

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT 11
(PART FOUR-F-TEMP-2):**

●
CONTEST IS WON!!!

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***RICK COLLIER
OF
CALGARY, ALBERTA,
CANADA
WALKS AWAY
WITH
AN
EASY WIN!!!!***

**CONGRATULATIONS,
to
RICK COLLIER!!!**

Dear Readers, Followers, Guests, Associates, and Friends:

Rick Collier of Calgary, Alberta, who has
<http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought6.html> appeared on our web site before, returns
as the winner of our *Gulliver's Travels* contest. He will receive a copy of *A Nation Gone
Blind* inscribed in a way sufficient to do him the honor he deserves.

As I mentioned in <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought6.htm> “Food for Thought 6,” Rick and I are friends from far back, having met not in our third year of college, as I erroneously said before, but in our fourth, 1962-1963. We were drawn together first as *literary* friends, Rick having founded a literary magazine in challenge to our campus’s “official” student literary magazine, which was moribund by merit of having fallen into the editorship of students more dedicated to snobbery than to life—while Rick’s magazine, edited by him and two or three others—and influenced by the unique personality and ever more than lively intellect of <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9104990/Reed-Whittemore> Reed Whittemore—was nothing if not dedicated to life, energy, *and* wit.

And to this day Rick remains dedicated not only to those things but also to a strong *and* practical socialist-based vision of cultural and political reform and aid to humanity that he devotes enormous amounts of time and energy to. Beyond all that, he’s an outdoorsman as well, having been a rock climber since *before* college, and, still a climber, possessor of a most astonishing record of peaks ascended.

To put all of this another way, Rick Collier is a person with the most rare combinations of gifts. He’s one with whom I can converse, without the least trace of euphemism or apology, about the absolute darkest facts of the global and political peril we all now face—and yet he’s also a person with whom I can engage in the purest pleasures of talk on *literary* subjects, not omitting the element of outright laughter that’s almost gone from the *pseudo*-literary “world” of today in our Age of Simplification, a “world” inhabited and represented by insipid, deceitful, posing, self-infatuated types along the lines—let’s just say, since <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought3.html> the name pops into mind—of Walter Kirm.

Give me ever Collier, never Kirm. Here’s what Rick wrote, and let’s have a round of applause for the man:

Answer, Part 1:

Completion of the Quote, from Chapter 2, “The Voyage to Lilliput”:

“and due Care was taken every Morning before Company came, that the offensive Matter should be carried off in Wheel-barrows, by **two Servants** appointed for that Purpose.”

Answer, Part 2:

You are, of course, parallel to one of the two servants in Lilliput—symbolizing the US diminished in stature to a mere shadow of its former greatness—and your service is far greater than your reward. Simultaneously, you cart about the excrement that’s symbolic of hypocrisy itself, as well as being damning evidence of the existence *of* self and of the interests that *serve* that huge self, these turds being themselves the products, literally, of *self*-interest, all of it

stinking to the heavens. In addition, the “offensive matter” is what’s discharged from a body politic—Gulliver—that has grown (an opposite symbolism from before but a corollary to it) enormous in its self-feeding gluttony and has now invaded the peaceable kingdom. There, by its very nature (that is, the very nature of corporate capitalism), it exhausts the treasury and, by its blundering, lays waste the land. You, Eric, are one of those two poor tiny laborers, facing a task of cleansing and removal that’s far greater than you alone can accomplish, *and* that grows ever bigger. Even so, just as a close examination of fecal matter can reveal traces of cancerous colon polyps, so will your sifting through the shit of the Bush administration and American “culture” reveal the ghastly disease that reticulates America.

This doesn’t provide a perfect analogy, maybe, but it touches the high points and reflects at least some of the great Swiftian complexity. Since I’m already owner of an inscribed copy of *ANGB*, I will accept a graciously diminished \$750 out of the \$1000 you offered in its stead.

—xp

A NOTE TO THE READER:

The signature “xp” is one of Richard Collier’s email “handles,” standing for “ex-professor,” he being now retired from many years as—among his many other achievements—professor of English.

Collier assumes that Gulliver’s “offensive matter” forms “turds.” This seems to me a rash assumption. Gulliver’s diet, after all, is new to him, the drinking water of Lilliput new also, and might it not be much more likely that he would suffer from “travelers’ diarrhea” than that his stools be properly dehydrated and turd-firm? Further, wouldn’t a stream of *liquid* “offensive matter” be more appropriate, symbolically, in representing the truly vile hypocrisies and diseases of American politics and culture today than a firm—and *relatively* scentless—“turd” would be?

As for the contest prize, my own memory is that the “offer” of \$1,000 in place of the far, far more valuable albeit by comparison *seemingly* more banal prize of an inscribed single copy of *ANGB*—my *own* memory is that such an offer was made in jest, not earnest. Odd, isn’t it, that a man of Richard Collier’s supposedly sharp intellect and literary cultivation should have missed entirely so elementary a thing as another writer’s simple tone of irony?

Any serious offers of arbitration will be welcome from readers interested in helping mend the suddenly and sadly riven friendship between Mr. Collier and me.

To all, meanwhile, as Happy a New Year as any of us can expect, and as Happy a New Year, certainly, as *all* of us hope for.

—EL
—January 1, 2007