

Situation Normal???

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Sadistic Equine Necromancy

by Aileen Forman

Merry Christmas! December is here and with it come the joys of fandom holidays. The Christmas/Hanukkah/Solstice party at the Formans' (7215 Nordic Lights Drive, call 896-6338 for directions) will be December 16, starting at 6 p.m. Just like last year, there will be an Alien Auction (sort of like a Chinese Auction, only politically correct, since aliens haven't bothered to complain). In case there are some members out there who weren't at last year's party, here's the low-down on it. You bring a gift, something interesting, costing \$10-15 that you already wrapped. When you arrive, you hand over your gift and get a number. Around 7 p.m., we start the Auction and draw a number. That person chooses a gift from the pile and opens it. The next person drawn then has the choice of taking that gift from the

first person or picking a new gift and unwrapping that one. If the second person chose the first person's gift, then number one gets to go back to the pile and choose another gift. Number three has a choice of one's or two's gifts or a new one, etc. Obviously, there are advantages to having your number picked last! The only rules are that you can't just take back something that was taken from you. It has to pass to another person first. Also, you must surrender your gift if chosen by another - no crying or leaving early! Last year, candy was a popular item, but be original! Be daring. Something you think is unique and special will probably go over well. And after all, you can always choose your own gift!

We'll have the usual wassail, eggnog and stuff, but feel free to bring any special food that you like as well as extra drinks. You can also bring any gifts that you want to give to SNAFFU members and

we'll exchange them after the auction.

Also coming up is the yearly election. It's time to decide if you want to run and who you want in what position. It's fun to help run SNAFFU, and it actually looks good on your resume! Make your intentions known by the January 8 meeting, and we'll tally votes January 22.

Dues will be due in January. Please make sure Su Williams has your correct address and give her \$10. Remember that we can only be a strong club with your support, and keep in mind all the terrific things that being a member provides you with. Prior to January 1, SilverCon IV memberships will be only \$10 also. Get your membership in ASAP!

4 December	5	6 Joe Gifford's Birthday	7	8	9 BW Mardi Gras walk- through. Meet at 7pm in the lobby. 896-6338	10 Social! 7PM At the Katz' 3701 Bridge- glen 648-5677
11 SNAFFU meeting at Skinny D's 6pm. Topic: Classic SF	12	13	14	15	16 SNAFFU Christmas Party at the Formans' 6pm 896-6338 Allen Auction!	17 Magic games every Sunday at Peggy & Tom's. Call 878-1698
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 Merry Christmas Mini-meeting at the Katz' 648-5677 6PM	26	27	28	29	30 SNAFFU Video Night at the Forman's. starts at 7pm 896-6338 Wizards & Time Bandits	31
1 January Rick King's Birthday	2 Remember! Dues are due this month and elections will be held on 1/22/95	3	4	5	6	7
8 SNAFFU meeting at Skinny D's 6pm. Topic: Animals in SF	9 Joyce Katz' Birthday!	10	11	12	13 SilverCon meeting to firm up plans and start volunteer lists, etc. at the Forman's 7pm 896-6338	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Social! 7PM At the Katz' 3701 Bridge- glen 648-5677

As Dreams Are Made

by Dave Wittman

This is from Eric S. Rabkin's **The Fantastic in Literature**, pages 209-211. The emphasis is added.

...The archetype of the mad scientist (a human version of the all-powerful Martian) is Prospero, and the ultimate emotional significance of imaginary beings...lies in our urge to have Prospero order our world. We each have within us the soul of a Ferdinand or of a Miranda.

...whether this explanation...may legitimately relate William Shakespeare and Edgar Cayce, it is still clear that as scientist, as detective, as Shane, or as Superman, the ordering figure often enough presides over narrative worlds that are indeed fantastic in their regularity, and attract us for that very reason. Even the scientist Faust was tempted by Mephistopheles; **we all seek an ultimate knowledge that will allow us to control our worlds.** The world being what it is, **such control is fantastic.**

One realm of activity in which people habitually comfort themselves with the sense of control is games... sport, fraternity rushing, medieval jousting, and quiz programs...any activity that is structured by convention in such a way that people agree to assign known values to allowable actions and in which they can, through these actions, produce a condition that the participants will agree to value. What makes checkers a game is that both players subscribe to certain conventions (rules) and the play by these rules can result in a condition wherein one has "lost all his men." This, surprisingly enough, gives the other participant pleasure.

...Westerns are so highly conventionalized that they can be expressed as "formulas." ...in a typical Western (say, "Shane"), the hero, possessing the wild skills of the outlaws (range riders, Indians), becomes convinced that he should employ his skills to protect the values of the townspeople...mediating between the two groups and passing between their two terrains, but his success is a self-abnegation that requires him to return to the wilderness (Natty Bumppo, Shane) or give up gun-fighting and settle down (the Virginian). ...detective stories, fairy tales, indeed **many widespread genres are essentially "formulas."** And formulas...are...**equivalent to games.**

...games/formulas/fictions create fantastic worlds that allowably offer diametric alternatives to perceived reality.

Games are much more common...than Cawelti suggests, however. There are countless "games people play." In **A Farewell to Arms**, Lt. Henry and Catherine Barkley, both lost in the cruel and chaotic realities of war, silently, conventionally, agree to be in love. Catherine's pathetically ritualistic assertions of love are required to make the game believable. Ultimately, the great effort expended in sustaining this mutual fantasy is seen by the protagonists as heroic and engenders real love. At that crucial point, the original chaos of reality asserts itself and Catherine dies in childbirth. So much for living in our fantasies. Reality, Hemingway tells us, is not so kind. And yet, **we all live in games time and again. We structure our lives, our sense of sexual roles, and our relations with fellow workers by subtle political conventions to which we subscribe because we need the consolation of a tame world.** If one can accept the intricacies of a social system as a highly complex analog of a **simple game**, the one can see that the escape offered by a "formula" **shares an essential element of structure with any fantastic escape offered by any mental construct,**

any complex set of conventions, even, in a fundamental way, with those conventions necessary for a so-called realistic novel.

And with any genre of novel, even science fiction.

If this is true, then why do some people view gamers so antagonistically? Why do they bash gamers?

I'm hoping to reduce the antagonism by showing that games and science fiction share a common ground. Both are grounded in fantasy.

We all seek to control our worlds, to escape the chaos of reality. Science fiction readers do it by living vicariously through the protagonist of a novel. Gamers do it by role-playing the protagonist(s) in a game.

We all want to be heroes. We all want good to triumph over evil, law to triumph over chaos, our dreams to come true in spite of reality. We identify with Sherlock Holmes who always solves the crime; with Dudley DoRight, the Canadian Mountie who always gets his man; with imaginary characters who preside over fictional worlds, maintaining order with fantastic regularity.

We all seek the ultimate knowledge to control our worlds. That's what magic, religion, astrology, science, and philosophy are about. That's what great athletes, artists, and writers show: skill--control. That's why we identify with detectives, crimefighters, and scientists.

Science fiction deals with a particular form of control: science. But science fiction is still grounded in fantasy: it creates fantastic worlds, alternatives to reality.

In writing this article, I've reached a fuller understanding of what Hemingway and the realists are all about. Instead of creating worlds that are alternatives to reality, that are fantastic in their regularity, they create worlds that remind us of the chaos of reality.

Yet, realistic novels still have conventions; they still have formulas. All novels have conventions and formulas, an element of control, of fantasy.

The need for control also gives insight into the rules lawyer/role player (the rules are just guidelines) dichotomy. The rules lawyer wants rules, conventions, and formulas. Without them, he sees chaos and reality, not regularity and fantasy. The role player wants to escape the restrictions and limitations of reality. For him rules represent those restrictions and limitations. He wants nothing to do with reality and rules. Each side's fantasy is ruled by a different formula.

We are all grounded in fantasy. As Shakespeare has Prospero say in **The Tempest**, "We are such stuff as dreams are made..."

SF and the Movies 1994

by Peggy Burke

Maybe I'm being optimistic, but it seems to me that there's a trend for movies with speculative themes, especially in the movies released Fall 1994.

Of the Fall releases, at least eight have obvious speculative fantasy themes:

Interview with the Vampire

Junior

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

The Puppet Masters

The Santa Clause

Star Trek Generations

Stargate

The Swan Princess

All of these have been hyped by the media (sometimes to nauseating extremes) and many are expected to be among the top-grossing films of the year, if not the decade.

Moviemakers may finally be realizing that the SF audience is larger than they originally thought--not to mention composed of people with more sophisticated tastes than the average Trekkie. SF fans today are not contented to watch a cops'n'robbers story set on a space station and call it science fiction. There is more to being speculative fiction than just having a high-tech laser background. Certainly, the SF movies being made today seem to be more complex than ever before--and this complexity cannot be explained by the advances in special effects technology. (After all, as George Lucas said, an effect without a story is a boring thing.)

Is speculative fiction finally moving from the sometimes shady reputation that it has had for so many years into the "respectable" mainstream? Are moviemakers realizing that they have a large audience available, if they'll give the audience what it wants?

I don't know--I certainly can't read the minds of anyone in Hollywood (assuming they have minds, which is sometimes debatable), and I'm not sure I'd want to if I could. This could just be a freak year for movies--but more optimistically, it could be the start of some major efforts to bring good SF to the silver screen.

I hope so--but if that's true, that means that I'll be spending even more money going to movies than I am now. Bankruptcy court, look out!



SilverCon IV Information

SilverCon IV will be held September 29 to October 1, 1995 at the Best Western Mardi Gras Inn--an all-suite hotel.

Guests of Honor are **Roger Zelazny** and **Wilson (Bob) Tucker**.

Membership rates are \$10 until December 31, 1994; \$15 until May 30, 1995; and \$20 until September 30, 1995. Checks should be made payable to SNAFFU, P.O. Box 95941, Las Vegas, NV 89119-5941.

Room rates at the Best Western Mardi Gras Inn are \$60 per night, single or double. Reserve your rooms early by calling 1-800-634-6501 or 1-702-733-6994.

As always, we'll have panels and gaming as well as a hucksters' room. This year, we're trying something different: novice gaming, for people who have never done role-playing games before. If you're interested, let us know!

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