

# "WHERE'S THE BEEF?"

## THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF DISAPPOINTMENT ----- ELLIOTT #1820

The shooting crew was short one little old lady and sent out to pick up one off the Manhattan street. She was spotted through a beauty-parlor window, chattering away under a hairdryer. Now she'd made millions for the adfirm and increased Wendy's hamburger sales 20% in two months.\* What's it all about? (\*The first two months of 1984.)

> (7) It puns the "complaint" connotation of the word "beef." ... More reasons?

1. "Heartaches? Take them all to Jesus! He will take your heartaches all away." So goes a lugubrious, effective gospel song--effective partly because addressing an experience everybody has: all God's chillun get disappointed, sometimes so profoundly that "heartache" is the right word. At the other extreme from profundity is finding too little beef in your fastfood hamburger that you stupidly bought from some competitor of Wendy's. The ad's power is multi-form: (1) It gives what-the-hell comic relief for commercial situations in which anger at getting ripped off compounds your disappointment at getting less than you expected; (2) It's caveat-emptor education: "I'm never going to buy another hamburger from THIS fastfood chain!" (3) It invites trust in the advertiser's product; (4) It encourages complaint when you're disappointed: Swallow the skimpy hamburger, but don't swallow the disappointment: Go to the top! Phone the president! Raise hell! You'll get bitter if you don't yell: if you do yell, the situation might improve for you and others. (5) In a world/society full of fraudulent politeness, it provides the pleasure of seeing somebody act natural, frank, unguarded, even gross, unselfconsciously, with emotional freedom. (6) It's brief.

2. A guy on Mondale's promo team put the phrase in Mondale's mouth to warn the American people not to buy Hart, whose "new ideas" would prove disappointingly skimpy if he were to make the White House. It was old-style roughhouse politics, a relief from the bland politeness of USA '84 politicking (in contrast, e.g., to Britain's lively political rhetoric; how did Americans get so polite in politics, religion, everything; helps explain American antisemitism, Yiddish being so rich in insults and other impolitenesses; this taboo against being "not nice" parades as kindness, even love--not the biblical love that "covers a multitude of sins," but the pseudolove that covers a multitude of honesties and fosters alienation by badmouthing confrontation).

3. By "the expulsive power of disappointment" I mean this: When a human being gets low/real enough to admit disappointment, some illusion(s) is/are expelled and reality has a fresh chance at the soul. As repentance (literally) re"turns" the soul to reality, away from sin, admitted disappointment accepts the painful admission that one's idealistic expectation is reality-frustrated: reality has refused to support one's illusional idealism, and from somewhere (I say, from "grace") one has received the courage to become discouraged, disappointed, even despairing (in contrast to being only desperate, which is the condition of the soul fighting destructively for its illusions: here Alex. Lowen, in his THE BETRAYAL OF THE BODY, is the master--esp.pp.116ff). (The underlings are IFD Disease, *pace* Fritz Kunkel.) Lowen, p.117: "Hope is realistic even in the deepest despair, since it admits the possibility of disappointment."

4. "I must pick up the pieces and go on." How often a counselee has said that to me, and how hopeless the soul that cannot arrive at the point of saying it! Life, to be itself and to grow, must occasionally fall to pieces: that is the bad news of good news.