TIGHTBEAM # 166

TIGHTBEAM #166

©Lynne Holdom, Nov 1990

cover by Dave Garcia
back cover by Karena Kliefoth

TIGHTBEAM is the fanzine and letterzine of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. **TIGHTBEAM** is published by the N3F in January, March, May, July, Spetember and November, and is distributed to the members of the N3F.
Contributions, especially letters, should be sent to the editor
Lynne Holdom, 3808 Macalaster Dr NE #25,
St Anthony, MN 55421.
Please write TB on the envelop.

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Printed at Campus Printer, 1315 4th St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Editorial

by Lynne Holdom

Welcome to the final issue of **TIGHTBEAM** for 1990. It has already snowed here in the Twin Cities (what else is new) though for the most part, Autumn was warmer than usual. I would have gotten **TIGHTBEAM** finished earlier than usual as well except that I did not get any letters to print, or so few that the letter section is much shorter than usual. If I hadn't had two long articles, I would have had to put out a 16 page zine. Since everyone says they want long zines, you have to cooperate by giving me something to print. If I don't **get** letters, none get printed. So, please, please, send letters. If they go to the wrong editor, they get forwarded so don't say you can't figure out which editor to send them to.

I do think I owe some explanation for asking for book reviews and then not printing any. I had two pages worth of reviews. Unfortunately **TIGHTBEAM** in its small format needs to be planned in blocks of four pages, not two. So I would have waited for two more pages of reviews or write two pages of copy or something. (Of course if I had had two more pages of letters there would have been no problem but....) Since my time is limited, I decided to use the reviews next time. One was camera ready as well. Sigh.

On the other hand, we are looking around for a new printer as the one in Michigan is often very late in getting the job done. It isn't much use for the editors to get the zines ready by the deadline, if the printer then holds on to the zine for a couple of months. This was the reason **TIGHTBEAM # 165** was so late. Catherine had it done early but it sat and sat and sat in Michigan. I have a printer here in Minneapolis, who only takes one week to print the zine from the time I deliver it. Of course it also has to be sent to Michigan as that's where the mailing permit is right now. Getting a new permit in a new post office means at least a $30 start up fee (that's just for the application.) Once you get the permit there is only the yearly fee. So we will have to be quite sure of where we want to have it.

I also want to get really started on writing the novel which is bothering me periodically. Maybe the release of the film **MISERY** is an omen designed to tell me what will happen if I don't work on it. At the moment I only get nasty comments from my writers' group. However.... Short stories are hard to write - at least for me - as I don't have a short story mind. There's simply not enough room. Of course the tales I hear from people who **have** written novels and not been able to find a publisher for them is another story. But at least this keeps me off the streets at night.

This issue also contains an article on **STAR TREK: THE NEW GENERATION** which should given folks something to comment on. And do you want Jeff to go back and write up the second season? (If the third season was the season of the kidnapping, is this latest one the season of the family?) Have any of you cable subscribers any idea of what the new SF channel is going to be like? My cable company says we'll get it sometime next year but I don't have a clue as to what it will contain. Old **TWILIGHT ZONE? OUTER LIMITS? THE SF THEATER?** Or perhaps just all those clunky monster films which I don't consider **real** SF. Of course the way the real world is going, I could use almost any form of escape.

I'm also hoping to get some time to actually **read** something. You should see the height of my "to read" pile. As the next author we will be discussing is Joan Slonczewski, I am working my way through **THE GATE AROUND EDEN** which is a post holocaust, alien invasion story (so far at least.)

However my major problem right now is getting feedback. I have heard next to nothing about what size zine you want, or even what you want in contents. Please, write to me. Every editor needs to know what the readers want and I haven't heard that lately. I don't need things to be camera ready in order to get them in **TIGHTBEAM**. I simply want legibility. I've only had one person submit something that was illegible so far. And I print all the letters I get sooner or later. But since I am short of these, they will probably get printed very quickly. Send all letters to me and if someone else is doing the January issue, they will be forwarded. It's your zine, so you should be contributing.

On that cheery note, I will wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Good New Year and a Happy Holiday Season. Don't gain too much weight.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sometimes when you have been doing something for a long time, you begin to take things for granted. Things that it took you a while to learn and now seem second nature to you can still be sort of confusing to those who haven't been around quite as long. I am going to take this opportunity to go over some of the things that every Neffer needs to know.

Whenever you find out that you are going to be moving, please send in a change of address form (available from your local Post Awful) to the Secretary as soon as you know that you are going to move, even if it is still weeks or even months in the future. The reason for this is that the mailing labels for the zines are usually made up a month or so before you see the zine. If you wait until the last minute, the chances are that you address label will be wrong which means that your zine will be late. It also means that the Secretary has to pay to have the zine forwarded to you, if there are still extra copies available. The Post Awful usually does <u>not</u> return the zine to the Secretary to be forwarded. Instead they rip the back cover (with the mailing label on it) off and return it to the Secretary. They also charge for this privilege (generally between 35¢ and 75¢). Since the funds allotted for Secretary expenses usually run out around May of each year, any further expenses are born by the Secretary and the Secretary doesn't have bottomless pockets. A little consideration on your part will improve the financial wellbeing of the Secretary. Yes, the Secretary's allotment could be increased, but no, the club doesn't have the funds to do so; this expense is just something that goes with the job and is to be expected but still it would be nice to keep the added expense to a minimum.

Something else to keep in mind is when you send in your dues, the check or money order should be made out to the Treasurer, Don Franson and <u>not</u> to N3F or The National Fantasy Fan Federation or ever to me. Please do not send cash! If your letter should get lost a check can be rewritten but cash is gone forever. You should always make sure that your name and address is clearly shown so I know who to credit the money to. Most people include the reminder card that Don sends when your dues are due. This is fine. If there is any change in your name or address (like you got married or divorced or thrown in the slammer) please let me know so I can see that the zines get to you without a lot of detours. (An aside here - if there is any information that you would like kept confidential, such as your telephone number, birthdate, marital status, etc. just say so and I will not give this information out. There are some members that have asked that their birthdates not be published (they won't be getting a birthday card from the Birthday Bureau but that is their choice); others don't want their phone numbers known; some don't want their real names (or pen names, as the case might be) known (I know them but won't tell - nothing sinister - there are some pros in the club who don't think it would help their sales if it were known that they belonged to a fan club - I don't agree but that is their choice and I respect it) and there are even a few prisoners among the membership - again, this is nobody's business except their own and if they want to tell anyone it is their privilege and if they don't, that is alright too.)

You should always examine your mailing label and make sure that the information on it is correct - if it is not, let me know. The same goes for the Roster - check your name and address and if there is anything incorrect on it let me know. If you haven't received a birthday card, chances are that we don't know when your birthday is - let us know.

A little effort on your part can really help to make the club run smoothly.

NEW MEMBERS' LISTING

Forrest Anson Avery
310 Frisco Ave
Leeds, AL 35094

Computer sales. BD: 12-15-50. Inst in SF 25 years. Inst in APAs, coll books and fanzines, comics, cons, zines, reading, writing, corres. Fav authors: Heinlein, Haldeman, Foster.

Barbara Brown
18531 Dearborn St, Apt 3
Northridge, CA 91351

BD: 11-17-46. In fandom 2 years. Inst APAs, art, collecting cartooning, computers, games, RR's, zines, movies/TV, reading writing. Favorite authors: MZB, Brooks. Likes Trek, Dr WHO.

Brenda Chaffee
2253 N. 9th #2
Laramie, WY 82070

Writer. BD: 3-12-59. Inst in SF 18 years; never in fandom. Inst in Correspondence, Zines, reading and writing. Likes soft SF/fantasy. Fav authors: Card, Chalker, Clayton, Tepper.

Edward P. Farrell
8875 Hillery Drive,
San Diego, CA 92126

Eng Scheduler. BD: 12-26-58. Inst in SF 25 years, in fandom 20 years. Likes Horror. Inst in art, collecting, computers, movies/TV, taping, reviewing. Fav authors: Lovecraft, Tolkien.

Tomasz Kamuzela
Ul Piekna 3/3, 47-220 Kedzierzyn-Kozle
Woj, Opolskie,
POLAND

Mary L. Kenaston
23 Elk Run Cove
Little Rock, AR 72211

Analyst. BD: 12-30-46. Inst in SF 35 years. Inst in collecting books, corres, movies/TV, taping, writing. Fav authors: Norton, Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein, Simak, Cherryh.

Carroll Luckett
Rte 2, Box 121,
Patriot, OH 45658

BD: 9-21-75. Inst in SF 5 years; in fandom 2 years. Likes Inst in Collecting, comics, games, movies/TV, reading, writing. Fav authors: Koontz, Cook, de Camp.

Eric McCormack
522 Lavern #10
Redlands, CA 92373

Designer. BD: 11-1-68.In SCA. Inst in cartooning, comics, cons, games, movies/TV, zines, editing, computers, reading, reviewing. Fav authors: Anthony, Asimov, Niven, Harrison.

Louis Albert Russo
108 Crescent Ridge Place
Lafayette, LA 70503

Actor/comic. BD: 7-4-35. Inst in SF 35 years. Inst in APAs, art, collecting, cartooning, corres, movies/TV, comics, zines, RRs reading, taping. Fav authors: Heinlein, Tolkien, Lovecraft

COAs: Emily Alward, Rte 1, Box 110A, Ninevah, IN 46164
Christine Fischer, 11600 Gavin W #31S, Pierrefonds, P.Q. H8Y 1YS, Canada
Ronald Gerard, 68 Monroe St., Garfield, NJ 07026-3308
Steve Herrick, P.O. Box 18066, Cincinnati, OH 45218
Harry Hopkins III, 4910 Woodman Park Dr #11, Dayton, OH 45432-1170
Jeff Kasten, 1155 DeKalb Pike, Center Square, PA 19422
Rhonda Krafchin, 5328 Allandale Rd., Bethesda, MD 20816.
Donell Meadows, Rte 4, Box 134C, Morehead City, NC 28557
Joan Panichella, 133 Oak St., Avenel, NJ 07001
Susan Parker, 1842 Governor Rd., Bellingham, WA 98226
E.E. Rehmus, Box 190667, San Francisco, CA 94119.
Ruth Sacksteder, Pox 12593, Hinks Annex, Berkeley, CA 94701.
A.J. Sobczak, 330 East Cordova St., #268, Pasadena, CA 91101
Penina Spinka, 4 Glenmount Court, Glenmont, NY 12077
Laura Staley, 327 Dolph Rd., Mankato, MN 56001
Mark Williams, 8075 Sandleford NW, North Canton, OH 44720
Taras Wolansky, 100E Montgomery St #24H, Jersey City, NJ 07303

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION - A Review of the Third Season

by Jeffrey Kasten

In this article, I will first review the episodes of the show's latest season individually and then sum up with a few overall observations.

Evolution

This episode gets the season off to a rather shaky start. The scientific premises are good, the Enterprise is doing some actual exploring for a change, and the interplay between Wesley and his just-returned mother works well. The problem is that the 'menace' is a pushover. It's another misunderstood life form that just needs us to make a bigger effort at communicating with it. As somebody put it while I was watching: "I'm sick and tired of seeing the Enterprise attacked by newborn children, nannies and bacteria."

The Ensigns of Command

This is a pretty solid puzzle story, not all that ambitious but quite successfully done. I don't see much to say about the plot. The most noteworthy part of the story is how Data's attempts to be more human seem to have suffered an unexplained and never explicitly stated reversal. He is polite enough when the heroine falls for him, but is unable to respond at all. He stays this way for the rest of the season.

The Survivors

The premise of the story is not bad, and if **STAR TREK** was a half hour series, it might have been excellent. At an hour there simply isn't enough happening, and the plot is embarrassingly padded (how many times can Picard interrupt the old couple's dancing?) It also suffers from the series' most sexist photography ever: the cameraman is ridiculously fixated on Troi's left breast as she struggles to breath during the attack on her.

Who Watches the Watchers

This is a breathtaking story, one of the best **NEXT GENERATION** episodes. It's also about the only one that captures the feel of the old show (outdoor action, detailed alien society, chases, good music, etc.) I strongly suspect the lack of these elements in other episodes is why so many don't like **NEXT GENERATION**, even though it has its merits. Anyway, in this show at least the plot is handled far better than old TREK would have done: One can easily imagine Kirk & Co. on the same planet (but undoubtedly cut off from the ship by some plot device) and dealing with the same problem. However, in the old show the society would have been far less benign to start with, and would have been turned totally upside down by the end. Kirk would have wound up seducing/raping the leader who'd be played by a younger actress, and change her views in the process, etc. etc. Talking about this show is one of the few places where old versus new Trek actually has relevance. In this case the new is a vast improvement. Why can't they do shows like this more often?

The Bonding

Not one of the better stories. We don't see Lieut Astor killed, the kid playing Jeremy is no actor, and the alien is again misunderstood rather than evil. This adds up to a so-what kind of episode where we have little emotional interest and are supposed to. Surprisingly, the best moment comes when Wesley admits to Picard that he used to hate him but doesn't anymore. This is a beautifully played scene, which makes it all the more regrettable that Wesley's character is usually so poorly written for.

Booby Trap

After having little to do for two seasons, and having the one story featuring him making him too passive ("Samaritan Snare"), this episode gives Geordi his first chance to star. Fortunately it's an excellent story. Lavar Burton has no problem being at the center of the action, and the woman playing the Enterprise's designer is just as good. Which brings up another good point of the new series: parts for female guest stars have been good, and have generally been played by actresses vastly better than the lobotomized bottle blondes in the old show. Now if they

could only extend that improvement to the female regulars....

The Enemy

Geordi stars again, trapped with a Romulan on a deadly planet. The plot of this is more than a little contrived; how much manipulation is needed to get two enemies to work together? Geordi's also a little dumb in some spots, and the Romulan's no winner either. Somehow it works rather well anyway.

The Price

This is Troi's best episode so far. She falls for the negotiator a little too quickly, and I (mistakenly) got the impression they'd met before. Riker's double standard re Troi (I can fool around, but **you** better not) is put to good use here, and for once it seems to have been done consciously. Starting with **Up the Long Ladder** and through most of this season, Riker is far more sexist than before. The science in this story is fine, the big conference pretty well done, and Troi's boyfriend is likeable but a bit of a sleaze, as was intended.

The Vengeance Factor

This episode is a bit overcomplicated, but works well. The rebel base raided by the landing party was reused almost unchanged in **The Hunted**. Riker's romance with the servant leads to a memorable (if not very well directed) payoff at the end, when he's forced to kill her. As in most of the stories this season, the writer doesn't flinch away from the logical, if unpleasant, conclusion of the plot.

The Defector

Not a bad story, but it suffers from too many holes in the plot and shaky pacing. The Romulan, paranoid as he was, should have been able to guess from the evidence that his superiors let him escape, even if not why. The arrival of the Klingons was done nicely, but had been telegraphed badly earlier. They also should have been shown in person at least briefly. The very end, when they find the Romulan's message to his family, made up for a lot of these problems.

The Hunted

This story superficially resembles old Trek's **Dagger of the Mind** (insane prison escapee winds up on the Enterprise), but develops quite differently. The end, with Picard abandoning the planet's pompous rulers to the rebels, is magnificent. However, the story is almost ruined by a ludicrous (and unnecessary) scientific blunder. Genetically altered or not, once the soldier was picked up by the Transporter, that's IT. He's GONE. And yet he somehow got free. I groaned when I realized what had just happened.

The High Ground

Beverly Crusher's biggest part to date, and a fine story. It is similar to **Vengeance Factor** not only in its reuse of sets but also in overall feel and downbeat ending (and both stories resemble **The Hunted** as well. They tend to run together a bit in memory and should have been aired further apart from each other). The idea of a superior transporter that can go through shields but eventually kills the user is a good one and fully developed. The guest stars, both the rebel leader and the tough female police chief, were very good. Dr Crusher is also good, but it's noteworthy that even in this episode she doesn't actually do much; we know just a bit more about her at the end than at the start.

Deja Q

Am I the only one who's not crazy about Q? John DeLancie is an outstanding actor, but I have not been able to figure out what makes the Q stories so popular. As in previous stories, Picard comes across more like an irate landlord than a starship captain, and I don't see what any of the byplay adds to the Trek universe. Corben Bernsen's cameo at the end was nice, though.

A Matter of Perspective

There's nothing really wrong with this story that some genuine tension wouldn't fix. We know Riker didn't kill the scientist and won't go to jail, which makes it all sort of pointless. What makes it interesting anyway was probably unintentional. Just what did happen between Riker and the woman? Was it

halfway between his version and hers? After all, she was under oath and not lying, and what she remembered on the stand didn't make Riker look good at all. Like old Trek's **Turnabout Intruder**, this is a thought-provoking story for the wrong reasons.

Yesterday's Enterprise

Tasha returns, in a far better part than any she got while a regular! I don't know if she learned to act in the interim or just got better lines, but she's magnificent. So is Captain Garrett, in spite of a part that gives her nothing to do except be a stalward captain. There's very little I can say about this that wouldn't sound like a Hugo nomination (Chicago, Labor Day weekend 1991 - register now and get your ballots). There are a few minor weaknesses in the background (the Enterprise D in the war universe wouldn't resemble the familiar one so much) but no real holes in the plot, which is crucial in any time paradox story. Giving the Enterprise C a female captain (Kirk would be horrified) was the icing on the cake.

The Offspring

A good story, but one that left me a bit cold. The actress playing Data's daughter was fine, but somehow I couldn't get involved. It just seemed too obvious that she'd die at the end, or maybe the problem was me. Why exactly she died, what Data learned from the experience and how the admiral could suddenly change from a bad guy to a sympathetic one were all left unclear, which kept this a good distance away from being the tear-jerker it was obviously meant to be.

Sins of the Father

Considering the premise, and how uniformly outstanding previous **NEXT GENERATION** Klingon stories were, this is easily the most disappointing show of the season. There are vast plot holes. Why didn't Worf know his nurse survived before this? Why did he pick the captain to help him? Nice gesture, but stupid. Riker or Data would have been far better choices, and Picard should have insisted on declining. Why was the nurse so human looking and acting? And above all, why do the Klingons in this story, who allegedly value honor above all, have so very little of it throughout? A real mess in spite of fine performances by Michael Dorn and the actor playing his brother.

Allegience

Unfortunately, the most interesting thing in this story is the byplay between Picard and Beverly in his cabin, and this scene is rendered halfway pointless by Picard's being a phony. Beverly senses this, but we don't find out how, since they've never shown us what the real Picard is like when alone with Beverly! Picard's scenes on the alien ship are undercut by our wondering what the real him and Beverly have going. And once again, the alien proves a nice (but misunderstood) creature who runs off when Picard asks (and without our heroes, allegedly exploring the galaxy, trying to find out anything further about him and his race). In the greater scheme of things, this story also proves to be the second (but far from last) kidnapping of the season.

Captain's Holiday

This was intended as a change of pace, and as a one of a kind story, it was acceptable. It has a great line: "She is totally unscrupulous and dishonest - a perfect mate for a Ferenghi." Overall the Ferenghi work nicely here, and it is a pleasure to see Picard having some romance, but this is a very minor story. Among other questions it raises: why do the Ferenghi lust after human women? How do Ferenghi females feel about this interspecies lust? Has anybody connected with the show even thought of this?

Tin Man

Another of the few stories where the Enterprise actually does some wide-eyed exploring, even though they didn't plan it (but are just trying to beat the Romulans to a potentially valuable prize.) It's a shame the Enterprise hadn't been assigned to seek Tin Man just for the heck of it, and **then** discovered others were after it - they'd seem less cold-blooded and the interesting concepts explored in the story would have remained unsullied by the competition element. The Betazoid guest star (with no accent of any kind) was something of a twitch, although for

justified reasons, and this may be one reason why the story wasn't more popular.

Hollow Pursuits

I never expected to see a story remotely like this actually being aired. For 2½ years fans have written about what would happen if an ordinary crewman used the holodeck. As in the fanfiction, Barkley gets to beat up his senior officers and make love to Troi. Wonderfully honest and well done. I suspect this story is much more popular among male viewers than female, because we can identify so much with his fantasies. A minor quibble: why are all engineers young and male?

The Most Toys

Data's turn to be kidnapped. Having done that (and blowing up his shuttle to make it look like he was killed) not much else happens. The villain is well played, but ultimately tiresome. It's notable that this is the first real effort to show the seedy side of the Federation (leaving out a few people who were not seen in their own environment) since we saw Capt Pike and a few Starfleet officers watch Orion slave girls dancing, many years ago. In any case the villain is overcome much too easily. The tail ed, when we find that Data has fired his gun, helps save the episode somewhat.

Sarek

A well done an moving story. The disease that causes elderly Vulcans to feel emotions was beautifully conceived and handled. The brief mention of Spock and Amanda - is Spock still alive? - was chilling. You'll notice Sarek didn't mention Sybok: obviously **STAR TREK V** has been mercifully forgotten. About the only weak point of the episode was the actor playing Sarek's assistant, who was a little stiff. The aliens Sarek was negotiating with should also have been shown.

Menage A Troi

This horrible episode has one great line: "Ferenghi. Can't even trust their transporters." Aside from that, it's distasteful, pointless and even badly directed (Lwaxana's servant walks onto the screen right after they've left, leading us to think he's seen what happened; it's only later on that we find out otherwise; incidentally, he's also the Giant on **Twin Peaks**). Seemingly this episode was written out of desperation to give Majel Barrett another guest appearance, even though they'd run out of things for her to do. This story features kidnappings ad Feenghi interspecies lust, both already done to excess this season. If all this wasn't enough, Wesley not only saves Riker and Troi but also misses his trip to take the Starfleet exams in the process (Make-up exams in cases of reasonable excuse having been utterly forgotten). Easily the worst episode of the season.

Transfigurations

Have not seen.

Best of Both Worlds

Ludicrous title aside, there's little to complain about in this edge of the seat season climax. Action abounds as the captain is kidnapped (again, but at least justifiably) in Trek's first ever season cliffhanger. The preparations for the Borg attack, both as described by the admiral and done by the ship, were well described. There's even a (tiny) chance as I write this that Patrick Stewart could leave the show, meaning Riker would become captain. The female commander (next first office?) is well played and written for, but is a little too young and pretty, and this slightly decreases her believability in the part. An exciting end to what is undoubtedly the best **Next Generation** season so far.

Looking back at this collection of episodes, we can see a goodly number of fine or excellent stories, a few that are run of the mill, and only a few that are either mishandled or were losers to begin with. This is a better average that **ST:TNG**'s second season had, and far better than their first season. In fact, it's probably the best group of science-fiction TV episodes assembled anywhere since the original show's first season. Nonetheless, the show still has several problems that can't really be seen by looking at individual episodes. They include the following:

1. Lack of exploring. This has been commented on, but bears repeating. The ship is simply not doing enough travelling to exotic alien planets. Even when we do see alien planets, it's usually inside caves or buildings.

2. Wesley. He's nothing like the disaster he was the first season, but still spoils stories. Since Wil Wheaton is going off to college, this problem may be solved in spite of the efforts of Roddenberry and the writers. With the exception of one unimpressive story, nothing at all was done with the 'families' idea last season - it's obviously unworkable, but thee's no easy way to forget about it either.

3. Female regulars. Dumping Dr Crusher and bringing in Dr Pulaski was a great idea in spite of Pulaski's overdone McCoyisms, but unfortunately Gates McFadden sued and got her job back. She still can't act, and the writers haven't helped her character. Troi is vastly better than she was at the start, but still lacks some background and depth. Neither is in the chain of command or a very strong character, which is a genuine shortcoming. Also, sexism in casting crops up in levels below the guest stars - the ship badly needs some female security guards and engineers.

4. Humophilia. For some reason, almost all the admirals, hip captains and federation bigshots this season have been 1) human, 2) male (Shelby and Garrett being the major exceptions). and 3) WASP or close to it. There were some prominent aliens and women in earlier seasons, and there should be more.

5. Lack of or poor scoring. A very minor point, but nontheless there's ben almost no decent background music for the episodes. This is an area where the old show was miles ahead.

6. No scripts by science-fiction writers. This seems like stupid thing to being up, since I've stated that this year's scripts were quite good overall. True, but there's still room for improvement. There are at least as many SF writers working in Hollywood now as there were in 1966 (there could hardly be fewer). Where are Robert Bloch and Norman Spinrad (who had scripts on the old show)? George R.R. Martin? John Varley?

7. Lack of Balance in Script Purchasing. This is where looking at individual episodes is deceiving. Why so many kidnappings in one season? Why so many stories with sociopaths who live in caves? Why only one story (and small parts of another) that got filmed in an outdoor setting? These are the sorts of things that should get balanced out early in a show's season but haven't done so on Trek.

So overall, we see that **Next Generation**'s third season is the best yet, and follows a steady upward curve in quality since the new show began. If the writers and producers can solve (or at last reduce) some of the problems I've brought up, then the new season should enormously repay our attention.

Letters of Comment

Terry Fowler
#301-9180 Halston Court
Burnaby, BC V3N 4L8

My condolences to who knew and loved Lola Ann Center. She sounds like the kind of person I would like to have known. My father died of cancer recently, and I am waiting to hear the results of similar tests for my mother. Today would have been their 49th Wedding anniversary. Young or old, it is never easy to lose someone. A memorial service award and/or certificate is good; how about one for cons which provide smoke free air or additive free food?

On Gor: I have the dubious distinction of having read the first 14 volumes, loaned to me when I was helpless on my back after a drunk driver had had his way with my car, some ten years ago. It helped that I was quite drugged at the time. The first volume puzzled me (how could someone sustain such bad writing), the second angered me, the third sickened me, and I kept on reading them trying to unlock the mystery. There had to be a mystery. I came to understand that the true Gor philosophy is horrific: females (she sleen, never women) are not enslaved by the men, but by their own sexual demands, which can only find an outlet in submission. What ultimately enslaves the woman is the "true slave fire in her belly" which can only be experienced as a slave. Thus she enslaves herself in order to be sexually free; men don't really do the enslaving, but facilitate this twist on "freedom". It isn't even sex in the last analysis, but a poisonous and false rhetoric about the true nature of humanity, thinly disguised as fantasy.

Joe Napolitano: Scientism is ghod and Popper is its prophet. Science as a religion was founded by Auguste Comte in France in the last century, and was very influential in guiding the shape of scientific inquiry. In 1923 Alfred Wiggam wrote "The New Decalogue of Science" (endorsed by G. Stanley Hall, one of the American founders of Psychology,) which described science as religion and the necessity to evangelize the poor sodden masses. The book advocated, among other theories, eugenics to fulfill our God-given mandate to improve the human race by scientific means.

By the way, Astrology was built by thousands of years of observations and correlations. Isn't that science? Oh, I forgot, you have to reproduce. Well then, when you get a nova to set off on demand, I will believe in Science, the One True Faith.

Laurence Gray: I am not sure what you were saying about women who read and/or write about homosexual relationships. Maybe I came to it too late. But it seems to me you are confusing writing as an art, with writing as secret confessions. Please enlighten me.

Lee Sevier
2730 S Chautauqua #424
Norman, OK 73072

My name is Lee Sevier, that's pronounced severe (as in very bad or severe weather). I was born June 24, 1949 in the small town of Walters, Oklahoma. If my math is right, that makes me forty-one years old, old enough to know better. I am a full time student in the pre nursing program at the University of Oklahoma and I hope to become a surgical nurse someday. I have always dreamed of going to college, but never felt I could afford it. I found out that as an American Indian (I'm part Commanche) I could receive a grant from the Commanche tribe of Oklahoma and that is how I got to see my life's dream come true. So never give up, you're never too old to dream. I am married (20 wonderful years) and have two sons who are thirteen and seventeen (teenagers!)

<<Are you corrupting them with SF/fantasy?>>

I have loved fantasy and SF ever since I was young. A third grade

teacher discovered I couldn't read and got me interested and introduced me to SF. My favorite authors are J.R.R. Tolkien, Robert Heinlein and Steven King. I love to read, and hope to meet others who love books as much as I do.

Eunice Raymond
24971 Leicester
Sun City, CA 92355

Had to smile over Lynne Holdom's statement on page 1. I make no guarentee [sic] about misspellings due to illegibility." Uh, that's "guarantee," kiddo,... but thanks for the chuckle.

<<That's what I get for not running spell-check through the editorial.>>

Speaking of bloopers: how about that one in my LoC in #163, page 8? "Oliver Street?" Ay, yi, yi! The masked Gringos have struck again! Perdoname, por favor, but that's Olvera Street, amigos. Proclaimed LA's original street dating from when Spanish settlers called the village El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles, Olvera Street is now a tourist attraction. It has Mexican-style shops, momentos of early California, and strolling mariachi musicians. For the record, I'm a native Californian, but I've never been to Olvera Street.

TIGHTBEAM: I don't know about others, but I like the digest size issues. If nothing else, they're easier to store when you're short of storage space. And if they also have more reading in proportion to size, that's fine too.

Sally Morem: The Romulan salute has indeed been wit us from the start. And you're right: it is a play on ancient Rome. Believe it or not, despite my gripes about the excessive fake-Roman stuff, I'm not knocking that one. Taken out of context, it seems (to me at least) appropriate to the characters - more so than, say, our Anglo-Saxon mode of touching brow or cap in deference to superiors. In fact, I've used it in fan-fiction on occasion - but for purposes of the story, not just to proclaim (as **STAR TREK** too often seems to) "Hey, look everybody, the ancient Romans did this!"

Applying something cross-culturally this way can be tricky. What works; what's just corny? Tolkien said that "humanity is the only clay we have to work with" - which is not necessarily true, bu that's more often than not, the way we do it. Parallels in items, beliefs, and gestures can be found in widely-separated human groups, while some things most of us automatically assume are universal human habits really aren't. The Anasazi made clay mugs just like European ones, centuries before humans reached America. In many cultures it's bad luck to rock an empty cradle. But our supposedly universal head gestures - sideways shake for no, a nod for yes - are exactly the opposite in some countries. All things considered, the fist-to-chest Romulan salute didn't bother me; it seemed cross-culturally believable.

Conversely, what's believable or not, and looks/sounds alien? Umpteen things may seem wonderfully extraterrestrial, but would they work in real life? The Romulans' square goblets, for instance: they may look nicely exotic, but who could drink out of them? Hey, wait a minute! Maybe they're an ingenious built-in aid to moderation: "You've had one too many, Sub-commander. You're pouring it down your collar again."

Jeffrey Kasten: If Romulans with Russian accents are weird, what about Disney's **20,000 Leagues Under the Sea** with Englishman James Mason playing Captain Nemo? In **THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND** (the book, not the - BARF - movie) we find that Nemo is a former Rajah whose family was massacred by the English in the Sepoy Revolt. The English were Nemo's sworn enemies. In that light, an Englishman playing Captain Nemo is wonderfully ironic.

About **Gor:** the lack of old folks beats me. But maybe there are no pregnancies because

the author was never told where babies come from? That's a possibility...

Speaking of babies and "pro-life": I guess I'm anti-life because I'm in favor of abortion - but in favor in what appears to be a non-conformist way. I don't think unwanted children should be forced to be born and live unwanted, just to suit someone else's standards. Many people simply argue that a woman should be able to do as she chooses with her body. Well, in my opinion, aside from rape, incest or severe retardation, the mother?? knew what she was going with her body when she got pregnant; she has no room to complain! But the unwanted child does have a right not to be born. Childbearing should be a privilege, not a right. There are enough futureless children already. Would this change in a future world? Probably not. Callousness is too strong a human habit.

Slash fiction has been debated. Against my better judgement, I'm going to comment. As to gays vs Judeo-Christian concepts: I don't subscribe to any religion myself, but I do know this: in the Bible, homosexuality was grounds for execution, as was any promiscuous sex. That was not bigotry, but protection of public health and family unity.

<<It's the same in the Koran as Homosexuals in Iran discovered.>>

I don't want to watch two men have intercourse! But I have at times had to use rectal thermometers and enemas on people and animals. The equipment doesn't come back smelling like roses! I know gay men aren't the only ones indulging in anal intercourse; some heterosexual couples also do. Why? Sadomasochism? And wouldn't a man have to be utterly desperate for jollies to want to compete with turds to get some? Yes, that's putting it very crudely, but is there another description? Perhaps I'm a bigot. I admit I'm a prude. But I can't see that as an act of friendship or love. It seems more nearly an act of contempt, for others and for oneself.

<<The state of Minnesota must agree as "sodomy" is against the law for anyone though there are those who are trying to get the law repealed as they say it makes the state look silly.>>

Why are most slash writers woman? Perhaps they prefer to put male characters together to eliminate symbolic competition from female characters. A female lover may emotionally effect the female writer as if this were a "threat" to the hero's "belonging" to the fan/writer. A heroine represents (chances are) pregnancy, children, marriage, equalling loss of sex appeal in the hero since he's "spoken for". Put him with another male, and he's just having a little fun; he's still theoretically available as far as the writer may be concerned. I'm not saying all female slash writers may feel this way, consciously or subconsciously. Still the symbolic rivalry angle is the reason there are so few married heroes on TV or in movies - as Hollywood has at times admitted.

Why is Sulu still a helmsman? Why are Kirk and Co still in their old places? They aren't still there: they're back there, having been demoted as the close of **STAR TREK IV**. After the fools they were in #4 and #5, probably the reason they weren't shown the gate completely is that none of the brass were along on those two voyages to view their stupidity.

Laura Todd: Right on about ideas inculcated into women from birth. As a youngster, I was far more interested in adventure literature than in dolls and playing house. I have also done most of my writing about male characters. The few times I tried to write about women, they seemed unconvincing and wooden. Hardly normal for a woman to have trouble writing convincingly about women, is it? My present heroine, however, is working out much better, my first female character who has seemed "alive" to me. But I'm not writing about her so much as a female character, per se, but as a person who happens to be female.

Who's read **THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT** by Bruno Bettleheim? Besides dwelling at length on the rampant sexual symbolism of fairy tales (he prefers to dwell on this rather than examples of loyalty, honesty, or faith, as far as I can see), he mentions the not-uncommon interest in horses which girls may be seen to show. This is caused, says Bettleheim, by a kind of feminist viewpoint, in which controlling these powerful animals gives girls a subconscious feeling of controlling men! But he advises parents of such girls not to tell them this "fact", or it may spoil their

enjoyment of riding.

I've got news for Bruno. When I was a kid in the 50s, girls who wanted to read horse stories most often had to go to the boys' section of the library. Predominance of girls in horse activities is historically rather new, and the bookshelves then reflected that. Most horse stories were written for boys. Only as girls became less cloistered (and boys began to gravitate toward cars) have female riders been so numerous. According to an article by a professional (female) riding instructor, among small children, interest in horses is equal between the sexes. Later, boys discover cars, while girls tend to stick with horses. As adults, the balance swings back, with nearly as many men as women riding horses. Today there are more horse stories written with girl characters than formerly, and stories that appeal to both boys and girls.

I wonder if Bettelheim knows that some of the biggest name riding clubs are (or were, last I heard) entirely stag? Perhaps controlling these powerful animals gives the fellows a subconscious impression of controlling women.

"A SWEEPING ODYSSEY!"

Jeff Kasten
1155 DeKalb Pike
Center Square, PA
19422

Typos are and old and honorable tradition and I'm not enough of an iconoclast to suggest they can be done away with, evan assuming there was a way to do so. Sometimes they produce hilarious results, and usually at worst they obscure or temporarily deflect someone's point in a letter or article. But when a typo is not recognizable as such, and makes someone look like a fool, they cease being funny.

In issue #164, on page 18, Point #1 of my comments about what to do regarding a space station is seemingly repeated twice - presumably, I'm sure readers thought, because I wanted to beat them over the head with the point. This constitutes bad writing, and I don't doubt that some readers took the rest of what I had to say less seriously because of it. However, it's **NOT** what I wrote. My actual first point, which somehow got trashed, was "Cancel the current space station, stop all present contracts, and write off the money as lost." My idea about abolishing the National Space Council was ONLY point #2. I know accidents happen, but they are rarely this bad, and I hope someone will at least give me a mild apology.

<<It just proves that since I got spellcheck, I have to make up for misspelling words in more creative ways. Sorry. I thought I caught all the typos.>>

Shuttle Update: I think the events of the last five months demonstrate for once and for all the idiocy of using the shuttle to ferry up the station in pieces and assemble it there. Hopefully we won't lose any more people or ships before NASA gets its act together (or is abolished outright).

Re **THE SHORE OF WOMEN:** literary judgement will always be subjective, but how can ANYBODY seriously call this book "A feminist Gor Novel"? The ONLY thing they have in common is that one sex basically runs everything. Does Sargent approve of her female-run society? Absolutely not? Is she as bad a writer as Norman? No. Does the society have the same huge holes in it as Gor does? Again, no. Does it have three dimensional characters you can care about? Yes. Does the story even give a hint that it might have been written as a reaction to stuff like the Gor series? Not that I can tell. I dare anybody to even show a passage from the book that could be considered anti-male when not taken out of context (it's easy to find such passages if you're sneaky; for example the dialogue by the women in the city. Unfortunately, the expository passages clearly show that Sargent considers these

women misguided or occasionally just rotten, whereas Norman's writing shows no such compunctions about the things his characters do.]

Laurence Gray: A reliable source (Takei himself) told me (and about 400 other people who were in the lecture hall at the time) that he'd love to make a 6th Trek movie, but that ST5 did badly enough that they might not make one. No worry about Shatner directing, writing, etc.; Paramount isn't going to let him.

T.L. Bohman: The theory you present certainly has plenty of evidence to back it up, and may very well be correct. However your presenting of it has a few shaky points. First, the asteroid/comet/whatever almost certainly landed in the water somewhere (the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico are currently popular) so there wouldn't have been a crater in the normal sense. Second the Cretaceous extinction was not as wide as you seem to think. Basically, 11 of the reptilian orders were wiped out or virtually so, and almost overnight. These included all the dinosaurs and most of the other big reptiles. But what else was affected? Not too much - ammonoids, belemnoids, some types of smaller marine animals and that's about it. Plants were unaffected, and neither were most fish or invertibrates. The extinction at the end of the Permian is thought to have wiped out 96% of all species which makes the Cretaceous one seem minor.

<<I heard that the comet/meteor/whatever landed in the joining of tectonic plates causing the updwelling of material that created Iceland. The species which disappeared at the end of the Cretaceous were those affected most by weather changes. Plants just changed their range a bit. I have no theories about the Permian.>>

Lynne: I also knew Shona a few years ago, and I was horrified when you mentioned her passing away, since I didn't even know she was sick. I'll miss her too.

Sally Morem: Maybe I'm old fashioned, but whenever I think of the word you mention, I always change it to Nanootechnology (technology of the planet Ork). With this kind of twisted thinking, no wonder fans never hold onto good jobs... I was reading about the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and was surprised to find that Ferenghi is an Ethiopian word for foreigner. I wonder if Roddenberry knew that?

<<I think it's also the Arabic word for European which originally meant Frenchmen, the foreigners they came across during the Crusades.>>

The Romulans in "Balance of Terror" were supposed to be "just like Romans" in a way that any up to date SF fans would find ludicrous. Good story, but a ridiculous concept. I'd also like to know how they ran an interstellar empire with NO warp drive. Watch the story, and note how the writer obviously thinks going from impulse to warp 8 is like going from 25 knots to 30.

Karen S. Kling
2471 Moore Saur Road
Morrow, OH 45152

Cheryl Birkhead has raised a question about centaur anatomy (do both sections - human and horse) have hearts. I love getting into subjects like this! My guess is yes, mainly because the added circulatory system of a human torso would put an added strain on the equine heart, the second (human torso) heart need not be as well developed (only two chambers, rather than four), but an added pump would be beneficiary. This leads to more anatomy questions: do centaurs have two stomachs? two sets of lungs? two livers?

The centaur respiratory system has me concerned; if there are two sets of lungs, how are they connected? Also a centaur of such mass needs a great amount of oxygen. The limited size of a human's nasal cavity, larynx, pharynx and trachea would be a hindrance. To receive sufficient oxygen, the poor centaur would probably have to breathe through its mouth, and quite heavily too.

Harry Andruschak
P.O. Box 5309,
Torrance, CA
90510-5309

Since I don't have a TV set or go to movies, I know very little about **STAR TREK** today, nor has Jeff Kasten's article in **TB 164** increased my desire to obtain a TV set just to watch **STAR TREK: THE NEXT REGURGITATION**. I did see the very first episode at a girl friend's house, but my biggest memory of the fiasco was "yet another omnipotent alien." Roddenberry seems to have a hang up about God in the guise of an omnipotent alien but I don't have to buy his beans.

And nothing I have read about **STAR TREK** in **APA-L, LASFAPA**, or any other set of fanzines seems to indicate the fact that Roddenberry hasn't realized that the idea has been beaten to a pulp, and to the pulps it should return.

T.L. Bohman: The statement that VOYAGER ONE "discovered Jupiter's Ring system" is not quite accurate. What VOYAGER ONE did was to photograph the ring system. I was there at JPL when all this was going on. I remember it well. VOYAGER ONE turned its cameras to a part of the sky around Jupiter and took a long-time picture.

But the reason VOYAGER ONE was programmed to spend so much time pointing at what turned out to be the edge of the ring system was due to the information sent back by the PIONEER 11 spacecraft. It was the particles and Fields experiments on the PIONEER 11 that indicated a strong possibility of a ring system around Jupiter, or perhaps even a satellite. So strictly speaking, PIONEER 11 "discovered" the Jupiter ring system.

Yes, I did work at JPL, and I'm very proud of what we did. But we must also give credit where credit is due... to NASA's Ames Research Center, in charge of the PIONEER program.

Emily Alward
Rte 1, Box 110A
Ninevah, IN 46164

Lynne asked about the size of future **TIGHT-BEAM**s. If we can get more material in for the same cost, let's go with the smaller digest size. They're easier to carry around anyhow.

Jeff Kasten: I enjoyed your excellent article on the history of **STAR TREK** fandom. You asked why 90% of the fan fiction is written by women. Hmmm. It's been suggested that males are more imbued with our commercial ethic, so that when they start writing SF they aim for paying markets rather than amateur publications. But I don't believe this explanation as other [i.e. non-established-universe] non-paying small press SF magazines get a pretty even balance between men and women writers in their submissions. Perhaps it's no more than an accidental pattern, as people seem to recruit their friends into writing fanfic.

As for writers no longer making the transition to commercial success, I'm not sure this is true. In recent years there's been Melanie Rawn, A.C. Crispin, and Johanna Bolton, at least. They may never become the field's top people, but judging by advertizing campaigns, Rawn must already be bringing in a lot of money for DAW (I think that's her publisher - my books are mostly still packed away so I can't check to see for sure.)

<<It's DAW.>>

Laura Todd: I second you in hoping to see more debate on **SHORE OF WOMEN** and **GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY**, especially more comments from men. These books are "feminist Gor novels"? I'll have to think about that comment of Taras' for a while. Offhand I'd say "not quite". The men in these books aren't subjugated for anyone's erotic pleasure, but simply because the ruling class believes this is the only way to keep their world from falling apart.

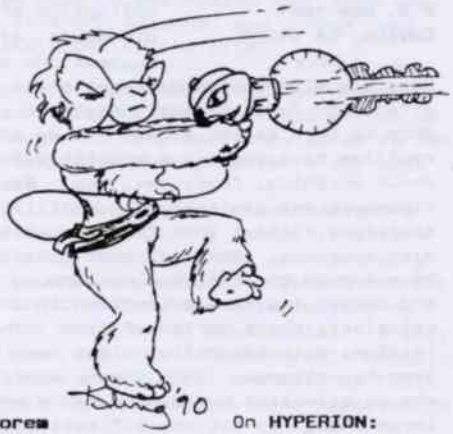
The more "confessions" like yours about psychic conditions I read, the luckier I feel about my growing up! Wonder Woman was my heroic role model, and in real life I was exposed to a fair number of female scientists, business-women, etc. (Of course then the sexism one runs into in adulthood comes as a double whammy.)

Mikal Norwitz: (and other cat people) I, too, finally had a kitten fall into my life

but I'm not sure I can cope with it. I like cats in someone else's home, but am not used to having a furry being careening across papers I'm writing and batting at the TV lead-in connections! The poor little guy used up a couple of his lives getting to me so I feel honor-bound to keep him unless a better home can be found.

Helen E. Davis: Very interesting comments on the difficulty of sorting out SF from fantasy, and the limits of logic in World-building.

ALL: I have a question. I've heard awful things about the Creation **STAR TREK** Cons from people who've attended one. Has anyone been at one as a Dealer. If so, I'd like to hear from you about what your experience there was. I'm trying to decide if it's even worth trying to get into the two or three a year they hold in this area. (Unfortunately the scheduling on the real Trek Con in Indianapolis is such that I have to choose between it and Darkovercon. Argghh!)



Sally Moren
13652 66th Place
Maple Grove, MN 55369

On **HYPERION:** Apparently Simmon's publisher insisted on this treatment of his book. **HYPERION** and its sequel are really one very long novel. Unfortunately, the publishing business hasn't figured out how to market this sort of thing properly so that readers aren't afflicted with cliffhangeritis.

<<The problem is that nothing makes me madder than discovering I have purchased half a novel. It's turned me off some new authors who may be great. I realize it's often **not** the author's fault but I still get angry at them.>>

Jeff Kasten: The original **STAR TREK** turned me on to SF. Unfortunately, I didn't know about all the good written stuff until I went to college and discovered it in the library and the bookstores. The only real SF I read before then was **A WRINKLE IN TIME**, by L'Engle which was in our high school library.

I never knew about fandom until 1982 when my space activist group introduced me to Minicon, Minnesota's major science fiction convention. I was amazed that there was a whole culture based on the enjoyment of science fiction. I've been attending Minicon ever since.

Nola Frame-Gray: Why did fans give that sub-genre the awful name of "slash"? It sounds like slasher films. Why not just KS?

Tasha's homeworld, the slum planet, sounds hokey to me. Something dreamed up by the scriptwriters to put a little 20th century ambiance into 24th century galactic society. It suffers from the same worldbuilding problem as the agricultural worlds of **STAR TREK**. Here is a civilization that can build food (and people) molecule by molecule. They simply would not be subject to the same kind of economic restrictions we are. What's the real problem? Lack of imagination and worldbuilding skills in the Trek head writer.

William Goodson: Actually **INFERNO** had a decisive ending. Our hero, the science-fiction writer (a thinly disguised Pournelle), forgave Benito Mussolini his many crimes and took his place as guide out of Hell for Lost Souls. According to the logical structure built up by Niven and Pournelle, the ending made perfect sense.

<<In the magazine version, the ending was a **lot** more ambiguous. In fact Niven and Pournelle got so many complaints, they strengthened the ending, making it clear that Hell is Hell, not a fantasy. The SF writer hero had a number of Niven's traits as well.>>

I also read Heilein's **JOB** and Twain's **CAPTAIN STORMFIELD'S VISIT TO HEAVEN** (Its real name) and enjoyed them thoroughly. That doesn't mean I actually **believed** that stuff.

On your support of the space program. Right on! Building up a space infrastructure can't help but improve our economy and technology here on Earth, let alone our scientific knowledge.

Christine Fischer: No, I haven't read **PENNTERRA**. But it does sound quite interesting. However, I detect one potentially serious fault in the science assumed by the author. It is virtually impossible for any complex system that we know (Human beings, animals, societies) to consciously direct their own subsystems. Normally, they have no access to them at all. This inaccessibility has great survival value. Can you imagine going through life having to consciously will your heart to beat and your lungs to breathe? Some meditators have learned rudimentary control over these, but they do so only for a short time and very carefully. It seems likely that a living planet would be totally unaware of the beings that it sheltered, much as we, until very recently, were unaware of our own cells. This, however, would totally ruin the plot of such novels as **PENNTERRA**.

T.L. Bohman: I thoroughly enjoyed your article on Comet Austin. Keep up the good work.

ALL: Remember when I asked for ideas on how to make the tropical rainforests more economically valuable intact than they would be torn down for ranching? I recently read some fascinating articles in the August issue of **CHRONICLES**, including one ny Edward O. Wilson. He came up with a list of plants and animals already living in the rainforests that could be raised and sold for profit without changing the nature of the rainforests. This would have the salutary effect of promoting preservation, along with economic growth for the human residents. I never did believe in the either/or ideology of the environmentalists. Here are some of the plants and animals on the list: The winged bean in New Guinea, including roots, leaves, seeds, stems, and flowers (they are all edible); the Giant River Turtle of the Amazon which could be raised in fish farms along the river banks for its tasty, nutritious meat (which can be raised at 440 times the rate of cattle in the same area); wild species of plants for petroleum substitutes; an other plans for fibers and pharmaceuticals. This means that the rainforests are full of untapped wealth organisms that can, if their habitats are maintained, improve the quality of human life in those areas.

Joe Napolitano
P.O. Box 1651
Covina, CA 91722

As to what caused the extinction of the dinosaurs, allow me to suggest one other possible alternative explanation to the ones offered by Terry Bohman: Maybe they were done in by a killer virus? As we all know reptiles have voracious appetites for just about anything, food, sex, etc. Because dinosaurs are basically big reptiles, it therefore follows that their appetites were also enormous. Thus all that activity could have spread the killer virus around quickly and caused the mass extinction in a relatively short period of time. The iridium, coincidentally, might have been laid down by volcanos. This theory would explain why no scientist has discovered a crater large enough to fit the K-T extinction theory.

<<Reptiles eat much less per body mass than do mammals as about 80% of our food goes to keep our internal temperature constant. I heard a theory that Iceland is the result of the giant meteor strike. It's on the boundary between two tectonic plates.>>

As for John Norman, let's have less discussion about him; the subject has been worked over enough times already. It gets repetitious and probably there's other subjects more worthy of space.

David Travis
P.O. Box 191,
Glassboro, NJ 08028

I found the **DRACULA** filmography fascinating. I suppose I never realized how **many** there have been. Perhaps the Guinness people would be interested in a new category - the person who has seen the greatest number of them.

C.M.'s <<Catherine Mintz>> answer to Joy Beeson's comment about grading children: There does indeed become an inverted kind of competitiveness. Deep believers in (whatever) church will bitterly compete in piety. It is my belief that the human race is basically competitive, and grades are a part of that. Instead of trying to eliminate competition, I believe we should spend the effort necessary to find ways for each student to be able to excel in <u>something</u>.

I was glad to see **TREMORS** get a good review. I liked it so much that I am buying a "pre-viewed" (used) tape of it. I was born in New Mexico and lived two years in southern Arizona, and I know real people like those in the film.

<<They are talking here about the predicted quake on the New Madrid fault which would affect us here though not very seriously as we're far enough away from the epicenter - any epicenter.>>

I have just finished Asimov's **NEMESIS** and it has all the Asimov virtues - such as clear, readable prose and carefully accurate science exposition. (Except for FTL travel which Dr Asimov has often stated he believes now and forever impossible). A very readable book; and yet I found myself checking how many pages were left. Probably my fault.
>>Not entirely. I had the same reaction.>>

Explosion at the Transplant Factory

Catherine Mintz
1810 S. Rittenhouse Square, #1708
Philadelphia, PA 19103

I have been discussing **STAR TREK** with David Heath. I told him my technique for figuring the outcome of any given episode - assume that **everything returns to its original state**. He, too, thought it worked. I've found it works so well that I almost hesitate to tell people who haven't discovered it for themselves: it's nice to be surprised occasionally.

<<MZB made that very point about the **original** STAR TREK in an article she wrote for **JUMEAUX**, a fanzine I publish. In fact, aside from the so-called adult soap operas, it works for TV programs.>>

I was disappointed by the conclusion of the two part cliffhanger featuring the Borg. It seemed much too easy to finish them off by Data using a little technomagic in the last ten minutes of the show. In fact, casting them into sleep and allowing them to be destroyed by their own runaway technology smacks more of fairy tales than science-fiction.

<<Not to mention that it left one wondering why no other species, such as Guinan's, ever thought of it.>>

Notice how the explosion of the Borg ship restored everything to status quo ante? It was as if there had never been this tremendous challenge to humanity. The resolution completely ignored an opportunity to deal with how ordinary humanity might interact with prosthetically-enhanced humanity, a theme that is very common in the current crop of stories and novels simply because reality is starting to breathe heavily down our necks. Consider nanotechnology, or cyberspace. That's all going to be in STAR TREK's **past.** If the Federation is populated by technophobes - and it doesn't seem to be - then the scripts should work that in and mention why.

The convention of no change really undercuts the writers' ability to develop stories with themes as sweeping as the storyline of roaming an entire galaxy would suggest. Humanity never seems to be permanently altered by its alien contacts. Instead the aliens all turn out to be rather human - and so capable of being reasoned with - or unreasonable horrors - and thus destroyed.

There's no middle ground. Even the often overwhelmed American Indians managed to put their stamp on the invading Europeans' culture. Instead the series seems to do best with small scale stuff, problems they encounter, solve and then leave behind as they boldly go on to the next episode.

The producers seem to have become aware of the stagnation and they are trying to deal with it in at least two ways. First, by showing more of the characters' backgrounds, which implies that they have changed and grown to reach their present state. Second, by having cameo characters for individual episodes that are free to change and develop. Both of these help but they really don't solve the fundamental unreality of these people never developing new skills and quirks despite the fact that they're encountering incredible numbers of new worlds, beings, and concepts.

One of the things I like about **Blake's Seven**, clunky as the costumes and special effects often are, is that the people really did change over the course of fifty-two episodes and that the primary cast wasn't always nice, even to one another. One of the later episodes featured Avon, a computer genius with a criminal record, prowling a straining shuttle during take-off, trying to find his old friend Vila - so he can space him and the ship will be lightened enough to reach escape velocity with its single remaining passenger. Another solution turns up, but you have no doubt that Avon is capable of doing it, and that he would feel logically justified - "Why should **two** die when only **one** is necessary and **I** am clearly the more intelligent?" **B7**'s universe is a little tougher than **ST:TNG**'s.

<<I also remember an episode where Avon let the scientist upgrading their star drive fry as it was necessary for them to get away from the Federation before she was completely finished. And he once forced Vila down to the surface at gunpoint.>>

I'd really like to see an episode of **STAR TREK** consider the problem of what these fundamentally very nice people do when they encounter an advantage-seeking, self-centered culture that they can't reason to the Federation's requirements of tolerance and where the situation calls for something more sophisticated than reducing them to a drifting cloud of interstellar dust. But it won't happen.

One of my local PBS stations - New Jersey Net- has purchased "Space Cops", which is a new British series supposedly developed to appeal to **B7** fandom. I understand from reviews in "Interzone" that it only accounted a middling success in the UK, which may account for its prompt availability to the US. But maybe not. It's a constant complaint that the BBC makes its new episodes of "Dr Who" with an eye to the American market rather than for home consumption, so probably it's a matter of the show being tailored to what the BBC executives think **we** want.

<<I have heard that as well and that UK fans resent this. But since the Britishness of the show is what appeals to a lot of Americans - that's the reason we put up with the cheesy special effects - they may be alienating the very audience they want to appeal to.>>

America in Space

by
Sally Morem

"...For I dipt into the future, as far
as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world, and all
wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce,
argosies of magic sails.
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping
down with costly bails..."
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Why should Americans go into space? Because of the kind of people we are. We can't flourish in a closed society. The urge to explore and create is too strong in us; if it is stifled, our civilization will explode in frustration. We are driven. We must go into space. And when we go, we will prepare the way for a new civilization.

The movement into space can be compared to the migration of ancient hunter-gatherers to new lands, to the exploration of Vinland by the Vikings, to the voyages of Columbus to the New World, and even to the movement of life from the oceans to the land. We will bring Earth's environment along with us as we brought the warm climate of the tropics to the frozen North in the form of clothing, fire and shelter. We didn't have to adapt biologically to a new environment; we adapted the new environment to us. This was the true beginning of civilization. And so it will be again.

A comprehensive vision of a space civilization must include a thorough exploration of how complex interlocking webs of relationships between economic and political systems, military power, and future science and technology might grow. For example: The reuse of space shuttle external tanks (which are now discarded before the shuttle reaches orbit) would allow astronauts to build larger space stations which could serve as industrial processing sites, military reconnaissance platforms, a moon base, and staging bases for spaceships bound for Mars. The construction of large arrays of solar cells - better known as solar power satellites (SPS) - would make usable energy available to every part of the solar system for any proposed project quickly and cheaply. Access to extraterrestrial resources on the moon and in the asteroids would make it unnecessary for spaceships to haul huge amounts of mass up through the Earth's steep gravitational well. This synergy of creativity would allow large numbers of individuals and groups to control productive technology, which would accelerate exponentially as scientific discoveries are made. As a result of massive growth in wealth and power, all political and economic systems would have to decentralize or collapse and die.

A SPACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

People think of the Earth and space as separate places. An astronaut travels <u>to</u> space <u>from</u> the Earth - a natural conceptual mistake for planet-bound people to make considering how difficult it is to get into orbit. A spaceship must fly 25,000 miles per hour to do so. This extraordinary feat was not achieved until 1957 - the year of Sputnik. In order to create a space civilization, it is necessary to demonstrate that the Earth is a integral part of space, and in order to do this, we must build a comprehensive, readily usable space transportation system

President Bush made several good arguments for the construction of Space Station Freedom, including providing continuous monitoring of the Earth, establishing a satellite repair station, developing space industrial processing capabilities, launching planetary probes, and constructing the first permanent, manned space observatory. But the most important reason for constructing the station is to create one of the first building blocks for the infrastructure of the space transportation system; Freedom will be that place.

Technological advances are rapidly overtaking the space shuttle. The proposed aerospace plane will be the shuttle of the next century giving the space transportation system needed flexibility and economy since the present shuttle is not fully reusable and it can only be launched from Kennedy Space Center. New engines are being developed which would allow the aerospace plane to take off

from a runway like and airplane and to keep gaining speed and altitude until it reaches hypersonic speeds and goes into orbit. We then could have regularly scheduled arrivals and departures for space at the nation's major airports. Such a system would be capable of bringing large numbers of people and quantities of material into orbit and back to Earth.

As human creativity in space grows, the transportation system will be continually expanded and upgraded. We will need two types of spacecraft based permanently in space to haul people and cargo to various places in space. Since these ships would never need to travel through any atmosphere, they could be designed far differently than today's rocket ships. Cargo ships would have large boxy shapes with cargo and instruments hung all over them like Christmas tree ornaments. Passenger ships would still need to be equipped with a pressurized, temperature-controlled environment.

These new spaceships will require far less research and development costs since their designs will be so much simpler to create. Also, engineers will not have to design the powerful rocket engines that are needed to get rockets off of the Earth. The pull of gravity is far less for a ship in space than on the Earth. Getting into orbit is always the hardest part of any trip into space. Once we're in orbit, we're halfway to anywhere in the solar system.

SPACE RESOURCES

In time, it will become far too expensive to keep hauling the necessary material for projects up through the Earth's deep gravitational well. A space transportation system will no longer be enough for a growing space civilization. We will begin to tap rich veins of space resources by mining the moon and the asteroids.

The Apollo Program can be thought of as a series of high-tech prospecting trips. When the moon rocks were brought back to laboratories and assayed, silicon, oxygen, calcium, aluminum, iron, potassium and phosphorus were found. All of these materials will be needed for the construction of tomorrow's large structures in space.

The moon's surface gravity is one-sixth that of Earth. This makes it possible to throw raw materials off the surface of the moon into space using a mass driver. Bulldozers and powershovels will gather the lunar material and load it into buckets. Electric motors will then propel them along a track as superconducting magnets lift them off the ground. When a bucket reaches the speed needed to overcome lunar gravity, the payload is released from the bucket and moves rapidly toward the "catcher", a huge, self-propelled craft with a large bag made of tough fabric. Lunar material goes into the bag and stays there while the bag rotates. When enough lunar material has been caught, the catcher moves off to deliver its load to the smelters and processors.

It will be necessary to establish a moon base for this operation. First, workers will set up a power plant. Then, they will dig out their own underground quarters with power equipment, set up the mass driver, and begin mining operations. The base and the mining operations can be expanded as demand rises for lunar material. More mass drivers, more bulldozers, more underground quarters will spread out on the lunar surface. SPS units will be placed in lunar orbits, supplying the growing energy needs of the base. Workers will be excavating millions of tons of lunar material each year as the base goes into full production.

But the true miner's bonanza lies in the asteroids - rocks floating in orbit between Mars and Jupiter, although some on occasion come closer to Earth. The asteroids are, in effect, a planet all carved up and ready for miners and processors to exploit. Miners could either go out there and bring them back near the Earth or process them there. Asteroids are loaded with precious ores and minerals. It is estimated that one small asteroid could contain some $15 million in gold - just as an impurity! There are many other valuable materials in the asteroids, such as silver, platinum, iron, nickel, copper, manganese, carbon, potassium, phosphorus, rare earths, water and organic chemicals, ready to be used in space construction projects and in industry.

Some of the richest ores mines on the

Earth are found at the sites of old meteor craters. In the future, we won't have to wait for an asteroid to crash to gain access to the raw materials in space. We will be able to go right to the source. One large asteroid would contain enough raw materials to supply all our enterprises in space for decades - and there are thousands of asteroids. We will have an incredible amount of material to work with for centuries to come.

SPACE POWER

But, where will we get the energy that is necessary to run these projects? From the sun. Small solar power satellites (SPS) will be constructed to supply clean, efficient solar energy to the growing space factories. The knowledge gained during the building of these smaller SPS units can then be applied to the construction of much larger units designed to supply energy to an energy-hungry Earth.

One component of the SPS system, called the powersat, will be located in geostationary orbit. It will be built of huge arrays of photovoltaic cells on an aluminum frame. The powersat will beam energy to the rectifying antenna, or "rectenna" for short. Rectennas will be built in sparcely populated areas of the world and will consist of rows of rectifying elements spread out over a large area of land. Power will be beamed from the powersat to the rectenna in the form of microwaves which can travel right through the atmosphere without being deflected or spread out. The microwaves received would then be transformed into the local electrical power standard and fed into the regional power grid.

SPS units could be built at a regular pace once the system is fully in gear. If so, we would be adding more and more units to take over the energy needs of America and the world. This will allow us to cut down on the use of other sources of energy. We can stop wasting our fossil fuels as energy sources and put them to better use as chemical feedstocks. We could shut down the nuclear power plants without plunging the world into another energy crisis. SPS will allow us to solve both our energy and pollution problems. It will make available an abundance of energy which could trigger a new renaissance in the life of our civilization.

When our energy needs in space really start growing, SPS units of very large size will be built closer to the sun as giant rectennas are built in various places in the solar system to receive that energy. Our level of energy consumption is limited only by what the sun itself can produce.

SPACE SCIENCE

Scientists will benefit greatly from all of this activity. As the miners move out to the asteroid belt, the scientists will follow. There they will learn much about the history of our solar system. Scientists will be allotted room in the burgeoning factories and bases where they will be conducting experiments in physics and chemistry and launching deep space probes. The greatly developed technology of that time will allow them to explore the newest of the frontiers of science.

Huge radio telescopes could be built in deep space, strung out for miles like huge spider webs, enabling scientists to study radio waves coming in from across the universe. The far side of the Moon would be the best place in the solar system for a radio observatory since it forever faces away from Earth. The Moon itself would act as a giant shield, blocking radio noise coming from the Earth. From such projects, astronomers will gather incredibly detailed information about the universe.

The knowledge gained by scientists in space will be pumped into enterprises, which will in turn give scientists an even broader technological base from which to work. Growth in technology, wealth, and science will feed on each other, multiplying their total effect. The result of this will be a true revolution, the creation of a space civilization.

SPACE INDUSTRY

The space environment will be very useful in certain industrial processes. The weightlessness and vacuum of space will allow us to make things better than ever before and make things we never could on Earth. Also, space has no biosphere to pollute. Eventually we will find it financially and politically useful to relocate all heavy industry in space. This will allow us to make the Earth

green again.

Space laboratories will be used to grow industrial crystals, to make semiconductors, to invent and produce new metal alloys, and to make biochemicals for the drug industry. The gravity free environment of space will allow liquids to be processed without a container, keeping the liquids from becoming contaminated, and leaving the material very pure. Zero-gee will also make it easier to mix materials of different densities. On Earth, the lighter material floats to the top. Other materials won't mix at all here, such as oil and water. So, creative engineers are looking forward to using zero-gee to come up with alloys with amazing new properties.

Vacuum pumps are very expensive pieces of laboratory equipment on Earth. But in space, there is an excellent vacuum at hand. There are a great many industrial processes which could be made far more productive in such a vacuum.

Computer manufacturers have discovered that gallium arsenide can be used instead of silicon to make microchips. It offers ten times the performance of silicon. But, gallium arsenide crystals are difficult to grow in Earth's gravitational field. Out of every hundred chips, only a few work; the rest must be thrown away because of flaws in the structure of the crystal. But in zero-gee, the yield of good chips would be ten times higher than on Earth.

Metallic whiskers are thin crystals that possess high strength. They are now combined with lighter materials of lower strength to form a composite material - fiberglass, for example. Metallic whiskers can't be grown very long in Earth's gravity. They break off as they grow. But in pace, we could make whiskers very thin and very long, creating a much stronger material than exists today.

SPACE COLONIES

Isaac Asimov coined the phrase "planetary chauvinism" for an assumption made by the most visionary that states "human beings will continue to live only on planets in the centuries to come." The economic need for a wide variety of professionals in space will disprove this assumption. Corporations will want to attract the best by offering high salaries and pleasant living quarters if they want their people to work in space permanently. But, medical problems associated with life in zero-gee will dissuade people from living in space. So it will become essential to design living quarters with artificial earth-like gravity built in. Space colonies will solve these problems and allow people to settle in space in large numbers.

Space colonies will be large, comfortable structures with Earth-like environments. The first colony will probably be built in the shape of a wheel, home to 10,000 people. This torus will rotate at a speed which will supply earth gravity to the rim in the form of centrifugal force. The inhabitants will enjoy earth-like air, water, climate, parkland, farmland and residential areas. A space colony will strongly resemble a well-planned residential area on Earth.

This large torus will take advantage of some of the unique characteristics of space. The rim will have earth gravity, allowing people to live there. Gravity will grow weaker as one moves inward toward the hub along the spokes. The hub would be weightless with no spin. In this configuration, the spokes would be used as work areas and as a hospital for those who need a low gravity environment to recuperate from accident or illness. Older people and handicapped people may also wish to live there since low gravity wouldn't be such a hardship on them. The hub would be used for docking facilities for spacecraft and space factories would be connected to the colony by a long axle.

The colony would be made self-sufficient in food production with agricultural areas interspersed with living areas on the rim. The residential areas would be made attractive with small parks planted with grass, trees, and flowers. People would be encouraged to plant vegetable and flower gardens by their homes. Small animals would thrive in the parks and in the homes of residents - dogs, cats, deer, squirrels, birds and harmless insects. Life would go on as it does on Earth.

Colonies would be built on aluminum skeletons with curved plates of aluminum that would fit together and robots would weld the seams together to make them airtight. Then,

construction workers and robots would build all the needed accoutrements on the inside to make the colonies homey. To protect the residents from cosmic rays, lunar slag would be placed all around the outside several feet thick with a tough fabric covering it, providing the same protection from radiation as Earth's atmosphere. Colonies would have strategically placed windows and mirrors which could be used to mimic the changes in sunlight in a normal Earth day. After being finished and sealed, oxygen would be let in the colonies and the long work of setting up an ecology, building homes and other buildings, and planting the agricultural areas and parklands would begin.

As people move in large numbers into space, construction companies would design and build larger and even more comfortable space colonies for them to live in. Some colonies may become as large as four miles in diameter and twenty miles in length, with 500 square miles of land area. Such colonies would be shaped like cigars, long cylinders with landscaped interiors. The residents would enjoy mountains, plains, lakes and streams. Small villages would dot the land. Creative colony designers may come up with their own unique combinations of land features or they may choose to copy particularly beautiful areas of Earth.

These large colonies could easily support populations of millions in comfort. To make even more room available for residential areas and parks in the main cylinder, small cylinders could be set around the colony like a necklace. These would be the agricultural modules. Large mirrors would be attached to one end of the cylinder and moved to stimulate a 24 hour day.

The key to rapid growth in space will be the continuous construction of additional space colonies. This would allow anyone who wanted to move into space to do so. Those who wanted to work in the colony itself would find a wide variety of jobs to choose from. They could set up shop at home. They could help maintain and repair the colony. They could help the scientists in their lab work. They could farm the agricultural modules. There need not be any unemployment problems in space.

SPACE CULTURE

The movement into space will stimulate human creativity on all levels: artistically, philosophically, politically, economically and technologically. The new space civilization will open doors to human potential we don't even know exist.

What sort of art will grow out of people's experiences in space? Artists will certainly take advantage of zero-gee in dance and in film. They will also explore the potential of the three-dimensionality of space and its vast scale. Leftover slag from asteroid mining could be sculpted into huge detailed works. A Mount Rushmore of space? Giant holograms could be projected onto defined areas. We can't fully predict what future artists will achieve in space, but we don know that our greatest artists have flourished in ages of expansion. One only has to think of Michelangelo and DaVinci to know that this is true.

The movement into space will also shape the lighter side of culture. Today, our songs and stories tell of America's openness and nomadic movement. Isn't it probable that tomorrow's country-western singers will be singing of the men and women who pulled up stakes to move to a new space colony? And won't they be filming new TV shows about the "Space Truckers"? Science-fiction has become a much stronger force in today's popular culture. It seems likely that we will be enjoying new "Star Trek" types of adventures even when we're living in a "Star Trek" world.

POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN SPACE

We must face the fact that the movement into space will not be entirely peaceful. There are always those who will try to take what is not theirs while others try to stop them. Human nature will not magically change in the future. Governments, police forces, and the military will be needed in space.

How can we create order in an expanding space civilization while preserving freedom and diversity? Where will political sovereignty reside, on Earth or in space? These questions imply that there are only

two choices: a solar system empire controlled by Earth or space nations independent of Earth. But the human movement into space will actually take the form of a growing sphere of activity with the Earth at the center. Isn't it likely that at least one government will be arranged in a like manner? It is certainly possible to create political structures which would allow for a large amount of local autonomy while retaining a body politic which extends from one part of Earth to areas in space - one in which all citizens retain all political rights and freedoms no matter where they live within it.

This has been done. It is known as the United States of America. The system established by the Constitution - federalism - enables people to have local control and enjoy the security of national power simultaneously. Its democratic institutions allow for the detection of problems before they become serious threats. Space settlers may find it necessary to create such a system in order to be able to live in a free and orderly Solar System civilization.

In order to make all this work, all levels of government and other centers of power would have to respect the responsibilities of everyone else. States and communities must retain and expand effective power. They must be able to pass laws reflecting local conditions and experiences while the federal government retains the power to oversee the larger whole.

Consider all the problems a society must overcome in order to survive and grow in space. It must defend itself from military attack, cosmic rays, meteors and space junk. It must secure enough resources to run its many operations and to supply its citizens with what they need to thrive in space. It must encourage the development of economic and scientific enterprises that will enable it to attract intelligent and industrious immigrants. And, it must enable its citizens to produce and deliver goods and services to other societies so that it can get what it needs in exchange.

In order for any of this to happen, the space society will need a good legal framework within which it may act. Rules for individuals and groups are necessary for any kind of coordinated activity to take place. This is especially true for Space Colonies since they would have special legal problems. (The term "Space Colony" refers to a very large space structure which is spun for artificial gravity and is given an Earth-like environment. "Colony" in this usage has lost its political connotation.)

Space Colonies must secure the right to unimpeded use of certain orbits and a right to a protective zone of space surrounding each Colony - a kind of Sphere of Influence - which no one may enter without challenge. These rights are absolutely required for safety reasons. Colonies must also secure the right to unobstructed solar energy and access to all Lunar and asteroidal material required for ongoing projects.

The generation and distribution of information will be by far the most important economic activity in space for the foreseeable future. An economic system would be ruined by too many restrictions. A free society would have huge advantages economically, but may suffer security risks in space.

At first glance, democracy doesn't appear to be as conductive to the development of stable space societies. It involves chaotic, uncontrolled decision-making processes which, if left to themselves, could destroy a space society. Popular opinion cannot be allowed to overrun necessary safety rules in the space environment.

But, democratic processes leave plenty of room for the implementation and enforcement of such rules. Fire codes in American cities come to mind. Meanwhile, settlers would find themselves free to develop the kind of free-flowing information and decision-making networks that would allow them to take full advantage of the rapid growth of knowledge in space.

Authoritarian societies were fashioned by people who lived in slow-changing agricultural civilizations. They were designed to react predictably to predictable situations. It is no coincidence that their modern counterparts have great difficulty in dealing with a rapidly changing world in the information age.

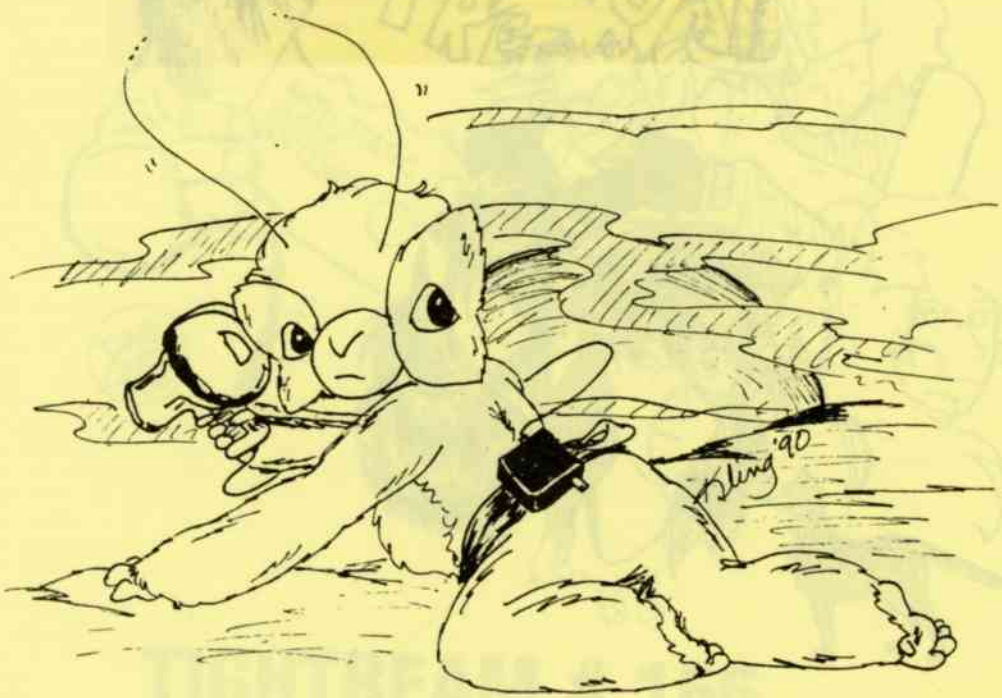
On the other hand, democratic societies

seem to be designed with the late twentieth century in mind. Our highly praised rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, press and assembly, are not just valuable guarantors of individual autonomy, they also function as crucial feedback mechanisms, allowing important information to be routed rapidly to where in it is most needed.

A vast proliferation of space societies is sure to come. There is plenty of room and plenty of resources with which to build. This means the creation of specifically American space states is not only possible, but probable. Space pioneers who are shopping around for a new home would reason that if you want democracy, it's best to go with a 200-year-old reputable firm.

Just as there is no clause in the Constitution that requires an American state to be on the American continent, there is nothing that says a state must be on Earth. Americans could move to space as the pioneers moved west and take law, precedent and democratic institutions with them. They need not be our colonists; they could be our fellow citizens.

Picture our solar system filled with a variety of settlements on planets, moons, space stations and Space Colonies - the heavens filled with commerce. Imagine their technological, cultural, ecological and political diversity. These would act as a centrifugal force, pulling against any enforced unity. A properly constituted American structure would be able to command, by the people's consent, the incredibly wealthy society which would spread throughout the Solar System and beyond. It would shape the ever-growing, ever-changing civilization to come.



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