

CATCH TRAP 96

A fanzine consisting largely, if not entirely, of mailing comments on the 96th mailing; and for the benefit of Redd Boggs and others, NO, I do NOT have the wrong mailing-number on this one, this consists of comments on mailing 96th, and is designed for the 97th, or November, mailing of FAPA. The perpetrator, of course, is Marion Zimmer Bradley; the thesis, is as usual, is that writing mailing comments is like working the catcher's position in a flying-trapeze act, a catch-as-catch-can business that keeps things swinging. And those who prefer belles-lettres may read DAY*STAR instead.

MISSED TRICKS: I have nothing to say about the following fanzines; not necessarily because of any lack of merit, but because they failed-- for one reason or another-- to stir my imagination, or, possibly (as with the campaign announcements) because there is really nothing which one COULD say about them; SALE OF SURPLUS STOCK: ELECTION BALLOT: OVERTIME FOR EYETRACKS: TAFF VOTING FORM: THE VENUS ORGANIZATION: CAMPAIGN F(LIAN); SILLY SEASONSVILLE: WASHINGTON GUIDEBOOK: and possibly others.

CELEPHAIS (Bill Evans); The Gilbert and Sullivan operas have a small dedicated fandom, but I suggest that the main reason for their perennial hardiness is the fact that small colleges, and even high schools, find them perfect for music-department performances where the level of musicianship is mediocre and the dramatic ability of the students less. They can be goofed and it only makes them funnier; they demand no dramatic subtleties; they are almost fool-proof and a bad performance does not spoil them. At the same time they are not, musically, as poor as the sappy operettas turned out by schoolteacherish people for the use of schools. In fact, the G&S operas, typically, contain music which at times is as beautifully and subtly constructed as anything by Verdi; and in some places approaches Mozartean purity and intricacy, so that they do not debase adolescent taste; added to which they cannot possibly offend even the most strait-laced communities. ++ My own record collection is heavily weighted with opera, mostly because, when I began buying records, one could still hear symphonic music on the radio, while I never got enough opera. When I have all the opera I want (if ever) I'll start buying orchestral music.... I have about a dozen symphonies, none of the heavily classical or modern; Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Dvorak. Strangely, my personal preference is about equally divided between the very severe classicism of Mozart--and such extreme moderns as Howard Handon. I don't care much for the extreme modernists of the "noisy" or dissonant variety, but the choral works of Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten please me, and I've never heard anything I disliked by Ernest Bloch. In general my dislikes are for the school of Strauss and Stravinsky -- loud banging chords of the pseudo-Wagner persuasion. Richard Strauss in lyric mood pleases me; unadulterated percussion bothers me, and hurts my ears. And strangely, my favorite operas are those of Monteverdi and Handel.

A second page of CATCH TRAP: it's always a temptation to chat on records at length with Bill Evans. ++ I did want to add that a FAPA such as Redd desires in OPEN SEASON ON MONSTERS would have to include me, too, among the missing. It's strange, and sad, to see the Insurgent of early FAPA days arguing for conformity and strict discipline in FAPazines.....even while he would throw the organization itself open to chaos and abuse. And, while this may be treason, I said it to Redd's face, too; I had the opportunity to read a FIRST draft of the article OPEN SEASON ON MONSTERS, and while it was less loaded with clever phraseology and labored humor and word-play, it had at least the burning sincerity of Redd's convictions. Redd, I fear (and this shows in the NEHWON REVIEW, too) has taken Tucker's words about "humor, to be spontaneous, must be long-revised," too seriously. Or else he is too faithful to Keats' advice to Shelley to "lead every rift with ore", or else, as he said somewhere, his fun comes in the careful polishing. For I often discover that, in the lengthy polishing of his work to meet the verbal standard (which is high) the sincerity and genuineness of the thought have been sacrificed to mere cleverness and repartee. They read like Oscar Wilde plays, all glitter and little gold.

TARGET: FAPA (Eney's fault); Obviously I do not approve of the Eney constitution; it has loopholes through which one could drive a herd of giraffes. I trust it has not yet been adopted? ++ In view of your comment on the Tolkien paper, I refer you to my Maryse Choisy quotation; "The novel we read is never the novel which the author wrote...."; fear of some such comment almost kept me from publishing this paper, which began as a long letter to my kid brother, analyzing some of the Tolkien characters as I saw them. Yet I think the writing was instructive for me and perhaps the reading was amusing for someone else. And look at all the pages it got into the mailing! ++ Men who show their pride of parenthood by christening the harmless infant junior should think of what they are doing to the kid in question. As long as we have a patrilineal society I suppose it's unavoidable, but dammit, my older brother staggered along, all through his childhood, as Leslie R. Zimmer, junior, which meant that he was variously called Sonny, Bobby (corruption of Brother, which as a baby I couldn't pronounce) and Young Les. Then he promptly turns around and names HIS son Leslie R Zimmer III, and the poor kid is already "Rusty" for life. Or some such. ++I suppose by now everybody in folklore fandom has told you that the Forest of Broceliande is the one--at least in Tennyson, I haven't time to check Malory -- where the "wily Vivien" conned poor old Merlin into his rocky prison. There is an opera which includes an invocation to Adamastor, King of the Ocean --I think it's Meyerbeer's AFRICAINE. And Don Rodrigo was the hero of an evil Spanish legend; Rodrigo, the Last of the Visigoths; in 711 AD, or thereabouts, Count Julian, lord of Andalusia, sent his daughter to the court of Don Rodrigo, and Rodrigo seduced the girl; in revenge, Julian made an alliance with Tarik and let the Moors into Spain. Rodrigo's fate was never known; at the battle of Guadalete, his brothers betrayed him, and he may have died on the field or been carried away as a slave to the Moors. This has been dramatized many times in Spanish literature and romance, of course. Although he is not nearly as famous as the Cid.

A third page of CATCH TRAP, and at this rate my stencils won't last halfway through the mailing!

Fortunately, I have little or nothing to say about the Heinlein and Bloch bibliographies, submitted by Calkins, except to admire his thoroughly expert mimeo work. I wonder how many members of FAPA really find bibliographies goshwow reading?

About CATCH TRAP 95, I wanted to mention in passing, and mostly to Juanita (hint, hint) that BRITTANICA JUNIOR, under the heading CIRCUS, has a colored reproduction of the John Steuart Curry painting THE PASSING LEAP....the original of which I saw in the circus collection in San Antonio, along with his paintings of the Codonas. It might give you some more ideas?

I should say also about THE VENUS ORGANIZATION, Bill Rotsler, that when I started handing these out for distribution to the bundles, it almost broke up the bundle-session right then and there! Dan McPhail was following us around....'nuff said. But he asked me to tell you that if any of the bundles showed signs of having been drooled over....

NO HOLDS BARRED GUIDE --(KAnderson); I just went on the wagon!

VANDY (Coulsons); I have tried again and again to learn to smoke, and can't manage it. I am physically incapable of inhaling--every time I try to draw smoke (or any impure air, actually) into my lungs, it literally doubles me up in a spasm of coughing, choking and bronchial reflex spasms; my conscious muscles are trying to inhale, my involuntary ones are by damn going to EXHALE and get rid of that stuff, and I am caught in their argument. Maybe this is because when studying voice I learned to breathe from the diaphragm and when I inhale I inhale. But then, many singers do smoke....needless to say, then, when you see me smoking, I am just playing with a cigarette usually because everyone else has one and I don't want to be conspicuous; smokers are so supercilious about nonsmokers. I was told once that smoking would "help me to relax" but obviously it does nothing for my nerves under those conditions except to frustrate me. On second thoughts, I remember inhaling ONCE in my life; the night I worked in the carnival with a knife-thrower. After the second show a couple of the girls were sharing a cigarette and when I came down from the knife stage someone handed me a cigarette and I discovered, to my own mild amazement, that I had actually, without a hitch, inhaled it, and smoked it to the end. Evidently I have to be soaked in adrenalin to manage it. This may go along with what my doctor told me once.... I've always thought of myself as "nervous" but I now know that my "nerves" are fits of depression; my doctor said that I literally had no nerves to speak of...."you're the least nervous woman I ever had to deal with" or something. I suppose it's true--anyone who can stand for a knife-thrower, and not even an exceptionally expert one, must have remarkably even nerves! ++ I agree that fashions are to please other women; men are notably indifferent to fashion, and many women who conspicuously do NOT follow fashion, if you ask them, will reveal that they do it because their husband likes unfashionably long hair, some "out" color such as powder-blue, or some such, I follow fashions only enough to avoid what is, for me, a far worse nightmare; being conspicuous.

A fourth page of CATCH TRAP and I'm still talking to Juanita Coulson....

I always feel a little shocked when I see the unrelieved whiteness of H-SU. The professors are always talking about missions, in this church college; it's all right to deal with the heathen negroes in Liberia; but they would all have the horrors at the thought of throwing H-SU open to the high-school graduates of the colored school in Abilene, who will not be able to go to college unless they can afford to live away from home, in Dallas or somewhere. "But," they say, "those people would resent it, they'd be uncomfortable in a white school, or if you try to go among them." Well, hell; the negro heathen in Africa resented the missionaries to the point of cooking and eating them, but the Baptists still considered it their Christian duty to go over and educate and clothe them. So I keep wondering why their Christian duty does not extend to those top 3%, maybe, of graduates of the Woodson high school, say to the point of offering them free tuition at a "good Christian college" if they have this fear that the colored South will turn communist. Frankly, I think unless Southern churches, at least, lead the way to desegregation, we will see a wholesale desertion of the churches. Of course that might be a Good Thing....but I'd think self-preservation at least would cause them to jump on the segregation wagon at least a year ahead of the community!

CHURN (Nancy Rapp) I, too, held off on reading the Tolkien books because my kid brother's enthusiasms had almost smothered me on the very idea. Go ahead, Nancy...read them. All that will happen is, you'll kick yourself for not doing it three years ago.

THE NO HOLDS BARRED GUIDE (Karen Anderson) Ugh! I never DID drink much, but after reading this, I damn near went on the wagon forever.....I must confess, apropos of what someone else said, that I like "loathesome syrups of the Mogan David persuasion". I like sweet things, and I refuse to be Put Down by people who think anything sweet ~~is~~ beneath contempt. As I have remarked before, to me there is NO SUCH THING as a "good dry" or "good sour" taste. Anything dry, sour or tart is ugh-ish to me. Sour things I cannot force down at any time, and why drink horrible tasting bitter or sour things when there are nice ones? Why should one be automatically declassée by a taste for sweets?

DIFFERENT: Moskowitz. Try as I may (and no one out-does me in respect for any woman intelligent enough to become a surgeon) I cannot see how this lengthy recital of Chris' medical qualifications should of necessity prove she is superior to Ted White in LITERARY judgment.....any more than Ted's editorial and musical experience qualifies him to perform an operation on somebody's erring gall bladder. The only person I knew who successfully combined medicine and literature was Conan Doyle, and by all accounts he was an inferior doctor. By this My-Wife-is-A-Great-Big-Woman technique, Sam is simply making them both look silly. No one has questioned the competence of Chris in her OWN field; she, on the contrary, has questioned ours in a field (amateur publishing and fandom) where we have at least twice the experience. I think, by and large, FAPA was nicer to Chris than they would have been to anyone else who made such a blind attack

A fifth page of CATCH TRAP, Chris Moskowitz being looked at with a mild frown....

on FAPA and the right of the members to publish their fanzines as they wishes. Chris, and G M Carr, and even George Wetzel, are all entitled to their opinions on how fanzines should be published; but not even God Almighty can tell OTHER members of FAPA how to publish. That Chris Moskowitz's opinions on fan-publishing must of necessary carry extra weight because she has all sorts of scientific degrees shows a laudable desire, on the part of Sam, to commend his wife in our eyes, and is rather endearing; and Lord knows, most people who have met her, admire her. I know I do. But I doubt very much if that qualifies her fully to attack fandom. If she wants serious creativity, there are whole bookstores full; if she wants scientific thought, I dare say she can find it in the various professional journals. And if she wants to show FAPA by example exactly HOW a fanzine should be published, I dare say she can afford the stencils and paper to do so, and we will read it and criticize it.--but by our standards, not hers. Just as if, were I to apply at a medical school, my small-but-sound reputation as a writer of science fiction would be, if anything, a handicap rather than a help to my classwork.

THE RUNNING, JUMPING AND STANDING STILL FANZINE: Ashworth. My own personal reaction to Tolkien's poetry has nothing to do with its literary merit, Mal. I found it tremendously moving and enjoyable, and, in fact, after seven years of total inaction, it spurred me to composing music again; the Rivendell suite, and various other bits. But my taste in poetry is not of the best. I tend to prefer the shoddy in poetry, and when I find myself whole-heartedly enjoying a poem, I can be almost sure that it is second-rate or less. I enjoyed the Tolkien verse too much to feel that it has much enduring value as poetry. In fact, it's not poetry, but VERSE: which anyone will tell you is something very different. ++ There are some lines which strike me as felicituous; but in general it is much too jingly, too A-A-Milne-ish. I appreciate most, of course, the very intricate internal-rhyme-and-assonance scheme of

"Eearendil was a Mariner...." and the lines which ~~begin~~ begin "...and burning as an island star" are, perhaps, a cut above the general verse-level of the rest. I'm no judge of poetry; but I liked it too much to feel that it can be much good.

ANKUS, #1; Pelz. THE CASE OF THE INCOMPLEAT CONCEPT was perhaps the best thing to appear in FAPA this year!

THE LAREAN (Ellik); Ron, the hopes of stirring a comment like this--not mere empty compliment, but some serious taking-up and arguing of the various points raised--was the reason why I did, despite my misgivings, publish MEN, HALFLINGS AND HERO WORSHIP in FAPA. Thanks. +++ Actually, since finishing the Tolkien saga I've been on a medieval-lietabture kick; (gads, I can't even spell!) literature. ++ Your points about Lancelot are well taken, but I have never been wholly satisfied with any of the novelized, portrayals, whether they follow Malory or are more romanticized

Sixth page of CATCH TRAP, Ellik and Lancelot under scrutiny;

I first became aware of Lancelot as a baffling character when I read THE BOY'S KING ARTHUR or some such; I've carried him around, like a worm in a nut, ever since. John Erskine's GALAHAD: ENOUGH OF HIS LIFE TO EXPLAIN HIS REPUTATION, struck me as being wildly off the point, even though I was about fourteen when I read it; when I read White's THE ILL MADE KNIGHT (back when it was first published as a separate volume) it touched me and struck deep into something in me, but still it wasn't the Lancelot whose image had formed itself somehow to me; and neither was an otherwise very fine novel, LANCELOT, MY BROTHER, by Dorothy James Roberts --who also perpetrated something called THE ENCHANTED CUP, about Tristram, for the Ladies Home Journal. Well, not a "fine" novel; let me say, rather, a very nice novel. +++ I agree with you; the Achilles-Agamemnon analogy for Boromir and Aragorn was poor. But it strikes me (later) that Boromir is a better analogy with Hector than with Aias. Boromir's fine qualities are those which were found in the son of Priam; devoted love of his father and his country, to the exclusion of all else; a fatal impetuousness; a bravery to death. His faults also are Hector's; a tendency to bullying, a desire for pre-eminence (if you note, every time he speaks, he is subtly jockeying with Aragorn for place, and Aragorn, though he is too proud actually to strive for place with him, nevertheless shows his mettle with Boromir as he seldom does with anyone else) and a gallant death which leads even his enemies to show him compassion. In fact, all through the first volume of the trilogy, I liked Boromir much better than Aragorn; later I felt Faramir was the most likable, not to say lovable, man; not till the third volume did I begin to grow fond of Aragorn, and on re-reading, I find he grows more lovable with acquaintance. I suspect, like the hobbits, I was a bit awed by him at first.

If I were to compare Aragorn, actually, with anyone in the Arthurian saga, I'd say he reminds me of Sir Balin. He, too, dwelt in obscurity and wandered long under disfavor; and when reading Malory, his stern speeches make me think I am hearing Aragorn's very accents. Also, he is the only character in all of Malory, so far as I can see, who ever contradicted or went against the counsel of Merlin to take his own counsel instead. And his long battles against the invisible Knight, Garlon, somehow remind me of Aragorn....ah, well.

I shall also mention -- among heroes of legend who are ILL at ease with women-- Sigurd in the Volsunga Saga, in that dreadful death-doomed scene with Brynhild. He tries first to console her, then-- reminiscent to me of Lancelot with Elaine-- offers "I will give thee all my gold, if I die not," which she refuses, and even desperately offers at last "I will put away Gudrun and take thee for wife", which Brynhild also, in her fey and demonaical mood, refuses; "Two husbands from one roof would be shame", under the Doom (Wyrd is the word used in my book) that lies on them.

It was suggested to me that "hobbits" might be derived from the "boggits" of Cornwall and the French "hobereaux". The trolls are from Beowulf, and you'll locate the barrow-wights in the Frithijof-saga, of course. And Luthien and Beren are an echo, perhaps, of Eochaid and Etain?

A seventh page of CATCH TRAP, resolutely turning away from the temptation to continue with the exegesis of Tolkien;

MOONSHINE/MOONSHADE (Sneary-Woolston); I was most interested in your "old Western town" staffed with members of FAPA, because it suddenly struck me; suppose, at a convention or something where FAPA had, through some odd co-incidence, been present 100%, and all the rest of humanity had suddenly been wiped out, how much of civilization would be present and reconstructable through us undestroyed ones? Like all such limited societies, there would be a shortage of women of nubile age, but not as severe a shortage as there would have been twenty years ago in FAPA: especially if we count the wives of members. We would have several scientists, several men of letters, a doctor (you forgot, Chris Moskowitz is a doctor, Rick; Richard Eney wouldn't have to be on the hook, though he'd probably have to work as her surrogate, and my own pragmatic knowledge of practical nursing would probably have to take precedence over my other abilities in such a survival-society.) We have Wrai Ballard to take charge of farming and agriculture, and Dan McPhail also has some experience with farms, as I have with dairy cattle, and probably some others--Nancy Rapp, for instance, grew up either on a farm or in a rural community, didn't you, Nan? We have a grade school teacher --- Juanita Coulson, whose connection with YANDRO would not blacklist her in such a community -- and a high school teacher; Lee Hoffman knows enough about cars, as does Ger Steward, to be in charge of mechanical operations; and in general I think FAPA would be pretty well equipped for survival. What do you think? +++ Rick, you don't publish very often, but when you do, you have a way of filling up my mind with Deep Thoughts. For instance, this business of one man's hell being another man's heaven. If I wanted to be facetious, I would say that my hell would be "The life I've been living in Rochester for the last ten years"-- and yet it wouldn't be entirely facetious either; an eternity like this would be about as much of a hell as I could think of. Also; hell is a place where there are babies and small children crying uncomforted or in pain and I am barred, as I sometimes am in nightmares, from going to them.... ++++ Equally personal; what is your concept of heaven? For me, quite simply, heaven is a place where there is music continually and I can sing it freely and without any limitations. Someone once told me, when I explained my conception of heaven, that it sounded like a rehearsal session at the opera house. I suppose so. I'm not stage struck. The shabby tawdriness of "backstage" and "show business" only somehow makes it seem real; something real people can do; work, not fun; the out-front glamour means nothing to me, and even puts me off a little with its phoniness, but I am never happier than when I am working backstage or rehearsing ...whether directing a school play, standing around grousing and weary in the wings while the choir waits to sing, pulling myself together to For-Godsake-get-it-RIGHT-this-time! I can be tired out, angry, hoarse, frazzled or ready to drop, but I am completely, unselfconsciously happy, as I never am any other time. I never wanted to write, you know. That's propaganda for book jackets. I never wanted to do anything but sing. Life had something else in store for me, but if there IS a heaven, and if I get there, and if actual rewards and happiness have anything to do with it, heaven will be a place (for me) not too unlike a big theater, all backstage.

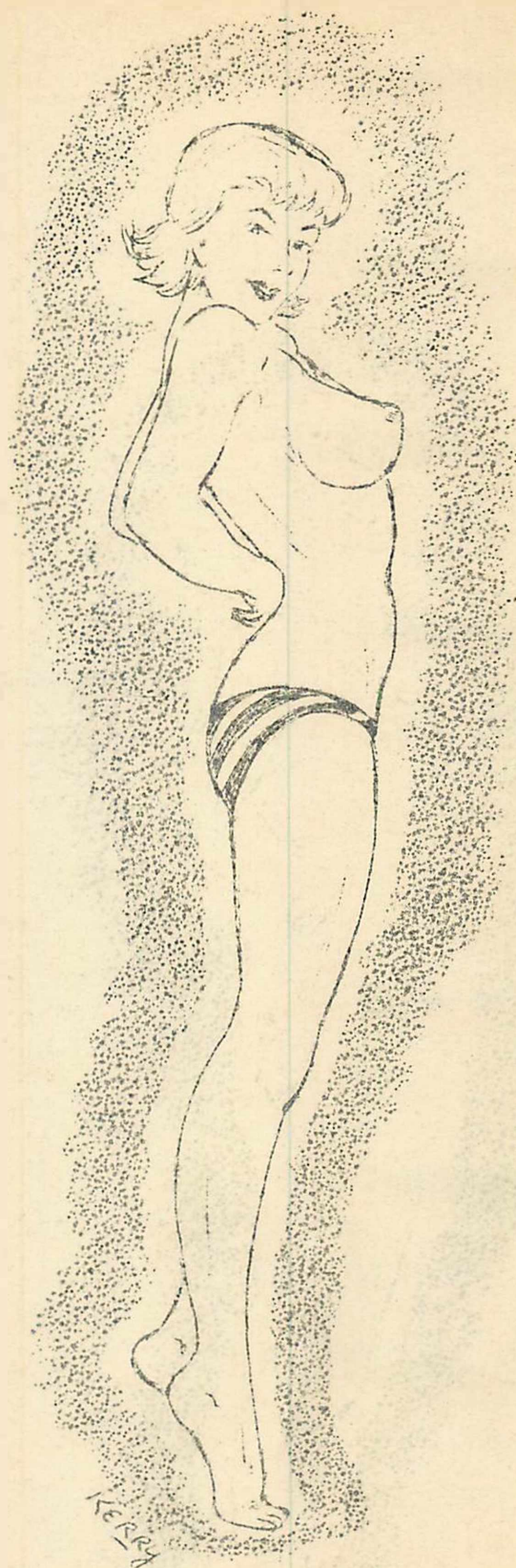
An eighth page of CATCH TRAP, and last because it is my last stencil, and I must mail the package out this morning. I wish Rike, Donaho and Sally Kidd had managed to get into the bundle, rather than postmailing; I had comments on their zines, yet CATCH TRAP, by one of my very few rigid policy lines, is in honor bound to ignore postmailings.

APOCRYPHA (Janke); I dunno, but it seems funny to me what when you want a singer you should specify unmarried; I mean, like, do you want her to sing, or do you want her to play around with on the side? If the latter, no wonder so many popular-band singers are so atrocious... musicianship is not their decisive point, then? If you want a sweetie, can't you locate one elsewhere, and in deference to the ears of your audience, pick a girl for the band whose main assets are in her larynx?

ALIF (KAnderson); Thanks for reprinting the Orcs Marching Song; I lost my copy from Detroit and never could remember how it went. I love that cover of yours.... you can draw circles and scrawls and make them look like sparkles, something no one else except Bjo has ever been able to manage.

PHANTASY PRESS: We loved having you with us for my final mailing, Dan, and were only sorry that you had to dash away in such a rush. I also like that Indian-stomping cover. One of the Abilene colleges, McMurry, always has an Indian theme; they call their campus "The Reservation" and their Homecoming every years means that they erect tepees and totem poles all over the campus with a sort of festive carnival atmosphere --all Indian, with tom-toms and feathers and so forth.

HORIZONS: Warner. I did like your extended commentary on Hagers-town; Brad once wrote a similar one about Rochester, though more businesslike, for his railroad, which I long intended to run through Day*Star but now cannot locate. ++I agree with you that fandom's referring to Tolkien as the Ring trilogy or even (shudder) the Ring Cycle is confusing and infuriating! ++ I would be utterly willing to sell stories like my cat-story, Harry; but who is going to buy them? Every time I put this sort of writing into a story, it gets ripped out again--if the agent doesn't do it, the editor will. There isn't room for many "quality" writers in the country; and anyone who wishes to make a living out of writing, as I do, soon abandons the other refuge of poseurs and would-bes and phonies, the "little magazines". I lost what little respect I ever had for "little magazines" when I discovered that the things I tossed off cynically and without effort won praise. It's too easy to fake profundity when actually there is only carelessness. ++ I think it's pretty obvious that thin-ness is a status symbol and has nothing to do, actually, with mental or physical health; all affluent societies put a premium on this sort of "conspicuous rejection"; "I can afford so much food that I can even afford to starve myself without fear or going hungry tomorrow." Doctors, who are human, either accept the status symbol and rationalize it by solemn remarks about the health qualities of underweight (look at all the pompous asses who jumped on the high-protein (i.e. high-status, expensive-food) bandwagon, and now they learn that it's asking for "strokes". Or else they rage, futilely, as they have done for years about the dangerous high heels; because true health (low heels) cannot strive with status (high uselessnesses)



"Thank YOU, Bill Rotsler!"

