!!) conundrum of the two clocks, one which is always five minutes slow and the other which does not run at all, showing always the same time. which, he asks, keeps better time? the broken one, of course, since it is right twice a day, the slow one is never right.

"sid and nancy" touches literal reality at many points, is right many times a day. "brazil" is only right metaphorically. now, I am a big fan of metaphor. I personally tend to enjoy a story whose characters are representative rather than literal at least as much as one whose characters (and situations, etc.) are literal but not necessarily representative. (Sid and nancy, and "sid and nancy", could be representative, or, like the guy who leaps on the hand grenade that doesn't go off, they could be a unique case from which we can draw no lesson about the universe in general.) and I would argue with anyone who said that either the metaphoric or the literal style was more "real" than the other. and each of these styles has its place, as does each director associated with each style. but I would tend to agree with those who say that a story based somewhat on a real (literal) person, set in a real(literal) city in a real(literal) year, is more the bailiwick of a director associated with literalism than one associated with metaphor. And that would be Alex Cox. Besides, I'm really tired of Gilliam's habit of making mental look like a fun blessing; I prefer Cox's style of showing that it generally gets you killed.

Message 67 5/19/98 4:28 PM
Subject: Re(3): Psycho Leo
From: terrible person
To: film

Karin Shaw writes:

However, it would be interesting to see Leo as Bateman...

Isn't he a little young? And is George Clooney that bad?

Robin, maybe.

Message 57 5/20/98 7:39 PM
Subject: Re(12): Auntie
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

pierre le fou writes:

An example: the Navy wanted to name a nuclear sub "Corpus Christi." The Catholic Church, quite rightly, threw a shit fit, and said, "no fucking way you are naming a submarine whose sole purpose is to bring about the end of the world 'Body of Christ.'"

The Navy, in all sincerity, replied, "But we name all our nuclear subs after cities. We're not blaspheming, we're just honoring the city of Corpus Christi. So it's not a problem, right?"

If you think about it, I mean, if you're a catholic and really take things seriously, shouldn't you be a bit upset that the Texans named a city after the body of Christ? (Nothing against Texans -- I mean, that anyone would do so.) So I can't really see how they thought that the Navy using the name is all

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that more blasphemy (and if it's blasphemy, I hope it's a blast for the rest of you too.)

Heyer (or heyer's spouse) is right, now that I think of it, about the origin of the Trinity site. As with the submarine, one still wonders what they were doing calling a bomb that, or rather, what they are doing calling a place in the middle of the desert Trinity. I mean, a really nice caribbean island is one thing, but I think the Trinity might be a little insulted.....

Heyer is also basically right in her characterization of weapons names as coming from patriotic lore (our national mythology) and scientific names from myth and science, though the first generation of U.S. missiles (which were kind of experimental or dual use, but deployed as well) had names like Thor, Nike, Atlas, Titan. And the Trident submarine based missile is, of course, named for the popular chewing gum.

I think the avoidance of religious imagery in weapons names is a bit odd in a country that is "under God" and invokes the special protection of Providence (not to mention the rest of the state of rhode island) on its coins and all its songs. German soldiers in WWI wore belt buckles that said "Gott Mit Uns" (God's with us, or May God be with us) and chaplains on all sides blessed weapons. Why not take the militarization of religion all the way? I can't think of any other countries which give religious names to weapons, not even Israel (man, I wonder what THEIR nuclear bombs are code named! Ark of the Covenant?), though the British have a Crusader tank. Interestingly enough, they also have a Saracen armored personnel carrier. (British tradition of fair play?) I guess it's ok to use mythology, but not religion, since of course, religion is what WE have, and mythology is what THEY have. And orthodoxy is my doxy, and heterodoxy is another man's doxy.

Oh, though of course, in "Beneath the Planet of the Apes", the leftover superbomb that is worshipped as a god by the futuroid guys with no faces, has the letters Alpha and Omega on it.

and they are not alone. laura deal says:
but I doubt many Christians would consider the bomb as part of God.
but I have heard Phyllis Schlafly refer to the bomb as "a gift from God". and certainly most of the christian right supported the Reagan era arms buildup as an, er, moral imperative, and saw the nuclear confrontation with the soviets as the only way to handle "Godless" communism. And remember, there is a not inconsiderable number of christians who are Waiting for the End of the World, and are glad for anything that will hasten it.

me, I've got my own reasons.

terrible person

Message 56 5/20/98 7:52 PM
Subject: Ur-Yojimbo
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

I just watched "Yojimbo", the classic Akira Kurosawa samurai film with toshiro mifune. it was adapted, almost shot by shot in some places, into the

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"spaghetti western" "A Fistful of Dollars", with Clint Eastwood, by Sergio Leone, and into the recent Bruce Willis gangster-era film "Last man Standing". interestingly, "Yojimbo" is derived from one of Dashiell hammet's "continental op" stories, "Red harvest".

The reason I bring this up is that I suspect it does not stop there. I would be willing to bet that the rather simple plot (basically, a penniless warrior comes to a town wracked by a battle for control between two rival gangs, and by continually switching sides, since both want him for his prowess, gets one gang to destroy the other, and then destroys the remaining gang, and then leaves) is a very old one, to be found in various mythologies and legendary traditions. SO CAN ANYONE HELP? is there a version in which coyote comes to a pueblo split between wolves and mountain lions? or a chanson de geste in which a knight errant comes to village fought over by two feudal lords? it seems that a scan of the collective myth database here should reveal something....

oh, and if you haven't seen yojimbo, see it; it totally kicks butt. and then it hacks it off with a single slash of a katana.

terrible person

Message 50 5/22/98 6:33 PM
Subject: Re(14): Auntie
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Nine writes:

terrible person writes:

if you're a catholic and really take things seriously, shouldn't you be a bit upset that the Texans named a city after the body of Christ?

Mm.. cities often got named after missions and cathedrals. Or named after saints etc for the continuing glory of a conquistador god. But I assume you know that.

Well, I did know that, yes. But why the protest against naming a submarine "Corpus Christi" when there already is one called "Los Angeles"? (a whole class of submarines, in fact.)

which brings me to the subject of Trinity. I checked this, and, with all due respect to Heyer's husband, there was never a place called Trinity. There is

now a place called the Trinity Test Site but it is named after the bomb, and not vice versa. The whole point about testing the bomb there was that there was nothing there. (It was the White Sands Bombing (now White Sands Missile) Range, or the Jornada del Muerto, Journey of a Dead Man. The location is also sometimes referred to as Alamogordo, but that is far away. The site is only open to the public two days a year; if you are not in the area those two days, the closest you can get is by driving on US 380 through bingham -- that's what I did. Check out the youth hostel in Truth or Consequences while you are in the area. It has its own hot spring and you can sleep in a wigwam.) The name appears to have been suggested by Oppenheimer with the same irreverence that was to get him into trouble in later years. (Maybe that is why most weapons get such serious names; who wants to lose his security clearance and be disgraced?)

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However, if you think about it....there is something interesting here. Laura Deal described the Christian Trinity as consisting of a Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and this is a progressive way of putting it, but the more traditional and common (at least the one I heard whenever I went to mass) is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now, look at the parallels to the Fat Man, the Little Boy (names which were basically physically descriptive), and the....it happened that after the test and the first two drops on Japan the US had no more fuel left to build any more bombs for a while. (Interesting what if: what if the Japanese had known this and called the US bluff, necessitating the invasion the bombs were justified as avoiding?) But if a third bomb had been dropped, would it have been called, in honor of fundamental physics discoveries that made it possible, "the Spirit of the Universe"? That would have been just too symbolic....(one problem: the Little Boy came first...) Or, if anyone had been to Hiroshima or Nagasaki, they would have seen the ghosts, the shadows of vaporized people left on walls....not sure Oppenheimer really had all this in mind though, smart as he was. Probably he just picked the name since he needed a word that began with T for Test. If you have ever been to Los Alamos, all the test sites have streets named after them there. Local boys who made good, as it were, heroes of the local mythology. By the way, Oppenheimer's poetic quote on witnessing the Trinity blast is the most remembered. But much more to the point is that of Dr. (Kenneth??) Bainbridge, who supervised the test. As Oppenheimer was waxing lyrical about the shatterer of worlds, he simply stood aghast and muttered: "Now we're all sons of bitches."

Of course, Riddley Walker, which started this whole thread, has wonderful mythological imagery for the bomb: The Hart of the Wood, The 1 Big 1, the Lytle Shining Man the Addom. It's a must read, even if you don't happen to be obsessed with the end of the world. (Another good source: Walter Miller's "a canticle for liebowitz." again, plenty of religious bomb imagery.)

Atomic mythology. It's my thing. Blame Heyer for starting the thread!! And duck and cover!!!

terrible person

Message 49 (Unsent)
Subject: Re: small Titanic question
From: terrible person
To: film

oxymoron alert!!!!

anticipated answer from Pee Girl: "Who are YOU calling a moron, PAL!??"

Peace, peace....

terrible person

Message 46 (Unsent)
Subject: even more shameless plug
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

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since at least Tim was advertising his *own* performance....

Hey folks!!! Stop playing with your 64K TRS-80's and complaining about President Reagan and Mayor Feinstein and watching movies on your sony betamax'es and wondering if those so-called "compact discs" you keep hearing about are going to be better than your LP's and drive your Chrysler K-cars down to the CW Saloon (911 Folsom) Sunday evening (the 24th) for New Wave City '80's night, featuring MONGOLOID, "the Bay Area's only theatrical DEVO tribute band" (which suggests somewhat unnervingly that there are other DEVO tribute bands that don't wear the ziggurat hats.) A co-worker of mine is in the band and promises a good time will be had by all, as we all laugh at that silly circa-1980 vision of a future of mindless automata permanently attached to computers and TVs, relating only through them... I mean, that could NEVER happen, could it?
>

Message 45 5/23/98 1:22 PM
Subject: Re: 8 hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

this sounds interesting, but looking through my back issues of Scientific American, I could not find the article. Not in an online index I checked either. Could you give an issue date (and even a page?) Duplication is an important part of the scientific method.

But of course, I would know what I would do. I would not even need the full eight hours. I would go back to any point in time -- say, the moment of my own conception, if I could endure the primal scene -- and alter events to create a time paradox, which would cause the whole temporal system to crash like a computer that is receiving contradictory instructions. The whole universe would have to acknowledge the contradiction-based impossibility of its existence and like God when confronted with the Babel fish, wink out of existence with an "oh dear." Sorry folks.

Hey, wait, how you know I did not just do this already?

terrible person (making your day for nine months now)

Message 44 5/24/98 2:12 PM
Subject: Re(3): 8 hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

well, I have not been able to find the new Sci. Am., so I will have to take pierre's word on the science of this, but whatever that may be, it's still an interesting philosophical question. I think, however, that most people will be a little disappointed at the answer.

first, let's think about how time -- meaning the flow of causally related events -- actually works. the model which pierre's question presupposes is what I will call the placid pond, that time is like a placid pond into which an intervention of the sort pierre imagines drops like a rock, sending out

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concentric ripples that get bigger (have more effect) the farther they get from the point of impact/change (though in this case, the ripples increase in amplitude as they increase in circumference instead of getting less energetic as in reality.) ok, a better analogy for the idea that small changes can have and can be calculated and arranged for the purpose of having larger and larger effects the further down the line one goes (it will later become clear why I used the first analogy) is the horseshoe nail, for want of which, ultimately, the kingdom is lost (in the old nursery rhyme.) now, this can be an appealing idea, when coupled with time travel. as in the classic ray bradbury story, "a sound of thunder" (and the simpsons episode based on it) you could go far back in time, and in relative safety, make a change that would have larger and larger effects as time went on. but there are some problems with this. First, it might not be so appealing. After all, if the kingdom can be lost for want of one nail, it can be lost again through want of another: time adjustment could be used by either side with equal ease (as in "Star trek: first contact" or "The Terminator".) But the second is more complex, more factual; time adjustment would not be possible, even if we wanted it.

I've already quoted, for comparison purposes, the image of time as a pond, but what if time were, as Steve Winwood put it, a river? In other words, it has a flow, a direction to it, certain banks, obstructions, etc., that constrain and direct it? Then if you dropped a rock into it, it might create a local disturbance. The flow of the river would be disrupted, depending on the size of the rock, and the swiftness and volume of the stream, for a few feet or a few miles but would eventually come back to the way it would have been anyway. Ok, but what is the literal meaning of this metaphor? Basically, it is that time, history, "things" as Lucretius put it, have a motive and a momentum to them. It's popular to say that the Universe is random, but it isn't. We could predict the outcome of every coin flip if we had time to measure the forces acting on the coin. There are truly random things at the quantum level -- but by the time we get up to any level we can see they have averaged out statistically so that one atom's state does not really matter (this nail cannot lose the kingdom, because there are so many other nails. Of course, there are plenty of things, plenty of events in our lives, that seem random, simply because we can't explain them. But there are always physical explanations for things, even if we can't figure them out [yet], and even if we cannot think of moral reasons for them.) But as an avid student of history, and after reading lots of "alternate universe" stories, I have generally come to espouse the "historical forces" view of things over than the "Great Men" theory exemplified by Time magazine's "Man of the year" cover (in the days before it went to computers and planets and Henry Kissinger's Harvard thesis. (Also by Isaac Asimov's Mule character in "Foundation and Empire".) In fact, I tend to discount the importance of timing and random factors at all. As I see it, history is largely a product of big forces, starting with and based on physics, ascending through biology and meteorology and geology and geography up to psychology and sociology and economics. Big people come along at certain moments and seem to have a big effect, and people imagine that if they were to be removed, or just slightly redirected through a tiny time adjustment, history would be totally changed. But again, I disagree. Most great leaders are products of their times. some people regard Hitler, for instance, as an aberration, that if an aging civil servant originally named Alois Schickelgruber had been prevented from having a child, then WWII and the Holocaust could have been totally avoided. but I disagree (as would Jonah goldhagen.) Hitler was not the only right-wing extremist around at the time, and the times in defeated, economically ravaged Germany definitely favored the rise of one to power. Believing in time adjustments leaves out the vital role of the people, the masses in deciding the fates of nations (which one can't

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ignore even if one does not believe in democracy.) It's funny too, that if you accept the lone time adjuster theory of history change, you also have to believe in lone gunmen theories of history changing assassinations. To explain the Kennedy assassination in my terms, you can either say 1) the assassination was the product of a vast conspiracy, a conspiracy so vast as to be a mass movement in itself, that would have gotten JFK even if some well-meaning time adjuster had shoved Oswald's rifle or convinced the President to use a security bubble 2) that if not that lone gunman, there would have been plenty of others who wanted the president dead (which applied even better, for instance, to the MLK killing) 3) that the death of JFK really did not make much of a difference, that he would, not content with proving his manhood through sex with most of the young women in the Washington/Maryland/Virginia area, have gotten us deep into Vietnam, and not had the legislative skill that LBJ did to pass civil rights legislation. (for that is another rule to remember in time changes, that of unintended consequences; you may achieve a certain goal through your change, but what happens after, may be very different from what you planned.....there is a neat comic book on this theme, called "the quantum mechanic", in which the greasy covered main character, who exists outside time and space, uses his huge wrench to adjust the machine of history, only to find his well meaning efforts result in the situations he wanted to avoid happening anyway, or something worse happening.) Don't call me a fatalist (ok, call me a fatalist, if you like) -- I see fatalism as optimistic, since it means life is predictable, at least probabilistically, unless you are Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but I generally feel things are the way they are for good reasons that will not be changed for light and transient causes. And I find the more I apply this attitude towards jobs, relationships, activities, and other life choices, the better they work.

There is a compromise (-ing?) position. In Isaac Asimov's "The End of eternity" he envisions a foundation existing outside of time that continually makes adjustments to time. However, they have found that any change they make tends to be obviated by the momentum of time. In other words, you can change things, but the effects, instead of getting greater with time, will be diluted with time, and by the next century, a whole new change must be made as things are as they would have been. This makes some sense; after all, the death of John F. Kennedy may have affected the 1960's a lot, but will affect the 2060's a lot less. Probably. Anyway, what this means is that if you want to accept Pierre's challenge, you could do a lot of good in the 14th century but would then be powerless to affect the late 20th century (which, seeing as that you live in it, you might want to.) Or, if you wanted to make things better here and now, you would have to realize it would not be permanent, and that the price of improvement is eternal vigilance and continued intervention.

So, under these rules, I would go back and introduce some infertility causing virus in the world around 1950, keeping the world's population around 2 billion and easing the strain on world resources. Now, having been born after that date, I realize I might be precluding my own birth (no great loss there.) But I think that most of the great ideas would have been come up with and the great inventions invented anyway -- they were in the air (I don't believe that great discoveries are particularly dependent on individuals anyway.) Who knows what would happen to population in a hundred years. but at least the present would be somewhat better.

I'm living in the future. I feel wonderful. I'm tripping over backwards....but if I could save time in a bottle....

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
terrible person
>

Message 42 5/24/98 2:24 PM
Subject: Re(2): Ur-Yojimbo
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

just thinking now -- in the story of jason and the argonauts, jason sows the dragon's teeth and they sprout up as warriors. he then tosses a rock or something among them, which starts them fighting among themselves (like a demonstration of a nuclear chain reaction I once saw, in which a floor was covered with mousetraps, each with 2 pingpong balls. when one ball was tossed on, one trap went off, setting off 2 others, symbolic kaboom.) but I don't think jason then finished them off. but ray harryhausen made them into great fighting skeletons.

aren't there now more PC versions of little black sambo? I think two came out last year. and of course, this is not a folktale, as far as I know, but written from scratch by a rather racist englishwoman....

terrible person

Message 40 5/26/98 7:17 AM
Subject: Re: Shekinah
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

just a few New Testament quotes: Jesus says that unlike John who baptizes with water, he (Jesus) will baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit; it is the HS that enters into people causing them to speak in tongues; God made Mary pregnant through the Holy Spirit (which I guess would be masculinizing.) I've always wondered if Jesus came from Mary's egg fertilized by the HS, so that half of Jesus is from Mary (the human half), or if a fully fertilized directly created embryo was placed in Mary by the HS, so that Jesus does not bear any of Mary's herediy and she was just a vessel not a sharer in creation.

>

Message 37 5/25/98 1:57 PM
Subject: Re(2): Welcome!
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

or, from another movie:

"You could be stabbed."

Message 35 5/25/98 3:10 PM
Subject: Re(5): 8 hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

the Great Wizard Tim (who can summon up fire without flint or tinder), whose

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responses to my posts are always so interesting (to me, at least) that now, rather than try to anticipate his responses and answer them preemptively, I hold back to enjoy them and be surprised, writes:

The first statement is true (maybe), but I'm a lot less sure about the second, due to chaos theory. Assuming the coin toss is correctly modeled as a chaotic system, no matter how fine our measurements we'll still find the amount of change in initial conditions necessary to convert a head to a tail or vice versa is less than our margin of error. Therefore, in a perfectly chaotic system, the coin flip will always remain unpredictable.

You have located a great gap in my scientific and metaphoric knowledge: chaos theory has never much interested or stuck with this old Newtonian/Cartesian, especially when Michael Crichton/Ian Malcolm associated too strongly with it (and it with them. but if anyone wants to hear my Michael Crichton story, it's a hoot!!) Chaotic makes me think of the Dungeons and Dragons derived alignments we would make up for our counselors at Young Smartass Camp. But if you are applying chaos theory to historical processes (am I assuming too much in thinking that that is what you were doing?) then that would sort of invalidate pierre's whole question. What would be the point in going back and changing anything if a small difference in the way you changed it -- the flap of a butterfly's wings instead of a dead butterfly -- could produce totally different future histories? Ok, if there were something you desperately wanted to avoid, to which ANYTHING were preferable, you could probably be pretty sure it would not happen since the chances of chaos replicating something are pretty slim. But to make a change to bring about a desired outcome -- forget about that. (It would be like the Lost in Space folks activating the hyperdrive to escape certain destruction from the sun by taking their chances on ending up who knows where in the universe...)

I like the time-as-a-river metaphor, and the implication that stepping on the butterfly won't necessarily get you in trouble. But rivers can and do change course overnight; you can go to sleep by the mighty Mississipp and wake up with it three miles away. Presumably if one wanted to change history one would learn to apply force of exactly the right sort to cause a major diversion.

Yes, you would need, in effect, to dam history, and since you would only have eight hours for this construction project, you would need a lot of beavers. (And to control the flood, a lot of dikes.) Your point about the Mississippi suddenly changing its course is well taken, but it is my impression that this usually involves the straightening out of a loop in the river, in other words, its return to a more "natural" or "probable" course, like chemicals assuming a more stable state. The historical analogy would be some very unlikely event (though, again, I tend to assert that there are not many unlikely events, that when the forces are analyzed, even the most unlikely seeming historical events seem reasonable, even inevitable) being obviated by a seemingly more likely one. The other thing, of course, is that as far as I know, even a big change upstream does not affect the way the Father of Waters runs into the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans; things get back on track by then, as the tributaries run in. Though, of course, this suggests history has an end -- well, maybe but that will be a story for another day.

On other problem: in many time travel stories, characters go back to change or just observe and when they come back, find that nothing seems different, and then realize that things were the way they were when they left only because they had already (relative to when they left) changed things. In other words,

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there is a time loop, a self-fulfilling prophecy, as if Thomas Jefferson wrote that fantastic declaration only because I went back to visit him with a modern copy so he knew what to write. ("La jetie/12 monkeys" being a good example.)

Or, our attempt to change is based on incorrect assumptions as to what really happened. One might go back with the intention of obviating one's own existence by shooting Dad as a boy, and when we find ourselves nevertheless existing, realize that Mom was, er, seeing other people.....

I still think that instead of using Black Holes and lots of nucleonics, I would rather travel in time the way Jack Finney's characters do in "Time and Again", by hypnotising themselves, convincing themselves that time is only an illusion and that, with the right authentic period-appropriate props to get them into character, they can just step from one time to another. I tried to do that last night, attending New Wave City in clothes that all dated from the 80's or earlier (if anyone else was there, I was the guy who Karaoke'd "Take me to the River" -- yeah, just how you imagined me), but I guess all the tattoos and piercings on the crowd outweighed the music, and though I had hoped to step out of the club into a City of which Feinstein was Mayor in a country of which Tip O'Neill was speaker of the house (and Gary Hart still a viable candidate), where CD's were for investing money, and computers had 64K (but cost what they do now), I was disappointed. Next time.....next one's in 2 weeks -- Pretenders tribute. Perhaps Time will be the avenger.

If I could freeze time at the flick of a switch, I would not hesitate. No!
there must be something

Message 31 5/26/98 7:08 AM

Subject: Re(7): 8 hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

Going by my limited understanding of chaos theory, that's not really how it would work. Rather, some butterfly-crushings would be damped (their ripples of consequence dying out), some would resonate to the point of making significant changes in the world, and a few would have large consequences. The chrononaut's challenge would be to determine those that would have the large consequences he wanted.

Hmmm. This sounds like a sort of natural selection model among alternate universes - am I getting this right? Just as people (creationists) who ask "why did it happen that just the right mutations to fit the open ecological niches came along?" can be answered, "actually almost every possible mutation happened, but only a few led anywhere." so that at the moment of change, all possible outcomes would be generated but the one that survived would be the most likely one? or the one chosen by the Mutator Temporis? either would be kind of neat. (meaning, if it were true, I would not move out of this universe, the way I will leave this state if Al Checchi should be elected governor. of course, many of you figure I must just be visiting this planet so why not try another universe?) however, the more familiar (at least to me) alternate universe model assumes that all the parallel or branching realities continue to coexist...

While it's quite true that another right-wing German dictator might have

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

arisen, he wouldn't have Hitler's unique idiosyncracies. We might get one who was less anti-Semitic but more militarily competent, so that the Holocaust would have been avoided but Germany not defeated.

tp: I tend to assert that there are not many unlikely events, that when the forces are analyzed. even the most unlikely seeming historical events seem reasonable, even inevitable.

But isn't this just another way of saying that hindsight is 20/20? It seems to me that there are usually plenty of reasonable outcomes to any historical situation

I would agree. there is more than one y for every x just as chaos theory allows for many possible outcomes. what I was protesting was the habit of some of treating certain historical events, even in hindsight, as aberrations, freak occurrences, with no historical meaning. for instance, the Holocaust was long treated as an example of the German people just going nuts under the influence of a few fanatics, while others, such as Goldhagen, see it as an expression and natural outcome of deep- and long-seated german anti-jewishness. i look at certain accidents in my life, and realize that though I once may have thought that I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, there was a very good reason I was there then, that my getting hit was completely natural and logical (and even deserved.) It might have been avoided by foresight then but not just by chance. (I find this empowering.) Even such an apparent example of divine intervention as Carlton Fisk's sixth game homer in 1975 or Bill Buckner's -- you know -- in '86 are not so freakish, but can be traced to long term trends in the Red Sox strategy (or, of course, the Curse.)

Time is a private matter, as Hassel discovered."

Yes, time IS personal, which is why I like Finney so much though if you and Heyer like Bester that is a strong recommendation. Of course, one wonders how one person's personal time travelling would affect everyone else. If I create a world in which you are different, shouldn't you have some say in that? This could lead to a sort of temporal solipsism. Me, I need to take some personal time (and Life, people, and fortune too.)

terrible person

Message 28 5/26/98 7:27 AM
Subject: Re(2): Here We Go Again (Quote Quiz III)
From: terrible person
To: film

there is of course an almost identical line in "Spinal Tap", with the addition of "It doesn't get widely reported."

Was the metal-handed agent of who tortured Otto even though it was nothing personal the inspiration for or lineal ancestor of Scully?

Message 27 5/26/98 7:27 AM
Subject: real foreigners
From: terrible person
To: film

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I just watched "von ryan's express" as my personal Sinatra tribute. One thing I really liked about it was that all the Italians spoke Italian and the Germans German (and the americans and english, english, though I guess that goes without saying.) Now, i think this vastly increases realism (since the good guys with whom we are supposed to identify knew no german and thus we could better feel their confusion.) Plus it's fun to second guess the subtitles. I don't know why this is not done more; maybe not enough american actors know foreign languages. So why not use foreign actors? in this internationalized market, they need the jobs too. To paraphrase John Waters, it gives foreigners jobs, and if people didn't have foreigners speaking actually playing the foreigners, there would be no employment for the european of today, and they would go make more european films.

speaking of European films, i watched "Chloe in the Afternoon"(actually, early in the morning before I had to return the tape). This is supposed to be a comedy? And what kind of a name for an actress is Zouzou? but she had great

clothes (and SUCH a wide mouth.) Always like this theme, in which the old friend who has never settled down comes and destabilizes (though adds a new concept, fun, to) the life of a now stable, formerly fun character. Sometimes these stories get a lot more extreme than "Chloe"...I guess there is a bit of a big chill/secaucus 7 theme here, since chloe and frederic would probably have been class of '68 or thereabouts....

Message 25 5/26/98 7:15 AM
Subject: Re(8): 8 hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Sirin N writes:

terry has this deplorable weakness for metaphors, you see (and abysmal puns), a weakness that imbues his arguments with a vaguely 'gilliamesque' quality. the engineering is as follows: item A of set Z is like item B of set Y in manner M. this constitutes probable cause to investigate manners N, O & P (regardless of the fact that item A was nowhere near item B at the specified time, and, in fact, comes equipped with an irrefutable alibi, courtesy of madam X). all of this is very charming. but gets confusing sometimes, when you lose track of which way the metaphor is working. for instance, a few posts ago i encountered my first looped river, the inevitable product, i suppose, of terry's loopy investigations into the nature of time...

Well, you have me there. Though it was Tim who introduced the river rerouting concept, I added the loops. Oops. Like Will Rogers, I never metaphor I didn't like, and unlike Groucho Marx (one of the only ways I am unlike him) I never fail to join any association, and since my fixed-gear got stolen I am too freewheeling, but you can't accuse me of not matching form to content. If I am discussing multiple possible outcomes of events, how better than by going off on multiple tangents?

terrible person

Message 21 5/27/98 6:42 AM
Subject: Re(4): Shekinah

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

much much neat stuff here to which to reply reply.....

first of all, Laura Deal's wondering about Pentecost. It's in Acts 2:4, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (that's King James. I have also heard it as "tongues unknown to man" -- I'll try to check the Greek tomorrow.) so I would assume that meant they spoke as modern Pentecostals do when they do tongues, meaning unintelligibly to us unblessed. However, a few verses later, there is the part in which the apostles address a multinational crowd and each one hears them in his own language (like simultaneous translation at the UN.) And then someone says the apostles must be drunk. No respect.

speaking of Greek, Sharon Everett's point about the double meaning of the word for virgin is interesting, suggesting a confusion within the story, or the real history, itself. However, it would seem more likely that the confusion was in the Greek in which the story was written down. there are three meanings that in various languages get associated differently: young (marriagable) woman, unmarried woman, and woman who has never had sex. The Greek parthine could mean any one of these three (children of unwed mothers were called parthinioi) though this apparently changed by Biblical times to stress the no-sex aspect. (IN other languages, it's different; latin virgo has all three meanings (with virgo intacta having the specific no-sex meaning) German Jungfrau is basically used only for Mary so it does not really count; French vierge and English virgin have only the sexual and religious meanings [as well as the metaphoric sense of unadulterated.]) The place where the Greek gets confusing -- where it is not clear whether the stress is on age or chastity or marital status, is in 1 corinthians 7:25-38. but Sharon is right, the Hebrew is ambiguous, so that a place in Isaiah that says "a young woman shall give birth" could be taken by Christians -- who will use any prophecy they can -- as predicting that a woman who had not had sex would give birth. (Wouldn't that really, really hurt? More than it would hurt already?)

One thing though: I spotted a misconception about the Immaculate conception; it refers to the creation not of Jesus but of Mary herself, free from the Original Sin.

as for Heyer's ideas on parthenogenesis -- maybe it's just because I've read "Motherlines", but I thought parthogenesis was basically spontaneous self-cloning, and thus could only produce a female offspring. (Was that the real Jesus secret?) Correct me if I am wrong on this. Anyone remember that great '80's song, "Nemesis", by Shriekback? "big black Nemesis/ Parthenogenesis/ No one move a muscle when the dead come home."

As for miracles, the only one I really believe in is the 1969 Mets.

terrible person (who was built out of spare parts in the laboratory)

Message 18 5/27/98 6:57 AM

Subject: jennifer tilly tea ritual

From: terrible person

To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

for most of "bound", which I finally saw last week (so that I feel stupid about missing Chris' question), I kept thinking, what that girl with the scratchy voice needs is a nice herbal brew with lemon and honey. But then I remembered she had the same voice in "The fabulous baker boys". And then I decided I quite liked her voice, as much as I came to like Gina Gershon's duckbill upper lip, as much as I came to like the movie in general, which I will now discuss with some attention paid to the ending.

After all, I thought that the two guys did a reasonably good job at portraying love and lust between two women. But heck, what would I know, not being a woman-oriented-woman or in fact any kind of woman. I mean, I also thought that the two presumably non-mafia members did a reasonable job at portraying the Mafia and I am not a Mafia member. So if there is anyone out there who is either a lesbian or a mafia member (or both) and wishes to explain to me why the Wachowski brothers and I am totally wrong, and why I should dislike their movie, you will find me an attentive and interested audience.

So besides the portrayal of the relationship, I liked the women characters themselves, how they were smart both in long term planning and desperate improvisation, and damned nervy. Gina Gershon showed tenacity and toughness worthy of the next Aliens movie. and cool tattoos (best since Barbara Hershey in "The last temptation of Christ") and neat useful earrings. I liked how Violet's ditsy voice belied her coolness under pressure.

I even liked Joe Pantoliano's "Da Bears" accent.

I liked the camera tricks, the closeups, the overheads. Oh, I know these are tricks and I am a sap to fall for them, but they worked for me. the money hanging on clotheslines was a great image, and although as soon as the white paint was spilled I knew there would be red blood dotting it, nevertheless, when the shot (both camera and gun) it was an arresting sight as well.

I liked the almost Aristotelian unity of place, giving the movie almost the feeling of a play and adding a claustrophobic sense as well.

What bothered me a little was that the filmmakers seemed to be about using all sorts of film noir conventions but then....didn't. Now, this was not a matter of turning conventions on their heads, because they weren't. They just...weren't used. And they gave an overall impression of what was going to happen that then just ... didn't. It wasn't as if something diametrically opposite expectations happened to, again, turn the convention on its head. It was as if the filmmakers were being careful to use some of the conventions but then forgot what they were using them for. I mean, use the convention conventionally or turn it on its head but don't just...let...it...peter...out. And it's too easy to distract the audience and lead it astray without actually leading it somewhere. For instance, the movie opens with Corky (Gina Gershon), "Bound" in a closet, remembered voices going through her head. Now many films noirs open with the protagonist in trouble, and remembering how he got into that trouble, the flashback taking us into the plot, which explains how he got into trouble, brings him to the present (meaning the starting situation) and then there is a brief wrapup. So I had the impression that things were going to end up badly for Corky. But no, it turns out the opening shot only reflected the situation about three fourths of the way through the movie; there was a lot of stuff after she got out of the situation. another example: usually, it would seem, when a character tells another character what happened, and that action is shown as the narrating character describes it, it

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means the narrating character is lying. But we had scenes of this in "Bound" and no one was lying. In fact, the whole movie seemed as if it was going to be a standard film noir (woman with man she hates finds not too bright guy she may sort of like (and who is good with his hands, practical) seduces him, gets him to rob and kill her husband, then dumps him to take the rap) only with a woman as the handyman. This was partly because Eva Luna had characterized Violet as a femme fatale. But she wasn't. the filmmakers kept using ominous dialogue to make us think she might be only using Corky, but she wasn't. She wasn't smart enough to set up a whole manipulative plan -- that was why she went to Corky -- and Corky was too experienced in both criminal and romantic matters to have fallen for it. So it wasn't a film noir at all, but a film about two women with different abilities getting together to screw over a bunch of jerky guys. (hmmm. would this have been a completely different movie if even one of the mobsters had been female? I mean, if that would have been realistic? Can males make a "feminist" picture or should they just butt out, women will make their own goddam pictures THANK YOU VERY MUCH.)

I'll enjoy the look of disapproval from the video store clerk when I rent showgirls just to see Gina.

terrible person (wants to free the bound periodicals)

>

Message 14 5/27/98 6:50 AM

Subject: Re(9): 8 hours

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

I realized as I looked through the table of contents of "Virtual Unrealities" that I have read (at least) one Bester story, "the Pi Man", which both reflects the idea that one person can reorder the universe ("the solipsistic idea") and the wish (or fear) that *I* could.

has anyone read "Hypertime", by Anthony firpo?

trying to be timely and not intimidated by Tim's reading list in this timocracy,

terrible person

Message 12 5/27/98 7:18 PM

Subject: Re(6): Shekinah

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

Heyer writes:

Is it the mother or the father who determines the gender of the child, and why? I have visions of XXs and XYs dancing around in my head, but I can't remember who has what.

it's the father. or rather, it's the father's DNA -- no one has shown he has any conscious or unconscious control though psychobioneurochemistry can be wondrous. since all men are XY (with a few XYY's) and women XX, there will always be one X, and the other will be X or Y depending on what the father gives. of course, once women figure out how to produce children themselves by

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combining ova, they will always produce XX's, always produce women.

and Greta Christina writes:

It seems too central a part of the story to just be a misunderstanding of the word for "virgin."

actually, there are numerous legends that are invented just to explain some linguistic ambiguity. for instance, it appears that originally there was not Romulus and REmus, just Romulus, Remus being a Greek form of his name. But people got confused and forgot this and decided that there must have been twin brothers, yeah, that's it, that's the ticket! But then what happened to the other brother? And thus a myth was invented to explain. (something similar appears to have happened with the Saxon brothers who supposedly led the invasion of Britain in 449, Hengest and Horsa. Both names mean "horse" ...) Now, if the story is a good one, and seems to have some meaning in itself (as the Virgin Birth story would), it is accepted. So someone says, "I heard he was born of a 'virgin'", and someone else misinterprets and comes up with a great story and sets it down....it was because I had the feeling that this might be happening with me, with people thinking my name was terry, that I put a disclaimer on my resume...

terrible person (this is not my name either but you are welcome to create legends about me)

>

Message 11 5/27/98 7:42 PM
Subject: Re(2): jennifer tilly tea ritual
From: terrible person
To: film

Chris A. Hall writes:

Although Violet may have been deceptive, manipulative, and ultimately destructive to Caesar, I have a hard time seeing her as a femme fatale because Caesar is such an unlikeable shit that I took great pleasure in watching him get screwed over.

but hang on -- in a film noir, there is usually a triangle of Femme Fatale, Femme Fatale's Husband whom she wants to kill and rob, and Other Guy. The husband is usually unlikeable while the Other Guy is fairly likeable (or at least because he is the protagonist, and things are shown from his point of view, we sort of identify with him.) But what defines a femme fatale is not so much what she does to her husband, since of course she kills him, but what she does to the Other Guy, roping him in and then betraying him. Now, in "Bound", Corky was the Other Guy. so we need to watch how violet acts towards HER to determine if violet was a femme fatale. does that make sense? she didn't rope Cesare in; he already had her. but she got Corky involved. another difference to classic film noir is that the story is not clearly told from Corky's POV (no Corky in voiceover) or Violet's. Kind of unsettling if you are used to one clear main character, but helps create the sense of equality between the two women which was what things were all about.

I guess it wasn't a film noir so much as a caper film (like the great train robbery.)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Aside from that, while I did find Corky's "look" to be sexy, I thought she looked like the male fantasy of a butch dyke. In other words, while her look was more "rough," she really didn't strike me as butch at all.

see, that is what I was worried about, that I was watching and enjoying and thus supporting another male fantasy portrayal of lesbians. I mean, what if Gina Gershon had gained a hundred pounds for the role and gotten a crewcut? probably would not have happened. (though wasn't that the idea in "French Twist"?) It seems that the Hollywood idea of a lesbian is still a really pretty woman in black jeans and a leather jacket with her arm around another really pretty woman in high heels. But then again, the Hollywood idea of a human being is a really beautiful two-legged animal.

really terrible two-legged animal

Message 10 5/27/98 7:56 PM

Subject: Re(3): 8 hours

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

I finally found the blurb that started this all, in the June Scientific American. But I'm thinking, pierre, that the line "for every microsecond of time travel" is a little ambiguous, since time measures both time and distance travelled, as it were. does it for each microsecond you spend in the past, or each microsecond from your present that you go back? is it measuring how long you go away for your vacation or how far?

now, you could be right, that it is how long you go away that is being measured. but let's say it is the other. in other words, you would need a black hole the mass of the sun to go back ten microseconds, to just before I typed that comma or something. to go back and kill hitler would need so much energy I can hardly conceive it. but maybe it would be more useful just to travel back a little at a time anyway. first of all, the results of any changes made, being shorter term, would be more predictable. think of how many snappy rejoinders you could come up with, how many car accidents, unintentional slights, unplanned pregnancies, and other things you reconsider

immediately after (but alas too late) could be avoided, how many bets and lotteries won. that would be how I would spend MY 8 hours, in little chunks like this, to make them last a long time. but of course, time has got nothing to do with it.

terrible person

Message 7 5/28/98 7:04 PM

Subject: Re(6): Shekinah

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

Tim Walters writes:

Parthenogenesis actually produces haploid offspring (one X chromosome), which would have pretty serious implications and is probably why we can be pretty

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sure humans don't do it--at least, I don't think any haploid humans have ever been found (sorry, Heyer). In Motherlines, since we don't see the horse-women's reproductive technology from the point of view of anyone who understands it, its description is necessarily vague. But I'm pretty sure that parthenogenesis is implied--the women of each Motherline are genetically identical, and seem to exhibit a lot of recessive traits (which can't be masked in a haploid). Whether a haploid human would be viable is open to question, but certainly within the bounds of reasonable speculation for an SF novel.

Why do I remember hearing the term "parthenogenesis" in connection with the book? Was it just on the dust jacket blurb? It was not used in the text?

when you say a haploid, do you mean that instead of all of the DNA of the mother (half from the mother's mother, half from the mother's father) being duplicated as in a clone, only half a set of chromosomes (found in any sex cell, any ovum or sperm) is taken and duplicated, so that the offspring has two copies of every gene, insuring that it will be expressed? That's weird enough. It reminds me of a photoessay I once saw in which people's faces were photographed and the photos cut in two. Half the photo was thrown away, the other mirror reflected and joined to the unreversed half. The result looked very different than the original face. This because human faces, except maybe for Jodie Foster and Michelle Pfeiffer, are very asymmetric.

terrible person (can only smile on one side of his face)

Message 5 (Unsent)
Subject: I was going to post...
From: terrible person

in your conference something about my so-far unsuccessful quest for an answer to the question: "Who invented the paper airplane?" I mean, think about it, did people have paper airplanes before they had real airplanes? Would they have thought of them then? etc. etc. etc. I could post it in pierre's conference but there does not seem to be much going on in yours and I like you better than him. (You've never insulted me.) But I don't want to talk about some

Message 1 5/29/98 7:16 AM
Subject: Re(2): Infinite hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Listen:
Meg Cotner has become unstuck in time.

I guess we all do that sometimes, live our lives out of order. I don't know if a meaningful distinction can be made between Billy Pilgrim's style of living his life out of order, and Dr. Manhattan's reliving chunks of his life. I suppose it is all relative to some absolute timescale, but I doubt there is

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

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such a thing. If causality is not what it's cracked up to be, how could we tell what is supposed to be the natural order of time? Both Billy and Jon saw all time as happening, or having happened, or going to happen, at the same time, and thus as fixed as space appears to be. This does not leave any room for multiple outcomes unless multiple universes are posited.

My big worry is this: I have very vivid memories of certain events in my past that I am as sure as I can be happened. Big ones like the death of my father, small ones like losing my hat at Fisherman's Wharf when I was four. I can sometimes, I feel, transport myself back to these times, relive them. What worries me is the possibility that RIGHT NOW, I am actually remembering a moment on 29 May 1998 very vividly when I wrote a post about time, and that the rest of the world is in 2005 and Newt Gingrich is President. That any moment I will snap out of it and find myself in some terrible situation (even about to die) like Tim Robbins in "Jacob's Ladder". Compounding this is an ability to vividly remember or rather imagine alternate versions of the past (such as what would have happened if I had asked out Alison from my theatre group when I was 15) and to project visions of myself in the future. Maybe I really am in the future -- that would explain my ability to project it -- and I AM remembering this. It's the old paradox of how do I know what I just dreamed wasn't reality and this "reality" now that I have "woken up" isn't really the dream? (Well, this reality is more consistent than dreamland, but what does that prove?)

To reply to Tim's question about visiting the future, I guess that would be interesting (and you would not be in danger of running into yourself. I couldn't stand that.) I'm sure the future will be interesting if smelly. But would you just go there to live? Or to gain information (such as about the Red Sox ten consecutive world championships 2109-2118) that you can use back in the time whence you came? Then you would need back travel again. But it does mean that when, in the Terminator, Reese says that his voyage back was a one way trip, he was wrong. If he could just have accelerated near the speed of light, he could have gotten back to 2029 in little enough time. I think most times, even the New York times, are nice places to visit but I wouldn't want to live there. (Except maybe the 1880's/90's. I would have done very nicely then.) Because when it comes down to it, you must remember this: a kiss is just a kiss, and a sigh is just a sigh. Humans don't change much. The fundamental things apply as time goes by.

And so do I.

Bye.

By terrible person.

(By the way, I seem to remember that in ancient Greek the semantics of the expression for the future was related to the words for behind one. The Greeks saw us as backing into the future, able to see the past but not what was coming. It's exactly Tim's rear-view mirror idea. So much for putting the past behind us....it's not even past.)

Message 34 5/30/98 10:39 AM
Subject: Re(4): Infinite hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

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Johnny Vann writes:

terrible person writes:

Maybe I really am in the future -- that would explain my ability to project it -- and I AM remembering this. It's the old paradox of how do I know what I just dreamed wasn't reality and this "reality" now that I have "woken up" isn't really the dream?

Aren't you always in your own reality? Are you implying that there is a reality outside and separate from you, and if so doesn't that require the existence of alternate timelines?

Well, I have been accused before of living in my own little world, or in my own reality. But yes, though it may be politically uncorrect in these times to say so, I do believe, Mandrake, in a reality beyond this one, or the one I perceive. After all, centuries of human history and a few decades of mine have shown me that we and I have thought we had things all figured out before and didn't and so there is no reason to think we are seeing through the glass any less darkly now, to think that what we perceive is all there is, that the number of things in heaven and earth is exactly equal to the number dreamt of in our philosophy. I've been surprised before, and not just about Laura Palmer, which is why I so sympathize with Bud White when he says to Lynn, "There's something going on, I know it, but I can't figure it out. I'm just not smart enough." All I know about you, Johnny, is what I read here, and yet I am fairly certain that you continue to exist when you log off. (Believe it or not, the same is true of me. Though of course I can't prove that.) So what I am saying is that while Reality goes on it's merry linear way, I could be PERCEIVING and EXPERIENCING it out of order through some weirdness in memory or perception. (Now, whether I am experiencing it for the first time, which would be really weird, or re-experiencing things I have already experienced, is the Billy Pilgrim/Doc Manhattan question I asked before. But the latter alternative seems less weird and would account for the sense of dij' vu I often feel. I think in general a perceptual explanation is a lot easier than a physical one.)

308 words. that's not so bad, is it?

(perceived as) terrible person

> 30

Message 30 5/30/98 11:40 PM

Subject: Ana Gasteyer

From: terrible person

To: Crushes on Greatness

is definitely the funniest thing on Saturday Night Live these days. (It's amazing that we get to see her at all, since females on SNL are usually invisible.) Her characters (Martha Stewart, Cinder Calhoun, that NPR music show parody) are always dead on, and she can actually sing. Plus she has great legs and great dimples and everything else that makes one way cute. The really neat thing is that my sister was her RA in college. so I might just be able to get an intro...

terribly smitten person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

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Message 29 5/31/98 9:05 AM
Subject: Re: Pyrates (was Shekinah)
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

I have known for some ten years that it is my destiny to lead a Charge of the Light Brigade/"The Lighthorsemen" style cavalry assault on vastly numerically, positionally, and technologically superior forces. (Think of Polish lancers charging German panzers at the outset of WWII. Or even "The Postman" maybe???) I know it will be a glorious day to die, with the sky cloudless (well, a few clouds are nice, but just a few) and a moderate breeze, and as I lie on the ground, looking up at it, having been shot off my horse (I hope he or she will get out of it all right), with a lot of me probably shot off, I'll think, gee, I thought it was midday, it's getting dark awfully early, but I won't mind, I would not have had any place under the new order anyway.....
the closest I have ever come to this was during my senior year of college when I had attended a formal dance in a sort of red British uniform coat I had bought at a costume sale, with white tie and sash, and, to top it off, a saber borrowed from a friend, who had spent \$600 on arms and armor the previous summer in Toledo. (He even had a full set of plate that only fit his little brother.) When I bicycled over to return it to him, I noticed that the long road on which he lived was quite empty, and so, slinging the saber over my shoulder samurai style, I got up to speed, gave myself the command to draw, called "Banzai!!" and "God for Harry, England, and St. George!" and put the spurs to her all the way to the end of the street..."flashed all their sabres there, flashed as they turned in air..."

This remembrance provoked by the image of half a dozen saber-bearing leather clad women on motorcycles....they would deserve the accompaniment of wagner's "Valkurenritt" far more than Robert Duvall's air cavalry....and could perhaps be optioned for a TV show to replace "Highlander".

Wishing I could loose the fateful lightning of my

terrible

swift sword....

Message 28 5/31/98 4:24 PM
Subject: Re(6): Infinite hours
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Johnny Vann writes:

*I can assure you that I either do or do not, but never both at the same time.
At least not usually if I can help it, which I usually can not.*

you are fortunate, to have a fifty fifty either or chance like that. actually, though I generally exist when I am writing and posting, elsetimes my existence

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

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or lack thereof can only be described as a probability ranging from 0 to 100
%. some guys have all the luck, or as the french say, toute la chance.

looking for tinker and evers, too,

terrible person

Message 27 5/31/98 4:40 PM
Subject: Re(2): Pyrates (was Shekinah)
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Walkurenritt? Walkyrenrit? Valkyrenrid? whatever.

A relevant story:

I was dating a woman who was in Navy ROTC. She was a cadet platoon commander, so when the unit marched in a parade or somesuch, she would carry a sword. One day, while she was riding public transportation to such an event, fully attired and equipped, a small boy began pointing at her very excitedly. "Look, Mom!!" he said. "A pirate!! A lady pirate!!"

(my own story of a kid's hyperperceptiveness on rapid transit will have to wait. perhaps on my resume...)

however, this brings me to the other theme discussed lately. now, my friend had no problem in the "male" role of the military. And as I watched 20/20 last night, with its report on the female cadets at The Citadel, it was apparent that at least two of the four had adapted pretty well also. (They even looked really cute in their short haircuts.) They seemed exactly the sort of people I would want defending my country. Now, we have discussed the question of how women adapt into "male" roles (BIG quotes on "male") in a women only society. What about how men adapt into "women's" roles in a male only society, such as a prison or, until recently, an army or navy? Of course, they are not concerned with reproduction or child care there; I meant more the psychological role. Ok, there are camp-followers and local women in occupied territories. The Spartan army was in effect built on homosexual relations between veterans and recruits but of course there is far more to "women's" roles than just sex. (also, all-female societies are sort of created when all the men go off to war. what were things like in WWII factories?)

terrible person (would only want to join a guerrilla force)

Message 26 6/2/98 6:36 AM
Subject: Re(2): Weeds
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Elizabeth A. Nolan writes:

*It could be venomous-snake-ridden poison oak growing on top of toxic waste.
You're lucky!*

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

you know, we had it tough in those days. we had to get up in the morning, clean the lake, eat two pieces of hard gravel, go to work for tuppence a day...

(ok. moratorium on python quotes here.)

it could be worse. you could have a backyard full of weed, and Dan Lungren and Michael Yamaguchi won't let it be used for medicinal purposes.

terrible person (feels so lucky he bets Dirty Harry has fired six shots)

Message 15 (Unsent)
Subject: elections
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

the day after an election always provides innumerable "it could have been worse" lines appropriate for any occasions. just think of how easily you can rejoin to any complaint:

Yes, but at least 226 was defeated.

Yes, but at least we'll never have to hear from Al Checchi again.

etc.

Message 14 6/3/98 7:12 PM
Subject: Proposition 233
From: terrible person
To: politics

LOS ANGELES, June 3 (American Press Association)

Former angel and current Prince of Darkness Satan today kicked off the campaign for Proposition 233, the "Evil for Californians" initiative. At a press conference, Mr. Satan declared that for too long the State of California had been pursuing the good of its citizens as its principle official goal. "Good just isn't working. I know. I used to work for good. But then I had a realization," he declared, "I think we need to recognize that it's time to give evil a chance. And I think there are a lot of Californians who agree with me." Mr. Satan elaborated, "For years, California public officials who wanted to pursue evil have had to try to present it as good. Now we appreciate their efforts. But we think that evil just has an image problem. We think evil has just been getting a bad rap from the liberal media. We think that if people knew more about evil, they would see that it's pretty....ok."

Mr. Satan indicated that he would be funding the initiative campaign mainly from his vast personal fortune, accumulated through his many years as Chairman and CEO of Hell Inc., a diversified company with strong interests in strip-mining and timber, and with close links to software giant Microsoft. He said that contributions of any size would be welcome as well. When asked how much he was prepared to spend, he said, "I am willing to spend whatever is necessary to secure the passage of this important measure. It's for the people of California, of today and of tomorrow."

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Mr. Satan did nothing to squelch rumors (previously reported in this space) that he may have office-holding ambitions. He reminded reporters that he was now legally a California resident, having settled into a vast compound in Orange County some months before. But he said that for the present, Evil for Californians was his main, in fact his only, priority. "This initiative will be my gift to Californians. It is the least I can do for them," he said. "If later on, they should call me to further service, I will be ready."

Since taking up residence in Orange County, Mr. Satan has been a notable presence on the Los Angeles social scene, frequently seen in the company of such notables as Arianna Huffington. A dapper, sunburnt man of indeterminate age, with a neatly trimmed beard and a pair of small horns, he presents a polished television image and was obviously at home in front of the cameras.

In a related development, a court has blocked the enforcement of Proposition 227, which aims to end bilingual education in California, pending further review. The judge is currently studying a proposal under which the proposition, which was passed by a large margin, could go into effect only if Silicon Valley businessman and sponsor Ron Unz could learn Spanish within 180 days. Opponents of the proposition are demanding that Unz be required to learn Chinese instead.

Message 13 6/4/98 6:42 PM
Subject: Aramaic
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

perhaps a week ago we were talking about Aramaic. Today on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" was a report on Syriac Christians in Turkey who speak -- Aramaic!! (I thought it had died out. Apparently not.) Then they interviewed a scholar who said that there are more than a quarter of a million speakers of modern Aramaic in this country alone. (I don't know how different modern dialects are from ancient ones, which must have been fairly different from each other. in college I worked for a biblical scholar who knew about a dozen aramaic dialects. After I played him the "Repo Man" soundtrack, he would sing "We've got nothing better to do/ Than watch TV and study some Hebrew.") So I don't know if a modern Aramaic speaker could have understood Jesus or the Jewish Kaddish or if he or she would be able to tell us about the semantics of the word for "virgin" 2000 years ago.....

Message 12 6/4/98 6:30 PM
Subject: who invented the paper airplane?
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

I would really like to know this. I have been thinking about it and researching it on and off for a while but haven't gotten very far. I'm talking about the classic type paper airplane you used to fold and throw when you had a substitute teacher. Does it antedate the discovery of the principles of aerodynamics and lift in the late 1800's? supposedly the chinese had paper darts, but they don't have wings, don't generate lift. they get all their energy from the throwing (they might as well be rocks.) on the other hand,

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kites are aerodynamic but don't get any energy from being thrown. now, the paper airplane, so simple, so elegant, seems like the sort of thing Leonardo Da Vinci would have invented, and in fact, Scientific american named the award in its paper airplane contest of a few years back the Leonardo. (trying to get more teenaged girls interested?) but they admitted they just liked the name. so. who invented the paper airplane? have paper airplanes evolved to reflect the shapes of real ones or vice versa? In other words, why does the Concorde SST look like a paper airplane?

a Leonardo -- or a Kate -- to the best response. (creativity will be judged as favorably as veracity.)

terrible person

Message 6 6/6/98 6:19 AM
Subject: Re(4): Weeds
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Michael D. Sweeney writes:

I'm surprised no one has mentioned triffids. Now there's a weed for you. (Come to think, though, only Terrible probably knows what I'm talking about. Sorry.)

actually, MDS, I have never seen a triffid -- but I know what you mean. (Look up, alarmed -- then continue with the questioning.) I was worried more about watermelon like pods extending their tentacles out into pierre and Nine, replacing them and transforming them into pierre le normal and Four and a Half.

Message 5 6/6/98 6:22 AM
Subject: Re(3): movie star
From: terrible person
To: Crushes on Greatness

Steve Omlid writes:

Not only is Halle an almost perfect-looking human being, but Bulworth shows that she can really act.

I thought that was amply demonstrated by "Jungle Fever". In fact, she could act before anyone could tell how beautiful she was.

Message 133 6/7/98 7:41 PM
Subject: Re(6): Edward Teller and Pakistan
From: terrible person
To: politics

why is so much made over the use of a brand new and incredibly cruel weapon of war at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and so little over the equally cruel (in terms

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. of casualties and the way wounds were inflicted) and also rather novel firebombing of Tokyo and other cities? (Not to mention Dresden.) The atomic bomb was just a little more dramatic?

interestingly (at least to me), the "Father of the Firebombing" was Gen. Curtis LeMay (later advocate of bombing North Vietnam "back to the stone age" and George Wallace's 1968 running mate.) he and Teller have something else in common besides being responsible for really terrible weapons, or perhaps as a consequence: both were the basis for characters in "Dr. Strangelove". (though the title character was a mixture of Teller, Werner Von Braun, herman Kahn, and a then relatively unknown Harvard professor named Henry Kissinger.) of course, teller is fond of saying that the hydrogen bomb has never sent him a father's day card. and not fond of saying that his original plan for a thermonuclear weapon, the so-called "classical super", would never have worked.

we can't blame the Indians and pakistanis for testing bombs just to cow (no pun intended) potential adversaries. remember that a big reason for using the bombs on Japan was to show the Soviets, who were finally entering the war in the Far East and seizing territory like crazy, that we had the bomb and would use it. (Truman actually threatened use of the bomb in 1948 when the Soviets were unwilling to pull out of the half of Iran they had occupied during the war. after 1949, this was impossible.)

also, before the Soviets finally came into the Far Eastern war in august, they were neutral towards the Japanese. And in fact it was the Soviets that the Japanese approached as intermediaries weeks before Hiroshima with their surrender offer. But the Japanese insisted on keeping the Emperor, while the U.S., insisting on unconditional surrender, would not countenance any conditions. So the bombs were dropped and the Japanese surrendered and the Emperor was kept.

I still love the story that at the Trinity test in July 1945, the Manhattan Project scientists believed there was a definite probability that the bomb would set the entire atmosphere on fire. They took bets on it. And then tested.

"This is the biggest fool thing we have ever done. The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives." -- Adm. Leahy, asst. to the President

terrible person

Message 132 6/7/98 7:44 PM
Subject: Re(2): nerds
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Tim Walters writes:

One to change the bulb, and five to complain about how it's gone electric.

or to put it another way, how many folk nerds does it take to put a new taper in the candelabrum?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
proposed answer:

one to put it in, and three to praise the Goddess or something like that?

making it up as I go along,

terrible person

Message 123 6/8/98 6:38 PM
Subject: Re(8): Edward Teller and Paki
From: terrible person
To: politics

Rod Ottinger writes:

Let's have fewer tears for Dresden. That tragedy came more than four years after the destruction of Coventry. City-busting was not an Allied innovation in the war.

but I thought the idea was that we (the Allies) were the "good guys", morally better than the Germans and others we were fighting, not out for revenge or gain but for a better world for all. that was the basis for the trial of Nazi and Japanese militarist leaders for "crimes against humanity"....also, my point was basically about firebombing, used at Dresden, as opposed to good old (ok, at the time, not that old) conventional bombing, used at Coventry.

There were no formal offers of surrender by the Imperial Govt before the 1st bomb. The peace faction in the Cabinet was checkmated by the war faction until the Emperor stepped in -- after Hiroshima. Even then the war faction planned and launched a coup to take the Emperor prisoner and to continue the war (it failed through the loyalty of important members of the Imperial Household). So it is likely that even Nagasaki was necessary to convince the diehards to allow the peace faction to proceed to surrender.

I believe I said "peace feelers", not "formal offers". I have heard the argument that the atomic bomb gave the Japanese an "out", a way to surrender, for the peace factions and the emperor to prevail, because they had satisfied honor, doing everything they possibly could, but that there was no way they could fight this "new and most cruel bomb" (as Hirohito put it in the surrender speech).

As for showing off, there may have been some for whom that element was most important, but there were far more at the top concerned with ending the war. The bombings after all were planned months before there was any indication that Stalin would -- finally-- grant Washington's REQUEST that the USSR enter the war against Japan.

the US desperately wanted the Soviets to enter the war in the East because until the middle of the Potsdam conference in July 1945, most American leaders had no idea the Bomb existed and those who did doubted it would work. When Truman found out about the successful Trinity test, his whole attitude towards Stalin changed.

finally, John Barrymore comments that the War Department (which really became

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

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the Department of the Army, since until 1947 the Department of the Navy was separate and equal) and the OSS (did not yet exist in 1941 - he probably means Army or Naval Intelligence?) knew about Pearl harbor but did not tell Roosevelt. The version I usually hear is that Roosevelt did know, but took no action in order to assure US entry into the war. I guess that is worse or something.

two more things in response to the original Teller quote. first of all, nothing I have read indicates that either India or pakistan developed its bomb through stealing US technology. (we helped both countries with reactor construction, though.) the Indians have no shortage of physics talent. The Pakistanis appear to have borrowed a chinese design after stealing a fuel processing plant design from the Netherlands. But nuclear science and technology are not all that difficult theoretically. the info is out there, whether in a famous article in The Progressive magazine in the 80's, or on the Net. the hard part is organizing a country's industries to produce the fuel. and doing it without messing up and killing a lot of people.

the other is that Teller, along with being wrong about the "Classical super", also has another great failure to his credit, the multibillion dollar pie in the sky boondoggle that never shot down a single missile, Ronald Reagan's death ray, the Strategic Defense Initiative. Millions of people thrown out on the streets by Reagan-era budget cuts, including not a small number of veterans, thank you, Dr. Teller.

"Far above the troprostrata
In a region stark and stellar
On his world of anti-matter
Sat Dr. Edward anti-Teller..."
anyone know the rest?
"...and the rest was gamma rays..."

terrible person

Message 121 6/9/98 6:14 PM
Subject: Re(3): Laundry
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Nine writes:

I think the key words to focus on here are "nearly all".

I was just trying to avoid having all of GOL picturing me panty-less.

is this the worst thing in the world? is the emphasis on "all" as opposed to "much of" or "some of"? and can we speak of one "panty"? do we ever talk of one "pant" or one "trouser"?

anyway, it could be worse. you could have had all your underwear gobbled in the washer like your socks instead of losing it the fun way, leaving it bit by bit as mementos with your various conquests and or conquerors.

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I will admit that there are a couple of pairs of panties left....but they are really REALLY unacceptable for regular daily wear. I'm down to the Calvin Klein men's briefs. And they leave really awful panty lines. So you're saying it really could be worse?

--Kelsey (needs some perspective here) Gadoo

it could be a lot worse.

they could be remaking "Back to the Future".

You could be Mademoiselle from St.-Nazaire, parlez-vous.

You could be without a bikini, the bottoms of which you could wear as underwear, and then wash out in the shower.

You could have a job where you have to wear skirts.

Worse than that, you could have to wear patent leather shoes.

Listen, it could be a LOT worse. in Japan, businessmen take officials to restaurants where the waitresses wear no underwear and the floors are mirrored.

Your underwear could be overrated.

You can't get your panties in a twist now.

You can be sure you won't get hit by a car since you are not wearing clean underwear.

Your family's Latin motto, which you are sworn to uphold, could be *semper ubi sub ubi*.

terrible person (has so much perspective he keeps reaching the vanishing point)

Message 120 6/9/98 7:08 PM

Subject: Re(10): Edward Teller and Paki

From: terrible person

To: politics

Mr. Ottinger, you are obviously a man who knows his history. I am glad to have you behind me on the OSS question, sort of, though I am not questioning Barrymore's statement that the OSS was the ancestor of the CIA, just when it came into existence. (and saying the Department of Defense comes from the Department of War is like saying the US comes from Virginia or the EU from France. the DOD, or the national military establishment as it was first called, was set up by the national security act of 1947 to encompass the old service departments which used to be able to operate fairly independently but in modern warfare needed more coordination. the Air Force was simply the Army Air Forces spun off, equalized, and renamed -- everyone kept their ranks, just changed to blue uniforms. [If you sing "off we go into the wild blue yonder", you will notice that its last line, "Nothing can stop the US Air force" fits the song much better as "NOthing can stop the Army Air Corps", the original pre-WWII version.] whereas the first secretary of defense was not the former secretary of War, but the former secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal. and finally, the desegregation of the Armed Services was not part of this Act, but in a separate Executive Order, not subject to Congressional Approval [powerful southern legislators would surely have stopped it.] Barrymore is right in attributing this wholly to Truman. ok, enough of that.

Rod Ottinger writes:

Even the peace faction in the Supreme War Council thought it could NEGOTIATE

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a peace, whereas the reality was that Japan could only SURRENDER, having nothing left after the loss of Okinawa six months earlier to negotiate with.

Still, on a few points I must respectfully differ with you. The Japanese did indeed have a lot left after Okinawa - 2 million men in China, most of Southeast Asia, Korea. This is why the US (at first) wanted the Soviets into the war, to deal with all this on the Asian mainland.

Who cares if news of Trinity at Potsdam made Truman feel better and more likely to resist Soviet pressures on its land grabs? Hiroshima and Nagasaki had already been planned and indeed the bombs had already begun the journey across the Pacific. The anti-Soviet elements of US strategic thinking did not figure into the destruction of two Japanese cities.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki may well have been planned months in advance, but the goahead was not given until July 31st. here is a quote that probably exceeds fair use from something I downloaded off AOL around the fiftieth anniversary (I think it was from the NY times originally)

Truman seemed to make the decision with astonishing ease. In Potsdam, Germany, before another meeting with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, Truman took an important message from a Navy aide, message No. 41011.

From Stimson, it asked for a decision. George Elsey, the aide, watched as Truman without hesitation turned over the note and wrote in pencil on the back:

"Sec. War. Reply to your 41011. Suggestions approved. Release when ready, but not sooner than August 2."

Years later, when he was asked by a historian how he deliberated and what he was thinking, Truman leaned over, held out his hand and snapped his fingers.

"I decided it like that," he said.

When it comes down to it, what probably decided Truman was that the US had spent \$2 billion (really money in those days) on the bomb and Truman knew that

if it came out that he had declined to use it, sacrificed any lives, he would probably have been impeached. it's one of the things about a democracy, you have to do what you think the people want you to....

Now we have the canard about FDR sacrificing Pearl Harbor to get us into the war. There is no question that FDR wanted us in the war. The problem is that he wanted to fight Hitler, not Japan (and even once we were in the war, the strategic decision was Hitler first, Japan thereafter). Even if we assume that the story is true, do you believe that FDR would sacrifice the entire Pacific fleet at the start of a war? And how did FDR know that Hitler would solve the problem by gratuitously declaring war on the US?

In terms of FDR's possible foreknowledge, I brought that up mainly because I thought that was what Barrymore was getting at. I am not sure what to think and since it seems that everyone involved is either dead or very careful to destroy all the records or both, I doubt I ever will. Of course it makes little sense that FDR would have sacrificed a big chunk of the pacific fleet.

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on the other hand, the carriers were conveniently, miraculously, out of Pearl that day. And it might have been worth it to protect an intelligence source. Or the President might have underestimated the strength of or mistimed the attack. Still, speculation like this quickly runs into the X-files realm. FDR was more interested in Europe, no argument there. He probably would have preferred Lusitania II or another Zimmermann telegram to Pearl. (Although of course the US had very substantial economic interests in the Pacific which were placed in jeopardy by Japanese expansion, and tensions had been escalating there with the US oil and scrap metal embargo in response to the Japanese seizure of Indochina.)

Here is a question which has interested me for a while, and with which you perhaps can help me: it's the old, "What was Hitler thinking?" meaning, did Hitler know in advance of Pearl Harbor? Did he approve and encourage or disapprove and discourage? I don't know the exact terms of the Rome-Tokyo-Berlin Axis, but I don't think the Germans were bound to declare war on the US just because the US had on Japan. (after all, the Japanese did not declare on the Soviets, when they could have done them a lot of damage and themselves a lot of good perhaps.) Did Hitler totally disregard the strength of the US, even though it tipped the balance in WWI? (Did he really believe his "stabbed in the back" theory?) did he think the US a decadent place of ethnic mixing and Lindberghian isolationism, or just too unready? it was not as though he could have seen the war ending before the US could become involved, with Britain having survived the Blitz and Operation Barbarossa bogging down in the snow...so what was Hitler -- and while we're at it, since it was probably different, what was the High Command thinking? were the field marshalls hitting themselves on the foreheads, saying "Ach!" I would be interested in anything you know about this....

interested to hear your thoughts.

terrible person

> 117

Message 117 6/9/98 6:00 PM
Subject: Re: thinking of you
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

"un point rose qu'on met sur l'i du verbe 'aimer'"....

(Edmond Rostand, "Cyrano de Bergerac", Act III -- describing a kiss)

terry

Message 104 6/12/98 2:45 AM
Subject: Re(12): Edward Teller and Pak
From: terrible person
To: politics

going back to the original topic of this thread:

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Today, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists reset its "Doomsday Clock" to nine minutes to midnight from fourteen. This five minute change is the largest since the early '60's, after France and China became nuclear powers. The reasons given for the change were not just the Indian and Pakistani tests, but the failure of the US and Russia to ratify and implement the arms reduction treaties that had led the Atomic Scientists so optimistically to move the clock back in the first place.

meanwhile, pakistan pledged today not to test anymore and to enter negotiations about joining the CTBT. and both sides seem to putting out peace feelers on Kashmir -- turning up the heat had made both of them sweaters about it. so perhaps the nuclear testing did some good after all, if it scared both sides to the bargaining table. we will have to see what comes of the negotiations.

Meltdown expected? (The weekdays are growing grim.) A nuclear error? I'm not sure how much fear I have. but I will wait for telephone communication from foreign capitals...

terrible person (writing way past midnight)

Message 103 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

What else do I need?

I have THREE stuffed bears!! THREE!!!

Message 102 6/12/98 7:09 PM
Subject: quiescent fear
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

I know that the idea of this conference is that people post their problems, and others give them perspective by telling them that things could be worse. But what if my problem is that things could ONLY be worse?

here is my situation. my life at this point is entirely adequate. better, in fact, at least over a longer term, than it has ever been. (meaning I have had much much much greater minutes, and rather better weeks, but never a better six months or three years. this makes more sense if you remember calculus.) now maybe to many of you my life would seem dull and limited, but I assure you, compared to the way it has been elsewhere, it's a dream, all I could reasonably ask for and more. the thing is, I have come into this situation almost entirely by dumb luck, hardly at all through my own efforts. call me Forrest Gump, if you will. I have never planned or worked for anything, or rather, when I have, it has never worked, so that I have come to rely entirely on chance. but at some point my luck must change. I can't go on flipping heads forever like Rosencrantz and guildenstern. it's against all laws of probability. and against all laws of merit. I would not want to live in such a

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universe and would feel obliged to take steps myself to ruin things. but I won't have to. The economy cannot continue this way forever. every boom has always turned to recession; the stock market bubble could burst any day. the earthquake must come eventually; the millennium bug sooner, global warming or nuclear terrorism later, but all will hasten the next economic collapse.

whether because they will need to cut back or just because they will become a little smarter, my employers will realize how grossly overpaid I am. my small number of friends will realize that there is a reason I use this name. my health, in no way helped by my eating and sleeping habits, will give way to some random cause, either a new one to which it has no resistance, or an old one to which its resistance has been momentarily degraded. I'll be just a bit too slow cutting through traffic. I'm at my high water mark, in the few seconds of zero-G at the top of the parabolic loop before the reentry begins... 'cuz it's all downhill now, running on empty, like when the coyote has run off the cliff and for some reason he hangs in the air for a while before falling, or has been sliced up but awaits a nudge before he falls to pieces...

so though in the present, I have no right to complain, and never would, since I know my life really could be a lot worse, for the future, well... I guess you could say, "it could be worse, your life could have collapsed already" but that is little consolation.... it's not as if I expect my life to be good as a universe given right; I am grateful for all I have. but once you get used to something, it is tough to lose it.

there are three things in life to worry about. you can look around and think, like winston, "we're things always this way? was there perhaps a time when things were different?"

you can look around and think, "things could be different. how do I know they aren't?"

and you can think about the future and realize, as Grendel does, "That could happen!"

and do you feel scared? oh, *I* do. I stop and falter. even if we threw it all away, things can only get worse.

terrible person

Message 101 6/12/98 10:25 PM
Subject: Re: Don't Miss It!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Isn't it odd that in a country like Britain in which almost all the spice in the otherwise bland culinary landscape is provided by people whose origins are in the Indian subcontinent, not one of the "Spice" Girls is from there? Why no Curry Spice? Perhaps if the Indians and Pakistanis had been given the respect they deserve in the person of representation on the, as it were, Spice Security Council, their relatives in the original country would not have felt the need for such symbols of international respect as nuclear bombs.

terrible person (aka Lost in Spice. or Hyper Spice, Chewie!)

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
Message 100 6/13/98 5:15 PM
Subject: Re(2): Don't Miss It!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

warming to this (my own) idea:

more reasons for a spice girl of Indian or Pakistani ancestry:

Indian music/dancing is pretty cool;

Indian women have been wearing midriff-bearing shirts since forever;

the group could change its idol from Margaret Thatcher to Indira Gandhi;

actually, my nominee for newest Spice Girls member would be someone who has the right big hair, who was previously in a group whose members adopted a common last name, but now needs something to keep him out of trouble; who can't play an instrument or sing too well and who is not terribly bright but represents a sort of eternal teenagerhood, who wears converse high-tops (though not platform ones) -- yes, I mean, none other than Joey Ramone. Just think of it: "I Wannabe Sedated."

terrible person (aka Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spice)

Message 99 6/13/98 5:40 PM
Subject: Re(4): Don't Miss It!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Greta Christina writes:

So what Spice name would Joey Ramone have? Grimy Spice, maybe?

When I stopped laughing at that (approx. 30 sec.) and was no longer beyond the capacity for rational thought, it occurred to me that "Greasy" might be a bit better. But let's ask him himself:

Q: "Mr. Ramone, now that you are changing your last name to Spice, what will you adopt as your descriptive first name?"

A: "Well, uuhhh, ummm, well, you know, ummmm...I...like....well.....ummmm...hey, what was the question again?"

I recently read the real names of the Ramones in a "history of punk rock" or somesuch. It was disillusioning. I mean, I knew they had them, I just did not want to be confronted with them. It's like thinking about how they make sausage. Anyway, I have since done my best to forget them and succeeded, except that one was Epstein. Or was that Sweathogs? One confuses them so easily.

why don't they add all the ramones to the spice girls, or enough give a total of 7, and name them all after the dwarves? but they would argue over who would be Dopey (in both senses.)

terrible spice

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Message 98 6/13/98 8:29 PM
Subject: Re(3): Stress!
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Meg Cotner writes:

I see this in music fairly regularly - often I see the phrase "singers and musicians."

I thought it was "drummers and musicians" (vide pierre's last big post.)

Message 97 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(4): Don't Miss It!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

I thought you were working your way towards.....Menudo Spice.

that's an idea!! or of course, New Kids On The Block Spice.

Message 96 (Unsent)
Subject: Re: Schoolyard Taunting
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

I remember [accompanying motions indicated in square brackets]:

Chinese [angling eyes up with fingers], Japanese [angling eyes down]
Dirty knees
Look at these! [pulling out chest of shirt]

I don't quite see how the one you ask about would work metrically, and the rhythm was of course central.

Even on the East Coast where I grew up, making fun of Asians seemed to permeate the child-culture. It must date from the WWII era; when I was a kid in the 70's, when we played "war", the bad guys were still the Germans. (this even though there was no shortage of Asian-Americans at my schools; it wasn't as if we did not know what Asians were really like. the power of folklore.....)

another example:

"Me Chinese, me play joke
Me put peepee in your Coke."

lyrically and lorically,

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terrible person

Message 95 6/14/98 11:59 AM
Subject: nessie's wet dream (was Re: Wet willy)
From: terrible person
To: politics

because of my schedule, I often do not get to read most of my sunday New York Times until Saturday night. Thus it was that I came to be reading the obituaries (a favorite section, though I object to them on principle) just as Kevin Costner as Jim Garrison was giving his summation in the Clay Shaw case in "JFK" on Channel 44. And one of the obituaries was for Lucien Conein. Conein was a French-born American-raised founding member of the OSS and CIA. Sent to Indochina in the late 50's, he became the American Ambassador's liaison to the generals who were plotting the overthrow and execution of Republic of Vietnam President Ngo Din Diem in 1963, and conveyed the Kennedy Administration's advance approval of their action. He quit the CIA in 1968, and when asked by E. Howard Hunt to join the White House Plumbers in 1971, declined (though he later insisted that had he been aboard, the Watergate bugging would have "been done right".) Ok, here is the part where nessie really gets excited. (It's a present, nessie; I don't know when your birthday is, so I am giving it to you now. Enjoy it.) From 1973 to 1984, Conein ran covert operations for the DEA. This, though he publically admitted that he was admitted that he was an honorary member of the Corsican Brotherhood [which may, or may not, be the same thing as the Union Corse, as far as I know, but has a history of drug smuggling.]

This is the fairly well documented stuff about him; he tended to lie a lot too. He had a bunch of mistresses. He may have served in the French Foreign Legion. He probably showed up in that "Bright Shining Lie" thing on cable. What a guy.

OK, nessie, I've given you the material, entertain us.

terrible person (used to ride his bicycle over the rude bridge, and loves Paul Revere, whether he rode or not, but Samuel Prescott more)

Message 94 6/14/98 2:42 PM
Subject: Re(3): quiescent fear
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Nine writes:
It could be worse... You could have a humility attack.

huh?

I know it bothers some people that I actually like to discuss things in depth rather than in sound bites. If you are one of those people, then by all means simply ignore what I write because I am not writing for you and I would not want to bother you or waste your time. But please, please, don't formulate your opinion on my posts and your reply to them simply by observing their length (or guessing about them based on other things I may have posted elsewhere) rather than actually reading their content. Thanks.

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Or, to put it in the spirit of this conference, and as a sound bite, just for you:

"Things could be worse. You could have actually taken, or wasted, the time to READ my post."

Yours very truly,

terrible person

Message 91 6/15/98 6:13 AM
Subject: Re: Bad cats
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture
Copies: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Greta Christina writes:

in fact big dogs are more of a threat to more animals than cats are (cats aren't really big enough to be much of a threat to, say, a pig),

Think about it. For some reason, in our culture cats are identified as female and dogs are identified as male. And in animal stories (as well as elsewhere), cats are often identified with negative character traits -- slyness, deceit, trickery, manipulation, a selfish and sybaritic love of physical comfort -- that our culture tends to identify with women.

Greta Christina points out that size does matter. So let's consider the importance of size in this matter. One reason to identify cats with females is that they are simply physically smaller and thus presumably physically weaker. Therefore, they have to operate through cunning and intelligence rather than brute force. is that they worst thing to identify with?

now, I am trying to think of folkloric cats, and I can only come up with puss in boots too. (isn't there a legend of tybalt, prince of cats, to which allusion is made in Romeo and Juliet?) if I may, I will include some from popular culture, sylvester, felix, tom. but like puss in boots, these cats are all ostensibly MALE. the only female cat I can think of offhand is the one voiced by Sally Field in "the incredible journey". (there the two dogs were both male, and the cat exhibited all the "female" characteristics Greta Christina listed.) but then, that most famous of dogs was female: lassie. it seems that in most depictions, the actual gender of the animal does not matter, just the "gender" of the entire species.

also, don't big cats (lions, leopards, tigers) seem male? though I loved the part in "the lion king" in which Nala kicked Simba's butt. again, a size thing.

there is also the "alley cat" figure, the fallen female of loose morals, again representing a certain type of female. examples are the one that sings "memory" in the musical, and mehitabel, in whose honor this post in all in lower case. however, equally many pop culture stray cats, like the band, are male (though I saw a terrific karaoke rendition of their signature song by two females a few weeks ago.)

another thing is that even though to many they are disease spreading vermin,

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often mice are seen as the cute heroes of stories. this makes cats the enemy, and dogs, as the enemy of cats, the enemy of my enemy and my friend. though for instance in the original version of "the mouse's tale" in "Alice in Wonderland", both the cat and the dog are villainous.

next time: an exhaustive analysis, based on work pioneered by Steve Omlid, of the significance of cats and dogs in proverbs.

terrible person (called a bad cat in the jazz world)

Message 85 6/15/98 6:48 PM
Subject: Re(2): quiescent fear
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Any N. Body writes:

It could be way worse guy...you could have some stranger die and leave you millions of dollars and then u would have even more to lose.....oh oh just think of the nightmares involved in that. Sweating in the night afraid the house of cards will fall afraid you aren't spending your money wisely or ethically.....

It could be soooooooooo much worse

Damn you, Any N. Body! Damn you to hell!! You blew it up!!! Don't you realize that I don't have to actually get the money in order to start worrying about spending it?? I can now worry about what I would do with it IF BY SOME CHANCE I WERE TO GET IT!!!!

I hope YOU can sleep knowing *I* can't!!

and the solstice is coming up!!! from then it's REALLY all downhill!

fired with a new goal in life of getting Any (or not content with not getting Any) if it's the last thing he does,

terrible person

6/15/98 10:03 PM
Subject: ` propos of nothing
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Two songs I found on the Web today.

I saw this performed on The Muppet Show many years ago, with Peter Sellers pounding on a bass drum, and a bunch of pigs and other assorted whatnots, in derbies, vests, and sleeve garters, singing along. I'd like to find a recording or the sheet music.

Cigarettes, and whiskey, and wild, wild women

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

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They'll drive you crazy, they'll drive you insane! (thump, thump, thump)
Cigarettes, and whiskey, and wild, wild women
They'll drive you crazy, they'll drive you insane!

Once I was happy and had a good wife.
I had enough money to last me for life.
Then I met with a gal and we went on a spree.
She taught me smokin' and drinkin' whiskey.

(Chorus)

Cigarettes are a blight on the whole human race.
A man is a monkey with one in his face.
Take warning, dear friend, take warning, dear brother:
A fire's on one end, and a fool's on the other.

(Chorus)

And now, good people, I'm broken with faith.
The lines on my face make a well written page.
I'm weavin' this story -- how sadly but true
On women and whiskey and what they can do.

(Chorus)

Write on the cross at the head of my grave:
"To women and whiskey here lies a poor slave.
Take warning, poor stranger, take warning dear friend."
They'll write in big letters these words at my end."

Cigarettes, and whiskey, and wild, wild women
They'll drive you crazy, they'll drive you insane!
Cigarettes, and whiskey, and wild, wild women
They'll drive you crazy, they'll drive you insane!

(Wait, isn't this Matt Stowell's theme song?)

GARRYOWEN

(the song to which Colonel Custer's Seventh Cavalry rode as they went to teach a lesson to a small party of Indians at Little Bighorn. Until today, I thought it was about a guy named Gary Owen, not a suburb of Limerick.)

Let Bacchus' sons be not dismayed
But join with me, each jovial blade
Come, drink and sing and lend your aid
To help me with the chorus:

Chorus: Instead of spa, we'll drink brown ale
And pay the reckoning on the nail.
No man for debt shall go to jail
For Garryowen in glory.

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We'll beat the bailiffs out of fun

We'll make the mayor and sheriffs run

We are the boys no man dare dun

If he regards a whole skin.

(Chorus)

Our hearts so stout have got no fame

For soon 'tis known from whence we came

Where'er we go they fear the name

Of Garryowen in glory.

(Chorus)

Message 127 6/16/98 10:44 PM

Subject: Re: Flaming ...

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

Nine writes:

When I do my big finale (to my boffo juggling act), what objects shall I set on fire and then juggle?

heretics?

witches?

french breads?

flaming carrots?

flaming liberals?

flaming Flemings? (only on your Belgian tour)

flaming old flames? (if you're feeling vengeful)

flambis? (if you're feeling culinary)

flaming people who have flamed you?

flaming dynamite sticks? (if you are cross-tossing with nother juggler)

on saturdays by my favorite bagel shop I sometimes see this kid juggling and playing the harmonica at the same time. he does not do either one that well, though I am sure if he concentrated on one at a time he could. but with time he will. he doesn't juggle the harmonicas; they stay still.

terrible person

Message 124 (Unsent)

Subject: Disaster at Terrobyl

From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I heard today that a nuclear plant in the Northeast -- perhaps Maine Yankee?? -- is being auctioned off piece by piece by sealed bid on the Web. Now, I think, this is the moment to fulfill my love/hate, or rather fascination/horror, relationship with all things nuclear. After all, who really wants an obsolete, inefficient, radioactive chunk of hardware? Maybe the bids will actually be much lower than I might expect. Maybe by maxing out all the credit cards they have been sending with advances, I can raise enough to BUY MY OWN NUCLEAR PLANT!!! I could set it up somewhere in the Bay Area, perhaps in a conveniently located Nuclear Free Zone, see if they can really enforce their silly City Council resolution.

Hey, I could claim it's all part of power demonopolization!!! Power, anyone? I bet I could run it better than Homer Simpson!!!

Message 123 6/16/98 10:48 PM
Subject: Re(2): `propos of nothing`
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Spidra Webster writes:

The Oakland library has the sheet music for this. Go to the Arts and Music section and there's a catalog of song titles.

oh thank you, Spidra!!! you are truly a civilized, civilized woman who is keeping me from going insane!!! to you, the Brass Monkey, First Class, with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the citation reading, "For Knowing Neat Stuff".

terrible person

Message 117 6/16/98 10:56 PM
Subject: Re(3): Bad cats
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

jon harmon writes:

One of the more interesting things I stumbled across was a theory regarding cats in the late middle ages. Don't know if it's true, but the Church supposedly demonized cats, so people got rid of many of them, 'cause they were evil. No cats, so the mice and particularly rats proliferated. Of course, rats carry things like parasites and such, so they were an important factor in the rapid and devastating spread of the plague.

Fascinating theory, anyway. Can anyone verify it or shed some additional light?

there is a book called "the great cat massacre and other great moments in french cultural history" (or something like that) by a big name historian, maybe simon schama. I have not read it, but I think this what you are talking about.

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hey, wild speculation time. cats were associated with the Egyptian goddess Isis, isn't it so? And worship of her gave christianity a pretty fair run for its money as the dominant religion in the Roman Empire. so could the christian prejudice against cats have arisen there and then?

the cat in "babe" was mean, and separated frm all the other animals indoors. was there a cat in "animal farm"? don't remember.

felines
wo wo wo felines
why did I ever let you go?

terrible person

Message 116 6/17/98 6:42 AM
Subject: Re(5): quiescent fear
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

McNair, get Mr. Stowell a rum! Get him the whole damn barrel if he likes!

Much as I appreciate your missionary zeal, Matt (Elder Matt? do you go around in a white shirt and tie like the Mormons?), I think you know my stance on organized religion. though yours sounds pretty disorganized. have you guys got an inquisition? do you burn heretics? do you make use of a certain dead language? is it a good way to meet chicks? I am fascinated by "early sightings" of things that later became important, before anyone knew what they were or took notice (early warnings, maybe), such as the apparent case of HIV dating to 1958. so isn't that Bob on the cover of the first Devo album?

and if, as I pointed out to Kelsey, you can't have one panty or trouser, how can you have slack? except the key on a guitar, or my jaw....

Nine writes:
Never fear.

like chief Vitalstatistix (Abraracourcix), my only fear is that the sky might fall on my head tomorrow. mais c'est pas demain la veille. or fear itself.

If I comment on your post then I have read it.
but can you appreciate my concern when i saw you had answered between 1 and three minutes (exclusive) of reading? I mean, even I can't understand what I write in that time.

I thought the post was about being very self satisfied to the point of having lost a sense of challenge, adventure or compassion.

it was more about being scared to the point of paralysis.

Thus my humility comment -- it sounded as though focusing on someone besides yourself might be a nice change.

maybe. but we don't come to this conference to complain about other people's problems, do we? saying humility would help is simply restating the premise of

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this conference. speaking of which, did you see last week's Norman Dog cartoon?

It Could Be Worse!

what do you think of the Second law of thermodynamics? I started thinking about entropy when I was walking through the wasted city. some see it as very pessimistic, that entropy is always increasing, things on their own can only run down. (just as in a real, frictionful environment, rather than the idealized one of physics class, things in motion don't stay in motion forever, but come to a halt. unless acted on by another force, though!!!! like a motor or legs and pedals!!) but look at what happened on a little planet covered with primordial soup! (available in your grocer's freezer) when the sun kept pumping in energy! greater complexity!! evolution!!! four legged beings crawl out of the slime, losing their tails, evolving up from little snails (I say it's all just wind in sails.) eventually learning to use computers!!!

is this a great universe or what?

terrible person (and in case I don't see you, good afternoon, good evening, and good night!!)

Message 113 (Unsent)
Subject: sex with directors
From: terrible person

many people in this conference take a certain pride in characterizing themselves as perverted, as having sexual tastes which are, to use their word, perverted, or even dangerous. now, of course, in either case, it is not my business to tell consenting adults what do, and it would not really even be appropriate for me simply to express concern when I hear about particularly hazardous sounding practices. however, I think it's all right to express my gladness when I hear that people are NOT doing certain things. which is why I was so glad not to hear anyone put on his or her list of directors with whom they would want to have sex, David Lynch.

however, I would not refuse a chance at/with his daughter, jennifer ("boxing helena"). but then, I would go out with Monica Lewinsky. curiosity. and I'd like to talk to either one first.

it would seem that sex with kubrick would take forever, you would never know what he was doing, he would never want to do it other than in his own place. on the other hand, just as you thought he was done he would want to do it all over.

Message 112 6/17/98 7:02 PM
Subject: Re(4): ` propos of nothing
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

soooo, who is Hoyt Axton? My impression was that the cigarettes song actually dated from the turn of the century, the era of the WCTU; I found it in a database of Irish folk songs. If it were actually modern, faux folk, that

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would be funny. (I also read that it had been recorded by Red Nichols. anyone know him?) so thank you, Sharon, for an interesting lead, though the jury (and the Brass Monkey prize committee) will still be out on it.

Oh, by the way, thanks, but I'm not looking for any info on "Garryowen" -- it's in all those westerns. I just put it on because it was fun and anarchistic (though perhaps too Freemenish), kind of weird for an army marching song.

terrible person (always wears boots so he can die with his boots on)

Message 111 6/17/98 6:58 PM
Subject: Re(7): quiescent fear
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Any N. Body writes:

it can always be soooooo much worse

and it's going to get worse, for YOU, PAL, if you're not careful. since I can't sleep now, I can spend eight hours a night plotting your excruciating destruction.gngngngng.

ok. thank you. I'm better now. (I could be worse.)

"Generally speaking, things have gone about as far as they can possibly go when things have got about as bad as they can reasonably get." Tom Stoppard.

or as good, say I.

I was thinking today about the greatest "It Could Be Worse" movie ever: "My Life as a Dog". The kid consoles himself from his own troubles by thinking about the guy who was killed by a stray flying javelin while crossing an athletic field, or, of course, the dog the soviet shot into space with no way to bring him down and no food to sustain him. and all in swedish. (I'm told that kid actor became a soccer star.and the girl would appear to have grown up into Martina Hingis.) so I would most humbly like to submit, as my nominee for the official mascot of this conference, Laika.

By the way, Laika was eventually rescued by Major Tom.

terrible person (Laika? I just met 'a!')

Message 109 (Unsent)
Subject: blimps
From: terrible person

I love 'em. ever since I read Michael Moorcock's "The Warlord of the Air". Rigid and semi-rigid ships too. They are amazing. You can't hear them approach, unlike helicopters. They move slowly and stay over the same place longer and can carry more. So they could easily be surveilling us. I'm always fascinated by what I fear. You can't tell how far away they are since we really don't know how big they are supposed to be. No perspective. I don't

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care about that little unpleasantness at Lakehurst, NJ, in 1937. Nope.
Airships are the way to go.

This commentary is not just another of my random almost Tourettish outbursts, but well-provoked and timely. You may have noticed the frequent presence recently of two blimps in Bay Area skies, a red one belonging, I am told, to Russell Stover, and a blue one belonging to MetLife. (there is also the green Fuji blimp, but I have not seen it lately.) my question is, how can I get a ride on one of these things? whom do I call, whom do I pay? anyone who have a friend who works on one or for one of the owning companies? maybe they are even hiring....and I wonder how much they cost. could I own my own blimp? be like Jules Verne's Robur, master of the air and the world? ok, so there were not any Stinger missiles in Verne's day. Still. Then all I would have to do is buy that nuclear plant in Maine, and my empire of evil would be complete. but I have got to get on board that blimp, where I would never be bored. I wonder if the crew constantly sucks the helium to talk funny.

Watch the skies!!!

terrible person (considered by many to be like round balloons, full of hot air)

Message 108 6/17/98 10:15 PM
Subject: Re(10): quiescent fear
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

It could be a lot worse. they could have made the movie like the book, in which the kid is older, only once mentions Laika and other unfortunates, and at the end goes postal with an air rifle (having some time before consummated his (in the movie) innocent love for his boxing partner.) In fact, the book reminded me a lot of "Apt Pupil", by Stephen King (in the "Different Seasons" collection) and was really, really unsettling to someone who liked the movie (and now Any has a new way to give me nightmares.)

So yes, it could have been a lot worse.

Message 107 (Unsent)
Subject: Re: This Mortal Coil
From: terrible person
To: politics

I am carefully rereading your post, Jabari, because at first I thought that you were asserting that racism was "in the nature" of "white" people. on rereading, I don't find you saying this, rather that the simple fact is that "white" people have done horrible things for whatever reason and need to take responsibility. (and that to the extent that "whites" collectively and individually have profited from the exploitation of other races, "whites" collectively and individually owe a moral debt.)

i just want to be sure that this is indeed your point.

because history shows that as soon as a nation or group finds itself

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technically and organizationally superior to another, it will attempt to rule that other group, with little concern to the methods (or rather, with concern to the methods in inverse proportion to the physical and cultural dissimilarity of that group.) this happens because nations and groups perceive there to be a shortage of resources at the moment, or perhaps one in the future, so that they had better prevent the other guys from competing for those resources by grabbing the resources or eliminating the other guys. (labor is a resource.)

it was easy for Europeans to slaughter and enslave indigenous americans, africans, and asians, but it was also easy for the Japanese, when they were militarily supreme, to treat both Chinese and "white" prisoners as animals to be slaughtered.

now, I imagine that you are pretty tired of hearing that pre-european african societies practiced slvery themselves. but what would you say to an assertion that, had africans formed centralized seafaring states, say, when europe was in the dark ages, if they had invented gunpowder and mastered horses, nothing in "the nature " of africans would have prevented them from sailing north, and, if they thought they could get away with it, enslaving and or massacring the helpless europeans?

it's true, "whites" did the things of which you accuse them. but I think this is mainly because they had the chance to first, and it could easily have gone the other way.

Message 106 6/17/98 11:31 PM
Subject: Re(4): Bad cats
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture
Copies: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Sharon E. Everett writes:

Can't find any of my nonfiction sources at the moment . . . but at one point it may actually have been illegal (if memory serves) to own a cat in the City -- which is odd, considering the legends about Dick Whittington (thrice Lord Mayor of London), who was allegedly quite fond of his kitty.

ok, so I ran into my REALLY SMART english graduate student friend today and I was telling him how I had found out that something in Blade Runner is a quote from Blake, and he suggested I should actually READ some Blake, so I was going through my old (actually my sister's, I stole it) Norton Anthology, and I find this poem by Christopher Smart (no relation to Maxwell, I presume) called "From Jubilate Agno", and it's two pages about HOW GREAT HIS CAT IS!!!! I kid you not. The cat's name is Jeoffry [sic]. You cat lovers, read this. (It is the source of the expression "tribe of the tiger", title of a recent book.) Smart

lived from 1722 to 1771 and according to the notes, was in prison for insanity when he wrote this. wow. and my neighbor is going away next week and I get to take care of his cat for ten days. that prospect is ailuring. but now, me owt of here.

terrible person

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Message 102 6/18/98 6:48 PM

Subject: Re(8): ` propos of nothing
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

ok, following Spidra's advice, I consulted the song collection at my local public library. the sheet music I found for "Cigarettes and Whiskey" (or, as they put it, "Cigarettes, Whiskey and Wild, Wild Women", which is the way Sellers and the Muppets sang it) gave the writer as Tim Spencer and the copyright date as 1947. so unless it was based on some old song and Spencer just took credit, it's not really a folk song. But it's a hoot and a half to sing!!!

Thanks to all for suggestions.

Message 101 6/18/98 6:52 PM

Subject: Re(5): Bad cats
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Sharon E. Everett writes:

terrible person writes:

cats were associated with the Egyptian goddess Isis, isn't it so?

Actually, it was Bastet (or Bast), the goddess of joy. There is some etymological theory that "Bast" is the origin of the name "Puss" for cats.

aha. things come together. in my favorite graphic novel, an Egyptophile superhero owns a genetically engineered lynx named "Bubastis". So, is this a real Egyptian name expressing some feline connection to Bast?

also, didn't one of the Norse goddesses have a chariot pulled by cats?

terrible person (known in Italian westerns as "Il cattivo")

Message 100 6/23/98 7:49 PM

Subject: Re(2): nessie's wet dream (was Re: Wet willy
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

Ah, yes. Maj. Lucien "Lou" Conein, right hand man of "Ugly American" Gen. Edward Geary Lansdale.

It would appear that you are referring to the book "The Ugly American" by Lederer and Burdick, and, I guess, the movie based on it. Or maybe you are just using an expression that has passed into the language -- I guess it was applied to Major Burns on "M*A*S*H"? The point is, although the book is mainly about people from the United States who interfere in the affairs of countries they know nothing about and thus bring good to no one, the actual character in the book referred to as "the Ugly American" is the GOOD GUY, a sort of proto-NGO or one-man independent Peace Corps, who goes into the

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villages with his wife, figures out simple ways of making people's lives better consistent with traditional culture, and in general is held up as the sympathetic example of the sort of person we SHOULD have been sending to Southeast Asia. He is PHYSICALLY ugly but morally good; the diplomats and advisors are physically smooth and good-looking but moral monsters. Anyway, you should be careful about your use of the term. Otherwise, it's worse than attributing to Humphrey Bogart the line "Play it again, Sam".

Cecil B. Curry's wholly sympathetic bio, <Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American>.

now this title is a reference to the novel by Graham Greene, "The Quiet American", which said pretty much everything that needed to be said about US involvement in Vietnam, even though it was written in the 50's, ten years before that involvement came to the attention of the American public. It concerns Alden Pyle, a totally naive -- and thus dangerous -- American advisor to the collapsing French administration in Indochina. "Ugly" came out in 1958 and "quiet" in '55 so if one title suggested the other I guess it was "quiet" suggesting "ugly".....

This shit is NOT entertaining. This is deadly serious, literally.

Please forgive me, but I find YOU and your writings, at least, VERY entertaining.

ravished my larder

is this something like bugging your pigs? now that would indeed be a tyrannical government.

And what are you so-called Americans doing about it? Well, you're not digging in at the crest of Breed's hill; that's for sure.

having spent much of the bicentennial year in the Boston area, I do, however, totally agree with you that there is nothing more fun than quoting from the heroes of the War of Independence. so I won't fire until I see the whites of their eyes, but stay cool and do mischief.

Message 97 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(5): Flaming ...
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

I think you should juggle dry-mounted cubes with photographs of fire on each of the six sides. Until you are good enough to juggle real fire, that is.

how about glass or mirrored spheres that will reflect and glow with a firey offstage light?

it would be like the magician I once saw who shimmied up a beam of light. he must have been on a wire, but you would think that, right in the light, it would be visible.

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Message 92 6/19/98 8:02 PM
Subject: Re(10): ` propos of nothing
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Spidra Webster writes:

terrible person writes:

ok, following Spidra's advice, I consulted the song collection at my local public library. the sheet music I found for "Cigarettes and Whiskey" (or, as they put it, "Cigareetes, Whuskey and Wild, Wild Women",

I don't think the former is the same as the latter. I coulda sworn they had the latter song as well. I only own one recording of that song - by Red Ingle and his Unnatural Seven, a group formed by an ex-Spike Jones member. So it's not exactly a straight version. It should state the writer's name though...

well, the lyrics match. so...well, I guess it is pretty possible that more than one artist wrote about cigarettes and whiskey.

Message 91 6/19/98 8:00 PM
Subject: Re(3): TRIVIA!!
From: terrible person
To: Play GOL Trivia!

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Eileen writes:

You?

Yes. It's true. Two years ago, several people got very offended when they thought I had arranged the icons of [extreme] in the shape of a swastika.

was this a Nazi swastika though, or an INDIAN one (going the other way?)

you know, I think I remember that -- but I thought it was a hammer and sickle.

Message 87 6/19/98 7:41 PM
Subject: Re: Happy genius
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Well, Richard Feynman was pretty happy. In fact, a lot of physicists were pretty happy. Which, considering the fact that many of them were designing weapons capable of wiping out humanity, may not be the best thing.

Speaking of Calder, did he do that famous mobile in Alabama? How about the one in Mantua, Italy -- La Donna e Mobile? Man, a Mobil can be a real gas.

terrible person (who wants to be an evil genius)

Message 86 6/19/98 7:48 PM
Subject: Re(12): quiescent fear

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From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Any N. Body writes:

as if i needed any more amunition

you may have more ammuniton, but I may have better weapons. I think everyone knows that I have the habit, when I GET ANNOYED, of writing not in idiosyncratic prose, but in rhyme and meter. so whenever you don't like what I write, just remember:

it could be verse.

and knowing how much I sometimes write, it could be a lot of verse.

terrible person (who has no desire to make this thread into me verses Any)

Message 85 6/19/98 7:57 PM
Subject: the last days of disk? ohhhhh....
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

as I write this, my hard disk, which is almost full because I keep forgetting to buy that Zip drive, is getting full, so that there is a lot of delay as space is looked for, and a lot of noise as well. there are two types of noise: while the disk is being formatted and the sectors allotted (or whatever) it's kind of a high whirring noise, and it's really, really, annoying (more annoying than Any N. Body!) on the other hand, when it's writing, then the noise is kind of a humming, with a grinding. so at this moment, as I type, it's making those write grind/humms. and that's good, because, of course:

it could be allot whirrs.

Help me!! help me!!! I can't stop!!!!

terrible person

Message 78 (Unsent)
Subject: Re: SNACKS?!!
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

no snacks, but I have a question:

twice in the last week I have seen dogs stalking squirrels. the dogs were absolutely motionless, as were the squirrels. it was quite a sight, a motionless animal, looking like a lawn ornament. they were not even, it appeared, breathing, panting, anything. now, what I can't understand is why the squirrel did not just run. was it having trouble being sure the dog was there since it was not moving?

Message 63 (Unsent)
Subject: new connerly initiative
From: terrible person
To: politics

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Connerly has announced a new plan, to make things really equal and colorblind, to ban the use of the terms "black" and "white" in all university communications. he feels that such differences should be ignored.....

> 62

Message 62 6/21/98 7:54 PM
Subject: Re(5): quiescent fear
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Nine is right. when I started this thread, I was thinking that the problem was that though the present seems ok, the future can only seem bleak. (bleak! bleak!) but I guess the I should compare the present to the known past and not to the unknowable future. because when you look at the present, even if it's tense, at the ISs and AREs, and you compare it to the future, the SHALL BEs and WILL BEs, you can only thing how much better things are than they used to be in the past. in other words, I should be happy, since it could be WEREs.

terrible person (rahooooo! WEREwolves of London....)

Message 176 6/22/98 7:59 PM
Subject: Re(7): Bad cats
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Davide Richmond writes:

my step-dad used to call me that [cattivo]all the time when I was in Italy 'cause I was so nice. my mom didn't like it, but it's like me being called when I lived in salinas "shorty" here in the states.

If anyone called me "shorty" ---- oh!!! now I get it. oops. ahem. on to other things.

if your Italian is good, maybe you can tell me exactly what "cattivo" means. My impression was that it means "evil", "Cruel", "mean", even my favorite Somerville word, "wicked!", of a person, different from "bad" of a thing, which would be "malo". In "Amadeus", the Emperor reacts to a snide comment by Salieri by saying, "You are being cattivo, Signor Court Composer!" but then that Emperor was not supposed to be terribly bright. It is interesting to me how the title of Sergio Leone's film translated into English. In Italian, it's "Il buono, Il brutto, e il cattivo" -- the good man, the ugly man, and the cruel man, since in italian, like all the latin derivatives, an adjective can stand on its own and its gender and number indicate a male or female person or people. (the order is carefully chosen too: two syllables, two syllables, building to three syllables.) whereas in english, adjectives can rarely stand on their own and then tend to indicate the plural; "the poor" means all poor people, not one. now, it happens that there is an expression "the good, the bad, and the ugly." (again, building one syllable, one syllable, two syllables), which is usually used to describe news: "tell me everything, the good (things), the bad (things) and the ugly (things.)" (am I right? I can't remember hearing the expression before I saw the movie, which came out in the mid-60's, but I believe I have seen it in things written before then.) note also that the translation is out of order; technically, it should be "the

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good, the ugly, and the bad". though in the movie, the ugly appears first, then the good, then the bad (conveniently identified by writing on the screen, and of course a voice screaming "wa-ah wa-ah ahwa...wa...wa..)

the etymology of "cattivo" is from latin "captivus", implying that the evil person is himself a captive of evil.....

captivatingly,

terrible person

Message 175 (Unsent)

Subject: mass ride to Sausalito

From: terrible person

To: Bicycle Talk

so what is the deal with the June 26 "Ride to Sausalito"? is this a Critical Mass -- am I even allowed to say that in Willie Brown's town? -- but with official sanction and sponsors? isn't Bicycle Mass the group headed by a real wacko whom most responsible bicycle movement leaders hate? if I go on this thing am I submitting and selling out to His Willieness?

if it's cool, though, is anyone going?

terrible person

Message 168 6/23/98 8:04 PM

Subject: Re(9): Bad cats

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

Davide Richmond writes:

I also noticed that...but seeing as I seen many titles of movies twisted around a bit, besides, it should of been "il bouno, il cattivo, e il malamente" (another of his nicknames for me) which is actually the definition of "evil", or "il losco" which is evil looking, though since he was really a evil bastard, not just evil looking.

so is the meaning of "Bruto" really closer to the latin "brutus" (stupid) than "ugly"? so is this another sacrifice in translation so that they could use a common english phrase? ("the good man, the stupid man, and the mean man" sounds like a fairy tale. how does it sound in italian? is it a preexisting common phrase?) also, I never thought Tuco (Eli Wallach) "the ugly" was bad or evil the way Sentenza/"Angel Eyes" (lee van cleef) "the bad" was -- he was too dumb and oafish to be evil, he was barely getting by. and it's not as if the clint eastwood character was all that good. anyway, though, I should keep this, as they say on Car Talk, folkloric and historic. so over to you,

Signor.

I have no idea....well....would it of sounded cooler if it was two, two, five...or maybe I just like the way malamente rolls of ones tounge...

malamente sounds great, alone -- but in the phrase the rhythm is off...but

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everything sounds good in italian...

wishes he could be:

uomo terribile(?????)

Message 167 6/23/98 6:53 AM
Subject: Re(2): As _____ stumbled out...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

the grifters, by Jim thompson. (but I am cheating, going by the movie -- well, I read the first few pages of the book so.....)

never try the long con,

terry

Message 165 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(10): Bad cats
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

this is not exactly folklore, but in Art Spiegelman's graphic novels "Maus: A survivor's tale" and "Maus: and here my troubles really began", cats are used to represent Germans/Nazis (while the Jews are mice) and dogs are the American rescuers. (There is also an indy comic book about bike messengers in which all the messengers are dogs, low level office workers are cats, and big important people are people.)

terrible (not that big or important) person

PS. My neighbor's cat is named Grizzly and he's black and shaggy and he won't come near me. I am taking care of him for a while? any feline bonding advice anyone?

Message 164 6/23/98 6:53 PM
Subject: Re(2): The sin of pride
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

In genesis 9:20 ff, Noah gets drunk and is lying in his tent drunk. Ham walks in and sees him, tells the other two sons (Shem and Japheth), who walk in backwards, cover up dad without looking (I am trying to imagine how this worked -- it's like imagining Rosemary Woods erasing the 18 1/2 minutes). Noah wakes up and curses Ham, decreeing that the descendants of Shem and Japheth will rule over his. I tell you, if it's not one thing.....

the thing about Lot is verse (man, it could be a Lot verse -- oops, wrong conference) 30 of chapter 19. Lot is the only one who has been saved from Sodom because, in theory, he was moral. (I didn't write this thing.) Oh, and his two daughters are there, but not his wife; she's on pretzels. so there is no way for Lot to have more kids. (or for the daughters to have any, but their motivation was "to preserve the seed of their father", not their own ticking

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs. biological clocks.) so they got him drunk and "went in to him" on successive nights, and he into them, I guess, without knowing it.

So Laura Deal IS definitely right and Jerry Falwell, whose punishment in hell will be to attend continuous classes in goddess worship, is full of crap. Too bad it was Rick James with him, and not, say, James Brown.

I once spent a week in Lynchburg, Virginia. I did a lot of bicycle riding on the quiet country roads (and watched a great minor league baseball game.) Many of the roads were unnamed, just numbered by the state or county. I noticed one with the number 666. I didn't take it. Not so much the obvious reason; it was simply that it was unpaved. No, not even with good intentions. But I am sure it led straight to the back door of Liberty U.....

terrible person (thinking of his favorite Chris Rea song)

Message 163 6/23/98 6:57 PM
Subject: Re(3): The old ram stands...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Grendel, by John Gardner.

I know this without even reading the original post because I was going to post it and the book is open on my desk.

I was very upset when I read that Gardner meant the final words to be uplifting, not a spiteful parting shot.

Remember, gather up gold -- but not MY gold -- and sit on it.

person of the race of Cain

Message 162 6/23/98 7:03 PM
Subject: He was an inch...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop to the shoulders, head forward, and fixed from-under stare, which made you think of a charging bull. His voice was deep, loud, and his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion which had nothing aggressive in it. It seemed a necessity, and it was directed apparently as much at himself as at anybody else. He was spotlessly neat, apparelled in immaculate white from shoes to hat.....

Message 161 6/24/98 7:32 AM
Subject: Re(4): The sin of pride
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Careful terry. If you use that joke one more time, I'm likely to make you moderator of an "It Could Be Verse" conference where you put people's posts to verse.

better than having mine put to shame....but do you mean something like this?

Kelsey writes: "Be careful, Terry
Though your pun at first was fun (ish)
Overused, it's tiresome. Very.
Careful, or we'll have to punish.
Here's the sanction we'll impose:
You will suffer for your crime
Converting others' posts in prose
Into meter, into rhyme."

Wait, I ask, just tell me, isn't
This that you've decided on
Making me as if imprisoned
Putting me away, a "con"?
And if in jail I'll face immersion
Making, of all others' non-verse
Into rhyming verse, conversion
Wouldn't the result be "Converse"?
For, I tell you, future jailers
You, as well, o shrink of psyches
Converse All-Stars, high Chuck Taylors
I possess, but run in Nikes.

terrible person
(Thinking as I write this down --
Give your view, o fair observers
Though this isn't Pervert Town
Should we call my conference "Perverse"?)

Message 160 6/24/98 6:18 PM

Subject: Re: Spiders
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

There I was in the shower, and I reached for the shampoo, and hiding right behind the shampoo was the HUGEST, FATTEST spider. ARrrrggghhh! I was out of that shower faster than you can say "charlotte's web."

Anyway, I have discovered, that it could be worse, so I would appreciate it if nobody posts additional worse scenarios involving spiders. I actually thought twice before posting this b/c I figured if someone responded with worse spider scenarios, I might have nightmares.

hey, you know that part at the beginning of "Raiders of the Lost Ark", where they're in south America, in that tomb, and...ok.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
Just think, it could be elephants.

Or snakes.

Or, as Greta said, it could be a radioactive spider. if it bit you, it might transform you from a meek New Yorker graduate student into Spiderman, allowing you to scale da walls, and swing really well in many ways on a cord (or on line) with no trouble, or, even better, it might transform you into Spidra Webster, allowing you to do all the scales and sing really well in many ways on a chord with a note treble.

terrible person (whose glass is always half awful.)

Message 157 6/24/98 6:35 AM
Subject: Re: First Lieutenant ___ carried letters...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

The Things They Carried, by Tim O'Brien. this is an incredible story, both in its content and its "list" format. it's like archaeology, just being handed the artifacts. Possibly the best Vietnam story ever written....

Chris extends his empire of quotation....and we pay him homage....

terrible person (who carries in his old messenger bag a toothbrush and paste, a 1996 BBC pocket calendar, two Ace bandages, a hand gripper, a palm sized giveaway new testament, a journal that was once a ledger for someone else's coin collection, and a lot of paper clips)

Message 156 6/24/98 6:24 AM
Subject: Re: I call our world...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Flatland, a Romance of Many Dimensions, by Edwin Abbott

terrible person (who only recently became equilateral)

Message 155 6/24/98 6:27 AM
Subject: Re: Once upon a time...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Stranger in a Strange Land, by Robert heinlein

terrible person (could never decide which was funnier, Heinlein's use of the word "grok", or his use of the word "mammaries")

Message 154 6/24/98 6:28 AM
Subject: Re: "It's a remarkable piece of apparatus,"
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
In the Penal Colony, by Franz Kafka

Be just.

terrible person (who, though untattooed, has all his crimes written on his body)

Message 153 6/24/98 6:31 AM
Subject: Re(2): It was a dark and stormy
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

I thought this was something by bulwer-lytton (also wrote "the last days of pompeii"), hence the prize for bad writing named for him.

or didn't snoopy write this?

terrible person

Message 151 6/24/98 6:03 PM
Subject: More: He was an inch...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

...and in the various Eastern ports where he got his living as ship-chandler's water-clerk he was very popular.

A water-clerk need not pass an examination in anything under the sun, but he must have Ability in the abstract and demonstrate it practically.

(It's not science fiction. It's about blowing it, getting a second chance, and blowing it again.)

Message 150 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(4): The sin of pride
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Maybe you'll even get your own TV show from all of this.

doesn't she already have one? I mean, I see it in TV Guide all the time and just assumed...you know, that game show? "Let's Make..."

oh, forget it.

terrible person

why doesn't anyone else notice these things?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 147 6/24/98 10:40 PM

Subject: Re(2): That Old Time Religion

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

pierre le fou writes:

A verse I thought of:

*"Let's talk to Vulcan and Apollo
and ask if Hera swallows
when Zeus pulls out his rollo
it's good enough for me"*

If we're allowed to offer our own:

Let us burn our kids for Moloch
He's a real baby-holic
It'll cure them of the colic
And that's good enough for me....

Let us love Ahura- Mazda
He's that magic guy who has da
Power to make our cars run fasta
And that's good enough for me...

Let us all now practice Shinto
In toyotas, not in Pintos
And of all the shrines I've been to
It's good enough for me...

aren't folks glad I was not a religion major?

terrible person

Message 139 6/26/98 7:34 AM

Subject: Re(7): The sin of pride

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

laura deal writes:

*So the king calls Abraham and sayeth unto him "your kink is not my kink.
Whyfor didst though tell me your wife was your sister, you sick fuck?"*

I know you mean well, Laura, so take this as an expression of concern for your safety rather than of offense, but that "sick fuck" is claimed as an ancestor by many people (some here, as well), some of whom supposedly control the world's money supply, other of whom definitely control most of its oil supply; a small number of the first group have been known to build nuclear bombs in defense or furtherance of their cause, and a small number of the second have been known to build suicide bombs in defense or furtherance of theirs.

On the other hand, I am reminded of the line attributed variously to Disraeli and Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, in response to a taunt about his ancestry, that at a time when the taunter's ancestors were barbarians, his were princes in the temple of Solomon. The modern variation would be "while your ancestors were bugging animals or whatever, mine had already moved on to more sophisticated kinds of incest."

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I know that Abraham is a patriarch and thus part of an evil Patriarchy. However, I was pleasantly surprised four years ago, when I went to (Reform) services for the first time in a decade, to find that though the same prayerbook was being used, aloud, the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" was now that of "Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel, AND Leah" as well. (Note strategic omission of Haggai.)

I have not seen the X-files movie yet, but my impression is that it deals with a secret thousands-years-old conspiracy of a select group of people with a power coming down from the sky to rule the world through some sort of biological experiment. This sounds eerily familiar. It even might explain that most quaint of customs, circumcision; I heard a few years ago that Israeli scientists were making the drug interferon in a special unique culture made out of a resource plentiful in Israel - removed foreskins. I've never read "Chariots of the Gods?" either, but all I can think of is Belloc's famous line:

"Indy, do you realize what they Ark is? It is a transmitter! It is a radio, for speaking to God!"

terrible person (talked to God once and came away a little disappointed; now interested in opening negotiations with the other guy)

Message 135 6/27/98 10:00 AM
Subject: Re: Hopefully it's real
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

some of it sounds a bit like Finley Peter Dunne's "Mr. Dooley" columns of a hundred years ago.

Message 128 6/27/98 11:15 AM
Subject: Re: Nicholson, Cuba, and Art
From: terrible person
To: politics

I wonder if Jack Nicholson ate breakfast 300 yards from 5000 Cubans who are there to kill him, or whatever the line is.

Message 124 6/27/98 3:25 PM
Subject: Re(9): The sin of pride
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Heyer writes:

Good luck. According to the Bible, they're in close communication and sit around making bets with each other. Just ask Job.

I'm shocked!! Shocked to find that there is GAMBLING going on here!! And I cannot believe that God plays dice with the Universe!! [Albert, stop telling God what to do. -- Niels Bohr, wasn't it?]

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I imagine they have a Cold War "Dr. Strangelove" style "hot line". "Ah, Louie? Hello, louie? how's the weather there? Still hot, eh?" [Note: according to the Inferno, the center of Hell, where Lucifer is, is freezing cold.]

Actually, I did ask about Job, and neither of them offered me one. They were not too impressed with my resume; they said they'd "get back to me". Haven't I heard that before. But if they are collaborating, that's to my advantage; in true con-man style, I should be able to play them off against one another and end up running a little corner of Purgatory of my own, free from interference, in which to put into practice my own views on just desserts and fairness, or, like Yojimbo or The Man With No Name in "For a Fistful of Dollars", by siding first with one and then the other, get them to destroy one another, to leave the universe in freedom and chaos. See "That Old Time Religion" in Heyer's conference.

Feeling that it never hurts to dream big,

terrible person

Message 112 6/28/98 10:32 PM
Subject: Re(6): Sweet potatoes
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

it was my friend's birthday yesterdayso we went out for Thai food. we ordered as an appetizer these deep-fried sweet potato things. (fried in coconut oil, I think. enough saturated fat, I imagine, to fell an ox.) still, they were pretty good.

Message 109 6/29/98 6:09 AM
Subject: Re(9): Sweet potatoes
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Tim Walters writes:

Hahn's Hibachi has an excellent veggie tempura that includes sweet potatoes (or yams, I can never remember which is which).

didn't Popeye say something like that? "I sweet potato what I sweet potato"? or is that a song from "La Cage Aux Folles"?

for much on yams, read Chinua Achebe.

Message 98 6/29/98 9:39 PM
Subject: Re(9): Sweet potatoes
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

In "Things Fall Apart" (and the sort of sequel, "Arrow of God"), yams are the principle food of the tribes. The king of crops, they call it. And each year they have the New Yam festival. etc. etc.

according to my dictionary, a yam can be a sweet potato, or it can be something of a different genus altogether. and neither is the same genus as the plain potato.

And Tim, I am gravely disappointed (and gravelly voiced). You should know that yams and sweet potatoes are tubers, not vegetables. What will you call a

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
vegetable next? Ketchup? Ronald Reagan?

for it's root, root root for the home, Tim.....

terrible person

Message 97 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(2): Hands and ears
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
Some plug up one ear when they're singing with others. Doing this helps you to hear your own voice (as opposed to having your voice drowned out amongst the chorus of voices) and helps you to find your part in a harmony when you're singing with a group.

Yes, it can get really hard to fight the melody (especially if you're singing baritone or bass and the very full of -- himself -- tenor next to you is making sure he is heard.) You end up doing it yourself, so it's unison, not harmony. Blocking the tenor out helps you hear the accompaniment better (so does punching him out), and pick out your line in it.

Message 96 6/29/98 9:22 PM
Subject: Re(5): Military Service: The
From: terrible person
To: politics

I was really glad to register for the draft back in the 80's. I did it on my eighteenth birthday, not waiting a day. It was not that I felt I was striking a blow for liberty against the Atheist Evil Empire. But no one was doing anything to celebrate my birthday. There wasn't an election for a few months. They had raised the drinking age to 21, and the age of consent was 16 or so. There was nothing to do to proclaim the age I had attained, except to register, to act as if it were some important duty I was undertaking, that I had to undertake. Most people I knew did it months late, if at all. but they had birthday parties.

Two weeks after I registered, the US bombed Libya and soon after was escalating things in Central America. My father, who was living in Canada at the time, told me the guest room was always available.

I like to think I would have gone. How could I have looked my less fortunate fellow-members of my age cohort in the face if I hadn't?

terrible person

Message 95 6/29/98 9:34 PM
Subject: reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I am watching this program on KQED about Civil War reenactors, people who dress up in blue and grey and restage the battles of the War Between the States down to the last detail. (When I lived near our nation's capital, I knew enthusiasts, but none costumed like this. I believe there is a new book about them.) Some of it is quite interesting; just now a woman is demonstrating 1860's undergarments. and everyone has great facial hair (at least the men do-- there is, in fact, a fair number of women soldiers in drag, as there was in the actual war.) and really serious intent expressions. It's kind of cool, in its way. They seem to be having a good time.

Now, sword dancing is one thing; it's not a specific event, but a bygone practice that is being recreated. But this is serious reenactment. When I saw Michael Moore speak, he showed the "TV nation" segments they would not let him air; in one, he had a bunch of civil war reenactors do more recent events, such as the rodney king beating and the LA riots. so I am trying to think of other disastrous events of recent or not-so-recent history that WE could reenact.

Ideas?

terrible person (full of terrible ideas)

Message 91 6/30/98 12:15 AM
Subject: Re(3): Call me Jonah...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

cat's cradle, by vonnegut?

the "listen" is a tipoff but....

is Vonnegut just a 60's write? I see him as alive and well and no more dead than Mark Twain was....

is actually looking it up considered cheating?

terrible person (who, from what he's tasted of desire, holds with those who favor fire)

Message 88 6/30/98 7:13 AM
Subject: Re(5): Call me Jonah...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:
terrible person writes:

is actually looking it up considered cheating?

No.

well, it should be. I think. in some circumstances. I mean, it's one thing if you think you recognize the lines and look at the actual book to confirm. even looking in a book of quotes would be all right, as long as it does not have an index or you don't use it. But typing the words into a search engine, or asking your grandfather well....

I mean, as I tried to convince my forensic sciences instructors, except in

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
rare instances every wh-question (who, what, when, etc.) presupposes an almost infinite series of yes-no questions (is it this? is it this?)

just a theory, how things would be in a terrible universe...

terrible person

Message 83 6/30/98 7:15 PM
Subject: Re(7): Call me Jonah...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

laura deal writes:

but the Call me Jonah... post had been up long enough that I'm not outraged if that's how you got the answer.

it isn't. that's why I raise the issue. this is a game, right? nothing rides on this. when you play pickup softball with your friends on Sunday afternoon, you don't cork the bats, or throw spitballs, do you? it's not important enough to go all out to win.....

I think the neatest thing, when no one knows the answer right away, is when people figure out the author and book through a cooperative and deductive process. One person says, it sounds like so and so, and another says, well, maybe not so and so, but definitely that genre, but I am not sure what book, and someone else gets somewhat closer.....but all without references. so it's not a digital, you either know it or you don't, sort of deal, but an analog,

you can know some of it, and whatever you know helps, sort of deal. (on the other hand, if this were "I am trying to remember where I heard that quote", then of course references would be of the essence. but then it would not be a game, but a search for answers. in a game, the asker always has the answer, just as Alex Trebek does on his blue card.)

Another thing that's cool, I think, is when answerers add a few words explaining why this is such a great beginning to a great book and why it is so personally significant that they have come to know it so readily.

Call me a dreamer. (Come on. If someone doesn't reply with the single word "Dreamer!" I will be awfully disappointed.)

Or, for that matter, call me Ishmael. (And that is not from Ishmael Reed's autobiography.)

terrible person

Message 82 6/30/98 6:40 PM
Subject: Re(4): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Spidra Webster writes:

squicky

????

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

if this is a real word, I HAVE to know where you heard it; if it isn't, I salute you for inventing it.

terrible (a portmanteau of "theory" and "horrible") person

Message 81 6/30/98 6:53 PM
Subject: Re(3): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

SPYYDER writes:

I was bothered by the guy who said when he was in the moment, everything melted away and he was THERE

a few weeks, or months ago (funny that I should lose track of time when talking about time travel), I wrote in "It's a le fou world" about time travel as described by Jack Finney in "Time and Again", which is accomplished by getting really deeply into character, by going to a place that has not changed since the target time, wearing the authentic clothes, eating the authentic foods, thinking the authentic thoughts....and then, through self-hypnosis, making the leap in time. I described how I had tried this myself, dressing up in early 80's clothes and going to New Wave City to immerse myself in early 80's music, to see if I could get back to Echo Beach. Well, it did not work for me. But I can almost appreciate what the reenactors feel. Here they are, on the actual battlefield, with the right weapons (antiques or replicas), many of them having extensively researched and taken the characters of actual battle participants. I could well understand that a few might break ont through to the other side of time. In fact, the host noted that after every staged battle, a certain number of people miss roll call, miss thepostbellum parties. Usually they are found pretty soon; they are the guys who wandered into the woods to relieve themselves and then got lost. Some stay gone longer, weeks, even months. And there are a few, mainly those with few ties to this life, no wives, no homes, no important jobs, who, it is eventually, finally noticed....never make it back at all.

And there are so many unidentified dead from the Civil War.

terrible person (do you wonder anymore why he wears a toga and speaks Latin?)

Message 80 6/30/98 6:57 PM
Subject: Re(2): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Spidra Webster

Spidra Webster writes:

The SF General Strike.

If it will get me out of work, I'm all for it. But I'll need to learn more songs.

Message 78 6/30/98 7:17 PM
Subject: Answer: He was an inch...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

well, it's been a week, and I want to post something else, so, it's "Lord Jim", by Joseph Conrad.

Message 77 6/30/98 7:22 PM
Subject: To make a start more swift...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

.....than weighty,
Hail Muse. Dear Reader, once upon
A time, say, circa 1980,
There lived a man. His name was John.
Successful in his field, though only
Twenty-six, respected, lonely,
One evening as he walked across
Golden Gate Park, the ill-judged toss
Of a red frisbee almost brained him.
He thought, "If I died, who'd be sad?
Who'd weep? Who'd gloat? Who would be glad?
Would anybody?" As it pained him,
He turned from this dispiriting theme
To ruminations less extreme.

Message 76 6/30/98 7:25 PM
Subject: Re(6): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
It is a term to indicate disgust or creepy-crawlies over something.

is there something wrong with creepy-crawlies?

Message 74 6/30/98 10:23 PM
Subject: Re(8): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

my impression of Renaissance faires and SCA activities, such as the ones you are involved in, Sharon, is that they do not place their primary emphasis on mass slaughter and a secondary one on involuntary servitude, as the Civil War reenactments tend to do, but rather focus mainly, if not entirely, on the more peaceful aspects of life (in fact, on life.)

so there are reenactments and reenactments.

now, some would say that by showing a civil war battle, complete with 82% unit casualties, battlefield amputations, etc., the reenactors are showing the world and themselves the horror of the whole thing so that they would never want to repeat it. Unfortunately, most of the people there seemed to think it was a jolly lot of fun that they would gladly repeat.

terrible person (much more interested in the naval aspects of the civil war anyway. though General Sherman was pretty cool.)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 73 (Unsent)

Subject:

From: terrible person

To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

you know what they say about looking into the abyss?

to prove conspiracy, the prosecutor has to show intent, capability, and at least one overt act in furtherance of the conspiracy. (ok, correct me, lawyers.) even when you are only conspiring with yourself, it is only after that overt act that you begin to believe you might do it.

when acting, you should always be careful about getting too far into character. when lying, you should be careful about starting to believe your own lie.

yesterday, I committed my first overt act in furtherance of my private (private in that though I am announcing it, I am the only one involved) conspiracy to disguise myself as a priest and go around acting like one. to see what it is like. for ten dollars, at a used clothing store, I bought a black priest's shirt with a clerical collar. it's a bit worn but it fits well

and will do for informal use, and in dim light.

when I first go out wearing it, whenever that may be, whenever I have trained myself to keep a straight face, I will feel the way I imagine transvestites feel when they go out in drag for the first time. (not that I have worn a dress or skirt since a high school production of *Brigadoon*, or a latin students' convention, or shaved my legs since I was bicycling every day.) for most people, dressing as the opposite sex (or another sex) is the ultimate transgression. can they get away with it? they wonder. do they have the pose right, the mannerisms, the speech? well, that's how I would feel dressed as a priest. it's not a crime, unlike impersonating a police officer. I don't see what could happen to me were I found out (at least legally. some folks might be a bit upset, of course....but some folks would be upset long before they found me out. I'd be damned if I was.....) but it's definitely a transgression.

I can't wait to go to New Wave City dressed this way.

funny thing happened on my way out of there last time. it was three o'clock in the morning. I was dressed in synthopop white, in big white shirt, white tie, white pants, suspenders, belt, and sneakers. as I mounted my (black) bicycle,

I put on my enormous white helmet with the moveable visor. as I headed down the block, two women my age, dressed to go out, came up to me, and asked me (rather forcefully, actually) to walk them back up the alley to their hotel. I agreed to, but in order to avoid any misconceptions, assured them that I was not, in fact, the superhero I appeared, but simply a costumed adventurer, the difference being that I did not have any actual powers, but simply hoped by this outfit, and by bluff and gesture, to convince evildoers and defense-neederers that I did. but that I generally did not tell the defense-neederers this unless I feared that by trusting in my they might endanger themselves.

I recently had this argument with a friend? a former friend? a philosopher? I was asserting, as I have elsewhere here, that the background and opinions of the author of a work do matter to our judgment of it; she took a more deconstructionist view that the identity of the author matters little, since

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

the interpretation is not dictated by the author but constructed by the audience. now, I quite disagreed with her. but perhaps she was right. perhaps there are higher truths in demonstration of which it is appropriate literally to lie.

Message 70 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(2): To make a start more swift...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Actually, *I* wrote it.

Had you for a second?

Tim makes a start more swift, or litera(ri)ly gets it -- is that a Tom Swiftie? (how about "squickily"?)

This is a good book for group reading aloud, though it can be read in an evening on one's own. It's one of the things that made me want to move here to Bayaria.

I guess Seth was sort of inspired by "Eugene Onegin".

terrible person (who may someday return to working on his own epic poem, about, what else? bicycle messengers in pursuit of the nature of truth)

Message 67 7/1/98 8:38 PM
Subject: Re(2): To make a start more swift...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

good guessing/deducing. though I think you might enjoy the book, too.

terrible person (prefers unstanzed pentameter couplets)

Message 66 7/1/98 8:47 PM
Subject: Re: Yummy!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

I am making flan and I have never smelled such a wonderful smell.....almond and cinnamon all throughout my house.....

really? what a coincidence. my English friend Nigel is getting married, and he loves custard in general. so my friends and I (his friends too) -- most of us don't cook too much -- have gotten together. We're only making flans for Nigel.

Message 65 7/1/98 9:33 PM
Subject: Re(11): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Sharon E. Everett writes:

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

*is that there were implied *and* stated codes of honor during the time periods stated.*

It seemed to me that the people on this show had a definite sense of comradeship, of looking out for each other and working together, of sacrifice, and of fighting honorably (even though life was supposedly at stake.)

I think that a major issue here is one of distance and degree. Replaying the Civil War seems a bit -- tasteless -- when the issues concerned, from sectional differences to states' rights to the status of African-Americans, are still very much alive, have never been solved. Contrast for instance the reenactments of the Boston Tea Party which I used to witness or join in when I lived in the Hub of the Universe. Shouting anti-British slogans is fun when the disco machine flies in London and we are all friends and bailed them out of three world wars and no one has any residual anger (except perhaps a few Canadians whose Loyalist ancestors lost their property.) When I attended Latinstudent conventions, where we would feel like Greeks, we would feel like Romans, no one would demonstrate to remind us of the lands that the Romans made deserts and called it peace, of the nations wiped out; no one thinks much about that any more. It's, as they say, ancient history. But look at Northern Ireland, where the yearly Protestant marches are in effect recreations of victories in the wars of the "Glorious" Revolution of 1689; the Catholic Irish can be excused for not joining in the festivities when they are still suffering the consequences of these wars. The Quebecois se souviennent of the battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1765 and would not much enjoy a recreation of it. Even medieval times are not exempt; the Serbs still believe they are refighting the 1389 battle of Kosovo against the Turks, with the Albanians and bosnian muslims standing in for the turks. So a recreation of that battle might be in questionable taste.

I think a conflict really should be over and done with and resolved before it is simulated. In this respect, simulations are like jokes. The SCA, as far as I know, is pretty vague about times and places, not representing actual nations with actual descendants today. But I heard this morning that newly renominated Gov. Fob James of Alabama is asserting that the Bill of Rights' limitations on the powers of congress to abridge rights do not apply to the states (despite a little thing called the fourteenth amendment) and is threatening to call out the state national guard to prevent the enforcement of federal court orders. his issue is religion, not race, but the states' rights argument for which his illustrious predecessor, George Wallace, once stood in the schoolhouse doorway, is obviously still out there. I don't know if there is any connection between anti-federal militias, or racist hate groups, and confederate reenactors, but as long as there is no consensus on some of these issues, I will worry.

terrible person

Message 60 7/1/98 9:38 PM
Subject: Re(4): To make a start more swift...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

it's good for a group read aloud. poetry should always be read aloud. and Ragtime should always be played slowly.

(that's a sort of a first line, totally obvious.)

Message 59 7/1/98 9:45 PM
Subject: Re(9): Call me Jonah...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Johnny Vann writes:

But just don't call you late for dinner, right?

I hope you won't call me "late for dinner" or "late for ... [anything]" for that matter. I endeavor to be punctual.;?-,; and would find it inaccurate and insulting. I hope that there will be only one time when I am referred to as "the late terrible person", though (though of course I could always try to engineer things so), I probably won't be around to hear it.

the on-time temporal person (who is quite disappointed, by the way)

Message 58 7/1/98 9:51 PM
Subject: Re(8): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Tim Walters writes:

terrible person writes:

is there something wrong with creepy-crawlies?

They're squicky.

"What gives you the creeps, gives creeps you." -- Nietzsche

Message 57 7/1/98 9:55 PM
Subject: Re(6): To make a start more swift...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Tim Walters writes:

terrible person writes:

Ragtime should always be played slowly.

(that's a sort of a first line, totally obvious.)

Presumably you're referring to Mr. Doctorow's novel.

Doctor Misterow, you presume?

Yes, it is actually on the front page, not in the text itself, part of a quote from Scott Joplin from a score, following "Do not play this piece fast."

I have developed the most remarkable relaxation technique, consisting of singing "The Entertainer" to oneself as slowly as possible. Of course, I'm not actually that big on relaxation.

Message 56 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(3): Yummy!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Steve Omlid writes:

Your future is as good as sealed, Terry.

If my future were not already sealed, if I had anything to lose, do you think I'd do this?

"Captain, you have no idea what you're dealing with."

Message 55 7/2/98 6:15 AM
Subject: Re(8): To make a start more s
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Greta Christina writes:

Just to be an annoying nitpicker...it's in the frontpiece (or whatever the hell they call the quote that sometimes appears before Chapter 1), and it reads:

*Do not play this piece fast.
It is never right to play Ragtime fast...*

*Read the thing about a zillion times in her younger days,
Greta*

No!!!! No!!!! my memory is INFALLIBLE!!!! someone must have sneaked in and changed my copy so it would be like yours and everyone else's!!! yes, that's it!!! it's those same guys in the three red cars who are always following me! some sinister force must have applied energy to the other end!!! Or I saw the alternate universe edition, where what Doctorow had printed, in fact, what Joplin said, was just slightly different, because someone stepped on a butterfly in the triassic!! Yes!! I ask you, can the whole world be crazy, and I sane? I answer you: fish!! elugelabubble!

terrible person (who first read "Ragtime" when he was about 12 and was VERY impressed with the scene between Emma Goldman and Evelyn Nesbit, and who wished people would understand that fireworks and explosives are the same thing)

Message 53 7/2/98 9:04 PM
Subject: Re(12): To make a start more s
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Tim Walters writes:

Tim Walters writes:

It's by Ray Bradbury... I want to say "A Gun for Dinosaur", but that's L. Sprague de Camp... argh.

That would be "A Sound of Thunder", I think, or something like that.

(usually I delete the original quote but I liked the way Tim's conversation with himself looked.)

Correct on the title. I'm told the story was parodied on The Simpsons (though I also have a theory that there are exactly six things left in the universe

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(that have NOT been parodied on The Simpsons.)

teribul perrson (uh oh!!!)

ps: what is the nature of the De Camp story, MDS?

Message 52 7/2/98 9:18 PM
Subject: Re(13): reenactments
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

laura deal writes:

Of course as I typed that I was reminded of the day at Renn Faire when an IRA guy broke into a pageant I was in and started screaming at the woman playing Queen Elizabeth at because of her part in oppressing Ireland.

It's interesting: Boston is probably the stronghold of the Irish and Irish nationalism in the US (more concentrated than New York), and yet, I never saw a celebration of an event from the War of Independence or War of 1812 turned into an anti-British demonstration, at least not overtly. No connection of modern and two-hundred-year-old independence struggles was ever made (that I saw.) And March 17 is celebrated in Boston not just as St. Patrick's Day (and the eve of some obscure local hero's birth) but as Evacuation Day, the day in 1776 when the British, with Henry Knox's cannon staring down on them from Dorchester Heights, found it advisable to seek a more hospitable garrison. So sometimes a great opportunity to remember and remind is available and yet not used.

terrible person (REALLY admires Henry Knox for transporting a hundred cannon the length of Massachusetts in the dead of winter)

Message 49 7/2/98 9:51 PM
Subject: Re(10): Sweet potatoes
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Heyer writes:

Yeah, it's an urban legend about how he put a yam in the microwave and it exploded. The original title to the book was "Things Blow Apart" but the publisher thought it was too violent.

I think you are maybe confusing this with the story about the Frenchman homebrewing nitroglycerine on his kitchen floor. It got out of control, and they called him Linoleum Blownapart.

terrible person

Message 47 7/3/98 6:23 AM
Subject: Re(4): Today, by radio...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
in what location was this post's start?

I think that it's "La Disparition" which its translator calls "A void". a thing is amiss though with its gallic author's writing alias so that I cannot put it in this post and stay faithful to his book's spirit. I will just say that it starts with "P", has "R" in its midst, and has "C" at its finish.

Alas that I may not sign this in my usual way, but you all know why by now....

awful human

Message 46 7/3/98 7:00 AM
Subject: Re: What is it about my recipe?
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
Okay.

I'm annoyed.

*Whenever *anybody* posts anything to this conference about some food item they've made, people chirp: "recipe please," "please post the recipe," and "can we have the recipe?"*

*So how come when I kvell about how wonderful my house smelled when I made flan, NOT ONE person asked me for the flan recipe? Huh? Tell me that. Is it all some plot to make me think *my* recipes aren't good enough? Is it? IS IT? Please explain this tome me.*

I'm waiting.

--Kelsey (do you realize how many sweet potato recipes there were?) Gadoo

well, I perhaps have a better excuse than most; since I have little capability to appreciate physical objects in themselves, but see them mainly as words on whose sound to play, the actual recipe for the flans matters little to me. Sorry. I admire and even envy those who CAN appreciate such things.

But I sympathize; if you are disappointed not to be taken up on your recipe, I am a bit disappointed that an apparently reasonably well-read, well-educated, and well-spoken person like Steve Omlid (and earlier, in another conference, Sharon Everett) could not come up with anything better in response to real groaner from me than the puny, tired and tiresome "you will be punished". Please, folks, I am NOT trying to insult, but to encourage, I know you can do better than just saying to Cyrano (or C.D. Bales) "you have a big nose"; it's not brain surgery, but just letting yourself and your mind go a little, letting your categories get fuzzy, drifting into alternate universes of speech, stopping and smelling the phonology (funology? punology?) I know what you are thinking, "We don't bother with this because we have lives, we have better things to think about", but it takes no time, no thinking is required -- think you very much? or think I? (though I will admit I put a bit of thought into this showoffy tour de farce.) it's a reflex, or an inability to

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hear quite right, or even a madness (Witzelsuch, the psychologists call it -- Kelsey, this is thine cue, very much.) though I don't mean to set myself up hear as a puntificating pundit, 'pun my word, it's easy -- so please do. Pun at me, and I'll take it on the chin -- a real pun-chin match (though I am not the Puchen Lama, just Lame sometimes.) If you are getting annoyed by now, then remember that the pun is mightier than the sorehead, and fight back in kind.

either that, or just deflate. for instance, no one pointed out that though I punned on "flans" as if it rhymes with "plans", it's actually more like "flon", with nasalization of the vowel rather than an actual n. with weak puns like that, I'll never get onto Monty Python's Flon Circus.

but just to show you how easy it is to produce numerous variants that can be batted back and forth in a match of pun tennis (such as Nine and I once started in film -- that Nine, she shoots for the heart and goes for the juggler -- and the vain), here is an opunning salvo:

a computer engineer might say, we're only making LAN's for Nigel.
a promiscuous Scot might say, we're only making clans for Nigel.
or, to take it in another direction:
if your dessert might give you an upset stomach, you're only making flans for Di-Gel.
if you believe in your own celestial origin, you're only making flans for Rigel.
and if you have run out of your usual lubricant, or just want something of similar consistency but more interesting flavor, you're only making flans for Kay-Why Gel.

manifestly,

terrible person

ps. I'll take the recipe, if you like. If you read this far.

Message 44 7/3/98 10:31 AM
Subject: Re(3): What is it about my recipe?
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

laura deal writes:

My excuse is shorter: I'm not a flan fan. I don't really see the point in a dessert without chocolate, but if I was going to make flan, I would ask for your recipe.

I totally agree. Dessert without chocolate is like rain without thunder.

In fact, the same could be said about entrees and appetizers as well.

terrible person (my goddess is theobroma)

Message 43 7/3/98 10:47 AM
Subject: Re(6): Today, by radio...
From: terrible person

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: Great Beginnings

Tim Walters writes:

(besides the fact that some poor sumbitch had to translate it from French with no E to English with no E, which I would expect to be harder than writing it in the first place)

that is definitely hard and not done with ease, but I don't think it is because English makes more use of the letter e than francais. I won't go through the various grammatical categories in the two languages (e.g., past tense in english) that are almost always marked with an e (after being patted and pricked? or like Connexion Men?), but merely cite the fact that my ex-roommate's scrabble set, for some reason he once explained to me and I could not remember (he was widely travelled), was a french edition, and though many of the letters like K had different values, E had he same value as in english because it's about the same frequency. (which only Kenneth knows.) and speaking of things that I bet only one person knows, Laura, who can turn a tap into a tape? who can turn a cap into a cape?

would my last post be described as _mail?

is Anton Vowl of "A void" related to Sarah Vowl of Salon magazine and occasional NPR commentaries in the voice of Lucy the Sheriff's receptionist on "Twin Peaks"?

terrible person (has three parallel horizontal scars on his ribs)

Message 42 7/3/98 10:51 AM
Subject: Re(2): Lammas
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

laura deal writes:

Excuse me, but I just have to say that since llamas can't legally consent to sex , that I find your bringing them to a sex party offensive and insensitive.

no no, Laura, you missed the point. bringing the lamas to a sex party will distract them from chanting and meditating and getting the Chinese occupiers out of their country.

terrible person (sometimes a lameass himself)

Message 41 7/3/98 10:59 AM
Subject: Re(15): To make a start more s
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

laura deal writes:

terrible person writes:

Correct on the title. I'm told the story was parodied on The Simpsons (though

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I also have a theory that there are exactly six things left in the universe that have NOT been parodied on The Simpsons.)

Johnny Vann writes:

Ok, I'll bite. What are those six things?

I think one of them is flan.

actually, I dare not reveal them, to protect their anonymity while they are spirited away to a bunker in Central Asia in whose vast distances the minions of Matt Groening will never find them. those minions are watching me right now, from that new red blimp (why would russell stover need a blimp?) and from the three red cars. I am reminded of that poem that goes "The slitheragee has crawled out of the sea. it may catch all the others, but it won't catch me. No, you won't catch me, old Slitheragee! you may catch all the others but you wo---"

terrible person

Message 39 (Unsent)

Subject: Re(2): What is it about my recipe?

From: terrible person

To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

terrible person writes:

and if you have run out of your usual lubricant, or just want something of similar consistency but more interesting flavor, you're only making flans for Kay-Why Gel.

and if you were to use flans for such purposes, I am sure they would be the best-laid flans of Mice and Women.

Message 38 7/3/98 1:22 PM

Subject: Re(3): When Miss ___ died...

From: terrible person

To: Great Beginnings

I guess that must be Faulkner, though I really should have let someone who has actually read him answer. I don't think I've been closer to Faulkner than "The Bear", some movies, and the character played by John Mahoney in "Barton Fink".

terrible person (why me? because I don't listen)

Message 37 7/3/98 1:26 PM

Subject: Re: In the year 1878...

From: terrible person

To: Great Beginnings

quick, Chris!!!

the game is afoot!!

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Excellent choice!!!

A Study in Scarlet, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the first Sherlock Holmes story.

(My forensic sciences instructor loved the part where Holmes discovers a test for hemoglobin, and I when I had a chemist for a roommate I would constantly refer to this story.)

terrible person (a veritable Napoleon of crime)

Message 35 7/3/98 4:48 PM
Subject: Re(4): What is it about my recipe?
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Forgive me. I've joined late. I've just heard
That Kelsey Gadoo's become flustered.
Her anger she's mustered
And angrily blustered
That no one appreciates custard.

But since I came into this talk late
And it's almost the Fourth, by my clock, let
Me say: keep your spark lit
(As I English talk mock a lot.)
And cook up some flans out of chocolate!

uncertain of my pronunciation,

terrible person

(as is appropriate for limericks, a non-G-rated version of this is available on request.)

Message 33 7/3/98 6:06 PM
Subject: Re(8): Today, by radio...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

laura deal writes:

terrible person writes:

and speaking of things that I bet only one person knows, Laura, who can turn a tap into a tape? who can turn a cap into a cape?

its.....Letter Man! (no, not Dave)

*electrically,
Laura*

oh, yes, of course, Laura, Letterman COULD do that (by tearing the E from his varsity sweater) but I was thinking of the more specialized SILENT E!! (he

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turned a can -- alakazam! -- into cane. But my friend Sam -- stayed just the same!!)

they lured Tom Lehrer out of retirement and got him to write and sing that.

so you walk into a room, and there in the dark and gloom, is Dracula! how do you say "Goodbye?"

Immediately,

terrible person

Message 32 7/4/98 12:32 AM
Subject: in Congress, July 4, 1776
From: terrible person
To: politics

When in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation. We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness--That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience

hath shewn, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Des

Message 31 7/4/98 12:39 AM
Subject: Re: in Congress, July 4, 1776
From: terrible person
To: politics

Yay. Good job, Tom, and all you Congressmen who made changes.

I love this thing. I know Jefferson owned slaves and probably raped at least one of them (for could a teenager giving in to her 'owner's' demands ever be said to be giving consent?), so that makes him quite the hypocrite, but the man could write. And I know half of it is propaganda and exaggeration and spin, but, the man could write. (So it's the best propaganda, exaggeration, and spin ever written.) It's like watching a boxing match. In this corner, the Heavyweight champeen of the woild, weighing three hundred pounds (sterling), wearing trunks with a red cross and a white saltire, George the thoid! And in this corner, the challenger, standing six foot three, with red hair, from

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Charlottesville, Vee-Ay, in the red and white striped trunks, the Fellow from Monticello, Tom Jefferson! Ding ding! And Jefferson is coming on really strong! he's landing some heavy blows! the King just can't stand up! he's on the ropes! Jefferson is really pouring it on! They have GOT to stop this fight! The king is just REELING! There's no way he can stand up....

(The only other pieces from which I get this same feeling are Mark Anthony's speech in "Julius Caesar" and Cicero's First Catilinarian oration.)

Anyone have a favorite part? (Besides the sexy parts about eating out their substances and manly firmness.) I'm partial to the "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" bit, since every signer knew he was committing treason and what the penalty was. Oh, and the "decent respect to the opinions of mankind" line; it's very humble. The use of the word "self-evident" -- meaning, if you don't see it, you must be stupid. And "Prudence, indeed...." -- I always think about that before making changes in my life.

Anyway, it's a great piece of writing, and I hope you all get as much pleasure out of reading it as I did out of posting it.

Next time: "Common Sense"!!!

Message 24 7/4/98 12:17 AM
Subject: Re(3): What is it about my recipe?
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

So what are the flavors? Kelsey Gadoo Ego, pierre le fou Ego, and terrible person Ego?

I can say that neither I nor my agent has ever agreed to the licensing of a "terrible person Ego" flavor, and I will certainly not appear in any ads for it. however, if anyone wanted to market "terrible person Id", that would be another story.

Idiosyncratically? Idiomatically? Idiotically?

terrible person

Message 23 7/4/98 12:23 AM
Subject: Re(4): Lammas
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

a question:

it seems to me that the males of many wooly quadrupeds, not just sheep, are called rams, and their females ewes. if so, if you defied Laura and the ASPCA and brought a llama to your sex party for indecent purposes, who would feed it Viagra, or rather, who would put the ram in the ram llama's ding dong? or would ewe do it?

hey, these things just occur to me. I don't make them up.

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Message 22 7/4/98 12:30 AM
Subject: Re: Homeless Experimental Subjects
From: terrible person
To: politics

I'm not going to comment on the content of this post, except to point out that it is dated December 20, 1996, more than a year and a half ago. Doubtless there have been developments in this story since then. This does not have the freshness of news or the perspective of history. I find nessie's posts a lot more interesting when he brings us one or the other.

Message 20 7/4/98 12:36 AM
Subject: in Congress, July 4, 1776 (2 of 2)
From: terrible person
To: politics

In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated Injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People. Nor have we been wanting in Attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which, would inevitable interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in

General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connection between them and the State of Great-Brit

Message 18 7/4/98 12:46 AM
Subject: Re(4): What is it about my recipe?
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Johnny Vann writes:
Kelsey Gadoo writes:
I might have pointed it out if I had understood your pun. Honestly, it's still lost on me. Who the hell is Nigel?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I can hear the song in my head, but I can't for the life of me figure out who the group is. I'm thinking early 80s new wave band of some sort?

Someone help us out here...

XTC, from "Drums and Wires"

Nigel Bruce? Nigel Tufnel? Nigel the bandleader on the Muppet Show? Nigel Hawthorne? the end is Nigel?

not feeling so bad since at least Tim and Davide knew it,

terrible person

Message 16 7/4/98 7:24 AM
Subject: Re(6): What is it about my recipe?
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

I've always wondered -- is Nigel just supposed to be joe average and the speaker is the Powers that Be directing things for him? Or is Nigel in some way retarded and the speaker is his guardian (not online) of some kind?

terrible person (hooray for Peter Pumpkin - yay!!! we pray for Peter Pumpkinhead!!)

Message 15 7/4/98 7:28 AM
Subject: Re(3): The Recipe
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Johnny Vann writes:

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Serve by scooping into a mug and pouring liquid caramel over it. (I actually used the Torani Hazlenut syrup used in Coffee bars. laura deal would probably use chocolate.)

laura deal writes:

Actually, Laura Deal would probably just skip all the muss and fuss and pour chocolate into the mug

Actually, not probably.

Laura (or Johnny speaking for her), haven't you ever just tried mainlining the stuff, injecting it directly? (though there is also a smokable form of chocolate, in crystals.) I hear the initial rush is unbelievable, but be careful of the comedown.

but keep your works clean - it gets gummed up....don't be like the guys in the Jim Carroll song....

terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 14 7/4/98 7:33 AM
Subject: Re(3): In the year 1878...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:
Wow. That one lasted exactly fourteen minutes.

I thought it would last at least a couple hours.

I would be amenable to an informal twenty-four hour rule (and even say amen to it), that no one will post an answer until everyone has had a chance to see the question.

Chris? Tim? Laura (since you set the initial conditions...)

Message 12 7/4/98 11:21 AM
Subject: Johnny marches home
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

the usual version of this is pretty happy:

When johnny comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah
We'll give him a hearty welcome then, hurrah, hurrah
The men will cheer, the boys will shout
The ladies, they will all turn out
And we'll all feel gay when Johnny comes marching home.

etc. etc. more stuff about celebrations

but I have heard a version much more appropriate to the minor key and the historical circumstances, a very grim one, about how when Johnny will come marching home, he'll be missing at least one limb. the chorus is "and we'll all drink stone blind/johnny come fill the bowl".

anyone know this version on this patriotic day?

terrible person

Message 10 7/4/98 1:28 PM
Subject: Re(3): in Congress, July 4, 1776
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:
terrible person writes:
The only other pieces from which I get this same feeling are Mark Anthony's speech in "Julius Caesar" and Cicero's First Catilinarian oration.

I'd put Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in the running too.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

the GA is great, no doubt -- especially since it's so short. but I was classing the Declaration with the two others above as exhaustive catalogues of evils at the ends of which the evildoer can't do much but run for his life.

you want the catilinarian in english or latin? nessie will like it -- it exposes a conspiracy. (though the exposer is head of the government, so whom do you believe?)

terrible person (like catiline, a monstrum)

Message 9 7/4/98 3:53 PM
Subject: Re(2): Johnny marches home
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Thorn Coyle writes:
Jonney I hardly knew you"

that starts to trigger memories...Bostonians still quote the line in memory of JFK....

glad to have a thorn on my side,

terrible person

Message 5 7/5/98 1:54 AM
Subject: Re(5): in Congress, July 4, 1776
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:
"Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?"
actually, you posed me the same question in film in the course of one of the more heated debates there.

For most of you, "How long, Catiline, will you try our patience?"

well, ok, but the tandem (literally "finally")really shows Cicero's total exasperation (or desire to appear totally exasperated) and I like a more literal "abuse" instead of "try".

Your turn, terrible Oh, and by the way, what do you mean the "exposer was head of the government"?

Cicero was consul that year, one of the two chief magistrates (magistrates retained their senate seats as members of a parliamentary-system cabinet do.) One reason that Catiline was trying to overthrow the government and really had it in for Cicero was that Cicero had beaten him in the election.

My recollection is that Cicero and Catiline were both Senators and the oration was delivered before the Senate. Then, as now, a Senator was not "head of the government". Actually, I'm trying to remember if at that point in the Republic they even had a "head of government" as we might understand the term. I think they had two Tribunes who more or less shared executive power, but

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

the Senate made most major decisions collectively.

the tribunes were the ten representatives of the plebs or common people who could Veto (lit. "I forbid") acts of the Senate (and the other legislative assemblies. the senate was really more a council of control of the magistrates, executive more than legislative. so the magistrates were very answerable to the senate and decisionmaking tended to be by consensus. though sometimes someone would decide that only he could save the republic by acting extralegally and this was considered a good thing, establishing a precedent. in fact, Cicero cites many examples of this in the speech.) as time went on, and the class struggle of senate vs. people intensified, the tribunes became more and more powerful.

When there was a crisis, they could appoint a "dictator" as a temporary leader--crisis manager really--too, I believe.

Right, dictators were appointed over all magistrates in times of great crisis. (kind of like the way presidential powers tend to expand in wartime.) they served for six months or until the crisis was over. Cincinnatus, for example, served only a few days, then went back to his plow.

I ask you, besides education, the aqueduct, public safety, roads, and sewers, what have the romans ever given us??

terrible person

Message 3 7/5/98 9:36 AM
Subject: Re(7): in Congress, July 4, 1776
From: terrible person
To: politics

Chris A. Hall writes:

terrible person writes:

I ask you, besides education, the aqueduct, public safety, roads, and sewers, what have the romans ever given us??

Brought peace?

Oh, PISS OFF!!!

terrible person (who is called terrible person, member in good standing of the People's Front of Judaea (officials))

Message 1 7/5/98 9:49 AM
Subject: Re(3): Johnny marches home
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Thorn Coyle writes:

*"Where are the arms that held me tight?
on that cold and dark December night,
you seem to have lost them in the fight...
Jonney I hardly knew you"*

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

*terrible person writes:
that starts to trigger memories...Bostonians still quote the line in memory of JFK...*

just thinking now how appropriate this lyric is in light of all of JFK's affairs.

7/5/98 2:32 PM
Subject: Re(9): inCongruous, July 4, 1776
From: terrible person
To: politics

Chris A. Hall writes:
SPLITTER!

and you realize, Chris, that Procurator Marcus Andrus is going to have us BOTH crucified if we keep on quoting Monty Python in his conference....

so let's quote Asterix instead!

These Romans are crazy!

terrible person (wishes Chris had posted "Romanes eunt domus" so I could have corrected his Latin at sword point)

Message 91 7/5/98 4:44 PM
Subject: Re: Palestine as a Roman colony
From: terrible person
To: politics

*pierre le fou writes:
Monty Python, in a movie that I have long argued sets the stage for the return of Maggie Thatcher by longing for the good old days of imperialism, gives the Romans credit for introducing into Palestine what they already had...*

The Judaeans were about the only people who could not seem to understand that they were living better under Roman rule. (despite the notorious corruption of many Roman provincial governors.) This is partly because Roman religion could assimilate just about anyone's gods and be assimilated to them, except when a people feels there is only one God and they have Him/It, and they don't want anyone's statues in their temples.

I think one of the imperialized people of whom "Life of Brian" is making fun is the Irish. Note that Reg's and Brian's wing of the PFJ is the "Officials", the name of one of the two wings of the IRA (along with the newer and more radical Provisionals.) In 1979 when "Life of Brian" came out, the British had long since given up almost all their Asian and African colonies, but had IRA bombs blowing up on their own soil.

Note the main character's name as well.

Easter, 1916:
a

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
terrible person

is born....

Message 90 7/5/98 4:44 PM
Subject: Re(7): in Congress, July 4, 1776
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

terrible person writes:

besides education, the aqueduct, public safety, roads, and sewers, what have the romans ever given us??

Lead poisoning? They were the first to use lead pipes and gave their word for lead, plumba I think, to plumbers.

plumbum (neuter) actually, whence the chemical symbol Pb and the verb plunge (drop like lead). And it has been theorized that lead poisoning was a major reason for the decline and fall.

gibbering on, er, gibboning?

terrible person

Message 89 7/5/98 4:45 PM
Subject: Re: Looks Interesting.....
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

I find this interesting too, but being (a) cynical person I am interested also in what Mr.? Dr.? Lodge is charging for all this, and reminded of the recent run of "swami" cartoons in Matt Groening's "Life in Hell."

People interested in the Blindfold Weekend might also be interested in the following offering from the Berkeley Adult School, which I would imagine is a lot cheaper.

GOALBALL

(Fee: None)

Goalball is an exciting fast-paced sport and a great workout designed for the visually impaired but playable by anyone willing to wear a blindfold. The game is played on a

volleyball sized court with 2 teams of 3 players at each end. The object is to bowl the bell-ball across the opponents goal line while they attempt to prevent it. Instruction will focus on the rules, skills and strategies of this internationally played sport and substantial prac-

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
tice/scrimmage time will be provided.
All levels of play welcome.

I have actually done a bit of experimentation in this area, though somewhat inadvertently. I own half a dozen pairs of glasses, only one of which is really in my current prescription (one other supposedly is, but for some reason, perhaps the geometry of the frames and where they hold the lenses, seems a little off.) I wear the old ones sometimes for cosmetic reasons or for sweaty or possible impact-filled athletic activities. And I can't really see through them. It's literally *dij`vu*, from second grade when I could not see the blackboard. I see as through a glass, darkly. Call me the Grey Lensman. Faces down the hall, and print three feet away, are fuzzy. I notice this at work, but then, when I get home and am indoors in small spaces, I don't notice as much so I forget to change back to my good glasses. So this goes on for a while. And this is partly because I get used to it. I don't think my other senses become more sensitive, as supposedly happens with sight-impaired people; though maybe they do not have enough time or maybe I just am not noticing. What I do find is that I begin using deductive sight (more. Since there are always limits on sight, I use it to some extent anyway.) Deductive sight means integrating logic and deduction into the process of visual identification. That distant figure has to be so and so not because I can see his or her face and tell it is he or she, but because all logic and reason say it must be. So and so would be in this place at this time. So and so often wears a jacket of that distinctive color, or rides a bicycle, or slouches that way. Of course, this doesn't always work. Things aren't always reasonable (at least on the surface); more than one person can have that jacket. (on the other hand, more than one person can have that face.)

After a while, you get used enough to doing this that you can no longer quite tell -- well, perhaps with a bit of reflection -- why and how you can know what you know. At this point, it has become indistinguishable from intuition. You know that must be so-and-so -- you just know, oh, maybe it's the jacket, maybe it's just having run into him or her in that place before. It's related to the activities of aerial photograph analysts. It's a bit like going to text-only from the GOL GUI; is there a way to obtain, or convey, all the information with more limited technical means that you can with more advanced ones? It's kind of fun, actually. The amount of visual information we get can be an overwhelming flood. a lot of it we don't need and it only distracts us. eliminating a lot of the information input, and concentrating on the what remains, can be fascinating. After all, most people online are just looking at each other through microscopes or telescopes; sometimes they can, through deduction/intuition, tell a lot more about a person online (or think we do, or think we do and be completely wrong) than we might be meeting them in real life, either because they feel freer to reveal more, or because there are fewer distractions, fewer data to distract us lead us to wrong conclusions.

In other words, I would say that the Blindfold Weekend, in many respects, does not sound all that different than what we already do here on Good Old GOL. I guess there's no place like home, and, as Christof tries to teach Truman Burbank (and if young Truman thinks he's happy, he must be happy, he must be happy in his world), why travel when you're already there?

terrible person

Message 88 7/5/98 5:09 PM
Subject: Re(6): What is it about my recipe?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Hey, yo, Steve knew it too, as the crack about your future being as good as sealed should have indicated.

*You see, Terry? I *am* good for more than SM allusions.*

You have me there, Steve. Me ipse inertiae nequitiaeque condemno. In context, I read the line as "your FATE is sealed" (something I often think for different reasons), and so the associative synapse did not fire. (Also, though, I was interpreting "punished" in a criminal sense (again, reflecting my particular mindset), not an SM one. Which is how I will continue to interpret it, unless you mean SM to stand for "Subtle, man!" or "Song Maven".)

Giving credit where it's due,

terrible person

Message 83 7/6/98 7:23 PM
Subject: Re(6): In the year 1878...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:

I wasn't criticizing terry for getting my quote in such a brief time. I was just expressing amazement.

well, I will try not to turn this into another of my theoretical-philosophical screeds (like "Industrial Society and its Future" -- oops, wait, that wasn't mine). but first, I wasn't taking it "that way" (it's not like my third grade teacher saying "let's not always see the same hands...") but the fact was, I just seemed to get it fast because I happened to log on soon after you posted it. your amazement is not really at any knowledge or guessing skill or research skills I may possess, but at the fact that I happened to log on right after you, since I tend to log on frequently for short periods. if I had gone away for the weekend or something, I would have answered when I got back, days later -- would you still have been amazed? there would have been no difference in me or my skills. (and, by the way, that I get the answers is not because I have a wide literary knowledge, but because I happen to have read a lot of the cool books you have.) as I have said before, this is not a search for truth here. Chris does not post the starts of books because he needs vital information for some term paper or article he is writing under deadline. It's all supposed to be in good fun, a format in which to consider good writing. And it's not a competition either; though there is praise and pride for the correct answerer, no one is keeping score. I like answering first, of course, that's why I do it, but if people are saying, "oh, damn, I would have gotten that if I had a little more time to think", then, what's the point? but if no one is saying that, then nothing more needs to be said.

so that's my screed and creed. do you read?

terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 80 7/6/98 6:31 PM
Subject: Re: Single Name GOL Accounts
From: terrible person
To: Play GOL Trivia!

Jabari Adisa writes:
How is it that some people have single name GOL accounts, while others have to conform to the norm?

I remember back in '95 when a certain SysAdmin (Name Him) would that be Andrew Sullivan? just a guess. declared that single name accounts would no longer be allowed. However, it appears that some new subscribers have managed to set-up these forbidden accounts. How?

I've always found that I could manage it by leaving the first name field blank and putting the alias in the last name field. interesting, though: when I tried putting "the" in the first field, the name got disapproved, while there are certainly enough users who have managed "the.." names. so I'm not all that smart, and just occasionally lucky.

*) 1998, Jabari Adisa
This author retains the rights to all comments. No comments are to be published or re-published or misunderstood or taken lightly without the written consent of the author (that's me). "Fair Use" consideration is limited to quotations for the purpose of furthering a discussion or clarifying a point or just plain old brown-nosing. And, yes, I will sue (that's you).*

but where? in what jurisdiction? where the unfair user is? where the GOL server is? does written consent mean on paper or online? would you go in small claims (damages of \$5000 or less) or municipal or superior court (lots more dough, but you'd need a pricey lawyer.) sorry. I can't help thinking of this stuff.

Message 76 7/6/98 10:02 PM
Subject: Within five minutes, or ten minutes...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

..... no more
than that, three of the others had called her on the telephone to ask her if she had heard that something had happened out there.

"Jane, this is Alice. Listen, I just got a call from Betty, and she said she heard something's happened out there. Have you heard anything?" That was the way they phrased it, call after call. She picked up the telephone and began relaying this same message to some of the others.

"Connie, this is Jane _____. Alice just called me, and she says something's happened . . ."

Something was part of the official Wife Lingo for tiptoeing blindfolded around the subject. Being barely twenty-one years old and new around here, Jane Conrad knew very little about this particular subject, since nobody ever talked

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
about it. But the day was young! And what a setting she had
for her imminent enlightenment!

It's science, not fiction, though it reads like it....

Message 75 7/6/98 10:34 PM
Subject: My vacillating crush on...
From: terrible person
To: Crushes on Greatness

Lara Flynn Boyle:

I can't remember whether I liked her in "Twin Peaks". I think I found her quiet cool Donna Hayward a little too quiet and cool; identifying with Agent Cooper, I preferred Sherilyn Fenn's Audrey Horne.

For a while, I tried to figure out how she could look so pale and white in some appearances, and entirely freckled in others such as "Wayne's World".

Then I caught her in things like "Where the Day Takes You", and "Red Rock West", and she started to grow on me. The quiet cool worked better the older she got.

Lately, I've been watching her in "the practice", which I kind of like, not just because it actually looks like Boston, and because the people in it sort of look like real people (only slightly larger than life), not like that ridiculous fluff "Ally McBeal".

and I think she has grown up nicely.

terrible person

Message 72 7/7/98 6:21 AM
Subject: Re(2): Within five minutes, or ten minutes...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

*Michael D. Sweeney writes:
I've got it!*

And I'm sure, because I have a copy here and just checked.

But I won't say anything yet. Hmm. How about "A future Senator figures prominently...."

Michael obviously has the.....oh, not yet. But he's fast. Faster than...oh, not yet.

Message 70 7/7/98 6:01 PM
Subject: Re(4): Within five minutes, or ten minutes...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Auntie Em writes:

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
The Right Stuff???

operational, both Em and M! Congratulations! We'll hang your pictures behind the bar at Pancho's Happy Bottom Riding Club, and start sewing your suits for future Mercury missions.

Message 69 7/8/98 4:36 PM
Subject: Re: day off
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Any N. Body writes:
I had the day of today and spent it sunning myself at the beach and now i'm sun burnt :(

You're toast, Any. I've been waiting for this.

It could be worse. At least you don't have skin cancer. Yet.

It could be a lot worse. You could have had your hands in some embarrassing place so that the outline of them was burned into your skin for everyone to see. You didn't, did you?

Seeing red....

terrible person

Message 67 7/8/98 4:31 PM
Subject: Re(9): Johnny marches home
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Michael D. Sweeney writes:
Wanted to mention Jody's here; they are almost entirely an oral tradition, carried by memory from post to post, elaborated over the years, diverging slowly until each unit has their own "dialect" or version. Almost never taught; soldiers pick them up by listening and singing along as they arrive in a unit.)

since oral tradition and group knowledge are valued, I guess there would not be much need for, and in fact, only bewilderment at, some clever wag who thought he could make up new ones?

see, I had envisioned that as an MOS, some guy in an office somewhere, whose entire job in the Army was to make up marching calls. And I had some interest in that job myself. If I were ever called, I mean.

"what did YOU do in the war, uncle terry?"

disappointedly,

terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 66 7/8/98 4:36 PM
Subject: Re: posting
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Any N. Body writes:
There is nobody posting here ?

I suppose it could be worse and people could be posting :)

Yes, Any, it could be worse and *I* could be posting!!!!

(It gets worse. See above.)

Message 63 7/8/98 5:47 PM
Subject: I need a job!!! (read this, it's funny)
From: terrible person
To: bruce brugmann

or at least some freelance work!!!

please, Mr. Editor!! I'm really clever!! I can write limericks at the drop of a hat! I can rhyme you couplet and triolet!!! I could write scathingly satirical verse about all those guys you hate! Read my stuff in Heyer's Cocktail Party or It's a le fou world!!

At the SF Bay Guardian, (dammit!!)
The topics and styles run the gamut
Through every enjoyment.
I know there's employment
For me there, I just need to scam it!!

Why couldn't this city so hilly
Be Houston or Detroit or Philly?
Although we'd be missing

Some nice same-sex kissing
At least we'd be rid of Mayor Willie?

admit it, you're laughing!! you want to give me an extremely modest quantity of money each week to adorn your fine publication with this sort of thing weekly!! right? please?

Yours pleadingly,

terrible person

Message 60 7/8/98 6:00 PM
Subject: Re(2): The Cosby Verdict
From: terrible person
To: politics

Auntie Em writes:

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

but it was the fact (as I saw it) that someone like O.J. could so completely lose control.

but did he really lose control? it took a certain amount of planning -- premeditation, as they call it in the murder biz -- to commit that crime. when I think of "losing control", to me it usually means that one moment he was normal, the next shooting. I forgot how long it takes to drive from Brentwood to Bundy Drive (is that where Nicole lived?), but I thought the idea was that he did have some time to calm down. it seemed to me that OJ the perfectly calm defendant was fully consistent with OJ the calm killer. but I've never been a big OJ follower.

here is my big complaint about the Markhasev trial, or rather its coverage. They didn't get it right when there was this great dancer named Baryshnikov. They didn't get it right when one of the two most powerful men in the world was Gorbachev. But you would think that if someone is accused of killing the son of the most popular entertainer in the world, PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA WOULD LEARN TO PRONOUNCE THE RUSSIAN NAME "MIKHAIL"!!!! It's not "mchale" like the navy or the celtics player kevin. it's not "mchile" to rhyme with "smile". it's MEE-KHA-EEL, with stress on the last syllable, and the KH like German or scottish or Hebrew ch. Okay, all you media types? (And all you GOLers, whose pronunciation, I am thankful to say, I can't hear?) Let's say it again. Mee-kha-EEL. Mee-kha-EEL. Now you've got it. Once more. Mee-kha-EEL. ochen' khorosho, vsie.

grozny cheloviek

Message 58 7/8/98 7:27 PM
Subject: Re: Span's Periodness
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Tim Walters writes:

I hope I'm not being too argumentative here, but when I was in the SCA it used to frost my shorts a bit that the self-appointed authenticity police would nitpick people's costumes to death, but let any old piece of folk music slide. (I prefer a more relaxed vision of "period" myself, but if one is going to be difficult, one might as well be thorough about it.)

now, I have never been in the SCA, but it seems that if they really want to be creative in their anachronism, they should not just be anachronistic to the present day, but to every period. what I mean is that they should recreate a sort of alternate medieval situation, not unlike Terry Gilliam's Alternate 1930's in "Brazil," or hanna-barbara's modern stoneage in "The flintstones". so why not have medieval computers with blacksmith-wrought keyboards (with ivory keys), wooden boxes (like the original, stone age apples) and blown glass screens? why not the medieval equivalent of punks in hair spiked with tallow and black leather jerkins? and why not play the music of young Robert the Dylan (of the Village of Greenwich) on the olde instruments?

I mean, what period of timespan are we talking about?

somewhere in the second millennium (at least for now),

terryble person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 55 7/8/98 8:26 PM
Subject: Re(3): Span's Periodness
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Tim Walters writes:

"Period" means the time between [uh, I forget... AD 1000?] and 1650, and characters from this entire period mingle freely, and fantasy tropes are often worked in.

I guess that can allow for a certain amount of the sort of anachronism I was trying to describe. After all, things WERE pretty different, certainly in terms of technology, well, at least firearms, than in 1000 or earlier. I guess the metalworking was somewhat better. a Cromwellian or cavalier cuirass WOULD look pretty out of place on a crusty carolingian cavalryman (though I don't know how well a reproduction of one would be distinguishable.) Largely I think it would be a matter of style, not technology, though one influences the other. but there, that is 850 years difference. on the other hand, to compare the technologies and styles of today and 1148, I think you'd get a much greater, and more amusing, contrast.

terrible person (won't be dealing much with periodicals no more, though maybe periods.....)

Message 54 7/8/98 9:46 PM
Subject: Re(6): Within five minutes, or ten minutes...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Michael D. Sweeney writes:

Read a biography of Pancho Barnes once. Interesting lady!

I once saw a movie of the week about her, starring...Valerie Bertinelli!! yeah. you can guess the quality. the best part was when she was being asked by Howard Hughes or someone to do stunt flying for some movie he was making in 1933 or so. (maybe some famous one, can't remember.) "I'm making a movie about World War One flying aces", he said. I guess he must have had foresight to make all that money.

Message 49 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(5): Span's Periodness
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Tim Walters writes:

Spidra Webster writes:

BTW, Tim, why did you drop out of the SCA?

I moved and didn't rejoin. No existential crisis or anything.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

tim and spidra, I was hoping for something more on the order of "why did you leave the SCA? did you run off with a duke's wife? abscond with the monastery treasure? I like to think you rose up and slew a man, 'tis the romantic in me [though there won't be Romantics for several centuries. Still, it's what I like about you.]" and then tim could say, "'tis something of the trine, forsooth."

Message 48 7/9/98 12:29 PM
Subject: Re(3): Palestine as a Roman colony
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

terrible person writes:

The Judaeans were about the only people who could not seem to understand that they were living better under Roman rule.

meaning, at that time. as the word "roman" indicated, I was not speaking of imperialism in general.

Rome PILLAGED Judea. Plunder is the ESSENCE of imperialism.

Ever play Dungeons and Dragons? Remember Chaotic vs. Lawful? There are imperialists who chaotically blunder their plundering. (They are called pillage idiots.) They just enjoy slaughtering people and so they burn even though the occupied people have already surrendered and then they pile up the skulls like Tamerlane. They certainly don't do the occupied any good and they don't do themselves all that much good either since they burn most of what is useful. Smart imperialists organize things so that more is produced and saved (it goes in grain siloes instead of spoiling.) They don't kill the golden-egg laying goose, they let it keep laying. They take a gander and get it a gander. Though the imperialists take a big chunk of what is produced, for their trouble, as any rulers do, the ruled often end up with more they had when they were disorganized. Though they don't always, of course. But then they use up the production capability and end up with zero, a big goose egg (not gold.) I am sure that when the aliens take over, or to the extent they have, we will produce mainly for them and not for us, right?

Fuck imperialists and the horse they rode in on.

but the Romans were almost entirely INFANTRY, so.....

Message 47 7/9/98 12:19 PM
Subject: Re(2): Palestine as a Roman colony
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

If any of these peoples are to get extra credit it must be the Greeks who contributed a disproportionate share of the engineers.

um, no, actually, the engineering was almost all Roman. the Romans invented -- or brought to perfection -- the arch and the vault and the dome. The Greeks pretty much stuck with posts and lintels (borrowed, in turn, from the

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Egyptians.) The Greeks put the Romans to shame in the arts, philosophy, literature, and the Romans knew it. (see Book VI of the Aeneid, ln. 847-853) practically every teacher in Rome was a Greek slave. but the Romans knew they totally outdistanced the Greeks in political organization and administration and the infrastructure it required. That is why the Roman Empire lasted several hundred years and Alexander the Great's (macedonian but with Greek know-how) broke up at his death.

the Romans would have created windows 98; the Greeks, Riven.

terrible person (couldn't do either)

Message 42 7/9/98 4:31 PM
Subject: Re(3): day off
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Any N. Body writes:

actually it could be much much worse u could have had ur hands on my body and I would have had to suffer the outline for monthsyeeeeeccchhhhh

no, it could be a LOT worse. the only place I would put my hands on your body would be around your throat, and then, I assure you, your suffering would be brief, but terrible. gllllllluuuuuuurrrrrkkkkk.

it could be worse. I could be buying some too-small isotoner gloves right now. and a regulation size Body bag. if I leave marks, I don't leave prints.

heh heh.

cracking my knuckles,

terrible person

Message 41 7/9/98 7:35 PM
Subject: Room 101
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

For a moment he was alone, then the door opened and O'Brien came in

"You asked me once," said O'Brien, "what was in Room 101. I told you that you knew the answer already. Everyone knows it. The thing that is in Room 101 is the worst thing in the world."

The door opened again. A guard came in, carrying something made of wire, a box or basket of some kind. He set it down on the further table. Because of the position in which O'Brien was standing, Winston could not see what the thing was.

"The worst thing in the world," said O'Brien, "varies from individual to individual. It may be burial alive, or death by fire, or by drowning, or by impalement, or fifty

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

other deaths. There are cases where it is some quite trivial thing, not even fatal."

He had moved a little to one side, so that Winston had a better view of the thing on the table. It was an oblong wire cage with a handle on top for carrying it by. Fixed to the front of it was something that looked like a fencing mask, with the concave side outwards. Although it was three or four meters away from him, he could see that the cage was divided lengthways into two compartments, and that there was some kind of creature in each. They were rats.

"In your case," said O'Brien, "the worst thing in the world happens to be rats."

This Conference vs. Room 101.

An unstoppable force vs. an immovable object.

Who wins?

Message 40 7/9/98 7:46 PM

Subject: dual-use melodies

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

I was listening to a report today on National Public Radio (my favorite Liberal Medium) concerning the Orange Order marches in Northern Ireland, with an emphasis on the songs sung thereat. (and threats thereat.) They played a song that sounded exactly like "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" except with lyrics about the Battle of the Boyne. This got me to thinking about other melodies that have had more than one set of lyrics set to them for more than one purpose. (It's interesting as well to try to determine which were the original lyrics and use.) Two examples come to my mind immediately: "O Tannenbaum" was used for "Maryland, My Maryland" (an exhortation to that state to join other slave/southern states in secession in 1861, still the state's official song, I think) and "The Red Flag"; while "God Save the Queen" is not only America's "America", but at the time of WWI was also the Prussian/German national hymn, "Heil Dir im Siegerkranz." (And the French claimed they had written it.)

So what are the best examples people can think of of melodies used for very different, even contrasting, purposes?

(One problem is that if you are marching along, you want to use something distinctive to show who you are; unless you are trying to coopt or make fun of the other guy's song, you risk being confused with him by both your side and his. Unless you are trying to sneak in....)

terrible person (often sings the Nice Song for just this purpose)

Message 39 7/9/98 8:15 PM

Subject: Bruce Brugmann won't read my mail

From: terrible person

To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

so it occurred to me last night that, since I could use the extra cash, and the SF Bay Guardian could use a little -- je ne sais quoi -- and since Guardian Editor Bruce Brugmann is so frequently right here online, I thought I would just send him a quick email suggesting that I write a few lines of verse

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

for the Guardian each week, a sort of verbal editorial page cartoon. I dashed off a few limericks and sent him the following, under the title:

I need a job!!! (read this, it's funny)

"or at least some freelance work!!!

please, Mr. Editor!! I'm really clever!! I can write limericks at the drop of a hat! I can rhyme you couplet and triolet!!! I could write scathingly satirical verse about all those guys you hate! Read my stuff in Heyer's Cocktail Party or It's a le fou world!!

At the SF Bay Guardian, (dammit!!)
The topics and styles run the gamut
Through every enjoyment.
I know there's employment
For me there, I just need to scam it!!

Why couldn't this city so hilly
Be Houston or Detroit or Philly?
Although we'd be missing
Some nice same-sex kissing
At least we'd be rid of May'r Willie?

admit it, you're laughing!! you want to give me an extremely modest quantity of money each week to adorn your fine publication with this sort of thing weekly!! right? please?

Yours pleadingly,

terrible person"

but he won't even read the thing!!! I sent him another note asking him to, but no dice....

so listen folks, I need your support. write to bruce. just get him to read the thing -- that's all I ask. I am sure he will give it the treatment it deserves. write especially if you have any pull with him. tell him that I am threatening to go to the SF Weekly. hmm, that's an idea. just think, shouldn't the whole Bay Area be subjected to what you have had to endure, namely, my verse? and I promise, if I get into the Guardian, I will never post anything in rhyme here on GOL again. Never ever. I swear. thank you all so much.

desperate person

Message 37 7/9/98 8:19 PM
Subject: Re: The Star-Spangled Banner
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Heyer writes:

Well, shit, I've forgotten the second verse.

given the nature of the song, I would imagine that most of its singers did too.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 36 7/9/98 8:33 PM
Subject: Re(3): Palestine as a Roman colony
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

As for the Irish, we simply got sick of being starved by the millions, and of having our babies held up on bayonets for target practice, etc. etc.

Since nessie identifies with the cause of Irish Nationalism, I am pleased to have him present when I award the U LOOZ BIG, DOODS!!! Award for the Week (aka the U LOOZ, BIG DOODS!! Award) to.....

The Portadown Chapter of the Orange Order, camped in a damp field for three days now, in their John Cleese Ministry of Silly Walks bowler hats and suits, eating worms, giving a color which some of us find pleasant and vital a bad name, blocked from the greatest display of triumphalism since Steve ...whoahhhh!!! let's forget that since they marched last year by the same Army and Constabulary that has supported them in bullying and suppressing minority the minority for centuries. Stop whining, orange guys. At least the Army isn't shooting at you....we all know they've done that enough to the other side. So, a big HA HA!! and a fat pie in the face and a rousing chorus of U LOOZ BIG, orange DOODS!!!

Message 30 7/9/98 11:47 PM
Subject: Re(4): The Star-Spangled Banner
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Spidra Webster writes:

Tim Walters writes:

it's actually worse than the SSB lyrics, which takes some doing.

*Aw, damn. I actually *like* the national anthem.*

I'm with Spidra on this. I LOVE the national anthem, words and music alike. Maybe it's just that it makes me think of baseball games on summer evenings. Or British naval officers gnashing their teeth and thinking, "well, what do we do now?" when they see the flag still there.

I feel something like US Grant, who once said, "I only know two songs. One of them is Yankee Doodle, and the other isn't."

Spidra, let's give 'em all four verses just to annoy 'em.

Message 29 7/9/98 11:49 PM
Subject: Re(4): The Star-Spangled Bann
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Heyer writes:

Yes, they do indeed win the "Boring Drink Song Lyrics" contest, pretty much hands down. Someone ought to write better ones.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Heyer, you may have been singing your song, but you're playing mine. So who was someone supposed to be? All right, all right.

Except I don't know how he pronounces his name.

To high-seated Heyer
With a beer in her hand
Came a thought, as she posted
"Anacreon's" lyric.
"These words don't inspire
Me to drink as I planned.
If I'm going to get toasted
I'll need more than beer. Hic.
Then the good Engineer
Entered, bringing more beer
And the whiskey that's brown
And the vodka that's clear.
And they filled up the glasses
And clinked them, said "Cheers"
And they filled up themselves
With liquors and beers.

They had finished a bottle
And another as well
And had started a third
But were thinking of stopping,
When what should them startle
But the sound of the bell
And voice they both heard
Shouting "Let's go bar-hopping!"
Alas for these poor
For the voice at the door
Was of him, who than anyone
Else can drink more.
So they feebly protesting
To hard drinking Hell
Were dragged off forever
By Matthew Sto-well.

Play ball.

Message 28 7/9/98 11:53 PM
Subject: Re(5): Palestine as a Roman colony
From: terrible person
To: politics

Ron Morgan writes:
I like the image this conjures up of Bill Gates as Caligula, but it begs the question; If MS is Rome, does that make Apple Carthage?

that's great, Ron!!! the Carthaginians were a seafaring, mercantile, colonizing people of Phoenician origin. (The Phoenicians had done cool things like devising an alphabet and dying things purple.) They were enterprising,

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

innovating. ok, so they sacrificed their kids to Moloch. They were all over the mediterranean (the world) when the Romans hadn't gotten out of their own suburbs. The Romans could not tie their shoes without authorization. They were ok on land, but couldn't tell one end of the ship from the side. (The carthaginians were not that great on land; they mainly hired mercenaries as land troops.) In fact, the romans only built a fleet by finding a wrecked Carthaginian ship and copying its operating system plank for plank. Still, they had to build a couple of fleets and have them destroyed before they could match the Carthaginians. Once they did, though, they rapidly cut off the markets on which Carthage depended and took away its market share. Though the Carthaginians displayed amazing resiliency and kept coming back until the Romans deleted Carthage and sold all its inhabitants into serfdom. And did you know that the name Hannibal means "Jobs" in Carthaginian? And the distance from Redmond to Cupertino is exactly that from central Italy to North Africa? ok, I made that part up. (but hey. look on a map...)

I think the Caligula analogy for Bill Gates is ok, but perhaps a better one might be Claudius, whom everyone laughed at until he became ruler of the world. Nero built a huge palace.. and NERO looks like NERD.....

terrible person (LOVES a classical analogy)

Message 26 7/10/98 8:03 AM
Subject: Re(2): Bruce Brugmann won't read my mail
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Spidra Webster writes:

As for your limerick, you're about a century and a half too late for that kind of thing to really work in a mass periodical. I can totally see it in a 19th century publication but I can't picture it nowadays. I actually like limericks and puns more than the average bear,

that word "bear" , it gives me an idea. Early California. Yes. Maybe I could, using the time travel methods I have discussed here before, travel back to Gold Rush San Francisco, a century and a half ago, where my stuff would be appreciated. Where Bruce Brugmann would be a recently arrived Bavarian immigrant, handing out a free broadside to the miners and prospectors in town for a few days, looking for the prospects for broads. Decrying the corrupt city government (barely in place a year), decrying overcharging by the water mills, celebrating all lifestyles, with a few personal ads in the back (Single white male, 49, grizzled, wants to stake claim on hardy woman to help him find gold in them thar hills and make her mine.....) His signature battle cry of the time: "Confound it!"

now, to make this transition, I need to find a place around here that is exactly as it was in 1848.....maybe the beach, or the presidio?? have I missed that civil war recreation that was scheduled around here? I should bury a time capsule somewhere for all of you to find yesterday and know that I made it....

Extemporaneously,

terrible person

Message 21 7/10/98 1:59 PM
Subject: Re: galleys and proofs
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

You might try an academic library. If I were in your place, I would go for a walk to my nearest college campus. They're full of young, attractive students, and I, with a lot of gall, would be giving every young gal eyes, yes, and some of the profs as well, though I might earn reproof for doing so. Then I might stop at a local seafood bar and grill, and ask about the quality of the galley, and the proof of the beverages (and puddings.) That's what I would do with those MS.

Elizabeth A. Nolan writes:

I know that the subject line will probably inspire terrible person to write something about boats and geometry,
I don't get it. why would I do that?

are these things you got at your old job? aren't there any sort of confidentiality rules protecting unpublished stuff?

you could just recycle them, since they are now available, presumably, in final, published form. you could scan them all onto a website first.

feeling as if he's not helping Leon,

terrible person

Message 18 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(2): my car
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

you could have a horde of axe-wielding evil dead zombies chasing you.

or, for that matter, a krypo-lock-wielding ex-bicycle messenger with limited brakes, enraged that you cut him off at the last light.

Message 9 7/11/98 5:19 PM
Subject: Re(7): Palestine as a Roman colony
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

terrible person writes:
The carthaginians were not that great on land

Hey! YOU try crossing the Alps with a herd of elephants. Hannible was as successful as he was because the Romans didn't think anybody could do what he did--so he surprised them. Pissed 'em off too. You might want to add one of those "Carthago delenda est!" orations to your list of faves.

try crossing the Rhone, too. but as I said, almost all hannibal's troops were mercenaries. (and Hannibal was just as great a leader of the carthaginians as he was of the A-Team.) as he went, the peoples on the roman frontiers, conquered by the Romans not long before and -- less than pleased about it -- tended to join up with hannibal, since Carthaginian rule was a lot looser than

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
Roman....

the romans got some of their own back....don't forget how hannibal got the disappointing news that his brother Hasdrubal would not be joining him with a fresh army...

as for Cato the Elder, (aka Cato the Censor -- he had basically held Ken Starr's job) I don't know if any of his speeches have survived. But it was always my impression -- not sure how I got it, but it's appealing -- that his speeches were not usually specifically about Carthage and its menace, but that he just tacked that onto the end of whatever he was talking about. you know, "that's why we need agricultural subsidies....and Carthage must be destroyed!!!" "that's why we need to cut the capital gains tax...and destroy carthage!!!" that sort of thing. if you want great speeches about how dangerous something or rather someone is, try Demosthenes' Philippics or Cicero's In M. Antonium. and don't forget what happened to Cicero....

Message 8 7/11/98 5:38 PM
Subject: Re: The Irish mess
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

why doesn't HRH the Queen (i.e the crown they're showing loyalty to), get on the telly and say she appreciates the gesture and all that but she'd prefer they cut out the marching for now 'cause it's upsetting everyone just too too much?

LOL! very good, bernard, nice idea. it would help humanize the monarchy -- isn't that the idea? she could invite them to tea...or she could just send Prince William; the orange order's teenaged daughters would insist that they stand down. actually, william's phenomenal popularity, based on his looks and the memory of his mother and the contrast with his father, scares me. I imagine him, in cooperation with the media-savvy Tony Blair, who will do anything to get elected (like eviscerate Labor's traditional if unsuccessful platform), becoming a sort of demagogue, using his charisma and the vagueness of Britain's unwritten constitution (which still theoretically puts sovereignty with the king, as you pointed out), to rule the country himself, at first well, and then as power corrupts, tyrannically....he'd be like Caligula, who before he showed himself to be totally nuts, was hailed as a savior, the son of the hero Germanicus (the Robert Kennedy of ancient Rome...)

(nobody had better steal that idea for a book or movie, you hear!! it's mine!!! mine!! or William's, if he actually wants to do it...)

sorry for the digression. the important question you are raising is, what are the Loyalists going to do, now that the "mother country", loyalty to which defined them, and which always backed them up before, is trying (sort of, maybe) to play the role of honest broker among all its citizens? where are the Loyalists going to go? will they start committing terrorist acts against the British government to force it to support them? will they declare Northern Ireland independent (the way Rhodesia did -- which the British refused to recognize while blacks were excluded from power) and set up another Stormont, another "Protestant parliament for a protestant people"?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

that would be different.

but the idea of the figurehead sovereign intervening is interesting. I am told that the long-reigning king of Thailand, and Juan Carlos of Spain, have both staved off military coups by reminding the plotters of their oaths of loyalty to the crown, and cowing them this way. in Anthony Burgess's "1985" (published 1979) King Charles quells the anarchy tht has broken out in a thatcherless britain by an appeal to good old decency. any other precedents (or figurehead presidents? roman herzog of Germany and Ezer Weizmann have often kind of overstepped their roles and clashed with the chancellor/prime minister....)

resume until 980709 12:35

It doesn't scan, Martha

From nine to five I have to spend my time at work.

My job is very boring; I'm an office clerk.

The only thing that helps me pass the time away

Is knowing I'll get back to Ithaca someday.

Ithaca, far away in time

Ithaca, far away in time.....

Ran guns to the Ethiopians.

And fought in Spain on the Loyalist side.

Got well paid both times.

Though the other side might have paid a lot better.

Draw your own conclusions.

Hey: It's not TERRIBLE person.

It's TERRIBLE PERSON.

Dactyl spondee. Fits in anywhere in a hexameter line, and into "Eleanor Rigby" as well.

References available upon request. Naming names here would break a streak.

I'm not a teen, and I'm male. If you still want to chat with me, I'd be honored.

And while we're at it:

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

It's not "It's not the WORST thing in the world."

It's "It's not the WORST THING in the WORLD."

"Newspapers are unable, seemingly, to discriminate between a bicycle accident and the collapse of civilization." -- George Bernard Shaw

Why should I be any different?

Don't believe in piercings, just enclosures.

Message 106 7/12/98 2:08 PM
Subject: Re(6): The Star-Spangled Bann
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Heyer writes:

Terry, you rule. I'm vastly flattered to have my very own drinking song. This almost beats immortality on a library shelf.

you know, I have for some time, on and off, been trying to create my own folklore, especially since Prof. Alan Dundes, who knows a lot of stuff, told me that it can't be done, that pop culture draws from folklore and not the other way around. ten years ago, I seemed to have inadvertently succeeded, and I nearly succeeded here (or still may have), again, not purposefully, a bit more than a year ago. but I guess it only works naively; it doesn't work when you try too hard.....

but if you really liked my effort, then what you could do would be to sing it. wherever, with whomever. spread it around; if it's good, others will pick it up. it will spread, mouth to ear to mouth, on the net, however. and someday,

maybe in a year, maybe in fifty, I'll be sitting somewhere, quietly minding my own business. and I will hear someone singing what sounds like the Star Spangled Banner. and then I will realize that the person is not using the usual lyrics. in fact, I will recognize the lyrics as the ones I posted. and someone will be singing them having no idea who Heyer, engineer K, and Matt Stowell are. and I'll ask, "where did you hear those words?" and the person will say, "oh, I don't know. I just heard them. from someone. why?" and I'll say, "because I...oh, forget it."

Run, boy!!!

terrible person

Message 102 7/12/98 3:54 PM
Subject: Re(2): dual-use melodies
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

true enough, though they were pretty much used by the same people in the same cause. which came first? I would imagine "John Brown's Body" but not by much, since the attack on Harper's Ferry was less than two years before the Civil

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

War...I'll bet the melody had been around even longer, say, as a hymn....

on a related note: the script of David Mamet's "American Buffalo" has on its front page the following:

"mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord
He is tearing down the alley in a black and yellow Ford.."

but that's it. is there a rest of this? anyone know? this sounds like a Tim question.

terrible person (wonders why the people in Mamet plays interrupt each other so much)

Message 98 7/12/98 11:06 PM
Subject: Re(6): Bruce Brugmann won't r
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Hey, someone here must have some pull, because he read it finally!!!!

And forwarded it!!!

To whom, though? The police? Hey, it was a joke! Hey, let's see a warrant.
No, I didn't steal those signs, I found them.....

Well, thank you whoever helped me, and most of all, thank you, Bruce Brugmann.
Even if you think my rap is crap, as Inspector Yuen says. At least you read it. That's all a person can ask.

Next objective: to get Greta Christina to get me into the Spectator!!!

terrible person (really needs some good news)

Message 97 7/12/98 11:22 PM
Subject: Re(2): The Irish mess
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

living under Irish laws. Divorce, contraception, and abortion come to mind.

one thing though -- and here I am quoting a guy from Belfast (Irish, Nationalist, Catholic, whatever you want to call him) to whom I said almost the same thing as you just did -- most Northern Ireland Protestants are not exactly liberal on the social or "family values" issues. They're pretty conservative. It's not as though they are big on divorce, contraception, and abortion themselves. To them it's more a matter of principle; for three hundred years they have learned to fear and hate the Pope and "Popery" and they see the Republic of Ireland as allowing too great a say to the Roman Church, with what result, it does not matter so much. I think it's pretty clear that Protestants in the Republic don't suffer the same kind of discrimination in jobs, housing, and in the courts, that Northern Ireland Catholics do.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

also, don't you see the Orangemen as evil remnants of imperialism? Just surprised to find you so sympathetic to them. Just wondered.

terrible person (born in Boston and thus honorarily Irish)

Message 96 7/13/98 6:57 PM
Subject: Hannibal (was Re(8): Palestine as a Roman colony)
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:
<a bunch of cool stuff about elephants!!!>

where did you get all that, nessie? is it in Livy? it's wicked neat!!

The real secret to his success was the near universal hatred of Rome among its neighbors.

and the real secret to his failure was that, after he annihilated three of their armies early in the campaign, the Romans followed the plans of Fabius Maximus "the delayer" and refused to join battle, instead harrying his army and supply lines. Don't forget, Hannibal spent almost 15 years in Italy. And then he had political problems back home....

two hannibal stories (caveat lector):

It's 207 bce and hannibal is hanging in southern italy, living it up, but unable to deliver the knockout blow. He's waiting for his brother , Hasdrubal, to arrive with the remains of the Carthaginian army in Spain (which had been driven out by P. Cornelius Scipio) as reinforcements. Unfortunately, Hasdrubal, after crossing the Alps and all, has been intercepted and wiped out by the Romans at the Metaurus River near the Adriatic Coast. But Hannibal doesn't know this. He's sitting in his camp, wondering where Hasdrubal is. Whatever is keeping Hasdrubal? Suddenly, a horseman appears at the gate of the camp, and with a bowler's fling, sends some unknown object rolling down the main alley of the camp. Hannibal's men run to see what it is, and when they see, they bring it to Hannibal. It's Hasdrubal's head. uh oh. (I don't know if Francis Coppola necessarily had this in mind when he filmed the scene in which Colonel Kurtz drops Chef's head in the imprisoned Willard's lap in "Apocalypse Now", but it's the same idea.)

the other story is that after his defeat at Zama in 202 BCE by P. Cornelius Scipio (Africanus), he went into exile in Asia. at one point Scipio visited him there, and in the course of conversation asked who he (hannibal) thought was the greatest general ever. now, it's not clear what answer Scipio expected, whether it was "you, o scipio" or he really wanted Hannibal's opinion. anyway, hannibal named as number one Alexander the Great, and number 2, Pyrrhus of Epirus, who had been first to use elephants against the Romans in 275 bce but had been forced to give up after a -- Pyrrhic -- victory. And for number three, Hannibal named himself. I guess because he saw Scipio seemed a little hurt, he added, "and if I had defeated you, Scipio, I would have named myself first."

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

O Rerum Mundi Moderator, will it soon be time for a "Classical Politics" spinoff conference? how about a "history" conference (not containing message histories)

terrible person at the gates!!!

Message 95 7/13/98 6:01 AM
Subject: Re(4): dual-use melodies
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

Spidra Webster writes:

*terrible person writes:
which came first? I would imagine "John Brown's Body"*

JBB was first.

do you think it's still mouldering? or has it completely mouldered by now?
good embalming?

and when David Duchovny dies, will his body Mulder in the grave?

terrible person (loses sleep over these things -- that's why he gets up so early)

Message 92 7/13/98 1:05 PM
Subject: Re(7): Bruce Brugmann did read my mail
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Jabari Adisa writes:

*Jabari Adisa writes:
remarkable*

Jabari, you dumb ass. I think you meant 'remarkably.' Or is that more of that foolish Ebonics that you people tout so strongly?

Actually, Jabari, I thought your mistake was in leaving out a hyphen, and that was it. (otherwise, being a SMART ass, I would have pointed it out of course.)you said people were "remarkable deficient". I thought it was supposed to be one of those new compounds like "sex-positive", "Year 2000 compliant", "vitamin-rich". Now, of course, the first element in all those is a noun, but there is no reason why it should not be an adjective. These people are deficient in remarkable (-ness? stuff? whatever.)

Anyway, since language is descriptive, not prescriptive,(or should be), what people actually say, not moribund rules, you're not ungrammatical, you're an innovator.

terrible person (has one of those white message boards that's erasable and remarkable!)

Message 88 7/13/98 3:40 PM
Subject: Re(2): I'd finished my pie...
From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:

The beginning of a very famous novel about a psychotic.

Jim thompson, The Killer Inside Me???

Message 87 7/13/98 6:44 PM

Subject: Re(4): I'd finished my pie...

From: terrible person

To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:

Jim Thompson, The Killer Inside Me???

Chalk another one up for terry.

funny that I would know this.

(actually, I read it after reading Wendy Lesser's extensive discussion of it in her "Pictures at an Execution".)

are you correcting my spelling of Thomson? you're saying it's WITH a p, as in "pneumatic"?

I don't know, Chris. Thompson is the detective in the tight black suit and bowler hat. Thomson is the other detective, with the brush moustache. Get them straight, ok?

Tintinnabulating,

terrible person

Message 85 7/13/98 11:35 PM

Subject: Re(6): I'd finished my pie...

From: terrible person

To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:

Actually, I was correcting your lack of capitalization; I didn't even notice that I had corrected your blundering misspelling of "Thompson."

that's because I had not, in fact, misspelled "Thompson", I just assumed that that must have been what you were correcting! (did you fake me out or did I fake you out? if the latter, don't admit it; if the former, I certainly won't!)

If what you say was indeed the case, you should simply have italicized the initial t, no?

And it's true, I lack capitalization, which is why I'm desperately looking for people to invest in me.

Wouldn't it be great if the people in Film Processing began shouting things

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
like "billions of blue blistering barnacles in a thundering typhoon" instead of their usual?

Kind of weird though to be talking about killing and Thompson considering what's happening at San Quentin tonight.

terrible person (no, really, not Terrible Person. really!)

Message 82 7/14/98 6:15 AM
Subject: Re(8): I'd finished my pie...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:
Actually, detailed and rigorous scientific research has conclusively demonstrated that the maximum level of badness in a person who can quote Tintin comics is 63.458944973421 percent.

That's interesting, considering how no Tintin book has a single page that is not chock-full of Eurocentric racial and ethnic stereotypes. I'm not making a joke here; the books may be funny, but "Tintin in the Congo", for instance, could have been written by Kurtz of "Heart of Darkness".

And Asterix isn't a heck of a lot better, we should admit.

terrible person (is going to stick with "Calvin and Hobbes" and "The Fusco Brothers")

Message 79 7/14/98 1:12 PM
Subject: Re(10): I'd finished my pie...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:
However, I would be careful about judging either of these as being typical Tintin products; they were the first two Tintin novels ever created,

but the same sorts of stereotypes (both in appearance and conduct of characters) are found in many of the later books. Think of the African pilgrims who think they are on their way to Mecca but are actually going to be sold as slaves in "The Red Sea Sharks", or the Arabians, either scheming or clueless, in that book or "The Land of Black Gold". South Americans in Tintin are superstitious or politically childish. I don't think Herge's views really advanced a lot in time.

I was reading something today on the Web (glad to forward it, if anyone wants, though it's in French) about how the Thomson twins can actually be distinguished by a subtle difference in the shape of their moustaches. Not something I ever noticed.

I know what it means to work hard on machines.

terrible person (Lies, lies, lies -- yeah!!!)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

> 78

Message 78 7/14/98 1:15 PM
Subject: Re: I'm 30 years old...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Greta Christina writes:

Back in town, with one of my old favorites.

"I'm 30 years old and I have these dreams.

"I dream my knuckleball is jumping aorund like a Ping-Pong ball in the wind and I pitch a two-hit shutout against my old team, the New York Yankees, single home the winning run in the ninth inning and, when the game is over, take a big bow on the mound in Yankee Stadium with 60,000 people cheering wildly. After the game reporters crowd around my locker asking me to explain exactly how I did it. I don't mind telling them."

"Ball Four", by Jim Bouton?

God curse and damn the Yankees to Hell. The Sox have got them right where they want them.

Thinking about the game, the game, the game

terrible person

Message 77 7/14/98 2:02 PM
Subject: Re(2): Airplane notes
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

J.Mark Andrus writes:

No-even better...real-life in-flight re-creations of famous airplane disasters. Bask in the smell of burning oxygen canisters aboard ValuJet Flight 592...glory in the wild gyrations (for a brief minute) as an American Airlines DC-10 loses an engine over Chicago...

Nice idea, J. Mark. (And why not just do them on simulators, that shake a lot but never leave the ground?)But there would be no time to enjoy the split second detonations of Pan Am 103 or TWA 800, or KAL 007 and that Iranian airline the US Navy shot down.

Maybe with the new Titanic they can simulate the sinking of the old one. People are in general more interested in that than in the trip.

The only aerial disaster I'd really pay for would be the Hindenburg.

The humanity! the humanity!!

terrible person (sympathizes with big gasbags)

Message 76 7/14/98 1:59 PM

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

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Subject: more or less bunk
From: terrible person
To: History

so said Henry Ford, the fascist. Who once tried to sue a paper that had called him "ignorant", only to have it come out at the trial that he did not know stuff like what had happened in 1776, etc, etc. Decent cars, though.

This should be a fun conference. However, I think we should have one rule: no flaming permitted, and if one of the intellectual master debaters here thinks he or she has scored a particularly devastating point, gloating will be limited to "You're history!!!"

Hey, it's Bastille Day!! Let's get revolutionary!! (anyone know who was in the Bastille anyway besides DeSade?)

terrible person

Message 71 7/14/98 6:03 PM
Subject: Re(2): more or less bunk
From: terrible person
To: J.Mark Andrus
Copies: History

J.Mark Andrus writes:
Define "flaming".

If you mean posts that contain nothing but personal attacks/threats/insults, sure. Like for any other "politics" conference, "Flushed Very Often" awaits the deposit of such postings. Fortunately, there's been extremely little need for anything to be forcibly moved this way for quite a long time.

The "What's this conference for?" posting at the very bottom of the "Politics" conference (dated 8/4/97) pretty well spells out the posting guidelines, I think.

You're right, of course, Mark. I just brought it up to set up the "You're history" line. I don't think flaming will be a problem here. I mean, history just is not controversial!!!

By the way, thank you very much for setting up this conference.

terrible person

Message 69 7/14/98 9:32 PM
Subject: Re: Early morning pile-up
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Eva Luna writes:
So I was waiting for the bus this morning, noticing the pigeons who were eating crumbs that looked purposely left in the middle of the street.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

are you saying the driver, or an accomplice, had deliberately set up the birds, luring them into the street to be crushed? that's one way of game hunting, if not at that sporting. (like tossing a grenade into a fishpond.)

*A car came cruising down the street and caught one of the pigeons under its wheels. It was horrible enough watching an animal get crushed to death and seeing the carnage that was left once the car was through, but was even worse was the horribly loud *pop* sound the pigeon made under the cars wheels, like the car had run over a plastic bottle with the cap on tight. I've been hearing that horrid pop in my head all day.*

are you sure that's not the weasel?

it could be worse. roadkill pigeon is a lot cheaper than Safeway chicken for dinner, and, I'm told, tastes just like it.

it could be a lot worse. have you ever run over a bird on a bicycle?

when YOU were on the bicycle, that is.

terrible person (has)

Message 68 7/15/98 3:40 PM
Subject: Fenian Rams
From: terrible person
To: History

I have been doing a little research into the life and work of John Holland, the Irish schoolmaster who came to America and in the late 1870's, built the first fully operational submarines. They called them "Fenian Rams", and they were financed by the powerful Irish-American societies of the time, with the idea of liberating Ireland by sinking the British navy. Now, in reality, the various Fenian leaders fell to quarrelling amongst themselves and this, literally, scuttled the submarine program. (Though Holland later built the US Navy's first undersea boats.) But imagine if this had not happened, if Irish revolutionaries had come into possession of a small fleet of attack submarines about 1880. How would they have used them? Would they have raised a revolt in Ireland, and then sunk whatever ships the British sent to resupply the garrison? Would they have sought the alliance of a European power for an assault on England or its other possessions? (I don't think Germany's naval program had really gotten going yet...Perhaps Russia, with whom the British had almost "jingo"istically gone to war in 1878-9?) Would they simply have begun sinking British shipping to force Her Majesty's government to negotiate?

Or, would they have done the simplest thing; since the ships were being built in NY Harbor, attack the British fleet at Halifax, at the same time attempting, as they had done a few years before with little success, to invade Canada with an army of (to a great extent) trained Civil War veterans, and then trade it off for their homeland?

What would YOU have done in the circumstances?

Glory O, Glory O, to the bold Fenian men!

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

BTW, I have been playing with the idea of trying to write a sort of retro-techno-thriller on this topic, because I am sure it would be an instant bestseller...."Green Storm Rising" or somesuch....

terrible person

Message 67 7/15/98 3:18 PM
Subject: Re(3): I'm 30 years old...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Greta Christina writes:

Hey hey hey! Holy Cow! It looks like...it could be...it is! Terry hits one out of the park!

that's funny, I always imagined myself as a junkball-throwing relief pitcher. I guess as long as they don't have that travesty of a D(u)H rule...

*Knew that *someone* else had to know about this book,
Greta*

I have not actually read the book; it happened that in last week's Sunday Times sports section there was a piece by Bouton's son protesting the fact that his father is never invited to Old Timers' Games, since most of the other Old Timers don't are pretty pissed off at Bouton for what he said about them. Supposedly Mickey Mantle, on his deathbed, called Bouton to "make up." I do remember, when I went through my childhood baseball phase, reading an autobiography of Joe Pepitone called "Joe, Ya Coulda Made Us Proud" (not sure of dialectal spelling here.) I may use the title myself eventually, though. Never read Sparky Lyle's "The Bronx Zoo" either.

terrible person

Message 66 7/15/98 3:28 PM
Subject: THE PRISONER WILL STAND.
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

I stood up. For a moment I saw _____ again, sitting on that bench on the pier. The bullet had just struck her in the side of the head; the blood had not even started to flow. The flash from the pistol still lighted her face. Everything was plain as day. She was completely relaxed, was completely comfortable. The impact of the bullet had turned her head a little away from me; I did not have a perfect profile view but I could see enough of her face and her lips to know she was smiling. The Prosecuting Attorney was wrong when he told the jury she died in agony, friendless, alone except for her brutal murderer, out there in that black night on the edge of the Pacific. He was wrong as a man can be. She did not die in agony. She was relaxed and comfortable and she was smiling. It was the first time I had ever seen her smile. How could she have been in agony then? And she wasn't friendless.

I was her very best friend. I was her only friend. So how could she have been friendless?

(caps and italics are my edition's.)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I just finished this. Don't we ALL know someone like this?

Message 65 7/15/98 6:11 PM
Subject: Re(6): dual-use melodies
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

pierre le fou writes:

Have we already mentioned "God Save the Queen" and "My Country Tis of Thee"? I think in the original post, someone did, but maybe not one of "us".

Hieu Tran writes:

And then there's also "My Lady Greensleeves" turned into some kind of Christmas song.

In peter gay's 1763(?) The Beggar's Opera, which is probably more famous today as the basis of the Brecht/Weill "Threepenny Opera" than on its own, most of the songs use popular melodies of the time. The song the highwayman Macheath sings the night before he is set to be executed is to the tune of Greensleeves.

terrible person (isn't sure what he'll sing the night before his execution --

maybe "God's Comic" by Elvis Costello or "I believe" by the Buzzcocks or the slow version of "Wave of Mutilation" by the Pixies or "It's a sin" by the Pet Shop Boys or "Straight to Hell" by the Clash....do you get a last song with your last meal?)

Message 64 7/15/98 7:03 PM
Subject: Re: He's Dead: Was he Guilty?
From: terrible person
To: politics

John Barrymore writes:

My one, and it's a big one, concern with the deathly penalty has always been did we excute the right person? I don't wish to waste my time talking about morality, but I do have a major concern over seeing innocent people legally lynched.

Well, I suppose I have a somewhat different perspective on this, since I am categorically against the death penalty in all cases. It's easy for me; I can say, of course he should not have been executed, since no one should be. I think that the killing (since this would not really be execution, would it?) of a guy who, guess what folks? may very well have been innocent, only helps point up (as the Horace Kelly "sane enough to die?" debate did), the inherent contradictions of this form of "justice".

I know people even in this relatively progressive BBS will take me to task for this. But it's not something I can talk about rationally; it's just a gut feeling, or a sort of religious conviction. I think about people being executed, and I feel violently ill. This is not to say I don't feel ill when I hear about the murders executees have been convicted of committing (or about

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
other murders.) To me, it's all murder.

Emotionally,

terrible person

Message 63 7/15/98 9:44 PM
Subject: Re(2): THE PRISONER WILL STAND.
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Chris A. Hall writes:

I don't have any idea what this is, but from this passage, I wanna read it.

you may well have seen the movie (1969), but I haven't, so I don't know if you can recognize the book from it.

Message 62 7/15/98 9:57 PM
Subject: Re(4): THE PRISONER WILL STAND.
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Elizabeth A. Nolan writes:

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

They do indeed.

Couple No. 59, Elizabeth Nolan and Horace McCoy, win the dance marathon.

Message 59 7/16/98 10:48 AM
Subject: Re(4): surveillance
From: terrible person
To: politics

somehow the system keeps crashing when I try to reply....

I'm not getting this. who is Sgt. ottolin? is he the person to whom you were sending or the alleged governmental intervener?

some of those conspiracy-covertness oriented sites DO get an awful lot of mail, though.

did you try sending something innocuous from another account, to test the reaction then? something like, "hey guys! how's the weather there? awful hot here. hey, would you like my chocolate chip cookie recipe?" if that went through fine, then I guess you would have reason to worry.

very likely missing the point,

terrible person

Message 58 7/16/98 10:30 AM
Subject: Re(8): dual-use melodies
From: terrible person

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: Folk Culture

Hieu Tran writes:

terrible person writes:

In peter gay's 1763(?) The Beggar's Opera

I thought it was John Gay.

You're probably right. I should have put the question mark earlier. (was it at least 1763? 1768?) but isn't Peter Gay someone famous too?

one of them must be the guy for whom Gay St. in Greenwich Village is named.

terrible person

Message 57 (Unsent)

Subject: Re: Good Will Hunting

From: terrible person

To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Johnny Vann writes:

There was one scene where the star wrote this equation or diagram on his mirror. I could swear I remember hearing that there was a scientist or mathematician that used to write problems on glass or a mirror or something and said that then he could "see through the problem" or could "see himself in the problem" or something like that.

my guess is that Gus Van Sant did this not in homage to some real mathematician, but so that the character could look in the mirror (and the camera follow him there) and it would be superimposed on his face (as in the Truman Show) and the audience would see that the real problem was he or in him or something like that. You know, symbolism. But I could be wrong -- I am told that they had mathematical consultants who assured that all the math in the film was real. I suppose in certain kinds of geometry it would be useful to be able to see a mirror image of one's diagram, or in non-commutative equations. I could ask my mathematician ex-roommate in a few weeks when he visits.

terrible person (despises the very idea of that movie)

Message 56 7/16/98 6:18 PM

Subject: Re(8): Airplane notes

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

Big Red writes:

I think a clarification is in order. I have only seen male nerds, self-professed or otherwise, dick around with flight simulator games. It's an opinion whether you have them represent men or a close approximation.

-BR

and it's a pretty clear matter of fact, that while (we) nerds may not enjoy

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the same recreational activities as (you) Cool Judgmental People, we are, like everyone else, definitely human beings and legitimate representatives of whatever gender we happen to identify with.

and it's a matter of suspicion and probability that if one of these flight simulator nerds were on a crippled plane along with you and several hundred other people, the nerd would have a much greater chance of saving everyone's lives than you.

terrible person

Message 55 7/16/98 1:13 PM
Subject: CONSPIRACY THEORY # 1: Shakespeare
From: terrible person
To: History

No, I am not going to talk about the rather silly question of who actually wrote the plays attributed to one William Shakespeare. The truth is in there; the conspiracy is within one of the plays. In Hamlet, the title character is placed by his uncle, the usurping king, on a ship to England, along with Hamlet's old friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are carrying a letter to the King of England directing him to have Hamlet executed at once, thus saving Claudius the trouble and political heat. Hamlet gets wind of this, changes the letter to condemn R and G instead, and, when the ship just happens to be attacked by pirates, leaps off onto the pirate ship and gets away. According to what he tells his friend Horatio, the pirates brought Hamlet back to Denmark and let him go, all on a promise that he would "do a good turn for them." So Hamlet goes on to kill the King, and a popular rival for the throne, get himself killed. But it's OK; the Danes' old enemies, the Norwegians, appear, and they take over.

Now, we are supposed to believe this is all coincidence?

How did the pirates just happen to show up? Why would the pirates return Hamlet? what could he do for them? He was a killer and an exile. And how did the Norwegians know to turn up at the end? We're supposed to believe all this JUST HAPPENED?

I don't think so.

I think it is pretty obvious what has happened. Hamlet has sold out his country in order to get his revenge. Let's examine this: Hamlet asks himself, rather famously, whether he should be or not be. Now, though he does not specifically say what he has concluded, I think it is fairly obvious from his behavior. He has decided that he can only get his revenge at the expense of his own life, and has accepted this. So nothing else matters. Not the throne, not Denmark, just his revenge. Soon after, he tries to kill the King, thinking it is he behind the arras -- only to find out he has killed the King's Minister for State Security. This provokes his exile. As he heads down to the port, he sees the fleet of the Norwegians, who have been allowed free passage through Danish territorial waters and the use of Danish port facilities on their way to attack Poland. (In some movies, the Norwegians are shown as an army, but being as you can't march from Norway to Poland, they must be a fleet.) Then he sends R and G on ahead and gives a big speech. But Shakespeare covers up what he does next: he walks over to the Norwegian fleet and asks to see the guy in charge. That's Fortinbras. Who probably does not

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

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think much of Hamlet, who is a scholar (acting kinda weird lately too) rather than a warrior, and whose father killed Fortinbras' father, thus preventing the Norwegian conquest of Denmark. But Hamlet has a deal for Fortinbras. He says something like, "I have it on good intelligence that all the people in line for the Danish throne are going to be dead rather soon. If you were to show up at the right moment with your forces, the kingdom will be yours for the taking. All I need is for you to send a ship after mine to attack it and get me off and back home." Fortinbras considers and says, you've got yourself a deal.

So there never were any pirates. Just Norwegians. Hamlet was telling the truth about doing them a favor, but lying about for whom. But the Danes should regard Hamlet as a traitor who sold out his country for his personal interests.

This conspiracy has lain hidden for hundreds of years. I want it uncovered, dammit. If anything happens to me, you will know who is responsible.

Has anyone actually read Saxo Grammaticus for the real story of Amlethi? Anything in there to confirm my suspicions?

terrible person (mad North North-west and not going to take it anymore!!)

Message 54 7/16/98 1:13 PM
Subject: CONSPIRACY THEORY #2: Vergil
From: terrible person
To: History

Everyone knows that one of the first things that should make you suspect treason and collusion is when everyone from a military unit gets killed -- except one. Never trust the sole survivor. This rule has been around since rules have been.

Nevertheless, some people think they can get away with this sort of thing.

You all know what I'm talking about, and who. I'm talking about Aeneas, the only survivor from the sack of Troy by the Greeks, who went on to found a city in Italy which produced the founders of Rome, who was thus claimed as an ancestor by the Romans and by the Julio-Claudian emperors in particular.

Let's look at this: a fully armed hero, well-known to the Greeks, carrying his aged father on his back, and leading his son by the hand, followed by his household, makes his way through the streets of the burning city of troy, full of Greeks burning, sacking, raping, and slaughtering whatever they can, meets up with some other survivors, outside, who build a bunch of ships and set sail. And how did they manage this? Divine protection. Oh yeah.

It is obvious that Aeneas had made some deal with the Greeks, which, amazingly, they kept, that they would let him get away in exchange for his help in taking Troy. Now, perhaps he knew Troy was doomed and could do nothing to save it. Or he was more concerned about getting to Italy, pursuing his own destiny. I don't know. But I am suspicious. Add to this that at one point during the sack he disguised himself in Greek armor. And that he was the only witness to the death of Priam. You have to wonder. And then he managed to sail all over the Mediterranean without any Greeks bothering him. And when he finally got to Italy, and the natives called on the greek hero diomedes for help against him, the latter declined. You mean you're not suspicious?

But here is where it get really interesting. The poet Ovid was

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

famously exiled to the Black Sea by Emperor Augustus because of "carmen et error" -- a poem and a mistake, or, by hendiadys, a mistake of a poem. My suspicion is that Ovid, in the course of his mythological researches for his "Metamorphoses" discovered the truth about Aeneas. This was bad, since Augustus' based his legitimacy mainly on having been adopted by Julius Caesar into the Julian family, which claimed descent directly from Aeneas through Aeneas' son Ascanius (aka Iulus.) Augustus could not have this sort of thing, that he was descended from a traitor, bruited about. it would be a disgrace to him and to all of Rome. So he had to get rid of Ovid and discredit him, and give his support to Vergil in his writing of a whitewash of the whole thing, the Aeneid.

I am just so glad that today, government knows it could never get away with this sort of thing.

terrible person (hopes you are as enraged as he is)

Message 53 7/16/98 1:22 PM
Subject: Re(2): Fenian Rams
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

"Fenian Rams," eh? Clever name. You know what a "Steam Paddy" was, don't you?

the name was Holland's, not mine. The first ironclads (the Confederate Virginia, etc.) had reinforced bows for ramming wooden ship and were popularly called "Rams". the "Laird Rams" were super-ironclads built for the confederacy in England, but confiscated by Her majesty's Government under pressure from US Minister Charles Francis Adams. It came to be applied to any newfangled ship, including the various near-submersibles and submersibles built by the south during the civil war. The Fenian Rams were never intended for ramming; Holland had devised a sort of pneumatic gun.

I don't know what a steam paddy is. a steam paddle wheel ship? a steam driven police vehicle (paddy wagon?)

terrible person (getting steamed)

Message 50 7/16/98 9:45 PM
Subject: Re(7): surveillance
From: terrible person
To: politics

Chris A. Hall writes:

there are so many theories about what is actually going on, many of them directly contradictory to one another,

this is the main reason why "conspiracy theories" are interesting to me as possibilities, but I can't really espouse any one of them. To paraphrase the Captain talking to Montag in "Fahrenheit 451", "All your theories say different things." They are not all consistent so some must be wrong. Probably all but one. This is a matter of logic, not governmental brainwashing. Either the Cubans killed Kennedy, or the Mob, or the boys from Bell helicopters, or

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whomever, but not more than one (though two or three might have been working together; I doubt they all were.) sometimes I imagine that actually, everyone really was there in Dallas that day, every conceivable group, in complete ignorance of anyone else's plans. They all thought the assassination was their own unique idea. (Like the two different Judaeen terrorist groups who both tried tokidnap Pilate's wife in "Life of Brian", or the two gangs who show up to rob the same bank in "take the money and run.") and then they all began blazing away at the same time. with the result that no one really knows who actually hit JFK, as when one member of a firing squad's weapon contains a blank, but no one knows whose, in theory. this all becomes very quantum mechanical, or like Gilbert and Sullivan's "the gondoliers". the list of suspects is finite, but there is no way of knowing which is just guilty of attempted murder, and which of murder. it's gone from vague to ambiguous. everyone knows who COULD have done it, but no one can know who actually did it. amazing.

one conspiracy theory is probably right. but it's almost impossible to tell which one.

terrible person (busy conspiring nevertheless)

Message 49 7/16/98 6:13 PM
Subject: Re(6): my car
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

So is there anything worse than people using words that do not exist?
words exist if people use them. the only thing worse than people using words that "do not exist" would be people not being creative enough to make up new words (or being so conservative as to refuse to use the new ones the creative people made up.)

it's called evolution!!! what a concept!

this post has been written entirely using words that at one time, did not exist.

terrible person

Message 45 7/16/98 9:20 PM
Subject: Re(8): surveillance
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

The question then arises, WHO chose to release the Eagleton story to the press that particular day?

I don't know which paper broke the story, but I would not be surprised if it was the Committee for the Reelection of the President (CRP) dirty tricks staff that leaked it. a connection to the U.S. Public Health Service does not seem farfetched. someone knows someone and gives someone a call....

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
Message 44 7/16/98 9:29 PM
Subject: Re(6): surveillance
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:
CAPT JEFFERY T SCHWAGER@S2@CBIRF

(Whoever he is.)

it is my impression that, military officers being public employees, it is possible to find out who and where a lot of them are in publicly accessible databases. especially ones in non-field assignments (as I would imagine this guy is, probably at a desk in the pentagon.) even if his actual work is classified you might be able to get his title. and if they want to know who you are in order to tell you anything, they already know who you are basically I guess. (failing that, just try him in four11.com or similar.)

it would be funny to reverse the information-gathering direction, wouldn't it?

terrible person

Message 42 7/16/98 9:55 PM
Subject: Re(4): Fenian Rams
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:
They were a sort of mechanized earth mover used to fill in the Bay where SOMA now sits. Each could "do the work of forty Irishmen."

but could they drink like even one Irishman? don't think so!

I would love to read a history of urban landfilling in America. most of Boston, for instance, was not put there by nature. anyone have any good landfilling stories?

Message 37 7/17/98 10:40 AM
Subject: Re(10): Airplane notes
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Big Red writes:

What a scary thought:

"Ummm....excuse me, I know the pilot and co-pilot are dead...but I have 8,000 hours of experience with Microsoft Flight Simulator..."

Yeah that would sure instill confidence in the remaining crew to let the guy into the cockpit to then say,

"Gee...this isn't like the \$50 flightstick I use at home..."

I think the people would be sticking their head between their less to kiss

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their asses goodbye at that point.

Dead is dead, even if the nerd gave you a 1% better chance of survival and still become part of the debris.

even a one percent better chance means that one one out of every hundred crippled airplanes, hundreds of lives could be saved. that's a lot better than certain death.

I just hope that in such an event, you would allow your fellow passengers, who unlike you might be willing to admit that a nerd might do some good, the option of taking the only chance left to them. and if the nerd succeeded, I wouldn't expect YOU to thank him, but I hope you would accord the other passengers the right to do so.

terrible person

Message 36 7/17/98 6:45 AM
Subject: Re(5): He's Dead: Was he Guilty?
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

What if the jury that declared a prisoner must die ALSO had to pull the triggers?

now that would be scary, and cruel and unusual punishment; it would be torture to give a bunch of ordinary citizens guns and having them blaze away with little chance of hitting anything vital for hours -- unless the rifles were mounted in preaimed racks or the shooters were very, very close to the prisoner. if (or when) I am executed, I want it to be, as with Gary Gilmore, by trained and certified (and angry volunteer) marksmen who would do it right the first time. If I'm going to be martyred, I don't want it to be like St. Sebastian. (Though crucifixion, of course, has a certain appeal.) As Bryan Brown shouts at the end of "Breaker Morant", "Shoot straight, you bastards!"

terrible person (always lives every day as if it's going to be his last, because someday, he'll be right)

Message 35 7/17/98 6:55 AM
Subject: Re(2): CONSPIRACY THEORY # 1: Shakespeare
From: terrible person
To: History

Ron Morgan writes:

They had to borrow a king from the Swedish royal line, as they had none of their own,

actually, I am pretty sure the king they borrowed was Danish. (he changed to a Norwegian name though.) and of course, the Swedish royal family are not really Swedish, but French, descended from Napoleon's general Count Bernadotte (the Swedes invited him in so that Napoleon would leave them alone; later he turned on his old commander when that was the way the windd was blowing.)

I was actually more interested in the Viking and medieval days. How are you on your Harald Bluehairs and Redfeets and Hairtooths or whatever, Ron?

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I've got the Norwegian blues. They stun easily.

terrible person

Message 34 7/17/98 7:07 AM
Subject: Re(9): surveillance
From: terrible person
To: politics

Chris A. Hall writes:

And then there's the other, more likely idea: that Oswald was a lone nut with no one at all backing him.

call me a nut (like you don't already) but I have come to believe that Joseph P. Kennedy had his own son knocked off. He would certainly have had the means; plenty of underworld contacts from his bootlegging days, and the money to pay an assassin or two. As for motive, I think he got wind of JFK's fooling around and though he did not object on principle, he was afraid of public disgrace and private blackmail. He warned JFK to keep his pants zipped while in office but JFK wouldn't. Joe felt betrayed, disrespected as father and elder statesman, and remember his motto: "don't et mad, get even." He had also figured that JFK's back (which WAS injured tripping in the nursery, wasn't it?) would limit his activities or his aDDison's disease might kill him early anyway. Remember that JFK was not supposed to have become President; the Crown Prince had always been Joe Jr., who died in WWII. I think Joe Sr. got sick of

Jack, and decided that it was Bobby's turn. Having JFK go down in scandal would hurt Bobby; having him go down a still-beloved martyr would help Bobby.

Now, whether Oswald and Ruby were at all involved, or whether the actually killing was handled by other gunman, I can't be sure. But I know who paid them.

I would be surprised if I am the first to suggest this; has anyone seen anything about it before?

terrible person (wouldn't use Nair because he likes Occam's razor too much)

Message 33 7/17/98 7:13 AM
Subject: Re(2): My vacillating crush on...
From: terrible person
To: Crushes on Greatness

Karin Shaw writes:

If you like Lara Flynn Boyle, make sure you check out "After Glow" when it's out on video.

she was also in another alan rudolph film, "Equinox". Again, quiet and cool and serious as matthew modine's nice-girl-friend.

I would like to see her smile more, and not in that pained, reluctant manner.

Message 31 7/17/98 10:30 AM
Subject: Re(4): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person

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To: It's a le fou World

a possibly stupid question in reply:

Nair is intended to last several days, right? longer than shaving?

can it even have a permanent effect? (would that just be a freak accident?)

because I think that even men who hate to shave would freak if they thought they could never grow a beard. in adolescence, that first stubble is a sign of developing manliness. Steve says it's nice to have stubble to remind you it's the weekend, and that's true (or that you are on a LONG vacation), or that you are lapsing into barbarism. (not etymologically connected.) but look, when you see pictures of RuPaul out of drag, he's always got stubble. so men associate the need to shave -- in both the senses, the need to remove hair from face and the need to do it with a sharp dangerous object -- which involves danger and skill -- with manliness, while nair is seen as something women use on their legs.

terrible person (when I want to get rid of unwanted hair, I just hang around radioactive materials for a while)

Message 28 7/17/98 6:17 PM
Subject: Re(4): He's Dead: Was he Guilty?
From: terrible person
To: politics

Jabari Adisa writes:

I don't know the mechanics of Electrocutation or Lethal Injection, but I suspect that some of the above (guaranteed doubt and anonymity) is employed in those techniques as well.

in one report on lethal injection (can't remember what state; maybe Calif., maybe Texas, the capital thereof), the Warden and the Vice-Warden (or whatever he is called) both pressed buttons at the same time, and the gizmo was rigged so that only one of them actually triggered the release of the drugs but neither of the button men knew which. but I totally agree with Jabari. although executioners have traditionally been masked, in some places, guillotineur or hangman was an important job, one of pride. I don't see what the executioners are afraid of, if they believe so strongly in the righteousness of the death penalty and the guilt of the executee. especially when there is so much support for the death penalty. you'd think they'd be heroes, people would ask for their autographs, and they'd love that.

terrible person

Message 27 7/17/98 6:33 PM
Subject: Re(4): CONSPIRACY THEORY # 1: Shakespeare
From: terrible person
To: History

Jabari Adisa writes:

Supposedly, evidence of this is in the 46 Psalm. Count 46 words in from the beginning and you will find the word "shake." Count 46 words in from the end

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and you will find the word "spear."

um, so, why psalm # 46? I mean, if you look at enough psalms, you are sure to find a coincidence like this somewhere. or probably. hey, what do I know?

this is similar to the debate over the book "The bible code", which claims that by counting every nth letter in the hebrew texts, (say, the 70th, 140th, 210th, 280th, from the beginning of a book or some key word) you can find all sorts of predictions of things that have already happened, and therefore, find predictions of those that will. the problem is, you can do the same thing with any book, such as "Moby Dick". Which may be prophetic, but no one claims God wrote it. and you can, using the same counting methods, find in the bible all sorts of other things you really don't think God was trying to tell us. things are worth noting when you have a not otherwise explicable low-probability co-occurrence of events. then you have to assume a connection. but I don't see the mathematics making this so unlikely that there must be a connection.

I think I'll take the same approach to this as to any other "connection" or "not-coincidence" theory (I prefer those terms to the now-pejorative "conspiracy theory".) I'm not going to rule it out. it could be. even if it seems unlikely, there are a lot of unlikely things that happen. (nothing is impossible, but most things are wildly improbable; omnia fieri possunt, sed fiunt perpauca.) it's interesting and it makes me think. I guess I just need more data to confirm it (rather than some other theory, for instance, which at present may seem equally likely. the other theory could be that there is some other connection, or no connection at all, a true coincidence.)

Which is why I don't mind it when nessie propounds some new theory, crazy though it may seem. I just mind when he asserts it is the only possible one, and that anyone who disagrees is stupid or evil. I think a truly open mind is open on all sides, at least for a while.

terrible person

Message 26 7/17/98 6:34 PM
Subject: great protest demonstrations
From: terrible person
To: History

It occurred to me a few years ago as I participated in a reenactment of the Boston Tea Party how goofy the whole thing was -- not the reenactment so much (they are all goofy) as the original. After all, it was so obvious. I mean, come on. Dressing up like Indians? In Boston? But that was what was so great about it; since on the one hand it was so silly, and on the other there was absolutely nothing that could be done, ("No, Mr. Redcoat, I didn't see Mr. Adams or Mr. Revere there! All I saw was Injuns!! Are ya gonna do sumpin' about these savages with those troops o' yourn or just march around botherin' us Bostonians?")

So I have decided that a really, really good protest is like the Tea Party. No one gets hurt; some property may get destroyed but that's just money; but the target looks really silly, suffering damage in credibility more than anything else. (The protesters may look silly too, but they are doing so by choice so it's different. Also, ideally, the protesters have fun.) I am trying to think of other protests that meet this definition. One would be the Defenestration of Prague, in 1618, when the good (Protestant) people the bohemian capital tossed the representatives of the (Catholic) Emperor out of a window into a dungheap several stories below. Of course, this led to the

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Thirty Years War, so maybe it's not so funny. Maybe it's just the name.

Critical Mass does fulfill these criteria to some extent, too. But can anyone think of any others?

Message 25 7/17/98 6:36 PM
Subject: CONNECTION THEORY # 3: Homer
From: terrible person
To: History

Supposedly Odysseus spent ten years getting home from Troy. Ten years to travel a distance you could walk in a few months. Seven years with some watery tart on an island. A trip to the ends of the earth to call up spirits from the underworld. Yeah. Right.

Throughout the Iliad, it is apparent that Odysseus, being by far the cleverest of the Greeks and the best in speaking, is entrusted with every mission of a covert or espionage nature. He disguises himself to sneak into Troy, for instance. He puts together raids behind enemy lines. He devises the Horse and the disinformation plant to make the Trojans take it in. He is Homer's Wild Bill Donovan.

So I think it is quite obvious where he really was during the ten years it supposedly took him to get home: on some covert mission in whose cover-up Homer has been involved. So that's what they said when they said the poet was "blind". More like, turning a blind eye.

Now, the question is, what was he really doing? I have a theory on this too.

The fall of Troy is traditionally placed in 1186 BC; the stratum of the archaeological excavation of "Troy" that matches this date is not terribly impressive, but still. This date corresponds to a general collapse and crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean, which included destruction of Mycenaean civilization in Greece (and the start of the Dorian invasions) and four hundred years of "Dark Ages" when even writing was lost, the Exodus and invasion of Palestine by the Israelites, and attacks on Egypt and other countries by the mysterious "Peoples of the Sea". (These may have been Greeks; for instance, in the Odyssey, Menelaus reports that when he left Troy, he was driven by the winds to Egypt and not well received.) It also marked the collapse of the mighty Hittite Empire in Asia Minor. And the Hittites are really interesting.

The Hittites, besides having left the earliest written records of an Indo-European language, having fought back and forth with the Egyptians for possession of Syria and Palestine, are important in two other ways. First of all, they appear to have been in contact with their neighbors in Troy. (Look at a map. Troy is over there by the Dardanelles. The Hittites were centered near modern Ankara but spread far and wide. See how close everyone is? Well, as my high school Russian teacher used to say, they noticed this too.) In Hittite documents are names of quite a few of the places and people appearing in the Homeric poems. So we know they were interested.

The other interesting thing about the Hittites is that they had a secret technological edge on everyone. There was this dark grey metal which as far as most people of the time knew was only found in rocks that fell from the sky. It was as rare as gold and it was awfully hard to work so most peoples just used it for ceremonial stuff. They scoffed at its use the way people scoffed at the prospect of an "atomic weapon", or of a rocket that could fly, say, from Peenemunde to London. But the Hittites figured out how to make things out of it, like weapons that were harder and sharper than the bronze

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stuff that everyone else was using. (This being the Bronze Age.) In fact, consider this: in some traditions (though not in Homer), the warrior Achilles is invulnerable to weapons (except at his heel. which heel, I am not sure.) Paris (aka Alexander) shoots him there with a poisoned arrow and kills him. But what if this story is just a misinterpretation caused by lack of understanding? What if Achilles was simply invulnerable to BRONZE -- and since all weapons were made of bronze, people assumed this meant totally invulnerable? Perhaps he was simply so much bigger and stronger than everyone else -- no magic there -- that he could wear thicker and more complete armor than others and this made him "invulnerable." But what if the Hittites were secretly supplying the Trojans with iron weapons, the way the US secretly supplied the Afghan Mujahedeen with Stinger antiaircraft missiles, and Achilles' armor could not guard against this? (In fact, Hittite supplies probably were what allowed the Trojans to hold out for 10 years.)

Imagine how the Greeks would have felt. Their best warrior is mysteriously killed. They want to find out what kind of weapon did it and who supplied it. And then they want revenge. So they send Odysseus, of course. And he spends the next ten years tracking the weapon, and its source. And when he realizes who is involved, it's time to take the Hittites down.

Now, no one knows what really happened to the Hittites. Earthquakes are at least partly to blame. But another reason given is raids by -- the Peoples of the Sea. Who, as I have said, may well have been Greeks, naturally expanding or fleeing the Dorian invasions.

I see Odysseus, in the prow of a long boat, bearing down on the coast of Asia Minor at night, the lights of the watchfires of some Hittite town glinting off his and his men's armor (unless they have rubbed it with soot for disguise.) Weapons check. Sheaves of arrows are slipped into quivers and clicked into place. Daggers are sharpened. "Anyone have wine? Drink it if you got it." The boat hits the sand and the men pile out into the surf, Odysseus saying, "Go, go, go..." and....

"Let's do this for Achilles."

I think that's a better story than Calypso any day.

This is my third techno-thriller idea that no one had better steal.

Message 24 7/17/98 6:45 PM
Subject: Re(8): surveillance
From: terrible person
To: politics

Jabari Adisa writes:

Did you hear a few weeks ago when the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee heard testimony from the actual Scientists of Apartheid that they had, in fact, attempted to develop bacteria and vira that would eliminate Black people and leave white people unharmed. You did hear that right?

I heard that. But I wondered what the South African government must have been thinking. I thought that their economy depended on maintaining a large Black population in a state of servitude as a pool of cheap, exploitable, labor, doing the jobs the Whites would not want to do.

Simple explanation: racism is by nature irrational.

Message 23 7/17/98 8:43 PM
Subject: Re(11): surveillance
From: terrible person

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To: History

nessie writes:

(I suggest we move this to <history> where it really belongs.)

I'll keep it in both places; there is both past history and current politics herein (one can never quite separate the two, but in this case, even less.)

Then I suggest you read the Warren Committee testimony. Lawyer and Wall Street banker McCoy was the man who designed the Pentagon building

I just happen to have the World Book Encyclopedia Book of the Year for 1965, which contains the summary and conclusions of the Warren Report. (no author given; just "prepared under the chairmanship of Chief Justice Earl Warren"). One thing struck me: the posed picture of the Commission members. It appears to have been taken at a Veterans of Foreign Wars meeting; there is a VFW flag behind, and pictures of LBJ, JFK, and someone in an overseas hat whom I assume to have been the VFW commandant of the time but who looks a lot like Curtis LeMay. The members are Rep. Gerald Ford (who went on to pardon Nixon and hit his head), Rep. Hale Boggs (father of ABC and NPR's Cokie Roberts), Civil Rights Act opponent Sen. Richard Russell, Warren, Sen. John Sherman Cooper (don't know anything about him), former Defense Department official and Eastern Establishment Elder John McCloy, [presumably that's who you mean by "McCoy"], former CIA head Allen Dulles, and Counsel Lee Rankin. (Didn't he go on to other things? And wasn't another counsel, and the deviser of the "Single-bullet theory", present-day Senator Arlen Specter?)

Also, I thought it was Leslie Groves of the Corps of Engineers who built the Pentagon, before he went on to command the Manhattan Engineer District, or Project Y, to build atomic weapons.

and grew very tight with the White Russian community there

do you mean Russian emigre ("White" as opposed to "Red" from the 1919-21 Civil War) or Byelorussian?

the police did what they were supposed to do and ran straight for the Book Depository.

Whenever I go past a library and they have one of those metal contraptions for people to drop books after hours, I look for Oswald.

Operation Overcast.

we definitely had better operational names then; none of this "Desert Storm" or "Just Cause" or "Determined Falcon". I guess the secret operations still have names that are designed for impenetrability; the public relations exercises have the stupid ones.

When he got to the area, General Thurston, who was in charge of the military take over in that sector followed through with the arrangements to have him and several other scientists arrested and brought to the US as part of something called Operation Paperclip.

I believe that when the Red Army was closing in, Von Braun asked his team whom

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they would rather surrender to and work for. When most, predictably -- this wasn't rocket science, after all, chose the USA, I believe he led 117 or so rocket scientists (not just several) on a trek to meet the advancing americans. They all got citizenship and nice jobs at the Redstone Arsenal in Alabama. "Gather round while I sing you of Werner Von Braun/ A man whose allegiance is ruled by expedience...." (Tom Lehrer) When my father wrote Von Braun's obituary for a major national newsmagazine, he was crestfallen that the Editor would not let him quote that.

, a fellow named Clay Shaw, whom you may recall from Stone's movie.

there is a Representative Clay Shaw (R-Fla.) who had a lot to say and do with Welfare "Reform". Is he any relation?

Personally, I prefer to apply Redmond's Rule. "Once is hapstance. Twice is coincidence. Three times is enemy action."

this is also used by archvillain Auric Goldfinger in the Ian Fleming novel. Ian Fleming's connections to British intelligence and the CIA are well known.

I still would like to see the Joe Sr. angle explored more. I think it holds up and explains a lot. People who say that Joe would never have had his son killed to avoid disgrace forget that he had his daughter lobotomized and put away for the same reason. And remember, it was Joe who would have ended up paying the bills for hush money for all the Presidential girlfriends. Remember that only months before, in June 1963, the Profumo/Keeler sex scandal (see the movie) had forced the resignation of the British Defense Minister and probably helped lead to the resignation of the PM a few months later. Joe did not want to see that in the US. It would help explain why the documents have been and will be sealed so long; the Kennedies have a long reach, and can claim they just want to "protect the family". Probably the Kennedies of the time all knew, and the documents will only be released when they are gone (and can't be prosecuted as accessories.) And if the Kennedies know, it might explain why they keep screwing their lives up. How could they go on knowing what really happened?

The big question is whether RFK was involved, or knew. He could be pretty ruthless and even act outside the law (as when he sicced the FBI on Martin Luther King.) I think he might have gone along if he had seen the assassination as necessary and inevitable, and could rationalize to himself that it would further their shared policy goals. I imagine that he felt fairly confident about becoming President himself; his father had bought the election for JFK and had plenty left to do it for Bobby. And he was glad to be out of his brother's shadow; had JFK been reelected, it would have been harder to sell the idea of another Kennedy so soon.

Oswald's communist past still makes him the perfect red-herring patsy in this theory . those who weresupposed to be scared -- the Kennedy boys who were making the mistake of thinking themselves more important than the father who made them what they were -- knew who was responsible. the killing could not really be done privately, due to limited access to the well-guarded president (Joe couldn't just shoot him in the white house like the guy in that Gene hackman/Clint Eastwood movie) but if done in public, it had to be done surgically. hence, Dallas.

As for Rose and Jackie, I don't know. Maybe Rose knew; I doubt Jackie did or they would never have let her marry Onassis.

has anyone found any flaw in this yet? because I am starting to believe it

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myself.

terrible person

Message 20 7/17/98 10:52 PM
Subject: Re: So terri, you're the
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

classicist; care to discuss the parallels between the Kennedy brothers and the Gracchi brothers?

I would be glad to, Mr. Ness (hey, Mr. Ness, as soon as I write this, can we go raid Al Capone's speakeasy?) I think you might be a little disappointed though. Basically, the parallels of the Kennedies and the Gracchi are not that strong. I will however suggest what I think is a better Roman parallel of the Kennedies, but that will come below. And in describing the Gracchi, I will try to play up the Kennedy connections. But a lot of them will be a little strained, kind of like the Lincoln/Kennedy connections you sometimes hear about. (e.g., Kennedy was killed in a Lincoln, made by Ford; Lincoln in Ford's Theatre.) I'll try to keep them relevant.

(For those of you following along at home, my main source is Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, a pretty standard text. Livy wrote about the Gracchi, too, since he covered everything, but like 75% of his work, those books are lost.)

The Gracchi, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus and Gaius Sempronius Gracchus, came from a distinguished Roman family. (They were not patricians, just as the Kennedies were not Mayflower Brahmins, but they had been in the forefront of things longer than the Kennedies had.) Their father was a very successful general, consul not once but twice, a man with a lot of connections. (That's better than Ambassador to the Court of St. James, I think.) Through their mother they were grandsons of the hero of the Second Punic War, Scipio Africanus. Tiberius, the older brother, distinguished himself at the taking of Carthage in 146 bce, though his reputation was somewhat tarnished during his later service in Spain. As he went into public life, Rome was in a sort of crisis: after over a century of war, it found itself master of the mediterranean area, but economically disrupted. The biggest problem was that the countryside had become depopulated; instead of lots of small farms run by citizen-soldiers, there were more and more huge estates worked by slaves (who sometimes rebelled, which got nasty.) Gracchus was elected tribune (there is no comparable office in our system. Tribunes guarded the rights of the people from encroachment by the Senate; they had the right of *intercessio*, or veto, and could promote legislation themselves. Their persons were sacrosanct, inviolate, immune. His power was roughly comparable to that of a chairman of an important congressional committee, actually.) In 133 bce he proposed a rather moderate land reform program (which would, however, have greatly increased his own popularity as well.)

OK, now, Roman government was REALLY complicated. There were several different assemblies for passing laws, and the Senate's resolutions either had the force of law (the way Executive Orders do) or at least a lot of influence. The Romans did not have a written constitution but went by sometimes contradictory precedents. So when Tiberius tried to get his law passed without the prior consent of the Senate (even though he might well have gotten that

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consent), it was not clear if he was doing anything illegal. But (certain elements of) the Senate certainly thought so, so they got another of the ten tribunes to veto the reform plan. So Tiberius got this other tribune voted out of office and passed his plan. He then tried to bypass the Senate again in the matter of what to do with a large amount of money that had been left to Rome by a Minor Asian king. Then, to insure the implementation of his land plan, and safeguard himself, he wanted to run for a second consecutive term as tribune. Again, it was not quite clear whether he could do this; it wasn't clear that he couldn't, either, though no one had. At this point, his Senate opponents got scared, deciding he was a demagogue who might change things too much. (The Romans, unlike the Athenians, were DEEPLY conservative, slaves to precedent.) So a bunch of Senators marched over to the Assembly and lynched Tiberius and several hundred followers, with sort of witch hunt against the survivors. So much for legality.

So, not that much connection to JFK. Sorry. I would have loved to tell you that while TSG was riding in an open chariot in a triumphal parade in the southern Italian city of Capua when suddenly the twang of bowstring rang out and within six seconds a lone archer placed in a nearby scroll and tablet depository had put three arrows into the tribune (including one that went straight through him and the local prefect riding in the chariot with him).....but, well, for some reason I don't think you would have believed me.

On to Gaius. As a speaker, he was unstoppable. Diana Bowder, in "Who's Who in the Roman World", says "his brief career was motivated by a desire to avenge Tiberius and sustain his political achievements." But Cary and Scullard say, "he was a man of wider imagination and of deeper passions than his brother." So whether he was the real innovator, as they say RFK was in comparison to Jack, or just a copy, second string, a Rajiv Gandhi, is arguable. He did propose a lot more legislation though, and gain more power than his brother, unlike RFK.

He was in his early 20's when his brother died but already serving on the three-man commission that was implementing the land reform. (Not quite attorney general.) He did serve as a provincial administrator though. He soon got involved in one of the big issues of the day: civil rights. Over the years, the Romans had conquered all the other peoples of Italy and tentatively begun extending to them the rights of Roman citizens, but only tentatively. Roman politics was very personal, like Chicago ward politics; you got people's votes by doing personal favors for them, so The Powers That Were (as we say in Latin, *Vires Quae Erant*) wanted to keep the electorate small and limited to people already in their debt. Hearing him speak on the issue, the VQE immediately began to try to discredit him, but he got elected tribune (from a state in which he actually lived, too) in 123, and reelected unopposed (I guess they had decided it was all right) the next year. (Basically all Roman magistrates had one-year terms.)

While he was tribune, he was like Huey Long or FDR at the start; he could do anything. His program was as far-reaching as the New Deal or the Great Society and touched every aspect of life. He set up road building programs to give employment and help bring the produce, and the voters, of the newly established farms to Rome. (Remember, Rome was a direct, not a representative democracy; to take part in the assembly you actually had to go to Rome yourself.) He got new settlements established outside Rome. He introduced welfare, by having the state buy and store grain and sell it at a guaranteed low price. (Of course, this all got expensive, and thus, he ended up squeezing the provinces for tax money more than an idealist would have.) He also reformed politics by limiting Senatorial power, such as taking away the right of the Senate to try provincial officials accused of extortion (who were

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usually members of the Senate. Remember, the Senate was more like the House of Lords than the US Senate; you entered it by birth or previous officeholding, not by any sort of election. It was not an office, but more an ex-officio class of people from which certain officers were drawn.) But when he tried to extend citizenship to all Italians, he got into trouble. He thought that by his other reforms he had built up enough "gratia" (personal popularity and loyalty) among the people to pass anything. But it did not work out that way.

The Senators got another tribune to siphon off GSG's popularity by proposing a program that was similar, but did not go as far in some respects, and promised much further in respects that the proposer had no intention or means of realizing. He then vetoed the Gracchus Bill, knowing Gaius did not have the support to vote him out the way Tiberius had ousted the tribune who had opposed land reform. Gracchus' enemies then spread discrediting rumors about him, such as that he had had numerous affairs with Vestal Virgins and been involved in shady land deals (ok, I made that part up. They did spread rumors though.) He lost the next election for tribune, which meant not only that he lost power, but that he lost his immunity/personal inviolability/untouchability. So he hired bodyguards, and there were incidents, and a slave of a consul got killed. This gave the Senate the pretext to pass what is called *Senatus Consultum Ultimum*, or Final Decree of the Senate, which I refer to as the Life During Wartime Act because it basically says "This ain't no party, this ain't no disco, this ain't no fooling around." It's basically a declaration of martial law or state of emergency; the latin text reads simply "dent operam consules ne quid detrimenti res publica capiat." "let the consuls see to it that the republic suffer no harm." In short, the consuls could do virtually anything they liked, kill anyone they wanted, to "protect the country." (The subsequent events are mentioned early in Cicero's First Catilinarian.) The Senatorial forces marched against the Gracchans; they tried to hold out, and were overwhelmed and killed, and there was a purge of thousands of their sympathizers. End of Gracchans. A few of their reforms had, however taken root, and they definitely, by creating an opposition of a popular and conservative faction, drew the battle lines for the next century of Roman politics and civil wars.

So I would not say that Gaius, the younger brother, was like Robert Kennedy; perhaps more like John. But in all, his story is more like that of the Prague Spring, or maybe the Congo 1963, Guatemala 1954, Chile 1973, or even Odessa 1905, Beijing 1989..... Maybe if RFK had been elected with a strong majority, but he had been stymied on peace and civil rights by military-owned and Southern conservative senior committee chairmen, till rioting had broken out in DC.....But I don't think we have ever had anything quite like the Gracchi in this country (though I would love to hear possible candidates.)

I think a better parallel for the Kennedies in ancient Rome is the Julio-Claudian family under the first few emperors. (As portrayed in "I, Claudius", for example.) There is a strong founder of the dynasty, Augustus, or Joe Kennedy. Now, Augustus had no sons, but he had various male relatives who were poised to succeed him and then.....mysteriously and tragically died, or were disgraced (e.g., Agrippa Postumus.) In the end, the only one to become Emperor was Claudius, who spent most of his time drinking and marrying women much younger than he. (Teddy?) Germanicus, Claudius' brother, has some resemblance to JFK; a military hero, he was supposedly poisoned by Emperor Tiberius who saw him as a threat. (His son became the Emperor Caligula; like John Jr., he grew up in the public eye, and was well-loved for both his father's and his own sake, but though handsome, was crazy. Ok, crazy, stupid, same thing.) Robert Graves explains it all as due to the actions of the

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Empress Livia trying to promote the accession of her son by a previous marriage, Tiberius, by killing off anyone who stood in his way. Or if we see Augustus as Eisenhower (the general reigning over a "golden age"), and the Kennedys are the heirs to Augustus, then Tiberius has certain similarities to Richard Nixon, who eventually became President when we were out of Kennedys. (To LBJ as well.) Although Nixon would never be accused of sharing Tiberius' odd sexual fetishes (I'll leave them out; this is not Pervert Town), like him he was grim, humorless, hard-drinking, paranoid. He presided over treason trials of for anyone who opposed him in the slightest, with the assistance of his chief of staff/ captain of the guard, Haldemannus. (ok, Sejanus.) He was very devoted to his (first) wife (his mom made him divorce her to marry the Emperor's daughter and this made him hate everyone.) He inherited a long distant war in Germany and brought it to a sort of close. Though he got involved in others. He was a reasonably competent administrator at least at the start, before power drove him nuts. I think the best analogy of Kennedys to Julio-Claudians is that eventually, the later generations of the family become such a pathetic pale shadow of the previous generations that they just petered out with crazy Nero and more competent people took over.

Incidentally, I don't dislike the Kennedys; this is mainly a reaction against my immersion in Massachusetts Kennedy-worship.

proud to be the classicist (and, I hope, the classiest),

terrible person

Message 18 7/17/98 11:03 PM
Subject: Re(10): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

(which I do fairly often, being unable to concentrate on anything as incredibly dull as shaving)

if your shaving is dull, maybe that is why it is so cumbersome and painful.

you'd think that if Nair's fumes are so nasty, the Ramones would have a song about sniffing them. Come to think of it, they're all clean shaven. maybe it's not shaven.

Message 17 7/18/98 12:26 AM
Subject: Re: Oliver Stone's "Titanic"
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

There was a second iceberg.

8^)

nessie, how can you be so friggin' naive as to buy that? do you realize how many important people were on board? someone must have wanted at least one of them dead!

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the Titanic was built in Belfast, for chrissakes! In 1912! Irish revolutionaries, or Loyalists, would have had ample time to slip a bomb on board!

either that, or it was German U-boaters practicing for the Lusitania.

you can't put on over on

terrible person

Message 16 7/18/98 12:30 AM
Subject: Re: Warren Freeway
From: terrible person
To: History

and I bet you can't guess for whom the Public Health building at UC Berkeley, where they have all the infectious disease labs, is named.

they like to name things after governors, you see. pat brown has a snack bar.

at least Ronald Reagan's not there.

yet.

give ward connerly some time.

Message 15 7/18/98 10:02 PM
Subject: Re: Muwatalis versus Ramses II at Kadesh (was something or other)
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

While today we remember Herodotus as a historian, in his day he was an olive oil salesman. The Black Sea coast was his territory. He was reporting his own eye witness account.

Well, Herodotus said a lot of things we can't take too seriously. it's always funny to see him dismiss something as unlikely or impossible, only in the next paragraph to find some howler entirely credible. Maybe of that. he was well travelled, but an awful lot of his tales begin "I have heard that....".

We have no reason to doubt there were Africans living in what is now the Ukraine in the fifth century BCE.

Do you mean Black (subsaharan) Africans? Remember that the range of the Greeks (and Romans') knowledge of Africa (and the application of their geographic term Africa) did not extend past the desert. For Black Africans, they would probably have said Aethiopians, though of course the actual Aethiopians are Hamitic and unrelated to other Africans.

Palestine was then known as Canaan. The Peleset, one of the "Peoples of the Sea" gave it its modern name.

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These folks gave the Israelites a bunch of trouble as the Philistines.

(Artists too. But don't tell Yasir Arafat that -- his people still proudly use the name.)

The word "Aryan" is supposedly derived from the Sanskrit "maryunya" which means "chariot driver." I note, however, that it also puns twice. In Indo-European it could be taken for "Son of Ares." "Ari" is Semitic for "lion."

Um, I sat for a few years at the elbow of two of the world's highest powered Indo-Europeanists, and they were never able to give any sort of etymology for the term often used for the people in question. The best they were able to say is that Aryan is related not only to "Iran" (close enough to India) but very likely to "Eire", way out there on the other side of the Indo-European geographical range. This often happens, that similar forms are found only on the extremes; this means they are the oldest forms, which, when innovation came from the center and spread outwards but never made it to the edges, stayed the same. Also, Ares is not found in other I-E languages as far as I know; it seems to have been a pre i-E name which the Greeks picked up.

They didn't breed horses (not enough pasturage for it in Egypt) but instead imported their horses.

I've heard it theorized that the pre-Indo-European peoples of Europe did not know horses. When the invaders arrived riding them, the natives (like the pre-Spanish inhabitants of the Americas) could not figure out the relationship of man and beast -- and invented the myth of centaurs.

What we think of as the Trojan War was but a single theater of this far greater war that raged all around it.

In the same spirit, I usually use the term World War III to refer to the entire conflict waged between the United States and its allies against the Soviet Union and its from the mid-40's to the late 80's, fought on innumerable fronts.

Another bunch are called "Danu" which brings to mind the Tuatha.

Which brings to mind nothing for me. Who were these folks?

I'm fairly loaded,

Just keep the safety on.

They sure look like they're wearing first century BCE Numidian cavalry helmets, don't they?

Welll.....come on. There aren't THAT many ways to fashion leather and metal into a protective head covering. (also, a quick check of my usual sources doesn't turn up any pictures of Numidians wearing anything particularly distinctive on their heads. I always thought they travelled pretty light....what do you consider a Numidian helmet?)

I was talking to the Mormon missionary dudes the other day. I sometimes like talking to them when I have a question, though I hate it when they come up to me. You know how the basis of their religion is that ancient Israelites (from the time of the prophet Jeremiah) sailed to the New World. Now I thought they

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might be interested in the fact that it is pretty well established that Phoenicians (just north of the Israelites) sailed out past the pillars of Hercules at least as far as the hump of Africa and the gulf of guinea, and very likely circumnavigated Africa completely. Now, if you are off the hump of Africa, you hit the trade winds, which blow year round and take you straight to Brazil. (You don't need a weatherman to know this, as the song says.) Well, the Mormons thought this was fairly interesting, I guess, and so will you, I hope.

terrible person

Message 8 7/18/98 11:59 AM
Subject: Re(11): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Eva Luna writes:

I took a nasty spill (to which no one on the street even stopped to inquire if I was ok, assholes) and scrapped up my knee. Upon applicatioon of first aid I noticed I had MISSED a spot of hair right above said knee. But because said knee is all scraped up now, I don't dare Nair, as I know it would sting, and is probably a bad idea anyway. So now I have an icky, and hairy, scrape to show off to the world.

concerning the effects on shaven legs of falls and scrapes:

you may know that bicycle racers (or serious riders) often shave their legs. This was portrayed rather amusingly, for instance, in the 1979 film "Breaking Away", done by the main character played by Dennis Christopher, called "David Stohler" (now, I ask you, what kind of a name is that for a guy who rides a bicycle and was, according to his confession, Treasurer of the Latin Club in high school? *I* would never believe it.) Now, there are various reasons for this practice. Or rather, various reasons GIVEN for this practice by its practitioners. There is a (very small) aerodynamic benefit to shaven legs. Hairless legs can be more comfortably rubbed down before or after a ride by the team's or individual rider's masseur (-se.) The time-consuming act of shaving, and its rather (at least on men) eye-catching and eyebrow-raising effects, show to oneself and the world one's commitment to the sport, almost like a gang or tribal tattoo. But there is one other reason, which is perhaps the most important, because it is the most practical. At some point, sometimes at several, a cyclist suffers a bad high-speed wipeout and slides on his side, that is, on the side of one leg, scraping all the skin off, which leaving behind the large bloody abrasions known as "road rash" or "hamburger". These must be treated with antiinfection creams covered with self-adhesive or taped-on bandages. These must be changed frequently, and taking them off is a lot less painful to an already excruciated cyclist when there is no hair there.

long ago, when I was riding every day or wanted to look as if I were and was shaving my legs, my significant other was really freaked out by the feel of it. I suppose anyone who shaves and is used to unshaved partners would have a similar reaction on first close encounter with a shaved pair.

interesting as well (at least to me): when I take a spill (and I would imagine I have taken more than most people here -- put together): the last thing I

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want is a bunch of people salving their own consciences by giving me a hand I don't want. I have a very specific procedure for dealing with falls, developed through many of them, a systems status checklist, as it were. when I'm bloody ready to get up, I will; if I find I need help, I'll ask for it. meanwhile, if I feel like lying in the street figuring out what has happened, traffic can just wait. unless they want to run me over and finish the job. if I weren't prepared for such events and their consequences, I shouldn't be riding. and I wouldn't be. anyway without falls, I would not be able to walk into the presence of Slow People while wearing the red badge of courage (Or of clumsiness) and pooh-pooh their shocked reactions and offers of concern and medical assistance.

terrible cyclist

Message 7 7/18/98 12:09 PM
Subject: Re(10): He's Dead: Was he Guilty?
From: terrible person
To: politics

Steve Omlid writes:

nessie writes:

because we base most of our actions on feelings and not logic.

Which is why this world is so fucked up.

oh yeah, those feelings, like compassion -- they really screw things up, don't they?

logic is only a process. starting from the wrong axioms, you can prove anything logically.

in terms of pulling triggers, I think Ron Morgan would agree that neither Col. Birdie Tibbetts of the Enola Gay nor your typical atomic scientist nor your typical american voter of the time would have much relished slitting the throats of 50,000 Japanese one after another. Distance does matter. One's actions have consequences on the other side of the world, but I don't think one can really even feel the ones on the other side of the room.

Kind of in an antigeneralizing mood,

terrible person

Message 4 7/19/98 4:31 AM
Subject: Re(3): Muwatalis versus Ramses II at Kadesh (was something or other)
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

Ah, the Tuatha (pronounced Two-ah) de Danaan . .

Thanks. interesting.

The principle term used by Homer for the Greeks in general (besides "Achaeans") was "Danaans". Vergil picked this up in the famous line, "timeo

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Danaos et dona ferentes", spoken by Laocoon at the Trojan Horse.

terrible person (fears pretty much everyone, bearing gifts or no)

Message 3 7/19/98 4:38 AM
Subject: Re(2): Muwatalis versus Ramses I
From: terrible person
To: History

Rod Ottinger writes:

No, no, no. The peoples of the sea were the survivors of Atlantis.

You know, there may be something to this. I was just reading a review in the Times of a new book on the myth and literature of Atlantis. It briefly discussed the theory of Thera/Santorini, that it was the cataclysmic volcanic explosion of this island, dated to about 1550 bce, that gave rise to Atlantis legends (and weakened Minoan Crete enough for the mainland Mycenaeans to rise up, turn the tables, and take over.) This might have created a flood of Cretan refugees or made the Mycenaeans more adventurous. (In Homer, Troy was not the only place the Greeks raided.) The destruction of Thera might be a few hundred years too early to really correlate with the Peoples of the Sea, though.

Message 90 7/19/98 6:18 PM
Subject: Re(5): He's Dead: Was he Guilty?
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

but did the guys who pounded the nails into Christ's palms worry about it (little religious metaphor whether or not you believe in its historical authenticity)?

if any nails were actually driven, and that would have been contrary to the usual roman practice, they probably went through his wrists.

terrible person (really interested in crucifixion)

Message 88 7/19/98 2:33 PM
Subject: Mandela Celebrates 80th, gets married
From: terrible person
To: politics

What a guy!!!

And his wife seems pretty cool too. At least less likely to order political opponents beaten to death than the last one!

Yay Nelson!!!

Message 87 7/19/98 6:15 PM

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Subject: Re(9): surveillance
From: terrible person
To: History

It's appealing to dismiss conspiracy theories as magical thinking, as scapegoating some person or small group whose simple removal or neutralization by some empowered person will make everything peachy. But actually, if you read most of nessie's posts all the way through, they typically spread the blame pretty widely, and end with an injunction, a call to arms, to all of us to inform ourselves about the issues and do something about them ourselves. They call for mass action to be resisted and overcome by mass action.

Now, my impression is that nessie means his theories to be taken literally. with all due respect, I don't tend take them that way. I take most conspiracy theories as metaphors, as myths. Myths in the sense that they do point out a truth in symbolic language. Take the myth of Persephone; I don't believe the daughter of the goddess of the harvest was kidnapped by the god of the underworld, but I do see that there are seasons and I tend to feel sadder during one than the other. Take the parables of Jesus -- they're not meant to be taken literally. Malcolm X explained the Black Muslim credo that "the white man is the devil" as meaning not that individual white men necessarily were devils, but that the white man collectively had been the source of Evil. I don't know what to think about whether gunmen sent by a cabal of high-ranking members of the military and intelligence communities and the armaments industries actually shot the thirty-fifth President of the U.S. (I have my problems with the idea; see another post.) But what is abundantly clear is that, as Orwell warned in "1984", as Eisenhower warned in 1960, that in this country where the military had always been very small, a military-industrial complex, devoted to perpetuating itself and its power by creating wars for it to fight and a need for new military hardware, what Chomsky calls a national security state, gained power at the end of World War II and has resisted any challenge to its supremacy. I think that even you, Chris, will concede that even with the end of the Cold War, the so-called security apparatus and industries in this country have an oversized influence in the government, so much that the question of whether they actually staged a coup or not in 1963 is moot.

What strikes me about conspiracies is that they are not simplistic. a lone gunman is simplistic. it absolves the rest of responsibility. "there's no way to stop a determined marine with his rifle." or there is; it only requires one man be stopped. it doesn't call on the rest of us to do anything. what conspiracy theories alert us to is the existence of a whole culture that needs to be stopped, not just a single man. "JFK" isn't "Seven Days in May", in which the removal of General Scott saves the republic. the military industrial complex is thousands upon thousands of people with similar interests, it's a philosophy, a way of life. If you were to go through everything nessie has ever posted, and count all the people he names as complicit in the JFK assassination and the Vietnam deception, you would have hundreds. But they all shared the credo of putting their group and personal interests before the country's. It's a lot like racism or homophobia. Whether the government actually created the AIDS virus or not is not really as important as the fact that the government has utterly neglected the health of African Americans, treating them not only as second class citizens but as second class human beings. Saying "the military industrial complex murdered JFK and took over the country" may or may not be true; saying "the military industrial complex pretty much runs the country and got 58,000 American boys killed", at least as far as I can tell, IS true. And saying "the government created AIDS" may or may not be true, but saying "there is institutional racism in the US

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
government" definitely is.

With more recent events, such as the supposed October surprise, exposing what really happened might allow the guilty to be prosecuted, and some of their actions to be remedied. It might create enough outcry to demand changes, or at least to prevent anything similar from happening again. These last two go for anything that has happened anytime; we should always be alert to the lessons of history, no matter how ancient.

Lastly, though you seem to have thought you could easily distinguish among reality and lunacy in conspiracy theories, obviously, you weren't quite right. don't judge a book by its cover, or a message by its carrier. nessie can be really, really obnoxious sometimes, but he is sometimes right. maybe often right; I can't be sure. what I ask myself in reading his posts is, have I heard anything like that before? can I verify it, either in books or in reality? if it's true, does it affect me? if it were true, could I do anything about it? and even if it is not literally true, could I learn something from it?

terrible person

Message 86 7/19/98 6:26 PM
Subject: complementary conferences
From: terrible person
To: Shut Up And Suffer

no, not complimentary. I was just thinking that this is the dark side of the "It could be worse" conference in Extreme. Anything posted there could be forwarded here where it will receive a perhaps more appropriate response than it gets there. Hm. Perhaps it will be. And the response, back again.

Message 84 7/19/98 11:00 PM
Subject: Chapter 1 -- Reading: "Don't Worry...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

... About the Government" by Talking Heads

_____ is tall and not handsome. He comes riding up to his apartment building on a silver bicycle. He jumps the bike into a "bunny hop", clears the curb, swings his right leg over the seat, glides up to the steps, and jumps to the ground, bringing the bicycle to a halt. He hefts it onto his right shoulder, with his hand holding the down tube to the front wheel to keep it from moving. He has moved the large dirty red canvas bag that hangs around his neck on his right shoulder over to his left side, where he can reach into it with his left hand and get out his keys. He checks his mailbox. There are new issues of the movie and bicycling magazines to which he subscribes. There are bills, also. The bicycling magazine is the same as ever -- this year's great cyclist and his tips so that you can be as good as he and be the next year's great cyclist and be on the cover of the magazine with your tips for how readers can be the next year's great cyclist and so on....most of the tips involve buying the products with which this year's great cyclist has endorsement contracts. However, this year's great cyclist is still a god. He can do the equivalent of running a marathon every day for three weeks. Gods have a right to be mercenary.

There is an actor on the cover of the film magazine who is a few years older

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

than _____. _____ identifies with him. He likes to think he looks like him. The actress is exactly _____'s age. She is not as beautiful as some of her fellow actresses, but she has the reputation of being much more intelligent. She went to college. She has written screenplays. She and the actor will soon be in a movie together. They have also frequently been seen together at Hollywood parties, in restaurants, at night spots. _____ looks at the cover along time, studying the poses, the clothes, the expressions. The actress is carrying the actor over her shoulder, fireman-style, only the actor's head is forward so that they are both facing the camera. _____ wonders how they set up the shot-- could she really be holding him? It seems unlikely, but he should not underestimate women's strength. They are wearing safari clothing and the background is an African savannah with zebras in the distance. The actress holds a machete in her free hand. They are both smiling, in a way _____ likes to describe as a "shit-eating grin." He thinks, though, for the first time in the long years that he has used that expression, why would anyone smile while eating shit? He resolves to research the origin of the expression. the actor and the actress are very happy.

Especially, it seems to _____, the actor. "He's a lucky guy," thinks _____. Actually, he says it aloud. He is about to put down the bicycle and start reading the magazine then and there in the lobby but he has to relieve his bladder. He unlocks the inner door, holds it wide open as he gets the bicycle's back wheel through, and runs up the four flights of stairs to his apartment. There is an elevator, but _____ tries not to use it -- the stairs are good exercise. The elevator is one of the old fashioned cage type.

It reminds _____ of a movie in which a character rides a similar elevator all the way down to Hell. If the door of the elevator is not totally closed, the elevator will not move. _____ likes to scare his visitors by opening the door between floors so that it stops. Even when he closes the door again, the elevator will not restart. His visitors begin to panic. He knows that he needs to press the floor button again to get it moving, and he eventually does so, but not until he has playacted powerlessness for long enough to scare his visitors. _____ does not have a lot of visitors, however.

Message 82 (Unsent)

Subject: Re(7): A possibly stupid question

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

Eva Luna writes:

Any men out there with an opinion on the spectacle that is a woman shaving?

aren't you being somewhat narrow in your gender expectations here?

Message 79 7/20/98 7:18 PM

Subject: Re: Fwd: Re: Neo-Hegelian claptrap (wa

From: terrible person

To: History

could we agree to use the word "history" to mean both "stuff that has happened before now" (what the romans called "res gestae") and by metonymy "the record of stuff that happened before now [in whatever form]"?

as for the issue of social forces versus great men (I'll be paraphrasing something I posted in "It's a le fou world" a few months back during a

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discussion of time travel and time changing), I don't think you can really separate the two. especially now, when there are so many of us. social forces create men who lead movements (or maybe the movements were there already without them.)social forces are made up of individuals who come to be like minded. I doubt Hitler would have been who he was had he been born fifty years earlier. I don't think he would have gotten where he did in a different era. And I would imagine there would have been plenty of alternate hitlers to do what he did in depressed, defeated, 1920's Germany if he had happened to breathe a little more gas. On the other hand, the nazi movement might have taken a somewhat different form without him. So I think the social forces vs. mighty individuals argument is kind of chicken and eggish. they both matter.

terrible person

Message 77 (Unsent)

Subject: Re: Childhood Folklore

From: terrible person

To: Folk Culture

well, if you are just trying to compile a compilation (like the Men from D.A.R.E -- no, not the drugs thing, the Dictionary of American Regional English) you could just go and hang out down by the schoolyard for a day or so (Julio and I will be glad to join you as soon as the radical priest comes to get us released) and listen to what the kids say, maybe ask them a question or two. I'd rather do fieldwork than read any day. Of course, they may not be too strong on etymologies...

Message 76 7/20/98 7:26 PM

Subject: Re(14): A possibly stupid question

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

Eva Luna writes:

That's just common courtesy. I was sitting on the sidewalk bleeding, and people just walked on by not even asking if I was ok. I was, but would have loved a tissue if anyone had been kind enough to offer one.

I disagree strongly. and I think you have contradicted yourself. if it's just common courtesy, there is no reason to love it; you expect it. I think it's unreasonable to expect people to be nice to you (unless it's the law, or you are paying them.) if people have to do something, or always do it, that takes away anything wonderful about it. the less you expect, the less you will be disappointed, and when things turn out your way it will be an amazing surprise. show me a person who is nice to me because he or she thinks he or she is supposed to, and I would just as soon he or she not. show me a person who is nice to me for no reason, and I will follow that person anywhere and pour forth his or her praises in song and story.

terrible person

Message 75 (Unsent)

Subject: Re(2): MusicHound Folk Guide

From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: Folk Culture

Greta Christina writes:

ISBN number

Excuse me, ma'am, I'm from the Redundancy and Repetitiveness Squad Division. It's my job to point out to you that since the N in ISBN stands for number, like the M in ATM machin

Message 74 7/20/98 7:38 PM

Subject: forced marches

From: terrible person

To: History

I love the scenes in the movies when the commander says, 'all right men. we've got to get to the fort by tomorrow morning or it will have to surrender. it's 50 miles. we'll have to march all night...." (and then, when the guys in the fort see the dawn and are getting ready to surrender, suddenly there is the sound of bugles, and the allies come into view at the top of the ridge, to the consternation of the besiegers and teh cheers of thebesieged...)

so I was thinking about the great forces marches of history, when an army had to keep going because it basically had no choice. the best example, of course, is the Anabasis described by Xenophon (actually, the famous part is the catabasis, but that's ok), the march of 10,000 Greek mercenaries from babylonia to the black sea in 404 bce. (it's been the basis of several movies, such as the 1979 The Warriors (new york street gangs) and the mid-80's "The wild geese" (white mercenaries in africa)) the romans called a forced march a magnum iter (lit. a big journey) and Caesar is full of them. Still, I am having trouble thinking of good ones. In 1066, harold defeated the Danes at Stamford Bridge in the North of England and then managed to get his army south in time to ...well, we know what happened. It seems that the Napoleonic Wars, and the War Between the States, are full of examples of generals who, faced with two enemy armies, defeat one, then march all night to meet and surprise and defeat the other, as if they were in two places at once. But what are some more examples? (besides when I made my AP latin class get through book six of the aeneid by spring break.) remember, the commander has to say something like, "If we don't get there today, there ain't no tomorrow."

terrible person

Message 73 7/20/98 8:49 PM

Subject: Re(3): History

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

pierre le fou writes:

*"SNAKUS?!?!? SNAKUS?!?!? LATIN DOESN'T EVEN HAVE THE LETTER K! THE WORD IS *SERPENS*, FROM WHICH WE DERIVE THE WORDS PENIS! And PENCIL!"*

Another momentary pause while 25 15 year olds realize they just made the teacher say "penis". More explosive gales of laughter follow, and if she could have given me detention on general principle she would have.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I'm not sure why this has the title History. I was replying to something I found while looking for an old post of mine -- the thing I found was called "The Latin for snake."

I don't know if it matters to the story, but the fact is that Latin does have the letter K, though it only occurs in three words. And another fact is that neither "penis" nor "pencil" derives from latin "Serpens", meaning snake. Oh, and another latin word for snake is "anguis".

next time, ask for the word for "scabbard". In middle school french, we would ask the teacher the word for "seal [the animal]".

Hope I haven't ruined the story with the facts.

terrible person

Message 69 7/21/98 8:28 AM
Subject: Re(16): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

you don't get it, do you?

the issue here is not touching. the issue here is hypocrisy.

most people who offer help are only doing so to assuage their consciences and fulfill their egos. they go around thinking they should do more to help others, and when they see you in trouble, are glad that you are in trouble, so that they can help others or appear to help others and fulfill their quota and feel good about themselves. or, they feel they are not capable of helping others, so that when they get the chance, they say, oh, great, I feel so strong and capable. but do you notice something? they only help other people *when it is convenient for them*. if they have a date or a business meeting or an appointment with their personal trainer, they'll just rush on by.

and then they expect you to feel grateful to them when they basically were acting selfishly.

it's like when you see a seriously disabled person making his or her way along in a wheelchair controlled by a headstick. some people love to say, "can I help you?" in a voice unconsciously similar to that used with small children. the chairperson boils with rage. if it weren't such an effort to speak, he or she would say, "if I didn't think I could take care of myself, what would I be doing here? you're not better than I am, you're not some god sent to my rescue, now stop acting so damned superior".

the non-hypocrites are the ones who, when you call out to them, "help me!", think "this person needs me. I am not fulfilling MY personal needs, but hers. I could walk on by and get to my appointment but then this person would suffer. no one's watching, and I won't profit from this, and I know I am a generally decent person, but I have to help."

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Eva Luna writes:

But with that said I have to admit that I totally disagree with this:

tp: "I think it's unreasonable to expect people to be nice to you (unless it's the law, or you are paying them.) if people have to do something, or always do it, that takes away anything wonderful about it."

*It may be unreasonable to expect kindness, but that doesn't change the fact that I WANTED SOME, and in a small respect, *needed* some.*

this doesn't sound much like total disagreement. remember Rule # 1: "never confuse what you would like to be true with what actually is".

OK. So from now on if I see a person trip in the street, and then see them in pain and bleeding, I will walk on by because to offer help wouldn't mean as much as it would if I were to just walk up to a person and inquire, unwarranted, if they were ok.

no, you've taken this in the wrong direction. it would not mean as much as if you walked by an injured person and they asked and you helped.

I sure hope I never fall down in your presence.
I'll look forward to falling down in yours. it will be an interesting test.
though I don't need an accident to buy myself some ice cream.

terrible person (like Grendel? Holden out for a hero?)

Message 68 7/21/98 6:54 PM
Subject: Re(4): Fwd: Re: Neo-Hegelian
From: terrible person
To: History

Rod Ottinger writes:

which just proves my point since the word history has to be qualified with the word oral when history is understood to be a written record.

sort of true; after all, the word "prehistoric" means "before written history". yet I would include events for which there is only archaeological evidence (often more reliable than written evidence) in history as well.

Not to subtract credit from Marx where it is due, but it was Voltaire who said that history is the sound of silken slippers coming down the stairs and sabots climbing the stairs.

if he meant by this that the tendency in history is inevitably towards the levelling of class and wealth distinctions, the late 20th century is proving him quite wrong.

Among the great forces shouldn't we include population growth?
I would say this is THE great force, that drives all the others. and THE great problem as well.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 67 7/21/98 7:05 PM
Subject: War of Independent Quotes
From: terrible person
To: History

when I was a kid during the Bicentennial, I had this great publication (by Bellerophon Books) called "A coloring book of the American Revolution". It had marvellously complicated illustration of all the key moments, with dialogue balloons with authentic quotes. I no longer have the book; if anyone knows where to find a copy, I will thank you and praise you. But here are a few faves I remember from this and other sources (inaccuracies possible; corrections welcome)

"In the name of of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!!"

"oh, what a glorious morning this is!"

"Ye rebels, disperse! Lay down your arms! Ye rebels, why don't you lay down your arms?!"

"We'll beat them before nightfall or Molly Stark will be a widow."

"To place before mankind the common sense of the situation, in terms so clear and bold as to command their assent."

"My intention was to get possession of the place with as little fuss as possible."

"I have never seen an ox fatter in my life!"

guess these (speaker and circumstances), and I'll try to post some more.

Message 66 7/21/98 7:12 PM
Subject: Re(5): History
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Meg Cotner writes:

Which 3 words? I know "miki" is one, but don't know the others. In fact, I've never studied latin, just sung it.

Meg

ummm, "miki" is not a latin word (he doesn't like it.) I mean, you know the score, but you have probably seen so many in your long career that they get mixed up, four scores and seven years ago....

the three words (besides Greek transliterations) are Kaeso, one of the 18 Roman personal names for boys (yep, 18 was it -- girls didn't have any personal names), Karthago (also Carthago, the city that had to be destroyed), and kalendae, the term for the first day of each month, vital for writing the date.

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gaudeamus igitur!

terrible person

Message 65 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(19): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

It seems to me that it's better to do the right thing for the wrong reasons than to do the wrong thing for the right reasons.

I disagree. There is no such thing as a nice person who does terrible things. Is there a smallest giant? (there is Fezzik, with whom I'm starting to identify, and not just because he rhymes.) there is only a continuum of people arranged by the proportion of nice things to terrible things they do (and then, is it that easy to define right and wrong, nice and terrible? oh, let's say it is.)

I suppose if someone does 99 nice things and one terrible, then would you define him as nice? 99% nice? I think the best you can do is what players of baseball simulations do with batting averages: use them to set the odds of the next atbat leading to a hit.

now, it's useful to have some idea as to their underlying intentions. but I think that is pretty hard to deduce, except from their behavior, so we're back to that. if I think most people act a certain way, and for certain reasons, it's from my observations of their behavior. you can only infer motivation from conduct. it's possible that they are mainly nice people acting mean sometimes, but the probabilities seem to lean the other way.

what you say doesn't make any sense for another reason. if you are doing something for the right reasons, how can it be wrong? in whose eyes? yours? you know why you are doing it. other people's? if their opinions are worth a damn, they will recognize why you are doing it.

which is why I get such a kick out of GOL, trying to infer the vast iceberg of motivation from the tiny abovewater portion of visible conduct.(As John Donne wrote, "No man is an island...but each and every an iceberg".) or not bothering, deciding its not my responsibility. it's also why I have never accepted Chomsky's supposed vanquishing of the skinnerian view of language, but that is a different matter.

terrible person writes:

most people who offer help are only doing so to assuage their consciences and fulfill their egos. they go around thinking they should do more to help

others, and when they see you in trouble, are glad that you are in trouble, so that they can help others or appear to help others and fulfill their quota and feel good about themselves. or, they feel they are not capable of helping others, so that when they get the chance, they say, oh, great, I feel so strong and capable.

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I'm just curious what you base this on. How do you know why (or when) most people offer help to others?

I'm assuming that this is just opinion, but I wanted to make that explicit since you almost sound like you're using "fact" here. :)

Earlier you said:

I disagree strongly. and I think you have contradicted yourself. if it's just common courtesy, there is no reason to love it; you expect it. I think it's unreasonable to expect people to be nice to you (unless it's the law, or you are paying them.) if people have to do something, or always do it, that takes away anything wonderful about it. the less you expect, the less you will be disappointed, and when things turn out your way it will be an amazing surprise. show me a person who is nice to me because he or she thinks he or she is supposed to, and I would just as soon he or she not. show me a person who is nice to me for no reason, and I will follow that person anywhere and pour forth his or her praises in song and story.

I think you were simply choosing to pick apart Eva's use of the term "common courtesy" here to describe what she would have liked done in her case.

But for what it's worth, I think that frequently "common courtesy" and doing things for "no reason" go hand in hand. You talk about the two as if they are polar opposites when, oftentimes, both are at play and it's pretty hard to distinguish which force is acting more on a person. I rarely use the term "common courtesy" to justify behaviors of mine. Most of the things I do (even when they are courteous) are things I'm doing because I want to. Because it feels right to me. It means something to me to care for someone else in this way.

*There *are* certain "courtesies" that I tend to shun. I generally don't send birthday cards or buy people gifts at significant times of year. I prefer to give people gifts and cards when I'm moved to do so....when I see something out in the world that makes me think of someone in a special way. And I prefer the same (although I do appreciate the "courtesy" when people send me cards and gifts. I just don't expect it.) But when someone does give me a card and gift at my birthday, I am assuming that it is a combination of being naturally moved to do it *and* courtesy that is at play. And I appreciate both coming from other people.*

Blathering,

--Kelsey

I hold this truth to be self-evident.

would that be the facts of the hard, exact science of psychology, of which you are mistress and keeper, upon the grounds of which I am trespassing?

"common courtesy" means nothing other than "what I [whoever I may be] think people ought to do". I think people ought to do what they actually feel motivated to do. "for no reason" means "for no reason of personal gain".

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

you're right, of course, kelsey; I forgot I was dealing with you, someone who, just as Mary was uniquely unguilty of the original sin, is uniquely above the venal motivations that afflict the rest of us.

blathering? you said it, not I.

Message 64 7/21/98 11:35 PM
Subject: Re(18): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

*terrible person writes:
most people who offer help*

*Jezebel writes:
Terry, I find it on the one hand sad that you are so disillusioned with the rest of the human race,*

soooo....it's better to have illusions?

*and on the other hand, angry, because you've just lumped *me*, along with millions of others, into this uncaring, rude, unfeeling, selfish, egotistical, herd-like lump.*

I beg your pardon; please see above. it would appear that if anyone has lumped you into this group, it was you yourself; I never did.

*Talk about the world revolving around you!!
by "you" do you mean me, terrible person? i don't think I do any more than anyone else. but I do think most people see the world in terms of their own needs and the fulfillment thereof.*

And what the hell is wrong with asking someone for a kleenex, or for wanting or needing help? To admit you need help is a strength, not a weakness.

I have never said there is anything wrong with any of these things. what I have advised against is EXPECTING that kleenex spontaneously, or EXPECTING help. and I have voiced my opposition to offering the symbolic kleenex of help just to feel good oneself.

Tim Walters writes:
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I disagree. There is no such thing as a nice person who does terrible things. Is there a smallest giant? (there is Fezzik, with whom I'm starting to identify, and not just because he rhymes.) there is only a continuum of people arranged by the proportion of nice things to terrible things they do (and then, is it that easy to define right and wrong, nice and terrible? oh, let's say it is.)

I suppose if someone does 99 nice things and one terrible, then would you define him as nice? 99% nice? would he still be nice at 70%? 48 %? I think

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

the best you can do is what players of baseball simulations do with batting averages: use them to set the odds of the next atbat leading to a hit.

now, it's useful to have some idea as to people's underlying intentions. but I think that is pretty hard to deduce, except from their behavior, so we're back to that. if I think most people act a certain way, and for certain reasons, it's from my observations of their behavior. you can only infer motivation from conduct. it's possible that they are mainly nice people acting mean sometimes, but the probabilities seem to lean the other way.

what you say doesn't make any sense for another reason. if you are doing something for the right reasons, how can it be wrong? in whose eyes? yours? you know why you are doing it. other people's? if their opinions are worth a damn, they will recognize why you are doing it.

which is why I get such a kick out of GOL, trying to infer the vast iceberg of motivation from the tiny abovewater portion of visible conduct. (As John Donne wrote, "No man is an island...but each and every an iceberg".) or not bothering, deciding its not my responsibility. it's also why I have never accepted Chomsky's supposed vanquishing of the skinnerian view of language, but that is a different matter.

It's also why I like crossword puzzles, but again, that is a different matter.

Probabilistically,

terrible person

Message 63 7/22/98 7:54 AM
Subject: Re(5): History
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Spidra Webster writes:
scabbard = vagina

yes, but you should get the teacher to write it on the board for full effect, since in Latin it's pronounced "wah-GHEE-na".

Terrific people, the Romans.

Just think, Quirites, at this point you now know more Latin than Williams Buckley and Safire, put together.

Dan Savage knows Latin, though.

Semper ubi sub ubi!!

terrible person

Message 62 7/22/98 10:08 PM
Subject: don't expect anything (was: Re(20): A possibly stupid question)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

I'm changing the name of this thread because I'm mainly giving answers and don't consider them stupid. What others choose to call their posts (or mine) is their business.

Greta Christina writes:

Watch it, terry. Them's fightin' words.

If a person doesn't fight for what he (or she) believes, what kind of a person is he?

Well, as Kelsey asked, how do you know that? On what are you basing that belief?

Oh, that's right, Kelsey did say something, didn't she? Outnumbered five or six to one, I miss some people...I guess I am following the maxim quoted by W.W. Beauchamp, the writer character in "Unforgiven", "When confronted by superior numbers, an experienced gunfighter will always fire on the best shots first." I envy Chow Yun Fat in many ways, but at this point, I envy his ability to fire from two guns at once most. But concerning Kelsey's question: My suspicion is that her definition of "Fact" means fact according to her favorite hard and exact science of psychology. Whereas you, Greta, are signing off "Philosophically". (and she is signing off "Blathering".) so I will just say I hold this truth to be self-evident, based on my life's experience and observations.

Tim Walters writes:

This discussion is starting to remind me of reading Ayn Rand, It's the classic Randroid/Libertarian fallacy--20,000 excuses for acting like an asshole.

And I have never read Ayn Rand. but like James "the Amazing" Randi, I don't believe in magic. I do believe in the Krugerrand and the Almighty Dollar, and in the statistical studies of the Rand Corporation (tested on their random number generators.) And Sally Rand. If you want a label, an -ism for my ideas, well, they are sort of summed up by the song "Hound Dog", so let's call it....Jerry Leiberism? And I am not a Li(e?)bertarian. I do admire those who have gotten ACLU.)

Greta Christina writes:

*But I would also ask...so what? That's what a conscience is *for*.*

I think that there is a big difference between thinking, there is a human being like me suffering, how would I feel in that situation? -- which is conscience, and thinking, there is a human being suffering, I can ease my conscience [guilty from the many times I have not helped] by offering help this particular time.

And as you yourself said, you don't have to be good 100% of the time to be a good person.

actually, I did not say that. I said that a term like "good person" was meaningless because there was no clear dividing line between good and bad people.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Again, according to what definition of "selfish"? I just don't see that "being able to live with yourself and your conscience and to continue thinking of yourself as a basically good person" is a useful or meaningful definition of "selfish."

it's not? it means you are acting so that YOU can see YOURself a certain way.

(using "YOU" as Jezebel presumably was.) unselfish people don't worry about how they see themselves. I think helping others to reinforce one's own self-image rather than because they are human beings like you is selfish. I can't see it any other way.

Wait a minute. I am totally confused. This seems to completely contradict what you said before. Your whole first argument was that helping people out of a selfish motivation to "assuage their consciences and fulfill their egos" was bad and that you'd rather not be helped by someone like that, but that that was what "most people" did. You seemed to be saying that help offered with what you consider the right motivation was entirely different from help offered with what you consider the wrong motivation.

(just to point out, once more, the (by my definition) well-motivated person does not offer help, but gives it when it is requested.)

Now you're saying that it's hard to deduce motivations and underlying intentions, and that you have to judge on behavior. Which is it?

as usual, I am thinking probabilistically. it is hard to understand the motivations of one person (though the more contact you have with him or her, the better you can do so, the more probably you will be right.) but when you observe lots and lots of people, you can come up with pretty good generalizations about human motivation. now, any individual person could still be an exception; there is a certain chance of that. but the odds are they are not.

if, let's say for argument's sake, people decline to help you 75% of the time that you ask, is it unreasonable to wonder why they are suddenly helping you unsolicited? is it strange to suspect their motives?

Tim Walters writes:

No one's mentioned "nice" or "terrible" people except you.

nice (from latin "nescio", "I don't know") and terrible are just words I like. a nice person would be one who does good, or "right" (your word) things.

So why, exactly, are you so het up about people who do "nice" things but don't really mean it (whatever that means)?

if someone is doing something for the wrong reasons, chances are he's not going to do it too well., and do more harm than good. and people will come to expect these things and then be left high and dry when they turn out to have been fake.

I probably should have put "right" in quotes. Obviously, if you're doing the wrong thing, your reasons are wrong. But a lot of people decide on first principles, then apply them to every situation, no matter how little the results jibe with reality.

oh, I know; you accidentally save someone you're trying to hurt, if I stabbed you in the belly and dislodged a tumor, would you encourage people to stab each other? or the person does not know how badly he needs help and thus can't ask for it. sure it can happen. but the odds are against it. if people just leave others along, or wait until they ask, most of the time they will do a lot less damage.

Deeds trump intentions, every time.

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

but how can you tell intentions, except by deeds? it's not like reading a book or watching a movie with a voiceover so that we know thoughts. WE he audience know that for Michael Corleone, it's business, not personal, but Tessio has to guess -- and decide if he believes Michael (though at this point it doesn't matter much.)

In sum: the original issue was this. I asserted that it was a bad idea to expect people to help you when you fall. And I said that I did not like to be helped when I fall because I suspect the motives of those offering help.

I haven't read anything to convince me otherwise. I find that often when I fall, there is no one around to help, and that if I have depended on there being such, and not made adequate contingency plans, I'm really in trouble. One can't have any illusions. I find that it is a lot more useful to think (in advance) of ways to deal with the fall myself, and even better, to think of ways of avoiding the fall in the first place, by analyzing the causes of past falls. It's important to look sharp, to look down at your feet (to see that your shoes are tied), even if you're wearing pointy toed shoes. (I also get a certain sense of pride in knowing I can get by on my own.)

And I find that most of the help I have been offered in the past has been either perfunctory or, as in nessie's story, harmful. (at least not helpful.) And I have concluded that this is because most of the people offering said help really don't care enough to do it right.

But that's ok. I can accept that, that you really can't trust anyone except yourself.

If you want people to do anything, you have to make it worth their while; I can accept that too. Because there are no opportunities and no difficulties; there are only parameters. What seems like a disadvantage can be turned into an advantage with enough thought. You figure out what the rules are and you play by them. It's liberating.

This is my testimony.

terrible person

Message 59 7/23/98 12:54 AM
Subject: Re(22): A possibly stupid que
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

alan shepard died yesterday. He was the first American in space, and as commander of Apollo XIV, walked on the moon.

I met him once; he was signing his book. There were not many people there so we got to ask a lot of questions. Most of them he had heard a million times and answered by rote. (Example: I asked him his opinions of the book and movie "The Right Stuff" -- although he was portrayed in both as being incredibly brave and cool, he considered both hopelessly inaccurate.) However, I remembered he had been a test pilot before he was an astronaut, and as the planes of the late 50's are among my favorites, I asked him which of the planes he tested was his favorite. This he had not expected; he paused and got a faraway look and began talking about something "with the big engine"....

And he told one story I really remembered. When he was reactivated as an astronaut after years of medical disability, he wanted to take the first available mission -- Apollo XIII. But the brass thought he should wait, so the mission went to Jim Lovell instead, and we all know with what result. Whenever

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
he ran into Lovell, he said, Lovell would grin and say "You can have Apollo XIII whenever you want it!!!"

Adm. Alan Shepard, 1923-1998. Vaya con dios, Jose.

terrible person

Message 56 7/23/98 5:50 PM
Subject: Re(13): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person
To: politics

Anusha Amen-Ra writes:

The US won't make reparations unless demanded by those who have been wronged. Not that the legal challenge hasn't been made. It has and the US /IRS Lost in the Supreme Court. Leonard Ashton, class action vs US/IRS.

my impression is that when the Court orders something, it usually, if not always, gets done. so when was this case? could you give us more details? why hasn't it been put into effect?

There was no opportunity for Disclaimer on the part of Blacks who wished to decline forced citizenship. The legal DOMICILE of Blacks exslaves was and continues to be in Africa. There was no vote taken, petition signed and no polls were ever conducted to indicate that African Nationls in America wanted to live under the White-created Constitution.

well, anyone who lives in the US (excluding Indians not taxed) has to pay U.S. taxes, resident aliens included. rejecting citizenship won't help there.

also, just wondering, why fetishize "forty acres and a mule"? who determined that this would have been an appropriate repayment for what had then been 250 years of slavery? this was PROPOSED by some reconstruction congressional leaders but never passed. but if it had been, it would have been an act of that very "White government" whose legitimacy you question. would it have been enough? why not 80 and five mules? I don't think the number was based on a survey of land in the south and a census of freed slaves, dividing the first by the second. maybe it was envisioned to be enough for a family to live on (I have my doubts.) if "forty acres and a mule" is just a way of saying "just reparations", but to take it literally is a little odd I think.

Anusha Amen-Ra writes:

African people are by culture communal in nature. We are not individualistic or more concerned with ourselves as individuals more than we are our community

I'm a big fan of individualism myself. Just because everyone agrees on something doesn't make it right -- or rather, doesn't make it useful and productive. are they communal by culture or nature? they are usually seen as opposed....

Whites or Indo-Aryan

careful. The term Indo-Aryan -- if it has any meaning -- applies only to a very small section of "White" people.

Matrialinear cultures were sedentary,
sedentary is good? not going anywhere?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

the man brings the dowry,
called a "bride-price", giving him the feeling he "owns" the wife.

there is no notion of original sin
only one section of "White" people in the last 2000 years have had the idea of original sin.

and its morality is pacifist.
so there were no wars in precolonial Africa?

excess babies are killed,
???

they have original sin and its the womans fault,
but they don't have female genital mutilation to keep women in line as in Africa.

I think that your gross generalizations and historical inaccuracies about "Black" and "White" people reflect no credit on you.

terrible person (really hates this sort of debate but feels something must be said)

Message 55 7/23/98 5:56 PM
Subject: Re(6): Fwd: Re: Neo-Hegelian
From: terrible person
To: History

Rod Ottinger writes:

I had never thought of Voltaire' comment (one of his contriutions to the _Encyclopedia_) as expressing the idea of the leveling of classes (the two meet halfway?), to me it meant the fall of old elites to be replaced by new elites.

that's good!! I'm sure you've heard the anonymous (?) adage, "Under capitalism, man exploits man.. under communism, it's the other way around."

I agree that history is not just events or the record thereof but the analysis of the events and records. but I think archaeology, and analysis of artifacts, are as important to history as written records. for one, they go back a lot farther. for two, unlike historians, they never mislead deliberately.

Message 54 7/23/98 6:08 PM
Subject: Re(2): don't expect anything (was: Re(20): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

If a person doesn't fight for what he (or she) believes, what kind of a person is he?

A person with a sense of proportion? And after all, if all actions are

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
ultimately selfish,

(which I never actually said, just that the odds are that they are)

why bother fighting for what you believe? What's your angle?

maybe I don't have one. but isn't self-defense in one's self-interest?

*Of course, you'll never experience the joy of having your trust rewarded.
But at least you'll have the satisfaction of being right. May it serve you well.*

I may after long observation decide the odds are pretty good on someone. or I may not. But are you saying I'm right, but that I would be happier if I deceived myself? Is ignorance bliss? "Dr. Galilei, the Ptolemaic system works some of the time, and I think you'll be a lot happier believing it than this scary Copernican stuff."

"Ordinary fucking people--I hate 'em!",

Tim

I hope this is an expression of YOUR opinion, because it's not mine, and if you are trying to put these words into my mouth, I really resent it.

"Ordinary people -- I accept them."

terrible person

Message 50 7/23/98 8:32 PM
Subject: Re(4): don't expect anything (was: Re(20): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Steve Omlid writes:
Ummm...actually, it's a quote from Repo Man.

Yes, Steve, I know (hey, who's not giving whom credit for knowing quotes now? ok, ok, we're quits now.). "If only there were some way of finding out how much they owe....ordinary people spend their lives avoiding tense situations...etc."

I just wanted to be sure who was supposed to be saying what; thus, the apparent humorlessness.

Now, back to actual humorlessness.

terrible person

Message 49 7/23/98 8:40 PM
Subject: Re(8): Fwd: Re: Neo-Hegelian

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

Well, actually Egyptology is FILLED with stele which have been altered.

and it's true that, for instance, rulers tended to leave behind official portraits that showed them and their achievements somewhat larger than they really were. but it's generally easy enough to see through that. also, most of those depictions were intended to be seen and make their impression during the ruler's lifetime, or perhaps soon after -- but not thousands of years later, though it is fun to imagine some Ancient thinking, someday there will be archaeologists!!! let's play with their minds!

terrible person (would have done that had he been around then)

Message 48 7/23/98 8:47 PM
Subject: Re: The Bulge
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

That warning, however, would have revealed that they had broken the code. The Nazis would have changed the code and Allied intelligence would have lost their window into the General Staff's mind. This made sense. It was WORTH 30,000 civilian lives to keep the secret.

You know, I raised this point a few months ago concerning Pearl harbor, suggesting that it might be possible that FDR knew about the coming, but realized that mounting a strong defense would have tipped off the Japanese about the US breaking of their code, information which was worth all the lives and battleships. Rod Ottinger promptly told me why this was a pretty dumb idea on my part, and i learned a valuable lesson: avoid arguing with Rod Ottinger.

Mr. Ottinger?

terrible person

Message 45 7/24/98 8:32 AM
Subject: Re(20): A possibly stupid question
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Winnie Chan writes:

no ... not illusions, just benefit of the doubt.

well, if you read some of my posts in History, you'll see I'm a big fan of the benefit of the doubt, though I don't like that term much; it's kind of undescriptive -- I prefer something like "benefit of probability analysis" (isn't that easier to say?) because, to quote Rule # 2, "All things are possible, but most of them are wildly improbable."

Or, since people like latin quotes (or at least I do), "Omnia fieri possunt,

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
sed fiunt perpauca."

terrible person

Message 44 7/24/98 8:46 AM
Subject: Re(2): Why was THAT in the basement?!
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Johnny Vann writes:

Since Berkeley is "Nuclear Free" it would also, like nudity, be against city ordinance here. Of course you can get away with just about anything down there in Oakland I guess...

Isn't Oakland nuclear-free as well? or maybe it's just that you can't carry a concealed nuclear weapon, unless you're a clergyman in his church. I don't keep any of my own independent nuclear deterrent, my own force de frappe (good for milkshakes too), in Berkeley or Oakland, but on submarines patrolling undetectably below the Bay. ever wonder why that guy is following me all the time with the briefcase?

I just finished reading a book by John McPhee called "the curve of binding energy." it's basically about Ted Taylor, a really brilliant (technically, at least) Los Alamos bomb designer turned nuclear safety consultant (and since then, turned antinuclear activist.) Taylor spends most of the book saying, in effect, yes, terrorists could build a nuclear bomb in their basement. but no, I can't really tell you how.

pierre, does your policy cover insane air force generals afraid of fluoridation of water? or if a chip blows in the Fail-Safe device? these things can happen, you know. I seen it in the moving pictures.

terrible person (really more worried about chemical and biological weapons anyway)

Message 43 7/24/98 11:48 PM
Subject: Re(16): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person
To: politics

Auntie Em:

More to the point, it speculates that the Jews may have been the "purest, ' and oldest Neanderthal-Caucasoids," the iciest of the ice people; hence (he explains) the singularly odious character of ancient Jewish culture

not to imply that all African-Americans do or should believe the same thing, but I always wonder how Jews can be demonized this way as the antithesis of Africanness when I see T-shirts that proclaim "Jesus was a Black man" and from the biblical quotes listed as evidence below, appear to mean it literally, not figuratively.

Message 42 7/24/98 10:34 PM
Subject: Re(17): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: politics

Jabari Adisa writes:

Oy! As the Jewish people left, and the Black folks stayed. The word "Ghetto" became associated with Black communities.

Jabari, with all due respect (because I have often in the past admired your collecting of facts even if I could not agree with the conclusions you drew from them):

the term "ghetto" is used for African-American communities not because African-American people have moved into the areas Jews formerly inhabited, but in the metaphorical sense. Jews had once lived in limited, closed in areas (in Europe; I have never heard the term ghetto seriously used of a Jewish area in this country because though there was housing some housing discrimination, Jews tended to live together if and when they chose to, not because they were not allowed to live anywhere else (by law or prejudice); now African-Americans live in limited, closed in areas. But no one has ever said (before you) that they are the same areas. I think you just have a sort of verbal confusion. Just look at New York: the traditionally Jewish area was the Lower East Side, not Harlem.

terrible person

Message 41 7/24/98 10:58 PM

Subject: Re(5): Re (19) David Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby

From: terrible person

To: politics

nessie writes:

To this day paratroopers invoke his name and his Spirit before every jump.

this is sort of by coincidence, though. the night before the first US paratroop unit was to make its first jump, a bunch of them went out to see a movie about Geronimo. later, the men were teasing each other about being too scared to jump, and one guy -- I've lost his name, but it's in all the histories of US airborne troops -- said he'd show he wasn't scared by shouting "geronimo" as he jumped. and he did and it became a ritual as others, imitated him without knowing why. if they had seen a different movie, they would be shouting something else. I once tried to find out what other nations' paras shout. italians yell "folgore" (lightning). the french military attache looked at me funny over the phone. israelis keep their mouths shut because it's often not a training exercise. etc.

Betcha didn't know that Texas HAD respect for Black people. Ever hear who the "Yellow Rose of Texas" was?

oh,oh oh, Mr. Nessie, please, please, call on me, please, I know I always answer but I'm sitting here in the front row and I brought you an apple.... the Yellow Rose -- "the sweetest d----e Texas ever knew" -- was the African American woman who -- uh -- entertained Santa Anna before the battle of San Jacinto (?) so the Texans could surprise him or after the previous one so they could get away..... do I get an A?

terrible person

Message 40 (Unsent)

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(19): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

I think the solution to that problem is to fix secondary and primary education so that the preparation of urban minorities for college is as good as that of suburban whites.

I think so, too, but remember that this actually involves spending money (or redistributing it) while affirmative action only has administrative costs. as to building more colleges, this is fine, if there is a need for more college grads (or if the students can afford it.)

Message 39 7/24/98 11:12 PM
Subject: Re(23): My friend Nicholas
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

Greta Christina writes:

Well, at the moment, my choice of perversion is just about anything involving me and my girlfriend being in the same goddamn city...

there doesn't seem to be anything perverse about that. that seems very ...um...normal?

Chris A. Hall writes:

Damn. Now that is a source of frustration. Afraid I can't help you with that one. Currently, my own choice of perversion starts with having a girlfriend.

remember, there are no advantages or disadvantages. only parameters. this is why rule # 6 is called the Joplin/Kristofferson Act, since it runs, "freedom's just another word.....".

terrible person (still has a little to lose)

Message 38 7/24/98 11:21 PM
Subject: Re(4): The Bulge
From: terrible person
To: History

see? see? what did I tell you?

"avoid arguing with Rod Ottinger"!!!!!!

Bletchley? Winterbottom? Those English.

Dumb question: ENIGMA was the coding device, MAGIC and ULTRA the breaking of it? a few words to decode my confusion would be much appreciated....

A Person Called Terrible

Message 37 7/24/98 11:36 PM

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(4): don't expect anything (was: Re(20): A possibly stupid question)
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

I certainly didn't mean to attack you.

why not? by all means, do so (or attack what I say, because here, all we are is what we say.) I have said it before and I will say it again, if, or to the extent that, I can't stand the heat, I'll stay out of the kitchen. no one made me raise my voice; I chose to; if others disagree, what right have I to complain? let people attack me -- but let me defend myself (or my words.)

and it was not by chance I chose Michael Corleone to quote.

Nope. I was saying you would know you were right, which is very different. you mean, I take it, I would "know" I was right, or I would think I was.

Terry, I disagree with you (to the extent I understand your position), but I'm apparently being more hostile than I mean to be (probably because I'm posting in haste from work). I apologize.

and if I have seemed hostile, my excuse is much worse since I have been taking all day to reply. but I'm not sure if I should accept your apology since I am not sure that it is necessary since I don't see that you have done anything wrong or harmful to me.

(it's the flip side.)

terrible person

Message 35 7/27/98 4:33 PM
Subject: Re(7): The Bulge
From: terrible person
To: History

ding ding!!! fighters, unclench!! back to your corners! get sponged off, have some gatorade, check your books, and be ready for the next round!

Message 34 7/26/98 12:29 PM
Subject: Skipper Richmond?
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

So I was running yesterday down by (through? at? in? on?) the Marina and apparently a sailing race was just starting. As I looked at the boats, I was sure that standing at the helm of one of them, in a sporty blue blazer and captain's cap, was the well-known GOL-er mentioned in the subject line. Was it indeed? Or am I just so suggestible to visual-verbal association that when I saw the boat, an all-metal catamaran looking for all the world like an iron butterfly, I could only see in regatta Davide?

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

This is a true story, too. don't you know that I'll always be true?

terrible person

Message 33 7/26/98 4:35 PM
Subject: Re: roman welfare system
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

So <terrible>, care to enlighten us as to the evolving nature of the Roman welfare system and its effects on the state and society at large.

I have not had (and may not have for a while) enough time to really research this, so I'll just say what I know. the welfare system was basically the grain dole, the ancient equivalent of food stamps and usda surplus cheese. the grain dole made it possible for large numbers of people from the country to abandon their farms and flock to the City to become the urban mob (which had plenty of time to hang out in the forum and listen to one demagogic orator or another or to watch the games all day and vote for whoever gave them. it reduced the power of the senatorial clique which is good I guess but allowed men like caesar to attain power by bribery and demagoguery.) also, it's not as if they came to rome just for the free grain; starting with the second punic war (218-202 bce) and through the social war (a civil war in italy) a lot of land had been devastated, the inhabitants driven off, and then the land bought up by big landowners who farmed with all the slaves captured in the wars. even if the small farmers could go back, they could not compete. so they joined the army (and as professional, rather than citizen-soldiers, were more loyal to successful commanders than to the state -- thus, rise of military demagogues like caesar) or hung out in rome. (some were settled in the new provinces too, but those were mostly 20-veterans.) so the welfare system was just part of the problem of agricultural decline (so that almost all of rome's grain came from sicily and egypt) which was a major cause of the empire's decline over the next few hundred years.

What was the name of the governor of Egypt whose sons covertly engineered a welfare crisis in the form of a grain shortage and who then saved the day by sailing up the Tiber with a load of Egyptian grain? Septiminius? Something like that. It's been a while; my memory fails me.

It earned him the throne, if I recall correctly.

Um, the closest I can find to that name is Septimius Severus, but I can't match the incident. I will keep looking though.

terrible person (M. Faberius Terribilis)

Message 32 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(5): Re (22): David Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person
To: politics

Ron Morgan writes:

Holed up in his smokefilled room with a fifth and a lapdancer from the Lark in Theater.

Matt Stowell writes:

Ding ding ding! We have a winner! ;-)

Actually, I've just been occupied with some other offline stuff lately, and

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in

Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

haven't been checking up on things here over the last week or so. I'll have to read this thread and throw my \$2 in.

in context, don't you mean, "and stick my \$2 in her garter"?

Message 31 7/27/98 1:19 AM
Subject: Re(2): Trust me
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

"Assuming none of us have ever met outside this forum--a false assumption [all we are is what we say.]"

I try pretty hard as a matter of policy to keep anything I have learned about others, either offline or in private communication, out of public debates like this one. This is not a personal argument, at least to me, but a general one.

"But I maintain that any statement about human beings as bald as "most of their actions are selfish" is such an oversimplification that it qualifies as an illusion. "

It's a statement of probabilities, akin to saying "Two rolled dice will come up seven one sixth of the time."

"The only person whose motivations I have good information about is myself, and I still fail to understand why I do at least half of what I do. I'm very hesitant, therefore, to assign degrees of selfishness to my actions, let alone anyone else's."

I don't think it's unreasonable to suggest that it is hard to be objective about oneself, and thus, in fact, possibly easier to evaluate the motivations of others. In fact, it is easy to be extremely charitable towards others, to want to like and trust people, and to try to credit them with the best intentions. Until one learns else.

"One's expectations of people affect their behavior. "

I am hoping that you mean either, "One's expectations affect one's perception of their behavior", or "One's expectations of people affect one's own behavior towards them which affects their behavior towards you." Otherwise, you are talking about some sort of psychokinesis, not psychology> I suppose you could justify a sort of Uncertainty Principle, that you cannot evaluate a person's behavior without affecting it, but I think that that would be a principle that works better with particles than people.

"Trust is not an option; it's an imperative if one wishes to maintain a civil society."

Ronald Reagan: "Doveryai no proveryai."

Mikhail Gorbachev: "V kazhdom vstriechie vy boltaetie eto."

I think human relations can work just as well based on an understanding of our own and each others' interests.

Greta Christina writes (philosophically):

"These statements seem to imply a belief that his way of seeing the world is

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

the right one",

(well, I try to avoid posting and arguing for what I think is wrong. if I sometimes post what I know is false, well, that's in a different sense and a different matter)

"the only right one, and that seeing things any other way, or even considering the possibility of there being another way to see things, is "illusion.""

Yes, it's true that things may seem different to other people. Imagine a forest, with trees planted in lines but irregularly spaced; to most people standing around the forest perimeter, the forest looks chaotic. but to people placed along the right sight lines, or to people looking for the pattern, the pattern emerges. everyone is observing correctly, but not necessarily seeing. now, I agree that it is quite possible that for some people -- I don't know, perhaps, extremely attractive people -- trusting others and expecting a lot from them may very well work as a way of life. these people are very lucky but that is between them and the universe, not me. I never begrudge people as much happiness as they CAN get if they are willing to accept as much misery as they DO get. but I think that my system works better for most people. because I think you have to err on the side of caution, if you err, and if it matters. it's the old optimism/pessimism thing; I see the glass as half empty at best. or the water bottle. I try to keep mine full, even if I am just riding across town; though it would seem that there would be plenty of places to fill it if I had to, one never knows. imagine if I were crossing the Jornada del Muerto. It's better to expect nothing, plan for the worst, and if it does not come, be pleasantly surprised. I love to be surprised. I only wish that when I watched "All the president's men" the other night I had not known that Nixon eventually resigned.

"either forgetting entirely or thinking of as "the exception that proves the rule."

the idea of "the exception that proves the rule" is complete magical thinking, argumental homeopathy. in logic, an exception disproves a rule. unless it's a rule of thumb, a statement of probability. then there are no "exceptions"; each new data point, going one way or the other, adjusts the probabilities a little.

"And yet you can ask a hundred different people, even a hundred different sharp and acute observers of human behavior, and get a hundred different ideas and interpretations about human motivation. "

and then you average all their ideas and interpretations together and patterns start to emerge. (I think they call this a "metastudy"?)

"You can even get different interpretations from the same person; "

so everyone gives ten different opinions and you still average them all and you still get the same probabilities.

"many people (although certainly not all) are very good about keeping up their end of the social contract."

the social contract, like all contracts, are based on exchanges of value in mutual interest. (I give my landlord money for housing. I don't expect him to house me out of niceness. he could not afford to. nor could I pay him double the market rent out of niceness. does the term social contract really apply to person-to-person stuff anyway? I thought it was mainly for people to government and back. I'll have to rustle up some rousseau.)

"Just a few more words about the terms "good," and "selfish," and "conscience," and then I'll shut up for now."

(And did you? Noooooooo! so now you want me to trust you? shyeah right! hey, you said it.)

"Terry says, "I said that a term like 'good person' was meaningless because

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

there was no clear dividing line between good and bad people."

I must most

vehemently and emphatically disagree with this idea. The idea that there must be a clear, obvious, easily identifiable demarcation line for a term or idea to be usable is antithetical to everything I believe. I can give you a zillion examples of qualities and ideas that do not fall easily into separate, clearly divided categories, and that are important and valuable distinctions

nevertheless: gay and straight, male and female, sane and crazy, healthy and sick, smart and stupid...and yes, good and evil, to name just a few. The world is full of continuums (continua?), and most human experience lies somewhere in the middle of those continuums, and just because you can't point to the exact spot on those continuums that divides one side from the other doesn't mean there is no difference between one side and the other, or no use in trying to distinguish between different places on the spectrum."

Sure, you can draw a line somewhere -- say, at 50%, to divide continua into two categories. but what if you had to divide the rainbow, the visible spectrum of light, into two halves, say, at green? so that red, orange, yellow, and light green would be "red", and dark green, blue, indigo, and violet, as "blue"? seems a bit odd, doesn't it (though there are plenty of peoples in the world who do similar things.) I just think that it makes more sense (than saying "he is good") to say "he does 76% good things and 24% bad" (but then how do you define good things? it's just too vague.)

"I have a strong conscience and a strong sense of guilt and shame when I do wrong",

but we agree on the semantics here, yes? that these are two very different things, conscience (natural compassion) and guilt and shame (socially imposed expectations, desire to meet these expectations). or are these just my terms?

*"And if that's the definition of "selfish," than how do we distinguish between the person who helps others, even at their own expense, in order to maintain their own integrity and sense of themselves as a good person, from the "screw you, Jack, I've got mine" type of person who *doesn't* help others and who actually acts to hurt others and who doesn't care about the consequences to others as long as they can get the lion's share?"*

My point is that one can turn into the other very easily and without warning. Many people will try to pretend they're your friends, but you'd better watch out for the skin-deep.

I don't know why I am trying to convince people not to trust anyone. It's really not in the self-interest of someone who hopes within a few years to have moved from being an amateur confidence man to a full-time professional

.

So trust me, please!

terrible person

Message 30 7/27/98 1:29 AM

Subject: Re(25): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby

From: terrible person

To: politics

Anusha Amen-Ra writes:

We are attempting to communicate in English, a very vague and imprecise

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998.

Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
language. We are also attempting to communicate over a one dimensional bit of technology. My communications can't always be guaranteed to be true and correct for what I intend them to mean. That is my disclaimer.

I have a problem with this. I think you should, too. What you are saying is, "I sometimes don't mean what I say." But the rest of us have no idea when. We have nothing else to go on than what you write. Your statement seems like a convenient way of excusing yourself when you are wrong. But if you turned out to be right by mistake, would you admit it? I think a statement like this reduces your credibility to the level of CNN's. Do you want to be the person who cried "Wolf!?" I think a better solution is to proofread and fact check before you post and then take responsibility for what you post. I like to think I do that, and I hope that the day I don't, it will be strongly brought to my attention.

terrible person

Message 28 7/27/98 11:45 PM
Subject: Re(27): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person
To: politics

terrible person writes:

What you are saying is, "I sometimes don't mean what I say."

Jabari Adisa writes:

Terry, with all due respect, you are paraphrasing Anusha's words and making them mean what you need them to mean. He stated that he sometimes makes mistakes. We all do, especially in this form of discussion. He was just bold enough to say it.

(note: I am quoting jabari's whole post except for the signoff and copyright. I quoted Anusha as well in the previous post.)

I would agree with you that it is all right "sometimes to make mistakes" if I agreed with you that this is a "discussion". but it's not; it's an argument. in a discussion, people present views in the hope of synthesizing them and learning something. I think that most people here are trying to "win", that is, continue the argument until the other side either concedes or stops arguing. also, the arguments are almost religious, rather than political; people say what they believe. now, I don't have a problem with this. I think this is what most people want. there are other conferences (perhaps with less controversial topics) that emphasize consensus. (maybe they have more women than this one.) if people wanted this conference to be less of an intellectual food fight*, they would complain to J. Mark and he would change the rules. the point is, in a discussion, it's fine to make mistakes, own them up, and learn from them; nobody cares, no one is keeping score. but in a conference like this, one has to be really careful. people make big, sweeping statements about large groups of people. they attack each other. it doesn't matter who started any particular argument. everyone seems to agree that it matters to "win", to prevail, to convince. in a baseball game, you don't get another pitch if you say you did not mean to swing at the third strike. in war, you don't get to take a disastrous charge back. I think that given the charged atmosphere in this conference, everyone should be held to the strictest accountability for what he or she says. if you can't stand the heat....if this makes people a little more careful about what they say, I don't see that as a bad thing.

and -- and you can believe this or not -- I think that it was mostly coincidental that Anusha was the one I criticized for this. I would have preferred that it not be someone with whom I disagreed on many points. but I think I have a valid point, no matter who the practitioner is.

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I'll look forward to hearing your reaction to this, and others' as well, especially J. Mark's.

terrible person

Message 27 7/27/98 11:18 PM

Subject: Re(4): Trust me

From: terrible person

To: It's a le fou World

tp: It's a statement of probabilities, akin to saying "Two rolled dice will come up seven one sixth of the time."

tw: Nonsense. Actions can't be classified as "selfish" or "unselfish" the way a die roll can be classified as a one or a six.

(see paragraph starting "without a clear definition..." ff. below. You could easily put selfishness on a scale. Psychologists have all sorts of scales.)

tw: Understanding each others' interests is a lot more difficult than you make it sound. What do humans really want, anyway? Only if life is a perfect zero-sum game does the sort of arithmetic you propose make sense. But not only does life not seem to be zero-sum, it's hard to say what one would even be summing. Happiness? Security? Power?

I was thinking somewhat more short-term than that, more on the order of, "

Hey Mr. Driver, you want me out of your way, and I want to get out of your way, and if you will give me a second I will, and things will be better for both of us."

tw:Etymological note: the original meaning of this common phrase was "prove" in the sense of "proving ground", i.e., the exception tests the rule. In the real world, most rules have exceptions; whether these exceptions can be disregarded (or more precisely, for what purposes the exceptions can be disregarded) is what makes a rule successful or not.

My impression was that Greta was using the expression as I have often heard it used, referring to the adage that every rule has an exception and therefore a rule without an exception is no rule and you need an exception to have a rule, so the exception "proves" it's a rule. again, since I am not asserting that all people behave a certain way or another, but that most do, a single exception does not prove (demonstrate) one thing or the other.

tw:Without a clear definition of a selfish action, such a "metastudy" would be meaningless. And there is no such definition.

is there one of "trustworthy" or some of the adjectives you have used?

of course these are vague terms. the important thing is the probabilistic method. the history of science is progress towards making the unquantifiable quantifiable, from speed and gravity up to the work being done today at understanding emotions in terms of brain chemistry. Perhaps someday will be fulfilled the words of Prof. Von Olzen in "Tredegar Lewis and the Missing Brains" (a kind of neat story of a few years ago that reads like Franz kafka meets HG Wells -- which would not have been impossible, actually, but would not have been like this)... "If luck be a fluid, we shall draw it through a tube; if it be an essence, we shall send it over a wire!!"

But seriously, I would be glad to explain (again?)

what I see as selfish and self-interested; I thought it was pretty clear by now. And once again, I don't have a big problem with people acting in their basic self interest. It makes them consistent and predictable and makes the world go round faster. It seems entirely natural. What bothers me is their convincing themselves they are acting in someone else's interest when really pursuing their own, and then expecting gratitude, or giving the appearance

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of acting in someone else's interest but abruptly ceasing to do so at the moment of need.

tw: You could take a survey on the question "Are most human actions selfish?", but since the question presupposes what it intends to demonstrate--that there is some clear line between selfish and unselfish actions, and some way to quantify them--it's not much use.

Well, it was you, I believe, who asserted a clear line between good and evil. (or was it greta? do you mind if I cite you interchangeably?) but I'll stick with the opposite position. you could classify actions by their degree of selfishness, and factor that in, instead of rounding off. and instead of asking people directly, "do you think other people are selfish?" (or "...that you are?"), you could ask more subtle questions to people directly and find out how selfish they were that way, and not just someone's perceptions of how selfish they are. wouldn't you need a survey of this type yourself to prove that people are trustworthy? I have seen a fair number of psychological studies, and they are pretty clever, some of them. clever enough to do this, I think.

you have given mainly anecdotal evidence. you have cited yourself as a contrary example to my theory. but I doubt you would find me trustworthy. so averaging the two of us together, we're at 50 % already.

tw: There is no such thing as a contract without trust.

The whole point of a contract is not to have to trust. That's why you put things in writing, so that one party cannot, deliberately or inadvertently, "remember" what was agreed differently. And that's why a contract is legally enforceable, with the courts and the cops behind it, so that you don't have to trust the other guy to fulfill his obligations out of niceness. You avoid weaselling by writing the contract tightly.

tw: Do you also carry a second bicycle, in case some part on the first one breaks?

If I did that, it would be impossible to ride. I take as many precautions as are consistent with riding the bike comfortably -- otherwise, what would be the point?(but life is still living when I avoid trusting.) I carry bus/bart fare and walking shoes. And I check the bicycle before I ride it, and carry enough tools for most basic repairs.

tw: And a crutch, in case you break your leg?
I carry my medical insurance card.

tw: And a wheelchair, in case you break both legs?
I have memorized the numbers "9-1-1".

tw: After all, you wouldn't want to rely on anyone for help.
no one, except the people who are paid to help me.

tw: I'm not arguing with your practice of keeping the bottle full, which I think is wise. I'm arguing with your implied principle. Where does it stop? There's an infinite regress here.

but by the same argument, with you, there would be infinite regress in the other direction. (I won't call it infinite progress.) for instance, if you trust people so much, why earn your own living? why not just sit on the sidewalk and rely on the kindness of strangers? won't the universe provide? I try to put as little trust in others as I practically can right now. as time goes on, I hope to put less. and I think that to the extent I do, things will get better.

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tw:For that matter, you have to trust that no one's poisoned your water, unless you perform a rigorous chemical analysis every time you turn on the tap or buy a bottle of Calistoga.

well, there are plenty of people who do that, aren't there? but I find a Brita home filter better for my needs.

hydratedly,

terrible person

Message 23 7/28/98 12:10 AM
Subject: There was really only one rule...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

.....and that was Rule Number One. The reason why it was called "Rule Number One" and not simply "The Rule" was that there had been and still were many other rules, but they had all been determined so clearly and obviously to be derivatives of, or corollary or subsidiary to, Rule Number One, that they had quickly fallen into desuetude and consequently oblivion. Rule Number One had actually not always been Rule Number One, but within living memory had been Rule Number Two. But then the Rule that had been Number One since time immemorial was promoted to the special honor of The Name of the Game, and Number Two had moved up into Number One's spot, still remaining subordinate to it. After all, The Name of the Game was: "Don't get yourself killed." Where as Rule Number One was more enigmatic. But you knew what Rule Number One was. Everyone knew what Rule Number One was. Rule Number One was: "Don't be stupid." Of course, these three words had been the subject of great debate since before anyone had bothered to write down the debates. One scholar explained them as meaning, "Do not deceive yourself." Another preferred, "Never confuse what really is with what you wish were." And it was this ambiguity that gave Rule Number One its particular appeal, its cult following. For while The Name of the Game was specific, knife-edged, clear, Rule Number One was a cloud forever blowing on a soft breeze, forever just within reach and always just out of it. Which is why it is with Rule Number One that this story concerns itself.

Message 20 7/28/98 8:27 AM
Subject: Re(29): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person
To: politics

J.Mark Andrus writes:

terrible person writes:

if people wanted this conference to be less of an intellectual food fight, they would complain to J. Mark and he would change the rules.*

No, J. Mark would say if you want a "passion-free" online environment where moderators sit ready to micro-manage any discussion they feel is too "hot", go log onto BMUG or find someone else to moderate this conference.

This thread by now probably would have resulted in a number of privately e-mailed warning letters over there....especially if one of the admins had very obviously stuck his foot in his mouth.

And if you really consider this a "food fight", you should have been here t

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wo

years ago.

-Mark

the term "intellectual food fight" was originally applied to The MacLaughlin Group.

I am the last person to question your running of this conference, Mark. I agree that Planet BMUG can get boring, which is why I don't post there. (History is also a little more sedate. But only a little.) Politics is a contact sport. I'm not suggesting censoring opinions or facts (though I think that it's important for parties to an argument to remind each other of them.) I think my reactions to the merest hint of moderator interference might still be remembered. This is a passionate free for all and freedom and passion are what politics is about.

What I am saying is that in such an argumentative atmosphere, people need to be responsible and accountable for what they say. And stand by it. There is no point in arguing with someone who keeps changing position. You can't hit a moving target. I'm not saying that you, J. Mark Andrus, Dei Gratia Moderator of Politics and Defender of the Faith, should be doing anything other than what you are doing. But I think everyone here, as a participant, should decline to accept others' excuses and not make them himself.

terrible person (just wears them)

Message 19 7/28/98 8:45 AM

Subject: Re(6): Trust me
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Greta Christina writes:

tp>Well, it was you, I believe, who asserted a clear line between good and evil. (or was it greta? do you mind if I cite you interchangeably?)

*Well, Tim may or may not mind, but I certainly do. Especially since I said absolutely nothing of the kind. In fact, I said almost the exact opposite: I said that the distinction between good and evil is useful and meaningful and important *even though there is no clear line between them.* Sheesh.*

Somewhat irritated (and really beginning to wonder if this argument is worth it, given that terry doesn't seem to be paying even the slightest bit of attention to what she's actually saying),

Greta

well, first of all, you have begun several posts with a few words expressing blanket agreement with what Tim had previously said.

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But the distinction you are making (between what I thought you said and what you said) is not that important. Tim had asserted that since there is no clear definition of selfishness, it is pointless to talk about it. but if you are asserting that it is worth talking about it even if you can't make a clear distinction, it still contradicts what Tim says.

Though I sometimes feel as you do about the paying of attention in this argument, I'm enough of a Quixotic skinny, strange rider to continue it. On the other hand, if you want to bow out, I don't think anyone here will think the less of you, and isn't that what really matters?

And the odds are that I won't send you gloating email every morning. Do you trust me to do that?

terrible person

Message 18 7/29/98 9:04 AM
Subject: Re(8): Trust me
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

terrible person wrote:

Tim had asserted that since there is no clear definition of selfishness, it is pointless to talk about it.

tw: Bullshit. I said it's more complicated than your simple model,

I don't think my model is simple at all -- or rather, not oversimplified. it contains an infinite number of gradations. but no matter how you slice it or apportion or grade it, most of human behavior is still motivated by self-interest most of the time. which is fine with me.

tw: I'm not the one advocating a simple life recipe, you are. I never suggested that absolute trust is a good idea. I lock my car doors, I check for other cars before I start at a green light, etc.

and I said trust should be minimized as much as possible, that the less one trusts, the better. goal oriented thinking is not necessarily all-or-nothing thinking.

tw: Having worked in corporate law, I can tell you that trust is vital to contracts, even between hardened businessmen. Why do you think they insist on meeting face to face?

Well, I've been in corporate law, too. The other end. As a messenger, i carried those contracts from one party to the other, then waited while they signed them, all so that they would not have to meet face to face.

tw: No contract is sufficiently bulletproof to make dealing with an untrustworthy partner worthwhile. Sure, it's guarded trust, but it's trust nevertheless.

Good fences make good neighbors. Low expectations and well-understood interests make good partners.

tw: No one goes into a contract thinking "if the other guy defaults, I'll just sue him."

Well, I do. It's true, I would rather not sue; it's a pain in the neck, if fun sometimes. But the landlord would rather not be sued, either. It's in both

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of our interests to hold up our ends.

tw: For what it's worth, terry, I still consider you trustworthy. Why? Because everyone I've ever met who spouts this stuff about how everyone's really selfish (including myself, at one time) fails to act as if they believe it.

And now you are relying on "observation" and "self-evident truth". But in what way am I failing to act as if I believe it? Because in my replies I try to mark who said what clearly enough that Greta Christina can understand them in text-only? It's in my interest to be understood, isn't it? As I have said before, one exception neither proves nor disproves a probability. Using yourself as an anecdote is dubious enough; is it wise to try to use me as one?

tw: People love to put on cynical fronts, but, fortunately, one can't make oneself into a sociopath just by wishful thinking.

Oooh! Such language! when you call me that, smile! (I'm not sure which is worse, being called a sociopath or a wannabe one.) I dispute the characterization. I'm not violent or murderous, though I'm working on a manifesto, among other things. I largely accept society as it is and see it as my job to adapt to it, by making myself less dependent on untrustworthy others through proper planning.

If you want to trust me, trust me for a different reason. I'd be willing to bet that no one could guess what My Favorite Thing Ever Posted About Me Online is and who said it. Nope, it's not one of the very rare instances when people like my poems or puns. It was in fact said by Steve Omlid. It was at the outset of the huge "Modifications" debate in film in March and Steve said something like, "Terry's opposition to putting spoiler warnings on his posts is consistent with things he has said before about the endings of movies." (Steve, if you are reading this, and you save your writings, and you have this, I would not mind a copy. Especially if I am misquoting you from insufficient memory!) I don't think my position on this issue came as a surprise to anyone; it might even have been predicted. I feel either lucky or proud that because I base almost everything I say on a small number of interlocking principles, it's easy to guess where I'll stand. But I do that mainly to keep things simpler, to save my limited psychical energy. It's in my interest.

The other thing I will say is that to a great extent this is becoming an optimists vs. pessimist, half-full vs. half-empty argument. Your experience tells you one thing; mine another. You dispute the way I came up with my generalizations but make generalizations yourself. But remember how this argument started: Eva Luna was upset that when she fell, no one came to her aid. I tried to explain why this had happened and how she could avoid it in the future. But no one denies that it happened. Now, I suppose that if Eva Luna had reported an incident in which someone had helped her, lifted her up, dusted her off, complimented her Nair job, bought her new pantyhose and ice cream, and offered her a new and much better job, she would have posted about that and people might have replied about how great everyone is. Then I might have disagreed. And this argument might have been very different. Or it might have been very similar. But the fact is, no one helped her. And I think that should be recognized. That's my anecdote - and the above has been my antidote.

terrible person

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 17 7/29/98 9:20 AM

Subject: Re(2): Fwd: [prj] A position against bigotry
From: terrible person
To: politics

The original poster of this seems to be trying to be clever but is too clumsy to pull it off. He is trying to use the tactic roman orators called praeteritio, damning something with faint praise and by claiming one is not going to mention it. Best example: Mark Antony's funeral oration. "I'm not going to say anything against honorable men like Brutus, but...." Today, we hear "I'm not going to mention my opponent's numerous extramarital affairs because I want to keep this on a higher plane, talk about the issues...."

And I'm kind of surprised that nessie would forward and at least to some degree support this, since it is so riddled with historical errors as to be meaningless. It wouldn't last a minute in History. From the origins of European Jewry and the nature of Zionism to the text of the Balfour declaration and its date (and that of Lawrence's death), it's all wrong. Oh, and I was left waiting for the explanation of the jewish responsibility for world communism -- was he just going to base that on Marx's ethnicity? Or say Lenin was a Jew? (don't laugh; I have heard that from eastern europeans.)

So whoever wrote this, I think if he wants to attack the Jews, which it would appear is what he really wants to do, he should do it directly, and get some facts. who knows? he might even find a welcoming audience here.

terrible person

Message 16 7/29/98 9:33 AM

Subject: Re: Fwd: [prj] A position against bigotry
From: terrible person
To: History

With friends like these.....this post is a great example of the figure of speech the Romans called "praeteritio", literally, "going past." It's basically the trick of mentioning something by claiming you aren't. "I'm not going to mention that my opponent cheats on his wife with a fourteen year old. I could, but I want to keep this debate clean." the best example is Mark Antony's funeral address: "I'm not going to say anything against honorable men like Brutus..."

I don't know where this guy got his ideas about Zionism. but this piece contains so many historical errors that I am surprised that you, nessie, gave it any credence whatsoever, or agreed with it at all. ("YOU", in the rest of this reply, is addressed to the original writer, not to you, nessie. You, nessie, are welcome to pass on my comments to the original writer.)

>>>*During the latter half of the 19th Century the Ashkenazim Jew (Turco-Mongol descendants of Khazars)*

This is the theory espoused by Arthur Koestler in "The Thirteenth Tribe." To a great extent, it is an anti-zionist canard, since it says "The European Jews, not really coming from the Holy Land, have no claim to it."

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

>>*Both promised relief and world hegemony.*

Whatever it delivered, Communism promised world brotherhood. Zionism a small piece of land at the Eastern end of the mediterranean. No "world hegemony". That's like saying that Irish nationalism promised "world hegemony."

>>*Now who in the hell wouldn't go for such a promise. Many orthodox and fundamentalist Christians have that goal in mind, as do the Mormons.*

you'd do better to compare Jews not to other religious groups in this respect, but to other ethnic groups.

>>*When England signed the Balfour Declaration, which promised the Zionists a state in the Paletinate (Israel/Palestine),*

No. The Palatinate is a region in Western Germany. It has nothing to do with Palestine.

The Balfour declaration did not promise a state, but a "national home", "it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." (You might as well say the Balfour declaration is what the umpire says before "take your base".) also, the declaration was 2 November 1917; the US had entered the war in April.

>>*the propaganda presses in the U.S. started to grind up and beat the war drums for America's entry into a war. A war in which American Socialists had taken the isolationist position. England also betrayed its Arab allies in that war and Lawrence of Arabia, much opposed to the betrayal died in a "motorcycle accident" shortly after the war.*

No, he did not die until 1935. They made a movie about it! The fact is that the British didn't think any more of the Arabs than they did of any other people who were darker than they and lived in a hot climate. (Or who were as light as they and lived in a rainy climate to the west.) To the British, the Arabs were just another bunch of savages to be manipulated. The British had gotten used to Jews among them and seen at least that they could be useful, though I would imagine the idea of having a lot of them emigrate was not displeasing. They might be out of Britain but could serve as colonists. Even Hitler at one point considered resettling all the Jews in Madagascar (or circulated rumors that he did.) When the British realized that the Arabs would not stand for unlimited jewish immigration, they took very strong steps to limit it.

>>*Jews are people like everyone else.*

And we don't need idiotic inaccurate arguments like the ones above to know this.

>>*I do consider, however, Zionism as an evil. A dastardly evil, because it is an ideology of hegemony, and not just in Israel but in the world. And what has been perpetrated on the semitic*

How are you using this word? Semites include Jews and Arabs (and others.) Or

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is this the Khazar theory again, discrediting the Jews?

>>*peoples of Palestine/Israel is horrible and would not at all be tolerated by Christian, Freedom Loving Patriots of the U.S. if it was attempted here.*

Are the only freedom loving patriots in the US Christian?

>>*Zionism, in my opinion, needs to be seperated from Judaism the people, the religion, but unfortunately it is an integral part of it as that is the promise of the Messiah that has yet to come.*

No again. Or rather, it already is, but not in the way you imagine. Most Israelis are secular. They feel Israel belongs to them because it belonged to their ancestors, not because God gave it to anyone. In fact, many very religious jews are anti-zionist. they believe that the setting up of a Jewish state and the gathering of the dispersed Jews should be the work of God, of the Messiah, not of men. Draw an analogy to the Irish wish to have their country back, or the wish of some diaspora Africans to return home.

>>*Having said all of that. I will stand shoulder to shoulder against anyone that seeks to marginalize, demonize or dehumanize the Jew.*

Since that is what you are doing, this is quite a feat of twisting. You must kick butt at Twister.

And Communism? I thought we were going to get the lowdown on how that was all a Jewish conspiracy? (The scary thing is, I have met eastern europeans who think that.)

terrible person

Message 15 7/29/98 4:42 PM
Subject: Re: I drove out to Glendale..
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

since people yell at me when I get things too fast, I'll just say it was a movie with Fred MacMurray and Barbara Stanwyck, and written by an authro with an appropriately murderous last name.

Eva Luna can have it when she logs on.

terrible person (well-insured)

Message 14 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(2): and now for something completely different
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Isadora Alman writes:

Naked self promotion: For an autographed copy of LET'S TALK SEX, a collection of Qs & As from previous Ask Isadora columns,.....

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Isadora!

Are you trying to entice us to buy your book by implying that there's a nude photo on it?!

thinking of Elizabeth Wurtzel?

Message 13 7/29/98 11:05 PM
Subject: Re(10): Trust me
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Greta Christina writes:

tp>I try to put as little trust in others as I practically can right now. as time goes on, I hope to put less.

gc: Well, hey. Knock yourself out. If you want to live like that, go right ahead.

thanks. I am glad I have your approval and permission and recognition that my lifestyle is as valid as yours. There is a lot of risk unavoidably imposed on us as human beings, and I don't see the need to increase it.

gc: For that matter, if you want to believe that your life philosophy and your personal set of experiences and observations are objective fact, if you want to believe that your analysis and interpretation of human behavior are unbiased by your beliefs and assumptions, if you want to believe that the things you see are pure unfiltered reality and that the ways people treat you are unaffected by your expectations of them, then go right ahead.

but my beliefs and assumptions are based on my observations and experiences, and tested by practical application. my point to Eva Luna was that, based on her experience, she might come to similar conclusions. would you have said to Newton, "I assure you, Isaac, that no matter what yours just did, my apples generally fall UP?"

gc: If you want to believe that you "have to err on the side of caution,"

my line was "if I must err, err on the side of caution." I don't feel I have to err, though the probabilities are that I do and will some percentage of the time.

gc: rather than that you personally choose to err on the side of caution, then go right ahead.

it's not really a matter of choice. I could choose to live another way (and have tried.) but it would not work too well (and hasn't.)

gc: If you want to believe, not only that "most of human behavior is still motivated by self-interest most of the time," but that this belief is not a belief but an unbiased scientific observation of "society as it is" and that you have no choice but to live and behave the way you do (or, for that matter, if you want to believe that there even is such a thing as unbiased scientific

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observation), then go right ahead. Knock yourself out.

(would I want an excuse for this? you make it sound like a luxury I am trying to justify, an end in itself, something I want to do, rather than a necessity or a practicality.)

gc: I can't imagine why you'd want to, though. I mean, apart from the obvious reasons, of course; if you want to behave selfishly it's very ethically convenient to believe that nearly everyone else is doing the same, and it gives you a great excuse for keeping your defenses up at all times and trying to avoid any possibility of emotional pain.

this was sort of the argument of Cold War generals. "Sure we'll lose 20 million people in a nuclear war, but we'll win." I feel that one nuclear bomb can ruin your whole day.

gc:But even given those advantages, I still can't imagine why you'd want to live like that. It seems kind of lonely to me. Actually...no, it doesn't se em kind of lonely to me. It seems desperately lonely to me.

Lonely? What does it mean? Who, ME?? Ha, ha!!(Iggy Pop, "Bang Bang")

Desperate is an interesting word, one I use a lot, maybe in a somewhat different sense than you. (Remember the X song, "We're desperate/ Get used to it...") But what is wrong with Desperation? It's how the mass of men lead their lives. (Maybe more in your sense than mine.) To me, Desperation means recognizing one's limited resources, one's limited ability to demand, and thus, giving consideration to whatever is supplied, if not expecting that it will bring about one's Salvation. (Its opposite is Snobbery, which to me is a neutral term meaning simply that one has much more supply than one needs and can dispose of it or choose among it arbitrarily.) The point is, I don't see being 'desperately lonely' as any worse than any other condition. I think it makes one give a chance to a lot of things and people that one otherwise might have overlooked or ignored completely.

gc:Lonely and isolated and bitter and depressing and meaningless, and when I try to imagine what it would be like to live like that, it fills me with deep despair.

Etymologically the same as Desperation, but to me, quite different. (Despair discourages action; Desperation encourages it.)

gc:But hey...knock yourself out.

You really want me to do this, don't you? That's why you've said it three times!! But I'll have to decline. I've done this once (or the car did) and it was not so fun so now I try not to. I generally wear a helmet.

You know, as long as I have been commuting my bicycle or foot, people have said to me, "I can't understand how you can do this. Why don't you get a car? Think what you are missing out on." And I respond, "What? Missing out on insurance costs? On car payments? On endless repair bills? On the danger of accidents? No, thanks. I'd rather keep things simple. If I really want to go someplace, I'll find a way there. Meanwhile, there is always plenty to do in my area, in my town, in my apartment, in my head." They say the same things to

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me about my lack of a CD player, a microwave oven, contact lenses, home Internet access, cable television, etc. "Greta Christina, how can you live without the GOL GUI?" Don't you start to resent that after a while?

As for meaningless, meaning is where you find it. And some find happiness in finding meaning. Some people have enjoyed sitting bleeding on a sidewalk because it taught them something. (Your humble debating opponent, for example.) But Eva Luna did not seem to be that sort of person; if she were, she probably would not have posted as she did.

*gc: Personally...well, it's real clear to me that my life philosophy *is* my life philosophy, and that the odds of it reflecting objective reality are, literally, infinity to one.*

I'm assuming you meant to emphasize "MY" not "IS"....The only real test of a theory is whether it is descriptively and predictively adequate. I think the only way we could settle this argument would be to say, meet in 20 years (as in the Chekhov[?] story "The Bet") and compare who was having the better life. Though we would disagree on the criteria for evaluating this. And we might have started from different coordinates.

gc: And it's real clear to me that my beliefs about the world shape my experience of it. They shape what I choose to pay attention to and what I choose to not pay attention to, and they shape how I interpret what I see.

As I have said before, I would love to remember only the positive and be guided by it. It's more pleasant, but if I acted on the expectation that the positive was the rule, I would be in a lot of trouble. Or rather, a lot more trouble.

gc: And perhaps most importantly, they shape how other people treat me. It has been my overwhelming experience that, when I trust people, they are far more likely to act trustworthy. Not always -- God knows I've been hurt and betrayed -- but I don't live my life to minimize pain. I live it (this is a gross oversimplification, but I can't think of a better way to put it succinctly) to maximize joy. My joy, and the joy of others.

Well, this is like comparing two pitchers, one with a 266-251 record like Eppa Rixey (who nevertheless made it to the Hall of Fame on a winning percentage of .515) against Sandy Koufax (165-87; .655) or Dizzy Dean (150-83; .644) Every loss reduces your average joy, and, I think, your net joy. Just as it is easier to work on conserving energy than generating more, to increase your net happiness, reduce your misery. And save the time, and your pitching arm.

gc: And it has been my overwhelming experience that the joy that comes with trusting people is well worth the pain that comes when they sometimes betray that trust. It has been my overwhelming experience that dropping defenses and letting other people in is worth doing -- not always, and of course it's worth being choosy about who you let in and how much -- but in general, probabalistically as you might say, it is more worth doing than not. Partly because doing so changes their behavior, makes them more likely to act in a way that is good and kind and worthy of trust and maximizing of joy -- but largely because, if I don't, then I don't see any point to being alive at all.

You accuse me of universalizing from my experience. But aren't you doing the

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same thing above? I accepted that your experience may have happened but is largely the product of a good fortune on which the mass of people can't count. Most people don't win the lottery.

And I have found that trusting people, if it changes their behavior, tends to change it for the worse. The temptation to abuse trust is just too great. But usually trust does little. people pursue their own agendas and have no time to help, and that is ok. they have no obligation to me. who was I to trust in them in the first place, to try to put an obligation on them? as Stephen Crane wrote, in "War is Kind",

"A man said to the universe:
'Sir, I exist!'
'However,' replied the universe,
'The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation.'"

And there are certainly plenty of sources of joy in the world besides the trust of one's fellow human beings. Imagine yourself alone on a desert island, full of wondrous flora and fauna to be understood, with clear skies permitting astronomical observation, but no one to trust -- would you kill yourself immediately? Would life have become meaningless? You might say you would, and then I can't argue any further. but I feel there is a great deal that needs to be said on behalf of Things.

Tim Walters writes:
I'm going to bail

did you check your chute yourself? be careful!

tw:1. terry, an argument from example or analogy is not the same as anecdotal evidence, and

oh no, I love analogies (see above.) but a lot of your argument was "I know how *I* am" which is anecdotal.

don't fall and skin your knee as you land!!

terrible person

Message 11 7/29/98 9:58 PM
Subject: Re: More GOL Race War <wink>
From: terrible person
To: politics

hmm. there are about thirty million African-Americans in this country. About ten percent of the national population is between 18 and 24. (These are rather approximate figures here -- trying to get a ballpark estimate; Fenway being my personal choice.) So let's say then that there are about three million college aged African Americans right now. For simplicity's sake, let's ignore that many of them are middle class and above and might be able to afford an education on their own, though the question of means testing is a valid one. And let's say they all went to four-year public colleges in their home states -- say, about \$7,000 a year (which they

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wouldn't, I hope; I hope they would get into elite private schools as well.)

So you get an annual cost of \$21 billion. If every American (exclusive, presumably, of African-Americans, if this is really supposed to be free), woman, male, and child, about 220 million people, that is \$22 billion. The numbers work, at least, it would seem.

Some comments: I think that the savings to pay for this need not come out of the nuclear defense budget, but would be easily found in money no longer needed for the "Drug War" and for the cost of prison construction.

The above figures do not include the costs of remedial education, which I think would be very high. Basically, remedial education would have to begin funding inner city schools in the first place. It also does not include older adults who might want to go back for an education.

Some institutions and private groups already run minority scholarship programs that could reduce the cost of the national program.

It also does not take into account the fact that many prospective students, both young and old, would not be able to attend college full-time unless something were done to support their families.

Now, problems: there are a lot of other groups who are not doing so well economically and whose presence in this country is not exactly a matter of choice. Native Americans are an example. On the other hand, they are allowed to run gambling operations. (Maybe African Americans who really believe they are not citizens should be able to claim a similar right.) Many Hispanic (Latino? which is the right term?) and Asian Americans are refugees from political and economic conditions created by the United States or American economic interests. There are even desperately poor European-Americans, whose ancestors came as indentured servants, and who, though "free" for a long time, are looked down on and stuck in poverty much as African-Americans are. Now, I guess 250 years of slavery is worse, but by degree, and it might be difficult to explain that to these other groups. I think something would have to be done to help all groups in poverty.

ever thought of running for office, Matt? congressman pays about \$130,000 a year plus benefits and lots of perks and you get to spend most of the time talking to people. Your opponent, trying to find stuff in your past to attack you on, would be overwhelmed and throw up his hands in surrender. I am imagining the Stowell/Pelosi debates now....

terrible person (planning to run in his own district, but needs some new Nikes.)

Message 9 7/29/98 11:06 PM
Subject: Re(11): Trust me
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

*Actually, I *think* (if I'm not misrepresenting terry here) that terry's point was not just how you could have avoided the "situation" of falling down in the*

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future--although this was one part of his point--but how you could avoid feeling upset about nobody offering to help you after you've fallen in the future. His point was that if you had a "realistic" view of the world, you would not have been surprised or disappointed by the (lack of) reactions of passersby, but would have, in fact, expected it. And then you wouldn't have been upset.

Did I get that right terry?

YESSSSSS!!!
Someone gets it!!!!

terrible person

Message 8 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(2): How could it be worse?
From: terrible person
To: It Could Be Worse

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

You could have tripped and fallen as you were leaving and the people who were around to help you were only doing it for selfish reasons!

yes, like cynthia stevenson in "The Player".

if you actually worked as a sex worker, you could get laid, not laid off.

Message 7 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(32): avid Horowitz Blasts Camille Cosby
From: terrible person
To: politics

Ron Morgan writes:

>I would agree with you that it is all right "sometimes to make mistakes" If I agreed that this is a "discussion" but its not its an argument. In a discussion , people present views in the hope of synthesizing them and learning something.

Ron, for the record,

actually, it's I, terrible person, to whom you should be speaking. I wrote the above. I take full responsibility. I put my name on it, too! I don't know how Ron Morgan's name got on there but I did not put it there. did you? i'm not Ron Morgan's secret identity, if that's what you think. I regret that what I have said has been blamed on him almost as much as I am annoyed that it was not credited to me. it would be one thing if it were an old (even one day old -- things pile up fast here) post, or if Ron and I said similar things or in similar ways, or if I had often said "I agree with Ron". But I haven't. I think this is just another example of carelessness on your part. If you don't take this seriously, how are people to take YOU seriously?

that is what I would like to do here. I am not just

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interested in wining an arguement. So that is why I will readily admit when I think I am wrong. So if you point things out to me I will concede the truth of what you say if I can get it.

<snip>I do expect for anyone to call me on anything they think is not a true statement. I have no problem at then looking at what I said to determine if that is really what I mean. If you writes something that I think is not true then you can expect me to call you on it.<snip>

I have pointed out a number of points of fact on which you have been wrong. I haven't heard you concede a thing -- or defend what you said originally.

For me english is too imprecise.

Unfortunately, that is what everyone else here uses. In many cases, it's all they understand. What do you suggest? I'd be glad to engage you in French or Latin. bt it won't do the other folks much good. so we are stuck with english.

One word that I use may have a completely different meaning for me then it does for you.

Then define terms which you might think will be used differently at the outset, and/or give good reasons for those definitions. If you wait until you are called on them, it will look as if you are tailoring your definition to the situation.

Also I am use to writing something and then rewriting. I usually would rewrite something several times but in this forum I don't

But that is just the point!!! If something is important to you - and my impression is that the issues discussed here are -- wouldn't you put a little extra effort into making sure what you say actually reflects your opinions?

Listen: if I were to use to you the most foul insults that you as an African-American and a human being could imagine, and then say -- oops, that was a mistake, didn't mean that -- would you accept that? I think you would hold me accountable and I would have no claim to objectivity of any sort. (which is why, for instance, on rereading my post, I thought it prudent to substitute "PERSON who cried wolf" for the more familiar expression.)

so again, it is very possible that what I write may not represent what I actually intended for it to mean. My words are really only approximations at the truth as best I can depict under the circumstances.

I'm thinking of Emily Latella. "Oops. Never mind."

One small mistake casually shrugged off probably won't destroy your credibility. But each one will help steadily to erode it, until no one will believe you, even when you say that the world is round, without a footnote.

Message 5 7/30/98 8:39 AM
Subject: Re(9): The Bulge
From: terrible person
To: History

nessie writes:

History is the propaganda of victors. Never believe anything anybody says about their friends or enemies.

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on the other hand, in documents intended only for the eyes of a small like-minded group, with no expectation of public release (in fact, great fear of it), there can be veracity. though people sometimes are trying to deceive even their closest associates, or they really believe their own dogma or propaganda, they often will admit, even brag about, what they did and why in secret documents. I am just starting "The Pentagon Papers"; its intro compares it to "the release of the secret czarist archives after the Russian Revolution in 1917, the publication of Imperial Germany's records by the Weimar Republic following World War I, and the capture of the Nazi archives by the Allies at the climax of World War II."(p xii) of course, you have to believe that the documents presented by enemies aren't forgeries....

terrible person

Message 4 7/30/98 8:45 AM
Subject: Delusions of Grand Jury?
From: terrible person
To: politics

I actually don't have a post for this -- I suppose I could make one up -- but I just thought I would put it out there as a headline in search of an article. Or has anyone seen it used already?

terrible person

Message 3 7/30/98 6:20 PM
Subject: High-Water Marks and Pyrrhic Victories
From: terrible person
To: History

When I was a kid, I remember my father telling me about the Lowell Mill Strike. I'll never forget the phrase he used to characterise it; it was, he said, the "high-water mark" of the US labor movement. I think about that idea and that phrase a lot. A powerful nation or force, at the height of its power, bites off more than it can chew, and wears itself out in a long and debilitating struggle which it had expected would be easily and quickly won, so that it hardly matters whether the struggle was "won" or "lost." It keeps throwing more and more resources into winning an outright (and impossible) victory but as it does so sees that outright victory slipping away but can't cut its losses and leave. I can think of many examples. The Mycenaean Greeks took and sacked Troy, but the ones who had not been killed there were mostly killed when they got home, and they were so exhausted their power collapsed soon after. France and Britain "won" the World Wars but their industrial and man-power were so ravaged that they could no longer hold onto their colonial or world power and had to cede it to the United States, the Soviet Union, and the former colonized peoples. The United States, at the height of its power and confidence, got involved in Vietnam. Since South Vietnam did not actually fall until two years after the US departure, it could even be said that the US won. But the effects on the US were such that many saw (and see) it as the beginning of the US's decline. Or you could class the US with such powers as Napoleonic France and Hitler's

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Germany, who wore themselves out attacking Russia, lost, and headed downhill thence. But I like the other examples better. Pyrrhic victories tend to be thought of as battles, but they can be whole wars.

I guess this is one of those "laws of history", part of the Toynbee theory. Nations get big, get prideful, and suffer falls. Unless of course they had some less obvious goal which they could accomplish despite their apparent setback. Perhaps the British really wanted to pass the torch to the US as the defender of a certain set of values. Perhaps the Vietnam War really did have another purpose than keeping another country in the capitalist camp. Perhaps all the Greeks really cared about was going down in song and story. One wonders.

Message 1 7/30/98 7:34 PM
Subject: Re(12): Trust me
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

terrible person writes:

*"oh no, I love analogies (see above.) but a lot of your argument was "I know how *I* am" which is anecdotal."*

tw: This coming from the guy who thinks his sophomoric philosophy of life is on the same level of objectivity as the law of gravity.

now you're getting fresh, man. Since this started in -- was it June? your arguments -- I've seen your arguments -- have been pretty similar to mine. The interesting thing is that my philosophy really started to crystallize when I was about 16. But sophomoric -- that's "smart/stupid" in Greek, and 50% is not too bad.

But the mention of Newton -- that was what I call an analogy, a hypothetical one. Unless you are going to say, in the manner of Lloyd Bentsen, that you knew Isaac Newton, etc., etc.

Greta Christina writes:

No, I got it long before, Terry.

I'm not sure about that.

gc: And I, too, am bailing.

Is your boat leaking?

gc: I see little point in arguing philosophy with someone who, as Tim so perfectly said, thinks his personal life philosophy has the same kind of objective truth as the laws of physics. A philosophical debate that consists largely of one person saying, over and over again,

actually, at least two people

gc: "the way I see reality is just the way reality is"...well, it's not much of a debate, is it?

Bored,

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Greta

Well, then, it's been swell, folks. I at least was always interested. If frustrated. But as long as at least one person got it, and agreed with some of it, (and no, I am not talking about Kelsey Gadoo) it wasn't a waste for me.

with no regrets,

terrible person

Disposable Hero

We interrupt this resume to remind you all that, by Supreme Court decision:

New Jersey kicks "Big Apple" butt!!!!

go and eat worms, Rudy, and if you're really lucky, we'll let you keep the islands of Manhattan, Staten, and Long.

back to our regularly scheduled resume.

"So I spoke, and the proud heart in them was persuaded.
Yet I did not lead away my companions without some
loss. There was one, Elpenor, the youngest man, not terribly
powerful in fighting nor sound in his thoughts. This man,
apart from the rest of his friends, in search of cool air, had lain
down drunkenly to sleep on the roof of Circe's palace,
and when his companions stirred to go he, hearing their tumult
and noise of talking, started suddenly up, and never thought,
when he went down, to go by way of the long ladder,
but blundered straight off the edge of the roof, so that his neck bone
was broken out of its sockets, and his soul went down to Hades."

The Odyssey, Book X, ln. 550 - 560

"His form is ungainly, his intellect small,"

(so the crew would quite often remark),

"But his courage is perfect! And that, after all

Is what's needed when hunting a snark."

Lewis Carroll, "The Hunting of the Snark", Fit the First

"Beam down a landing party consisting of the Captain, the First Officer, the Chief Medical Officer, and Ensign Jensen."

"So we had to call off the jailbreak. But somehow, nobody remembered to tell Virgil...."

Fredo's going fishing on Lake Tahoe....

Who was that poor weak guy who gave Marlowe so much trouble in "The Long Good-Bye"?

"Les opinions sur son talent sont partagées: lui, il trouve qu'il est génial, tous les autres pensent qu'il est innommable. Mais quand il ne dit rien, c'est un gai compagnon, fort apprécié...." -- Astérix

The Terrible Papers, Part II: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, February to July 1998. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
They were expendable.....

six before breakfast

"Well, I tell you what, half these engineers've never been off the ground, you know. I mean, they're liable to tell you the sound barrier's a brick wall in the sky that'll rip your ears off if you try to go through it. If you ask me, I don't believe the damn thing even exists." ("The Right Stuff")

"You know, I don't believe there's such a thing as TV. I mean -- They keep on showing you The same pictures, over and over. And when they talk they just make sounds That more or less synch up With their lips. That's what I think!" (Laurie Anderson)

"Not even England. I don't believe in it, anyway. What? England.

Just a conspiracy of cartographers, you mean?"("Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead")

"I'm not worried about the scandal. I don't see how the President affects me in any way. I don't see any particular reason to believe he even exists. I mean, you don't believe in God, do you? Then why believe in Bill Clinton?"(Mayo)

More idols:

James Jesus Angleton

Darryl Zero

Max Cohen

Harry Caul

that Army officer at Ben Tre in February 1968

"I've never been to Chicago in my life. And I can prove that."
(Joe (Kiefer Sutherland), "Chicago Joe and the Showgirl")

My New Hero: Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.)

I'M going to HELL!!!
See y'all there!!

Mother's eyes are sparkling diamonds
Still the moon shows no light
This rose is withered, may God deliver
The rake at the gates of HELL tonight
Yigh! (The Pogues)

Well I'm standing by a river
But the water doesn't flow
It boils with every poison you can think of.

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Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
And I'm underneath the streetlights
But the light of joy I know
Is scared beyond belief way down in the shadows.
And the perverted fear of violence
Chokes a smile on every face
And common sense is ringing out the bells
This ain't no technological breakdown

This is the Road to HELL. (Chris Rea)

HELL would be bearable if only it weren't so crowded. (Mark Twain)

And then I woke up from my dreams
the neighbours all heard the screams
and all the stray dogs
were barking at the smell
those two scumbags had come back
with some matches and some petrol
set fire to my bed and left me burning IN HELL!!! (Carter USM)

To seek revenge may lead to HELL
But everyone does it and seldom as well
As Sweeney
As Sweeney Todd
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. (Stephen Sondheim)

Can you cough it up loud and strong
The immigrants, they wanna sing all night night long
It could be anywhere
Most likely could be any frontier

Any hemisphere
No man's land
There ain't no asylum here
King Solomon he never lived round here
There ain't no need for you
There ain't no need for you
Go straight to HELL, boys
Go straight to HELL, boys...(The Clash)

You pray for seven bullets.
Or you pray that you'll be killed.
Perhaps you'll go to heaven.
But more likely, straight to HELL. (Pray for Rain)

Now everybody's under somebody's spell
Unless they've already gone to HELL.(The Pet Shop Boys)

Then came from the mere, under the hills of mist
Grendel coming. He bore God's wrath.(Beowulf)

The customers do the serving themselves, like in co-op restaurants. (J-P Sartre)

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You can't send us to HELL. We've always been there. (Bertold Brecht)

Clint was right; make the Mordecai the dwarf Mayor and paint the town red.

I want it now.

"You've worked a lot on your own, haven't you, Captain?"

...

"I'm not presently disposed to discuss those operations, Sir."

"I'm unaware of any such activity or operation, nor would I be disposed to discuss such an operation if in fact it did exist, Sir."

...

"I saw a snail crawling along the edge of a straight razor, and surviving."
[and a very determined worm crawling over one? You know, a snail really CAN crawl along a razor; slime protects it that well.]

...

"Don't look in the camera!"

...

"Someday this war is gonna end." [What says it has to?]

....

Never get out of the boat, unless you're going all the way.

....

What did he see here that first tour?[and what happened in Boston, Willy?]

....

He could have gone for general, but he went for himself instead.

....

"We spent months uncovering them and accumulating evidence...The charges [against me] are unjustified; they are in fact, in the circumstances of this conflict, quite completely insane....What is often called ruthlessness may in many circumstances be only clarity....As for the charges against me, I am unconcerned. I am beyond their timid, lying morality. And so I am beyond caring. You have all my faith."

....

"He can be terrible, he can be mean, and he can be right. He's fighting the war." [Or is he shelling a continent? I can't believe this line is really in the movie!!!!]

....

"And he meant it."

....

"The heads. I know. You're looking at the heads. Sometimes he goes too far. He's the first one to admit it....If you could have heard the man...you were going to call him crazy?...The man is clear in his mind, but his soul is mad

[or mad in the head, and sick in the soul?...]...what are they going to say about him, that he was a wise man? That he was a kind man? That he had plans?

....

"Are my methods unsound?"

"You have the right to kill me. You have the right to do that, but you have no right to judge me."

....

"...call in the airstrike [with a poison kiss.] ...PBR Streetgang to Almighty.

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Almighty, do you read. Coordinates 09264712."

"DROP THE BOMB! EXTERMINATE THEM ALL!" [but drop it on whom?]

Mistah Kurtz, he dead. [The joke in the movie is that Kurtz is reading from Eliot's "The Hollow Men" which uses that line as an opening quote, and thus is the circle complete. A recent rereading of "Heart of Darkness" has revealed just how many elements of it Coppola kept just as tribute, though he did not need to for his own story. When it comes down to it, why not just parachute Willard in?]

The terror, the terror. No one understands terror (or terrorism, which they should, if they want to fight it.) They tell us they are fighting terror and that we should be scared of it. Meaning terror has succeeded. We should change our lives to guard against it, meaning terror has succeeded all the more. What

if the only object of terror were terror, as in "1984" (Part Three, section III?) No political or economic goal. Terror terroris gratia. Truly a bellum bellum.

"Horror and moral terror are your friends."

...

"We train young men to drop fire on people, but their commanders won't allow them to write 'fuck' on their airplanes, because that would be obscene." [or vice versa.]

It's really the same plot as "2001".

Hurry home early, hurry on home.
Boom-Boom Mancini's fighting Bobby Chacon.

When Alexis Arguello gave Boom-Boom a beating
Seven weeks later he was back in the ring.
Some have the speed and the right combinations
But if you can't take the punches, it don't mean a thing.

When they asked him who was responsible

For the death of Duk Koo Kim
He said "Someone should have stopped the fight,
And told me it was him."
They made hypocrite judgments
After the fact
But the name of the game
Is get hit and hit back. (Warren Zevon)

Although the war has just begun
Ignore the sirens, let's have fun
Put on your best go out in style
Although our future's looking black
We'll go downtown and join the pack
Let's celebrate and vapourize.

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Hey, there's no need to debate.

It's time to designate your fate.

Take the M out of M.A.D.

Let's all make a bomb. (Heaven 17)

Fade away and radiate.

Trudging slowly over wet sand
back to the bench where your clothes were stolen
this is the coastal town
that they forgot to close down
Armageddon -- come Armageddon!
Come Armageddon! Come!
Everyday is like Sunday
everyday is silent and grey
Hide on the promenade
scratch out a postcard
"how I dearly wish I was not here"
in the seaside town
...that they forgot to bomb
Come! Come! Come -- nuclear bomb!
Everyday is like Sunday
everyday is silent and grey
Trudging back over pebbles and sand
and a strange dust
lands on your hands
(and on your face)

Everyday is like Sunday
"Win Yourself a Cheap Tray"
share some greased tea with me
everyday is silent and grey.

from "Viva Hate"

Am I my resume? (A Chorus Line)