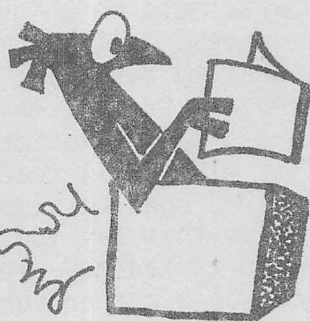


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BLATANT #13 is produced by Avedon Carol, who still resides at the ever-popular Kensington Tombs, 4409 Woodfield Road, Kensington, MD 20895 USA (301-564-0137), home of the Chuch Harris Fan Club International and Arfer Thomson Appreciation Society (God save the King). It is a cold February here in the Nation's Capitol, and I do not approve. Copyright (c) 1985 by Avedon Carol. All rights revert to the contributors. SDP #121. Duplication courtesy QWERTYUIOPress and thanks to our slowly de-gafiating Terry Hughes, too. Special thanks to King Arfer for the logo. Send lawyers, guns, and money/The shit has hit the fan. Member: fwa.

BUSINESS A lot of things have held up this issue, but I refuse to believe it has anything to do with the issue number (I'm superstitious, but not that way). Anyway, life's too exciting to dwell on all that rubbish. Why, I've even discovered that if you don't have to listen to it every other song, "Relax" sounds much better (of course, it would, stuck between all those multiple plays of big hits from StyxxJourneyWagon).

Boy, I sure know how to waste time getting to the point, don't I? And none of the foregoing has anything to do with what this section is about, which is The Mailing List. The first thing to know about the mailing list is that rich brown keeps it all in a computer, so send him your COAs. This is important. rich keeps lots of people's mailing lists, so it never hurts to keep him up to date. Also the postal rates are going up (higher than you think), so don't forget to mail in your Usual if you want to stay on that list. I mean it.

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HOW I SPENT MY XMAS VACATION After only a couple of days experiencing the discomforts of New York's deteriorated subway system, it occurred to me that a few Ace Specials might be proof against the battering of noise and the excruciating boredom of being tossed back and forth on the slick seats in the big travelling worm. Gibson's character careens back and forth through his oily neon cities in much the same way that I feel myself careening back and forth around the subway cars. Case sweats one deadline after another on his life, or what he perceives to be his life, and when the train comes to a halt I look up to see Patrick sweating the TAFF voting deadline in what seems to be a comparable way. Everything gets swept into the drama. Bleeker Street could be Japan, now. I emerge from the subway tunnel and peer up at the Tessier-Ashpool grounds where the two artificial intelligences chase each other--no, that's the Dakota. Opposing fictions surround me as they surround Case; it is all, undeniably, as real as anything else in my life. It is never real to be in New York. I lived here, once, before the bright blue of the Electric Circus began to fade into the rest of the greying city; it is all unrecognizable to me now, and I must follow Patrick's lead as he navigates my old neighborhoods, stranger to me now than the haunts of the Rastas in space.

Waking up I see what must be bright sunlight reflected off of the fire escape, but the air around it moves. Without my glasses I can only guess at what I must be seeing, but the fact that my eyes pick up the motion at all tells me there is more here than a subtle breeze. Snow, I think, squinting, still unsure. December. Snow. I am entombed. Shepard's revived dead may break through the blinding sharpness of the white glare, but my mind still reaches for neon, Japan, videogame discussions with a deadman. The green-eyed poet is almost too alive; the characters, undead or mad, or both, have too many words that say too little. The living are decaying faster than the dead. Perhaps Japan is fading. The shadows begin to soften the light, and I think I may be balanced on a copper subway platform. From outside I hear what I think must be an effect of the wind, but it is really people trying to start their cars. The dead man creates winds that tear out trees and howl through rooms between confrontations with a cast of Tarot cards. He walks the pattern and drops through a new transition. I think. It must be Gibson's fault. When the snow melts I crawl back out of the subway and see the Xmas decorations in Chinatown and find I've been thrown back into the video arcade. It really isn't fair, you know--it was a great love story, about the dead man and his accomplice. I should be able to stay there for a while, but there is neon, and I see no love stories in the subway lights.

In the laundromat I make my own transition. *Neuromancer* and *Green Eyes* are gone, I think. I open *Palimpsests* and check Terry's notes on it. Ah, it's a test. "I defy anyone to read the first chapter and thereafter not need to read the rest." I read the first chapter. I do not like the self-absorbed protagonist and his contemplation of his crummy relationship and his lousy professor and the dirt. I have a rare moment of wanting to read something else, although I usually finish most of the books I start. But I am in the laundromat, which is even more boring, and there is nothing else to do but look at the junkie who wanders back and forth, or watch the young women who are watching their washes suds up. And the second chapter is better, and some action starts to happen. Only now I wish Camus was Harrison, who could read the expressions on his lover's face, and recognize what their drama was doing to her. I wonder if Camus will continue to be as closed as he is, or if he will flower in his own drama. But I've been conned, I discover. As the snow melts off of the New York streets it suddenly engulfs Camus. One big snow job. He just does things at random, he just happens to run off to Alaska. Only he has a reason--one that he kept from the reader. It's a cheat. It happens because the very idea of an existential SF novel is oxymoronic. "The existential universe has no telos," Patrick explains.

And anyway, he doesn't love her. A classic case of someone claiming to love, when they just want another palimpsest. There's a certain justice--no, there's certain justice in her part in the project of using him as one. But it's still too loathsome a concept to undertake to explore, to entertain. Why do they do it? I feel my own ability to communicate deteriorating while someone else's self-hatred is being projected on me. I don't need to read books about this--this nameless place is really Cincinnati. And Camus can't read his lover's face--his ex-lover's face--because all he ever sought there was his own reflection.

Yazoo travels much better in time. And so do I, when the phone rings. It is Linda Pickersgill, calling from Reading where it is 1985 already. "Hey, you're in the future--who won TAFF?" But back in the subway the year isn't over yet, and nobody knows. I love Waldrop's characters, though. I love Took-His-Time's casual departure from stereotype, and the things that are named for what they are. The New Year's Eve party is a jarring step into another dimension entirely, where Larry Carmody explains to me that Lucy Huntzinger is responsible for the rift in New York fandom. "Don't tell me you didn't know, Avedon!" Larry, I still can't make that one hang together. Anymore than I can make sense of Camus and his surprise trip to Alaska. Yazoo and his new friends are much more sensible. Yazoo stays in the dying past because it makes more sense than the dead future. I, on the other hand, return to the present via Amtrak, so I can read in the mail that strangers have already begun re-writing my winter holiday. That's how archeology works.

THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS A couple of people have been watching me stop short in the middle of writing my TAFF report and telling me to go ahead and write it anyway and cheerleading at me all over the place. I doubt I have to say much to clarify what exactly had me so blocked on it, but you may not have had the pleasure of having your every word scrutinized to find The Most Sinister Possible Meaning.

Early last August I was over at the Gillilands' place using AAG's word processor and remarked that I was having trouble writing the damn trip report since I now felt like I couldn't say anything about D. West at all (I mean, who knows what sinister meaning could be found in the simple mention of the man's name, and what if, God forbid, I should make a--gasp!--typo?), and practically the only funny bits I could remember involved D. West (all two of them, mind you) in some way or other (one was just a joke of Malcolm's, but hey, it could, you know, MEAN something).

Anyway, I got all bogged down in it, because on the one hand I wanted to write it a certain way, and on the other hand I was so conscious of the ugly creature looking over my shoulder and re-interpreting my every word that I couldn't write any of it either. There was a point when I was sure I would never even look at it again, never wanted to hear of it again, at least until everyone I knew was dead or something.

Then I thought, well, maybe I'd write it, but I'd edit out all three of the jokes just so no one could "misunderstand" anything. I toyed with the idea of writing a TAFF report so bland that no one could possibly have a thing to say about it except, of course, that it was terribly dull and boring. Alternately, I could write a report containing a fully fictitious section about the Albacon banquet in which I find myself having incredibly delightful conversations with D. West, who is miraculously seated next to me instead of the dreadfully thoughtless, rude, and boring person who sat beside me in reality.

I have decided to write exactly the TAFF report I was planning to write. I will not delete all three jokes, nor any mention of D. West. If you want to pretend there is anything omitted that would have been there otherwise, that's your tough luck and you're a suspicious and sinister person yourself. But it's my TAFF report and it's going to be written the way I wanted to write it in the first place.

Mind you, it may very well sit on that disk forever, or there may be one single print-out which will hide in a drawer somewhere never to be seen by another human soul, or it may even be published somewhere some day--but it will be a TAFF report that does not even admit of the last seven months, since they hadn't happened yet, and anyway, I'd rather keep a record of a good time than of a bad one.

STRANGER THAN FICTION I guess if enough people ask you the same question enough times, you're bound to feel obliged to answer it sooner or later. And so it is with me. In the last month I've had quite a lot of people ask me, with incredulity bordering on horror, if there is any truth to the unlikely, unbelievable rumor they've been hearing about me. And, while I usually shy away from talking about this sort of thing in my fanzine, I feel like it beats reading about it first in some fountain of innaccuracies like Uncle Dick's Little Thing, so maybe I'd better face the ugly rumor squarely and be done with it.

Yes, it's true. I'm moving to England this summer, or so the theory goes. I'm moving to England because I can't not move to England any longer, despite the fact that I am loathe to leave Washington and a lot of friends who mean a great deal to me. If the last six months have proven nothing else to me, they have certainly demonstrated that I have quite a number of really excellent friends, the kind most people spend a lifetime wishing they had. And many of them live right here in this very country--indeed, some are right here in the lovely Washington Metropolitan Area. I will miss them very much, you can believe it. I will miss the people in New York who've been the light of every trip I take to The City and most of my East Coast conventions (and some of my other cons, too). I will miss the West Coast types who I see only once a year, at worldcons. I will miss those nice friendly phone calls and occasional meetings at cons with the Midwesterners I no longer have the stamina to drive out to visit. And the Tronna people, too...

But I have also learned that I have some very good friends elsewhere, and I think I've even met someone I might be able to live with, a mere 3,000 miles and an ocean away. And I believe it may be possible to live somewhere outside of the Washington Area for an extended period of time, maybe even a lifetime. Some people seem to do it without significant ill effect.

The trouble with moving to another country, especially an economically depressed one like England, is that they don't like to let foreigners just move right in and take up space in their job markets. The British Embassy has informed me that there is only one circumstance under which they will let me stay in their country for more than three months, unless I can prove that I have some desperately needed skill which I and only I can provide to British industry--which I don't. If I want to live in England and get a job, I have to be demonstrably irreplaceable to someone in Britain, you see, and simply telling them that there are people in Britain who feel that way about me just won't do. They want to see it On Paper, as it were, the official kind. A marriage license, in other words.

Well, I'm sure it comes as no surprise to most of you that the idea of obtaining official license from church or state to indulge in my own private existence doesn't especially thrill me and in fact fills me with a particular kind of trepidation. Once churches and governments start giving their official sanction to things they usually start meddling in them, setting up rules that no one in their right mind would knowingly agree to, and generally fussing around where they are not wanted. In the case of the specific institution in question, governments have had a habit of making one or both of the participants less than they were before for the purposes of--well, I'm not sure what all this is for the purpose of. But I don't necessarily expect it to work out to my advantage, and precedent seems to indicate that if it ever comes to a point of law, I'm not going to be the one who benefits from the contract.

So there are trade-offs and concessions and compromises to be dealt with, yes. And it may not be easy to appease those of you who've been wondering if all this marriage stuff means I've suddenly lost my mind and turned into someone else. No, I haven't--I may not be happy to have to play games with The State, but I'm not going to let the State's silly rules keep me away from something I want, either, so I'm playing along. I haven't changed my mind about marriage and I haven't suddenly stopped caring about those things, but sometimes you just have to make choices, or so my mother tells me. And if you're going to be alive, you have to take risks, you have to trust someone some time, and you have to keep living on the assumption that somebody, somewhere, is going to be worth the risk, no matter what has happened in the past, or in the statistical records, or even over the dinner table in your unlamented lost youth.

On the other hand, there are those of you who want to believe I have changed my mind about all this, and in the tone of your questions I've heard something else. For some reason, perhaps you think I'm capable of operating outside of the range of human emotions; that I, alone among the human race, am capable of making absolutely reasoned decisions, and that therefore when Avedon Carol, of all people, starts planning to run off and get married, it means there's hope for the world after all, anything is possible, even love. Well, forget that one. We're all human, no matter how hard we try, for better or worse, and what I try to do or even accomplish is still only a matter of chance and luck and maybe individual reality combined with the same idealistic and irrational hopefulness that infects all of us from time to time. I've fucked up before--not because I didn't recognize the chance of failure, but because, as always, I hoped I was correctly perceiving a chance for success as well. This time I think I see a far better than normal chance for success, one that justifies the unusually high level of risk involved in, among other things, moving across an ocean.

So I still think the marriage contract, as it has been honored (although usually only in the breach) throughout most of the world, is a dispicable document, and if I could live and work in Britain without it, I would. I'm not indulging this unpleasant whim of a government just because I've suddenly turned into a raving romantic. Still, if you must know, I wouldn't marry anyone else. I've never quite managed to turn myself into a soulless cynic, and even for a marriage-of-convenience, given the latitude husbands are so often granted by law in regard to their wives, I'd have to feel an awful lot of trust for someone to sign that contract with him. And hell, if you have that much faith in someone, and you really believe he'll honor your values, then maybe you just might be able to live with him after all.

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CATCH OF THE DAY This issue has gone on for far too long without having mentioned any other fanzines, but there isn't time for any serious reviewing to go on. Still, a terrible injustice has been done and something must be done, even if I make only a token stab. The thing is, people like Steve Bieler and Lucy and Sharee and Tom Weber have all been running around making some pretty good publications--sometimes even a long-awaited First Ish--and everyone's been so preoccupied with stupid distractions that no one has said anything and given these people the proper egoboo. Don't look here for it, either, but as I say, a token effort.

Victor Gonzalez produced his first issue, and I hardly heard a word about it. Fandom is in a terrible state indeed when four or five or six months elapse and not one fanzine you open spends so much as a paragraph saying

that Totally Wired is a fine first effort for VG and by the way has some good stuff from our pal Steve Bieler and even, to my great surprise, Dave Clements himself. And then, lo!, even before Xmas, Mister Gonzalez has teamed up with mild-mannered Jerry Kaufman and put out a zippy little fanzine. Yet, here it is February, and with their second issue already distributed, how many of us have brought out the old banners, or even mentioned their fanzine in our fanzines? Not enough, I'll tell you that. Is this any way to run a fandom?

Aside from Instant Gratification, there have been other Major Publishing Events recently. John Jarrold, the suave and cool nightclub entertainer who will soon be playing an engagement here on our shores, has expanded the horizons of his perzine publishing empire and made Prevert into a genzine. The ever-so-delightful six-year-old twins, Lillian Edwards and Christina Lake, have celebrated their 6th birthday in This Never Happens without a chapter of Snakes. Ted White has gafiated and returned with a new run of Egoscan, on a different color of paper and using capital letters in the title (I liked the CD article the best, but Ted, as usual, disagrees). Terry Hughes has purchased an e-stenciler and is contemplating pubbing his ish. And Mal Ashworth has risen from the swamp to produce Rot 6, a mere couple of decades after the last issue. And about time, too. I mean, wow, even Ted Pauls has put out a new Kipple or two. If this keeps up, I shall feel compelled to revive The Invisible Fan, and you know what *that* means.

And don't forget about sending your COAs to rich brown, who is currently staying at Ted White's place, 1014 N. Tuckahoe, Falls Church, VA



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