

Janus



# Janus

12-13

Volume 4 Number 2/3  
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### ERRATA

In "Murbles from Minneapolis" in Janus 11, "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank" should have been listed as appearing in the May (not July) 1976 issue of *Galaxy*; the July issue contained "Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance". "Baguette" appeared in the October 1976 issue of *Galaxy*.

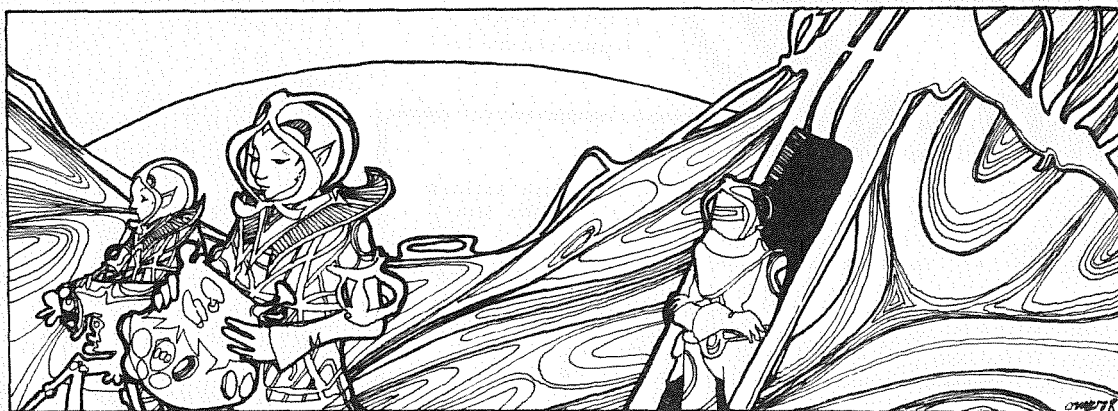
The co-editors of Janus, Janice Bogstad and Jeanne Gomoll, shape the philosophy and goals of the zine and locate and solicit contributors. However, Jan alone controls the quality of graphic contributions, communications with the writers, while Jeanne alone controls the quality of written contributions and communications with the writers, while Jeanne alone controls the quality of graphic contributions, communications with the artists, and executes Janus layout. Locs are edited by Hank Luttrell. Copy editing and proofreading are done by Richard S. Russell, with additional proofing by Jan Bogstad, Perri Corrick-West, Ellen Laluzerne, Hank Luttrell, Leslie Luttrell, Diane Martin, Paul Matzke, Emerson C. Mitchell, Kim Nash, and Lucy Nash. Typing is by Jan Bogstad, Jeanne Gomoll, Leslie Luttrell, Diane Martin, Richard S. Russell, and Rick White. Our printer and offset advisor is Randy Everts (Speed Print, Madison). Local newstand distribution is by WIND, Inc. Published by SF3. Special thanks to Philip Kaveny for suggesting the theme for this issue and to Janice Bogstad for conceiving the idea of the double issue that has made all of our lives longer. // Collation for Janus 11 was by Janice Bogstad, Perri Corrick-West, Jeanne Gomoll, Andrew Hooper, Philip Kaveny, Jeff Kesselman, Hank Luttrell, Leslie Luttrell, Diane Martin, Lynne Ann Morse, Rex T. Nelson, David Pfeiffer, Doug Price, Richard S. Russell, David R. J. Stenon, Richard C. West, and Rick White. // All of the opinions in Janus are those of their authors and/or artists and are not necessarily reflections of the policies or opinions of the editors or publisher. // Any resemblance of any fictional character, written or depicted, to any real persons, living or dead, is coincidental. // Copyright © 1978 by Janice Bogstad. All rights revert to the original authors and artists. // Normal single issue price: \$1.00. Price of this special double issue: \$2.00. Subscription to four issues (winter, spring, summer, autumn): \$4.00. Janus is also available for trade, accepted letters of comment, or other accepted contribution. // Write Janus c/o SF3, Box 1624, Madison, WI, 53701.

### WHY YOU GOT THIS ISSUE

About a third of the way across your mailing label is the letter J (Janus) and another letter which tells you why you got this issue:  
C = You contributed.  
D = Do you want to contribute? Artwork, articles, letters, etc. accepted.  
M = You were mentioned or reviewed.  
O = Other perfectly good reason.  
P = You publish someone who was mentioned or reviewed.  
S = You subscribe. Your last issue is indicated by the number after the S.  
T = We trade.  
U = Do you want to trade? We prefer to trade all-for-all.



## News Nurds



by Jeanne Gomoll

I reassure myself that we're really not all that late in getting this issue, no. 12, of *Janus* out. There are, after all, hornets in the air and sun-bathers lying out all over the place. It isn't as bad as I half-jokingly predicted at the end of the last issue: I am not, after all, wishing you all a Merry Christmas. But stories about why we're a bit late are the main staple of boring fanzine columns, so you can imagine anything you care to: that we've all been involved in a continuous orgy (or guerrilla warfare) since WisCon 2, that this issue is actually No. 13 but we just didn't let you know because your paranoid fantasies are all true, and we've been maliciously plotting against you, or that there was a slight problem with the time stabilization machine. Any of those possibilities would be a lot more interesting than the string of procrastinations I could describe, so I'll just leave it at that.

We survived WisCon and the controversy that followed within our group afterwards about whether or not WisCon should continue to have a feminist slant. (Resolution: Suzy McKee Charnas, author of *Walk to the End of the World* and the soon-to-be-released, *Motherlines*, will be the WisCon 3 Guest of honor (along with a still secret possible second GoH), and Gina Clark has accepted our invitation to be the fan GoH.) There should be a few convention reports within this issue, though not as many as Jan and I had hoped for, because it was surprisingly difficult for most of us to write about WisCon. Though I've written about it elsewhere, I myself have been unable to come up with an account I am very pleased with. Either my synopsis is too officially chronological or far too personal. Others in the group had their own reasons for declining to write about the con, but I wonder if it isn't just generally difficult to write about a convention when one has been so intimately a part of the production of it.

The biggest event of recent months has been the publishing of Hugo nominations. We are, I believe, just a little bit too late to "scoop" the newszines, but in case you haven't heard, here are the nominations:

Novel: *The Forbidden Tower* (Marion Zimmer Bradley), *Time Storm* (Gordon R. Dickson), *Dying of the Light* (George R. R. Martin), *Lucifer's Hammer* (Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle), *Gateway* (Frederick Pohl).

Novella: "A Snark in the Night," (Gregory Benford); "The Wonderful Secret," (Keith Laumer); "Aztecs," (Vonda N. McIntyre); "Stardance," (Spider & Jeanne Robinson); "In the Hall of the Martian Kings," (John Varley).

Novelette: "Ender's Game," (Orson Scott Card); "Prismatica," (Samuel R. Delany); "The Ninth Symphony of Ludwig van Beethoven and Other Lost Songs," (Carter Scholz); "The Screwfly Solution," (Racoon Sheldon); "Eyes of Amber," (Joan D. Vinge).

Short Story: "Jeffy is Five," (Harlan Ellison); "Lauralyn," (Randall Garrett); "Dog Day Evening," (Spider Robinson); "Time-Sharing Angel," (James Tiptree, Jr.); "Air Raid," (John Varley).

Dramatic Presentation: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *The Hobbit*, *Star Wars*, *Wizards*, and, "Blood! The Life and Future Times of Jack the Ripper."

Professional Artist: Vincent Di Fate, Stephen Fabian, Frank Kelly Freas, Rick Sternbach, Michael Whelan.

Professional Editor: James Baen, Ben Bova, Terry Carr, Edward L. Ferman, George H. Scithers.

Amateur Magazine: *Don-O-Saur*, *Janus*, *Locus*, *Maya*, *Science Fiction Review*.

Fan Writer: Charles Brown, Don D'Amassa, Richard E. Geis, Don C. Thompson, Susan Wood.

Fan Artist: Grant Canfield, Phil Foglio, Alexis Gilliland, Jeanne Gomoll, James Shull.

The spread in each category were as follows: NOVEL (95-25), NOVELLA (104-160), NOVELETTE (49-13), SHORT STORY (82-11), DRAMATIC PRESENTATION (338-8), PRO ARTIST (55-31), PRO EDITOR (92-29), AMATEUR MAGAZINE (53-15), FAN WRITER (42-10), FAN ARTIST (23-14). Total number of ballots received was 540.

If you wish to vote, ballots (and membership fees to Iguacon) must be in to the committee by July 31. For more information write to Iguacon, PO Box 1072, Phoenix, AZ 85001.

I didn't list the non-hugo awards, the John W. Campbell Award or the two Gandalf Awards. These are published in other zines and in the Iguacon PR 3.

Disregard this dry recitation of the list: I was (we all were) incredibly excited to hear the news of the two nominations, the one for JANUS and the other for me. In fact, we still are, in spite of the many valid criticisms we hear about the inappropriateness of fan awards voted for by the mixed conglomeration of people who attend Worldcons and vote on the Hugos. Witness the spread of votes in

the fannish categories: there are an appallingly small number of people who nominate (or at least who agree on any one fanzine in significant enough numbers), not to mention the odd mixture of semi-pro and amateur publications in the amateur category. Nevertheless it's impossible not to feel warm and honored and thrilled to have been nominated for a Hugo, and Jan and I have been somewhat dismayed by comments addressed to us in a few letters that suggest that we are somehow personally responsible for what the letter-writers regard as bad choices among the fan nominees. I haven't responded. I fail to see that I owe anyone an apology or even an explanation as to why I am not apologizing. More often heard though has been the complaint that *Janus* was unfortunately nominated more for its politics than for quality. That criticism is certainly debatable—I hope and believe—but more than that, it seems unfair that the "interest bias" of this fanzine should be any different than the interest biases of any other fanzine when as part of its appeal to a group of readers it causes them to enjoy any given fanzine. Victoria Wayne has said that feminism isn't fannish and others have agreed with that statement. My response is a question, one that echoes Harlan Ellison's questions concerning fannish ethics. I wonder, does the definition of fandom as being anything that a fan does, only go as far as one's own biases and prejudices? Some of these critics say over and over again that they prefer years past in fandom when fans were accepted on an equal basis without regard to age or sex, when all of us strident radical feminists didn't demand apas, cons, fanzines and rooms of our own and pollute the essential bodily fluids of fandom with our divisive demands. ...You know, back ten or fifteen years or so, when there were only a tiny number of women active in fandom. I think that the increasing number of women in fandom is not a result of the supposedly unbiased reception they have received from fandom. Rather, I think that the phenomenon stems from the increasing amount of SF that is written by women (and their friends) and by the increasing amount of feminist fanac, which has been connecting the potentials in SF and in fandom for women with the needs of women who are committed to feminism.

Thus I would certainly agree heartily with those critics that say that the philosophy of *Janus* might have something to do with its popularity. But I do fail to see why that is something to mourn. As I said, I still feel extraordinarily good about the nominations and only a little disheartened by some of the surprising "congratulation" notes we've received. I thought that Jan or I should respond at some point within *Janus*, however, and that's what this has been.

By the way, thank you all, kindly!

And now it's time for the regular Madstf news update. A number of out-of-towners have made their way to Madison and escaped relatively unscathed. Among the visitors have been Sarah Prince, Jon Singer (who stubbornly drove his car which any competent service station attendant would have declared dead, from Minneapolis to Chicago...in two days, Madison being his stopover), also: Karen Pearlstein, Ole Kvern (who was infected with the dread D&D disease while he was here), and two lemmings from the Seattle migration, Anna Vargo and Gary Farber. In connection with another arm of the octopus-like activities of the ubiquitous SF<sup>3</sup>, Philip Kaveny and Hank Luttrell are working on a proposal for a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Committee, to do a series of radio and television shows about Wisconsin SF writers.

Since WisCon, there have been only two general (advertised to the University community) monthly meetings. One was coordinated by Jan Bogstad and

dealt with popular science books which use science fiction to sell new technologies (like space stations, etc.). The other meeting was hosted by Randy Everts (*Janus's* printer) highlighting some findings he's made recently about Wisconsin SF writers. At that meeting we also celebrated the Hugo nominations with special cat cookies and cake provided by Diane Martin. Jan and I were captured on film like some unconventional newly married couple cutting the cake, but then that was a weird week; both of us were doing a number of strange things. As summer flowed into Wisconsin (at times, recently, accompanied by flash flood warnings), and a large number of people in our group got involved in studying for exams, writing term papers, etc., it became difficult to plan monthly meetings, and we've gone into our annual summer hiatus with regard to these events.

Other than that, we've traveled (or small groups of us have traveled) to various cons and parts of the country. While most of Madstf was at the apparently very successful X-Con in Milwaukee, I was in Vancouver for V-Con and later, in Seattle to visit various Northwestern fans. I had a wonderful time and even managed to sell enough artwork to pay for my visit. And then Jan, Phil Kaveny, Perri Corrick-West, and Dick West went to the SFRA Conference in Waterloo, IA, where they heard Ursula K. LeGuin speak. Jan said that when she talked to Ursula, she couldn't help stammering a lot.

Now, onto this issue's contents. If you thought that we were serious before... Wait, stop. I promised Jan that I'd be serious and sober when I talked about this. Ahem. Once more:

In this issue, *Janus* is highlighting the transcript of a talk given by Samuel R. Delany while he was sitting, no less, on my kitchen chair, right in my own kitchen, with all the rest of us crowded around on the floor and available couch space. The talk was the synthesis of thoughts he was preparing for a presentation he was to give on December 10 on the subject of how science fiction as literature relates to what we call mainstream literature. The discussion of especially the "fuzzy" stuff in between, that neither or both SF readers and mainstream readers have claimed, forms the main focus of this issue of *Janus*, and will hopefully add up to a whole that ties into, illuminates, and discusses the ideas that Delany suggests in his article. For instance: Jeff Clark discusses the latest novel of Robert Coover, *The Public Burning*; Cy Chauvin asks that we not forget that he is an artifice; and Hlavaty, editor of *Diagonal Relationship*, suggests that we think of the area of dispute between SF and mainstream as the DMZ. Imagine S. Liston in boxer trunks as he discusses Pynchon's last novel in *Gravity's Rainbow* as Science? Fiction? Tom Murn goes another round with Pynchon and *Gravity's Rainbow* from another corner. Philip Kaveny adds to these essays on modern mainstream writers who use SF techniques and metaphors in his discussion of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, and Jan Bogstad, together with Philip, comments on Delany's *The Jewel-Anged Jew*. Jan also writes about several works of surrealism as science fiction.

After all that thought-provoking critical expounding, you might be relieved to know that Diane Martin and Dick Russell are still here reviewing all the SF flicks in town or at the drive-ins, and that Greg Rihn is represented both in still more beanie margin jokes and in a couple of reviews (of films and Saturday TV fare). There are fanzine reviews, there are letters, and of course, as I said before, there are WisCon reports.

In neither the category of "regulars" nor the Delany-related material is the article by Virginia Gaiko, in which she, sometimes angrily, discusses her opinion of the art being done today by SF artists.

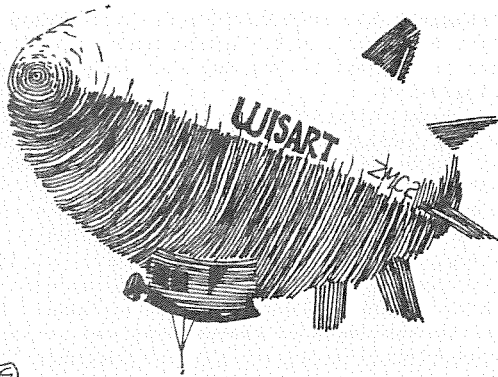


Accompanying her article is a fold-out print by Virginia that, I think, by illustration describes the sort of thing she is working toward. The piece, by the way, made me extremely uncomfortable to look at and I don't know quite how to respond when asked whether I "like" it or not. To me it seemed like a perfect companion to Philip K. Dick's *UBIK*. Neither Dick nor Gallo mean their images of the disintegration of the world around them to be comfortable ones and both are certainly unsettling though powerful pictures. I, and Virginia Gallo I'm sure, will be most interested to hear your responses to the picture and article.

And the last thing in this category of unusual *Janus* offerings is a section of letters that Harlan Ellison has received in response to his ethical statement published here (Vol. 3, No. 4, Whole No. 10) and

several other publications. We are printing only excerpts of a really massive amount of correspondence that Ellison has received in the last several months to give you an idea of the kind of response he's been getting, ranging from support and endorsement to mockery to propositions. Whether or not one decides to camp out in Phoenix, or whether that suggestion seems impossible to you, I think it's important to take his suggestions and his intentions seriously, and think about one's own spoken ethics as opposed to actual behavior. There is a lot at stake.

With that, we leave you until sometime after Iguanacon, at which time, if our schedule works, we will have gotten a batch of WorldCon reports out and published before any other fanzines do. I'll believe it when I see it. The deadline for that issue (for contributions and letters of comment) will be August 15, 1978. See you all in Phoenix! ☺



#### 1978 Report from the Pedestrian Arts Council: Dance of the Zeppelins

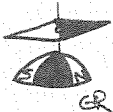
On May 23, 1978, the First Annual Dance of the Zeppelins took place. The event was financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation, the National Foundation for the Arts, and the Krupp Corporation.

The dance, the first of its type, ever, was not without problems. Due to a strong southwest gale, it was difficult for the seven airships to maintain the necessary interval from each other over the wind-swept surface of Lake Encore. Some had suggested earlier that the performance of the dance at an altitude of 100 metres was an act of foolhardy abandon. Kather, the choreographer, refused, however, to compromise the purity of his conception by allowing the zeppelins to rise any farther from the surface.

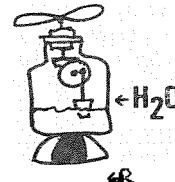
As the artist crashed to earth, he was heard to scream: "In art there are no extenuating circumstances." The Court of Inquiry nevertheless found him guilty, beyond any reasonable doubt, of flying at an unsafe altitude. Posthumously, he was reduced to the rank of Lighting Technician, Fourth Class. The whereabouts of the remaining airships has never been determined, and debris which would indicate a crash over the water was never washed ashore. Since the unfortunate incident, a conditional moratorium on zeppelin dances has been in effect until technology and art can come to a practicable compromise. ☺

PHIL-O

#### THE NAKED BEANIE, Part 1: Beanie turned by Earth's magnetic forces.



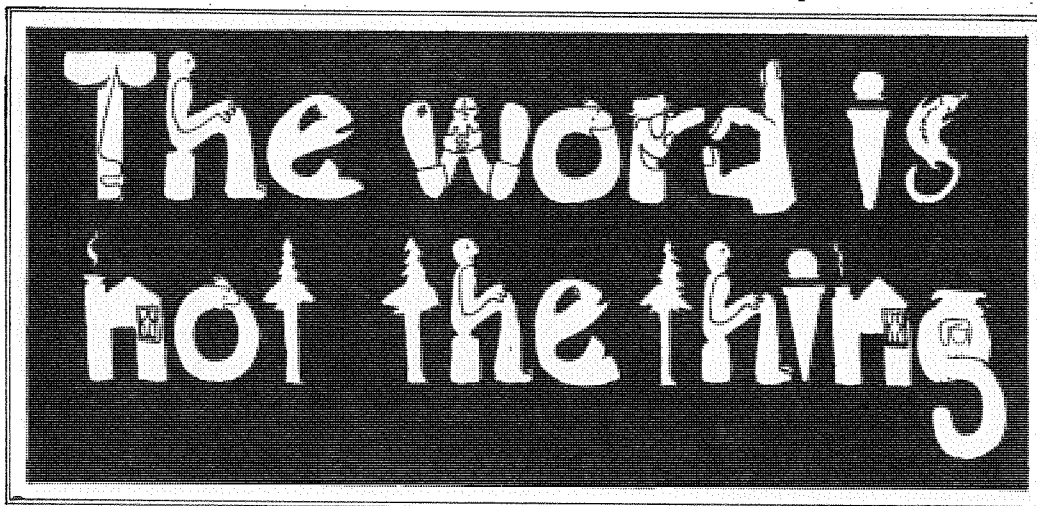
#### THE NAKED BEANIE, Part 2: Beanie exhibiting first practical use of tidal power.





I think it was in about 1906, 1907, either Duraine, a French artist, or Appolinaire, a French surrealist poet, or Matisse, another French artist, introduced Picasso to African sculpture. This is not the beginning, because you can actually trace it back a little bit farther, but it's a good measuring point in a kind of phenomenon that now exists on the walls of every gallery in the country, and indeed all throughout Europe, and that's the fact that art has moved from being very representational to—more serious art is now abstract—and when we look at this kind of phenomenon, there are a couple of ways in which we can look at it. Either we can look at it as a kind of *sui generis* revolution that took place in Western art around the beginning of the century that resulted in abstract art taking over everything, or we can go back to this particular idea when Picasso first began to look at black African sculpture, and then we see it as a case of getting in touch with a larger tradition.

One of the things that we tend to forget is that most of the art in the world is conceptual, rather than representational. It may be representing something, but it represents it in some kind of stylized way. Pattern is basically what you have going on; significant forms are taken out of things, and this is what most of the world's art is, and if you look at it in that wise, what you have is not a case of a *sui generis* revolution happening in Western art,



but what rather is a bunch of artists getting in touch with a tradition that is much larger historically, much larger in world terms, and you have the world tradition finally swamping this very local tradition of representative art in Europe.

And I think something rather analogous is going on today in terms of that growth of science fiction that I mentioned before in terms of the statistics—the fact that in 1951 you had maybe 12 or 15 things that by any stretch of the imagination could be called science-fiction novels published, and then last year something like 14% of all the fiction in the country published was science fiction and, indeed, something is growing, and there are again two ways to look at it. You can either see it as a kind of local phenomenon or you can look at it in a larger sense, and if you look at it in a larger sense one of the first things you do note is that in the same way that the rest of the world's graphic art is abstract, most of the world's fictional endeavors are fantastical. The idea of a representative fiction, of a representational fiction, the kind of limitations that have to be put on the myth, the folk-tale, the tall story, the entertaining lie—finally to reduce it to the lie whose only entertainment value is the fact that it can be mistaken for a representation of the real—is a very local phenomenon in historical terms.

# SAMUEL R. DELANY SPEAKS

24 November 1977

transcribed by  
Terri Gregory

When we say that most of the world's fiction is fantastical, what do we mean? Well, one of the things that we mean is that the way the world works in most of the fictive endeavors in most of the world outside of Europe—these are the folk myths of a lot of other countries—the way the world works in those stories is not the way the world works in the quotidian lives, the day-to-day experiences, of the people who both listen to those stories and indeed make them up. It's a very naive kind of approach that says that some Indian myth, in which a tree turns into a person or an animal speaks, is believed in a kind of one-to-one way, that frequently we tend to think that primitive peoples believe in their myths. These are precisely the people who really know what goes on in the forest; they know what animals are about, what trees are about, and would be much less likely to think that kind of thing than indeed we would. They know how trees behave, they know how animals behave, and so far then I think these myths actually have to be taken as fantastical. The world works in a different kind of way.

When science fiction comes into Western fiction and begins to take over in the way it's taking over, is something being borrowed from this or not? We hear a lot of talk about science fiction as the mythology of the industrial age and things of that sort, all of which seems rather glib to me; yet there may be something involved that I would like to put my finger on. There's a kind of irony here because the only way I can locate anything real in this thing is to borrow some terms from art, specifically the terms "figure" and "ground", which are the way we recognize anything. When we see something we see it against some kind of background, and indeed fiction seems to work in a way very similar to art in that, as we tell a story, there are some elements of it that belong in the subject of the story and there are some elements that reflect the world in which the subject of the story takes place; and I don't mean subjects in any phenomenological sense, I just mean it in the ordinary sense: the topic of the story, the main characters, the main things that the story is about. And one of the things that happens in a fantastical tale is that the ground, the presentation of the world, works differently from the way the world of the day-to-day lives of the heroes works. This seems to be a very important aspect of these fantastical fictions that we call mythology, the folktales, those stories where there is magic loose in the world: the fact that transformations happen in the world that are not part of the things that happen in the ordinary, day-to-day lives of the people of the cultures that actually produce these fictions.

At that point I find myself wanting to ask, "Well, what's the necessity in fiction for varying both the figure and the ground?" Now representational art, especially of the fictive sort, is a kind of art where we are very used to the subject—the figure—being varied. The figure is varied in representational art all the time. When I say "varied", I mean the figure always acts differently from the way people act in the real world. One of the things we are very used to, in fact we accept it without question, is that people in the most mimetic kind of fiction behave in ways that we don't usually see people around us behaving. The whole concept of the hero is an expression of the fact that people do not behave in the same way that people behave in real life.

People have talked about this particular kind of variation in behavior in a number of ways. W. H. Auden, in a poem called "Caliban to the Audience", which is a part of a longer poem called "The Sea and the Mariner", talks about the world of art as that place where great emotions loosen rather than tie the tongue. And this is just a convention of the most mimetic, most representational art that we have,

that somehow when a character gets in a state of great emotion suddenly, they become extraordinarily eloquent, whereas, you, I, and ordinary people, when we get in a situation involving great emotion, can't say a thing; that's precisely the place where we become inarticulate. But somehow we accept this convention in highly representational art of great emotion loosening rather than tying the tongue.

Just in terms of historical example, one of the first pieces of really mimetic fiction that we have in English is *Robinson Crusoe*. It is frequently cited as the first novel, and we know an awful lot about *Robinson Crusoe* in terms of the things that inspired DeFoe to write it. *Robinson Crusoe* was based on a man named Alexander Selkirk, and the things we know about Selkirk *vis-a-vis* Robinson Crusoe are intimately fascinating. Selkirk is a man who actually spent a couple of years on a desert island. But Selkirk, unlike Robinson Crusoe, was not shipwrecked on that island; he asked to be put on that island. Not only did he ask to be put on that island, but he got along very badly with the people on his ship, and



"We are now talking about SF in a very idealized way — what it could do, and what from time to time it does do: show people failing or succeeding, not in terms of our world, but in terms of another world. There is the image that another world is possible."

when he was put ashore and the ship was about to put off, he ran out, he decided he wanted to change his mind and get back on the ship. He'd been such an essentially pain-in-the-ass to his shipmates that they thought "Good riddance" and said, "No, no. No, no. You stay there." And so he did stay there, for about 18 months, and then he came back; he was finally picked up by another vessel, and he came back to England, and a great deal was made of Selkirk, and this inspired DeFoe to write *Robinson Crusoe*. Indeed, DeFoe and Selkirk were from the same hometown. But when Selkirk came back and moved into society, actually he once more became very quickly very, very disillusioned with society. He lived with his parents, but he wouldn't stay in their house; he built a cave in their back yard. And then he moved into the cave and lived the rest of his life there. In other words, Selkirk was nuts, in words of one syllable.

It is fascinating to look specifically at the kinds of changes that DeFoe thought necessary to make in the subject, in the central subject, in the main character of this novel to make *Robinson Crusoe*. When you read *Robinson Crusoe*, there is no hint of



Crusoe's being dissatisfied with society. It's all acts of God that put him on this island, and indeed when he comes back you can't imagine Robinson Crusoe living in a cave in the back yard once he gets out of these adventures. There is a great deal of what you can only call ideological distortion—distortions for rather ideological reasons of this basic story with which DeFoe was very familiar. He lived in the same town as Selkirk; he knew his family; Selkirk at one time gave a talk in the local church which DeFoe attended, in which he was so virulent that Selkirk was finally...not exactly excommunicated...but was forbidden to come back into the church. DeFoe heard this, and all of this turns into *Robinson Crusoe*. Robinson Crusoe, the most ordinary, *bourgeois* upholder of the English way of life, who just by an act of God gets stuck on this desert island, goes through the same kind of adventures that Selkirk goes through, and then returns, chastened, ready to receive society, although he was never unhappy with it.

This kind of distortion in the subject in what some people call the first English novel is paradigmatic for the kinds of distortions that happen in the subject. Even with the kinds of things that go on between the unhappy James Joyce living in Dublin and the James Joyce—the Stephen Dedalus character—that you get in *Ulysses*, I think this kind of thing always goes on. When mimetic fiction as an art is at its highest, there are all these values that are absolutely reversed.

So...mimetic fiction, realistic fiction, has a long tradition of varying the subject; but then what is the point of varying the ground? And how does this relate to science fiction?

Every fiction can be reduced to a kind of heuristic or didactic message. This doesn't necessarily mean that you are giving the meaning of the fiction by reducing it to this didactic message, but nevertheless this reduction can be made, and the reduction works very simply. Some main character tries to do something, and the character either fails or succeeds, and the author either thinks it's a good thing that the character failed or thinks it's a bad thing that the character failed. In mimetic fiction (in which the ground is the world we all recognize), this rather limits the didactic message that an author can give you. The fact that the ground is the same as our real world is a way for the author to say, "Things as they are; social reality will endure." And therefore the failure or success of the character has always got to be seen in some way or other as either; if the character is successful, then the character is successful in terms of an unchangeable real world. In other words, the character conforms to the real world somehow; even if the character wants to change something in the real world, the character must do so in ways that are realistic, so therefore the character conforms to the real world in some way. Or if the character fails, then the character has been trying to change something in the real world and has not been able to. Therefore the real world triumphs over the character, in one way or the other, which, if you want to take the reduction one step further, reduces the didactic messages of a fiction in which the ground is not varied to two messages: either slavery or madness. Those places where people fight against the real world and fail indicate that for some reason they have not perceived the real world correctly, and then, on some level or another, they are mad. Or, they make changes in the real world in realistic ways (which is to say, things as they are), do finally endure, they do finally persist, and therefore they are giving in to the real world on some level. Either the author approves or disapproves, one way or the other, but that is a secondary message. And

so you've got these two subjects for mundane fiction—slavery or madness.

Now if Freud or Marx and their progeny have told us anything, what they have told us is that slavery or madness as subjects—and I do mean this in a phenomenological sense—that slavery or madness as subjects have no existence. They can only be enforced. They are not subjective realities. There are not certain kinds of psychological realities, persons, who are basically slaves, and are meant to be slaves. There are not certain psychologies, certain real cells, who are basically mad. This is something that is impressed from the outside, and this is one of the reasons that these two particular messages just aren't relevant anymore. We know too much about the way psychology works—read very much along the Freudian-Marxist critique of it, to the extent that they are correct.

So one of the reasons it is necessary to vary the ground—to have the world not work in the way that our world works—is to allow a different kind of didactic message to come across. The character succeeds or fails not in terms of the real world, but in terms of a different world, in terms of a world that works differently from the way our world works and that allows a whole different range of didactic concerns for the author. The author is no longer limited to these two very boring messages that are indeed, finally, not correct.

So in science fiction, we get a way of varying the ground. The fact that we have a way of varying the ground and along believable lines results from a sort of bowdlerization not only of science fiction but of technological images, things that we think work. We think for example, that switches work, so we throw switches, and something happens at a distance, so we have a basic imaginative schema in which to inscribe it and there are all sorts of other technological schemata in which all of this is inscribed as well, so this allows a new set of didactic concerns to measure fiction. I think because the subject has always been varied, the subject has always worked differently in mundane fiction from the way the subject works in the real world. That's one of the reasons why you have to vary the ground to compensate for precisely the fact that the subject, the character, always works differently.

This is, by the way, in terms of some of the things we were talking about, is what Teresa Hbert was trying to get at when she was talking about stereotypes, i. e., these are not real people. No, fictional characters are not real people, they always work by different rules. If they work. By the way, when was the last time you had an adventure? When was the last time a story, a set of experiences that followed the schema of some story happened to you? This is a very rare occurrence, and, in order to inscribe people into stories, you have to have them act differently, otherwise it will not work. This is part of the convention of fiction, and I think that is what she was trying to say when she was talking about stereotypes.

I think, in this sense, this is why people are being attracted to science fiction, although there are many other supportive causes as well. I think on the level of a very real basic philosophical need, on a philosophical level, there is a kind of awareness of this. We're still talking about the potential of SF, we're not talking about something that every science-fiction novel fulfills, but what in the very SF construct itself is the possibility for it. I think people who pick up some SF novel and get a little tiniest sense of wonder, if you will (a phrase you are all familiar with), experience a bit of the potential that SF has to deal with different didactic structures. Now to treat esthetic structures as though they were all

didactic reductions does not exhaust the field. But the point is that every story does have a didactic reduction, and to say that it doesn't, doesn't handle the situation either. So we do have to talk about this. This becomes the thing that in most English courses no one will ever talk about—what this story means. This is the kind of thing that, e. g., a feminist always has to say to whoever is promulgating something—whether it be *War and Peace*, which is probably the most sexist novel ever written, or whatever—saying, "Look, the women are doing this, and they fail, and the cards are stacked up against them—this is just not true." And someone else says, "But you're missing the point. Think about the deep symbolism." At which point you throw up your hands, and you get a gun, and shoot somebody, or what have you. Because, at a certain point, you've got this argument between the political people on the one side and the symbolic people on the other side; what you have finally is simply that the symbolism is the politics with the political things left aside, and the politics, say the symbolic people, are inappropriate concerns. But the structures are the same things—politics and symbology at that point are simply two readings of the same structures. It should be fairly clear where my own allegiance is: I think the politics are very important.

There are other reasons that we are attracted to SF, and I think these become part of this whole thing. We are now talking about SF in a very idealized way—what it could do, and what from time to time it does do: show people failing or succeeding, not in terms of our world, but in terms of another world. There is the image that another world is possible.

One of the things that also happens is that, in that sense, mundane fiction does not, in both of its modes—both in its representational mode and in its innovative, surreal, experimental mode—does not construct a dialog with the world. It does construct a dialog with a character, but does not construct a dialog with the overall world. It greets the overall world with gesture. In the realistic mode of mundane fiction, the gesture is a gesture of acquiescence: things as they are will endure; certain tragic figures may try to change it, but they are tragic precisely because they can't. It's still a gesture, it's no dialog, and the surreal mode greets it with a gesture of defiance. It waves its arms very loudly, indeed very sympathetically; I mean, you cannot help but sympathize with these mute gesturings. Nevertheless, what they do not do is create an actual dialog with the world, which I think science fiction, again, at its greater potential, can do, because it not only presents people acting differently from the way people really do: more heroic, less heroic, certain aspects parodied—stereotyped, if you will—or simply brought to the fore for analysis. The world itself also works differently from the way our world works, and that produces an actual dialog with the world. That is very, very important, particularly at this economic and historic moment.

What are these other reasons that we are attracted to science fiction, now that we have had all this idealistic super-structure raised over things? One is a strange kind of hope and fear about technology. People are both disconcerted with the technology that they see and they're also attracted to it. Science fiction presents this in a distorted way, and there is a hope that somehow in the distortion people will read the real significance of what all this technology is about. I do not think that that is a valid reason to be attracted to science fiction, although I think a lot of people are.

The way this particular attraction manifests itself is in the kind of thing that is always going on in conferences, where they're having a conference

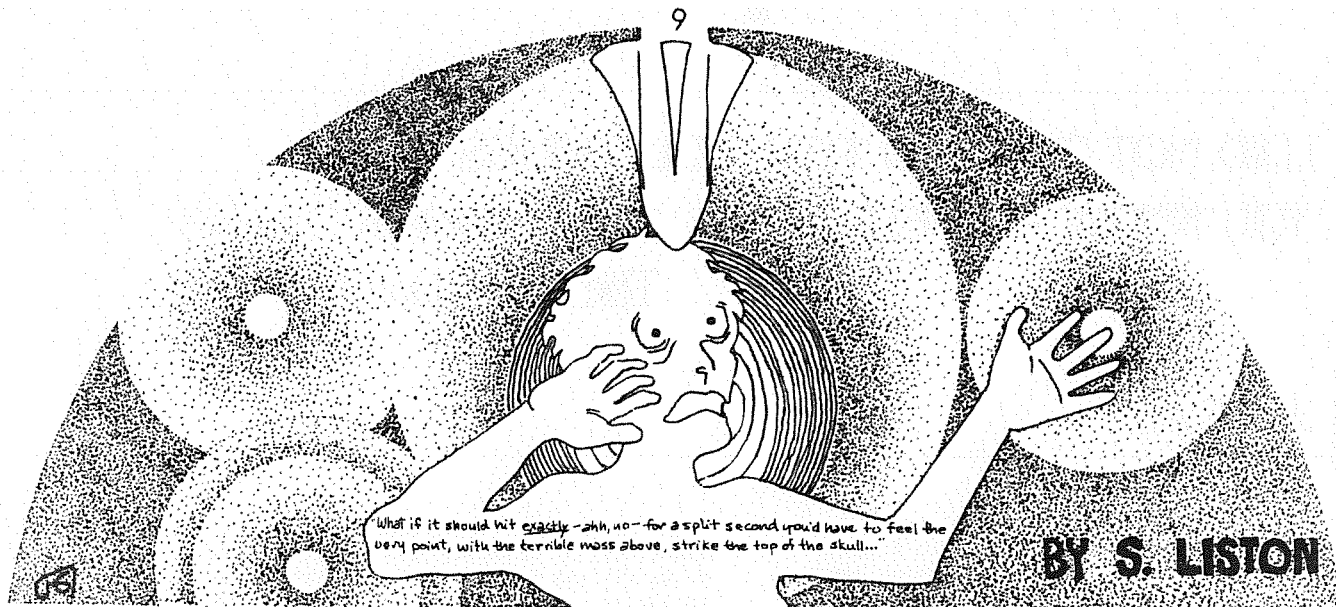
on the geology of Minnesota and so they've invited a geologist, someone who's an expert in ecology, and somebody else who's an expert in the history of Minnesota, and then they invite a Norwegian science fiction writer, because they want to know about the future. And this happens again and again. I've been on more panels like this than I can shake a stick at and, finally, what I spend most of my time doing is explaining to them the kind of miscalculation that has resulted in my being invited there in the first place—why I do not belong on this panel: I am merely a science-fiction writer; I am not a prophet. Science fiction is about the present. It makes a significant distortion of the present in order to say whatever it is that is said.

But the point is, the particular distortive techniques that science fiction uses are not the same distortive techniques that fantasy uses, or that fairy tales use, or the kind of reductive ones that myths or parodies use. It is just a different kind of distortion. One of the things that always fascinated me is how rapidly science fiction dates. In fact, SF dates a lot faster than other literature simply because various and sundry technical concerns change.

Okay. There is hope and fear of technology.

A second reason many are attracted to science fiction pertains specifically to the academy. Science fiction is actually a very small field, in terms of writers. As I said, 14% of the fiction published last year was science fiction; the SFMA has some 400 members, of whom 300 are essentially nonwriting members—associate members, teachers, librarians, and what have you—and actual science fiction writers who write most of this stuff are maybe a hundred people. This is a very small number of authors who are publishing 14% of the fiction published in the US today. This means that in terms of a critical approach this is a much smaller number than the best of the, let's say, serious authors in the country. Science fiction, like many of the fields of popular culture—comic books, pornography, you name it, even Hollywood movies—has not that many people doing it as a field. The field is knowable in a way that serious mundane fiction is not knowable: serious poetry today is not a knowable field; there are at least a thousand really fine poets working in the United States today. There is no way you can be familiar with the complete works of Shelley, Keats, Byron, Coleridge, and Blake, let's say. There are just too many fine writers. And so this idea, one of the very classical ideas of the critic, to put together the canon of acceptable work, i. e. *canon*, and should anyone claim to have done it, you can't check that they've done it because there's simply too much work to read. You can become knowledgeable about the whole field of science fiction or at least pretty knowledgeable about it, much more so than... even at 14% it's still only 14%, so you can do that, and this I think is behind the academic interest, one of the basic things in which an academic is expert in science fiction is inscribed, the fact that it is a knowable field.

One of the reasons people are attracted to science fiction is because of the way in which it has not yet fulfilled its promise, that it is a very potential thing. I think people see it as something that could be good, but it hasn't really burgeoned out and done the things that would utilize that ability to vary the ground, or that take you away at that point, I will bring this somewhat to a close, as a quick run-through of all these ideas. Nevertheless, I do think very sincerely that science fiction does represent the most sensitive and exciting form of writing that I've ever been privileged enough to encounter, and I'm very glad that I'm in it. But I think it is a play of these potentials and some strange realities as well.



## GRAVITY'S RAINBOW AS SCIENCE? FICTION?

Fiction has been defined as narrative in which names, dates, and places are false and everything else is true. History has been defined as narrative in which names, dates, and places are true and everything else is false. History usually tries to novelize its material, to give it a definite flow and structure pleasing and sensible to the reader. History omits the bugs, rainstorms and full moons of life and gives us a rational picture in which things might sometimes go wrong, but if so there is a good explanation for it and our leaders, teachers, and advisors will set it straight posthaste, if we just give them a little more money and time.

Pynchon denovelizes his narrative, throwing in all the accidents and diverse elements that pop up in daily events, leading us up blind alleys, sending his characters and rockets off in all, or some, directions, perhaps never to be seen again, or to show up in the unlikely places: a boxcar, a fashionable hotel, up a tree, central Asia. He includes all the little things that history leaves out, and instead of a neat wrapup we are given chaos. But on one subject history and Pynchon agree: the strong wage perpetual war on the weak. History mutes this fact and Pynchon screams it out, but the message is clear regardless of the source; it is that they are running things and intend to keep doing so. Pynchon did not come up with this idea in a drugged stupor; it is all down in black and white.

The above is given as an answer to the criticism that Pynchon presents a paranoid view of history. But if paranoia is defined as an unreasonable fear, then Pynchon is not paranoid. It is important at this point to determine which side you are on, that of the powerful chosen or the powerless mass. If you are among the chosen then it is necessary to say that fear of you is paranoia, but fear is required to keep everyone else law-abiding and hard at work.

Whether or not *Gravity's Rainbow* can be read as science fiction is a matter of definition. It is fiction and there is science in it plenty. But where sciencefiction creates fantasy worlds which, to our knowledge, do not exist in our universe (spaceships which travel faster than light, for instance), *Gravity's Rainbow* takes place against a backdrop of real earth history and, except for the erectile plastic, Imipolex G, real science. Anything which occurs in this book can occur in our world. Things which are too fantastic are clearly indicated to be dreams, sometimes drug-induced, or parables, such as the story of Byron the Bulb. The characters may seem incredible to the average reader but they present no

problem to anyone familiar with the names Manson, Polanski, Nixon, Billy Graham, Larry Flynt, or a thousand others to be met with daily in the most banal of news accounts. Let us say, merely, that the reader who does have a taste for the (apparently) unusual will find weirdness enough in *Gravity's Rainbow* and more than enough in the everyday world, floating psych ward that it is.

*Gravity's Rainbow* does not occupy the best-seller lists like *Jaws* or *Your Erroneous Zones*, but continues along at a steady rate of popularity, like a good investment. Unfortunately, many of its most steadfast devotees are cultists, preferring the book for its supposed perversity, difficulty, or obscurity. If you have read it, then you are a very far-out person, indeed. Let us examine it and see how the claims of bizarre stand up.

The characters, every last one of them, are from the best of old Hollywood. This appeals to readers of about Pynchon's age or watchers of midnight television. We have the boyish, Andy Hardy here, Slothop; the dashing daredevil soldiers, Tchitcherine and Pirate Prentice; Mata Hari in the person of Katje Morgesius; evil, slimy bastards like Pointsman, Weissman, and Major Narvy; sympathetic blacks, whores with hearts of gold, buck-toothed Japs, and "Ja-ve-haff-vays" Nazis, and comical sidekicks galore. Not too much complexity in the characters. They are convenient to the larger workings of the novel: the Rocket; the Firm; the Puritan Ethic; Science.

Science has enjoyed a long vogue, replacing Greek and Latin and liberal education in the hierarchy of snob appeal. It, unlike most things which move in and out of fashion, is important. It once saved us from the plague. Now, it might kill us. We would do well to pay attention to it and its practitioners. The great age of science, the monumental discoveries by towering geniuses, is over. We are now in a period of technocracy rather than insight. Scurrying hordes of people in white coats, carrying styrofoam cups of coffee, pump an immense amount of data through computers and await revelation. And yet, science has not come under calm scrutiny. It remains an awesome, religious sort of thing. Writers and historians do not understand it. Science-fiction writers, many of them scientists, have not brought it under control, but continue to treat it as magic. Pynchon, himself more of a technician, a talented engineer, than a scientist, has attempted to put science under the microscope and look at it without emotion and without reverence. It is not a pretty slide.

The scientists of *Gravity's Rainbow* have two obsessions: to prove their preconceived ideas and to

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# I DID NOT COME TO TELL YOU THINGS THAT YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I": Notes on Robert Coover's The Public Burning

Jeff Clark

Dream time is an act of artistic creation.... Most of the society's effort goes into forging the construct, the creative form in which everybody can live—a social contract of sorts. It is the job of the politicians—chiefs or whatever—to organize it. Whatever form they set up is necessarily entropic: eventually it runs down and is unable to propel itself past a certain point. When it does that, it becomes necessary to do everything that has been taboo.... A big blast reduces everything to rubble; then something new is built. Primitive societies, wiser than we, actually set aside a time to do this on a cyclical basis.

—Robert Coover, in *First Person*

What if we broke all the rules, played games with the evidence, manipulated language itself, made History a partisan ally? Of course, the Phantom was already onto this, wasn't he? Ahead of us again. What were his dialectical machinations if not the dissolution of the natural limits of language, the conscious invention of a space, a spooky artificial no-man's land, between logical alternatives?

—"Richard Nixon", in *The Public Burning*

This started life as *The Public Burning of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg: An Historical Romance*. Too bad it didn't remain that way. "A novel" is a poor designation.

Coover's book actually embraces characteristics of the romance, the epic, and the novel. The subject matter is weighty, as befits epic; the vision is ultimately comic, as befits romance. Superficially, the structure is loosely episodic and entertains with digressions (romance); but it also has an underlying monolithic unity (epic). According to the conventions of the epic, characters speak for themselves at length—"Nixon" narrates more than half the book—and yet there is a pronounced outside narrative voice—several, actually, in the non-"Nixon" chapters—a *la* romance. (Such complementary pairings might be continued, but one finally must admit that some features are shared to an extent by the two forms.) On top of it all is the very real, full character of "Richard Nixon"—a staple feature of the novel.

But the book is still the romance Coover once stipulated: it creates a world of magical happenings; and more important, it posits a closed universe in which what we've come to accept as "history" and its implications don't necessarily hold. Thus Coover turns the tables on *Don Quixote*—which itself turned them on romances of chivalry by inaugurating the novel form. The novel as a form rests on human interaction with social context, and the efficacy of this is manifest in historical process. Coover says: No—let us evoke again the timeless mythic mode. Only we'll do it (so bold are we) with history itself.

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In "Nixon" Coover doesn't create an alternate character, an alternate possibility or world (as they do in SF) via improvisation on a ground pattern—he intimates a thousand possibilities struggling and shifting within. Character and human activity, to him, are renewing fluid things. His isn't the way of firmness, of inevitability, of tragedy.

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"Nixon spends most of his time speculating on the details of the Rosenberg case, probing the pasts of both Rosenbergs and himself. The more he unearths to compare and contrast, the more dominant the comparison becomes. Working from a set of romantic dichotomies—Freedom and Communism, West and East, American and foreign, homegrown and exotic, country and city—his ruminations gradually drift toward synthesis. Physical fruition occurs in the love scene between Dick and Ethel at Sing Sing. (Quite appropriately, this chapter is called "A Taste of the City.")

But back to details. The more personal history Dick details, the less probable any such thing as History seems. Compare—not contrast and advance through historical process. Consider a pointillist painting: the closer you examine it, the more you focus on the dots. How much do they differ? Meanwhile, the painting is lost. The larger pattern—that "willful program for the stacking of perceptions"—dissolves for the moment.

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Dick's "spooky no-man's land" appears to him in several guises, among them the dark at the back of an elevator, the "swarm of black thing" he writes to his mother about as a child, and the empty hole in a toilet-seated electric chair on a comic postcard. (Two cops stare into the hole, one says: "He fell through." Thus enters Alice's rabbit hole.) It is the space of paradox, the center of ambiguity—the area we create our various fictions (extreme positions of right and left) to avoid contemplating, to keep from devolving into chaos.

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Under all the politics, the outrageous fancies, the historical data and the scatological slapstick, Coover's concern is with metafiction and structural anthropology. Hence the choice of subject. It was an era of our history possessing all the requisite elements: ideological positions having a railroaded clarity, rhetoric with metaphorical echoes, and all of it charged with emotional associations. The "American civil religion", as Coover called it in *First Person*, in full bloom. He takes these historical elements, mixes them with his own inventions, and explores how fiction is created (metafiction) and what our sociocultural institutional "fictions" really are once we've manipulated ourselves to a



It is the month of June 1953. A new administration has just taken office, headed by former General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his second-in-command, ex-Congressman Richard M. Nixon. They have inherited a country, and a world, fraught with danger and menace, a world in which Uncle Sam's dream of the American century seems to have gone sour. Only ten years before, the score had been 1,625,000,000 people for the Sons of Light and only 180,000,000 for the Phantom and his Legions of Darkness. And yet, by the beginning of the fifties, the Phantom had a score of 800,000,000 to Uncle Sam's 540,000,000, with a dubious group of 600,000,000 vacillating in-between. What had gone wrong? Who was responsible? Surely, with both right and might on our side, such a perfidious shift could never have occurred without treason. Up on the fifth floor of the FBI building, Chief Crime-buster and Top Cop of America J. Edgar Hoover is marshaling his formidable forces to ferret out the Enemy Within. And, jumping Jehosophat! he may just have them; maybe not all of them, but two very useful ones. Out of the Lower East Side, he plucks Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Arrested in the summer of 1950, they are tried, found guilty and, on April 5, 1951, "sentenced by the Judge to die thieves of light to be burned by light—in the electric chair.... Then, after the usual series of permissible sophistries, the various delaying moves and light-restoring countermoves, their fate is at last sealed and it is determined to burn them in New York City's Times Square on the night of their fourteenth wedding anniversary, Thursday, June 19, 1953."

It is on this wildly plausible premise that Robert Coover's remarkable new novel opens. Using the Rosenberg trial, the dramatic last-minute delay, and the impending execution as focal points, Coover weaves a compelling fantasy that re-creates with mythic power the whole tone and tenor of the Cold War period.

□Synopsis from the dust jacket of *The Public Burning*

vantage point behind their facades (structural anthropology). As Coover puts it again in *Pricksongs and Descants*: "The novelist uses familiar mythic or historical forms to combat the contents of those forms." In *Pricksongs* they were largely mythic; here, they're at least as often historical.

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The worst thing you can do with Coover is try to take him at face value, or feed your biases on snatches taken out of context. In this book he shows himself to be one of the most sophisticated employers of interlocking viewpoints played off one against the other.

Take the ending. "Nixon" is literally screwed: everything has been reduced, by a big blast, to rubble. The old (right) order is down. The new (left) one seems to be forming—the era of post-innocence. On the left, Greil Marcus (in *Rolling Stone*) praised the "Nixon" parts (he didn't read the whole book) for really getting inside him and showing us how the "man you love to hate" came to be the hardened monster he is. On the right, Norman Podhoretz (in *Saturday Review*) came to a rather similar conclusion, but didn't care at all for the fascist implications.

Such views are simply irrelevant. Or relevant, in an indirect and unintentional way. Coover remarks in *First Person* that "the crucial beliefs of people are mythic in nature." Mythology is an apparatus for validating the perceived nature of things. It comes after the fact; and it only explains an order that's selectively seen. Thus prejudiced views, especially of the ending alone, simply confirm Coover's point that we need our mythic fictions; and they miss the book's larger thrust. The "man you love to hate" is himself one of these fictions. But one that is livable, for most of us, right now.

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History—biographical or otherwise—is "nothing but words", says Coover's Dick Nixon. "Accidental accretions for the most part, leaving most of the story out."

Coover has researched his man's life minutely, and has drawn particularly upon the Nixon gospel, *Six Crises*, in a range of subtle ways. At one end Nixon's words are lifted almost verbatim and set in new situations (his philosophy on mob mentality from the "Caracas" episode shows up in his fictional confrontation with a group of supporters he mistakes for pro-Rosenberg troublemakers); at the other, they are put into the mouths of new characters (Eisenhower's "you're my boy", which he recalls during "The Heart Attack" episode, is echoed by Uncle Sam during the climactic inaugural rape). On the one hand Nixon's text flushes and validates his monologic counterpart in the book; on the other, it abets the construction of Coover's counter-myths to the historical gospel/



## Liston

continue to get funding to continue to prove their preconceived ideas. Nazis or not, they are more than willing to work on human subjects. Slothrop is one of these subjects and has been since birth. He comes under the scrutiny of Pointsmen, the disgusting, Skinnerite torturer of dogs, octopi, and inmates. It seems that Slothrop's sexual activities have an exact correspondence to the fall of rockets on London. The Firm wants to know why. The observation of Slothrop's activities is one of the main themes of the book and provides for a great deal of slapstick as he falls in and out of the hands of the Firm's operatives. The chase action is funny, but the idea behind it is not. The people who run things are believers, religious people. Their faith is the Puritan Ethic, in which all things are determined, and they show a zeal worthy of Torquemada in stamping out apostasy. They not only want to be proven right, they also want to be loved.

Contemporary science, then, is like Puritanism: joyless, tedious, and safely in the hands of the chosen. Much of it is too complicated for an untrained person to understand, hence the snob appeal. There are those who contend that *Gravity's Rainbow*, because it does treat of a great deal of science, is understandable only to mighty intellects such as their own. I suspect, however, that there are about two

pages in the book which cannot be easily explained to the average reader. Even English professors can approach it.

There is a strong and probably not very surprising relationship between Puritan determinism and the programming of people and computers. Just as our destinies are preordained by God, so is individual behavior punched in by the experts in charge of our early training. Or so the programmers believe. In fact, people tend to run off to Las Vegas or the Riviera regardless of input. The agents who chase Slothrop around Europe are always losing him because they believe that he will only behave in ways that he was conditioned to. He surprises them, just as the funny little Vietnamese fooled the best systems analysts of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. And, although Slothrop has apparently been conditioned, accidentally, to react sexually to a rocket firing, at the end, just before the launching of the 00000 rocket by the Schwarzkommando, the narrator remarks, "What, no hardon here?" Hmmm. Fooled again.

Pynchon does look for the secrets of the universe in all the nooks and crannies and armpits he can think of: does science have the answer? Well, no, not exactly: Religion? You've got to be kidding; History Music, the occult? Guess not. Is it all random? May-

## Clark

mythology of *Six Crises*. All such usage of *Six Crises* material receives no identifying quotation marks. The effect must be especially strong for those already familiar with that book. For those who only come to it later, I can vouch that the experience is very strange, even spooky. And it provokes some important deliberations on the nature of fiction and the accomplishments of this book.

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Metafiction is directly concerned with the creation of fiction, an activity shared by writer and reader; and thus (at least in Coover's work) it dramatizes one relationship between the reader and the fictional world.

"Objectivity"—admonishes one of Coover's third-person voices—"is in spite of itself a willful program for the stacking of perceptions; facts emerge not from life but from revelation, gnarled as always by ancient disharmonies and charged with libidinous energy."

"Richard Nixon" is one such revelation. His composition in paper is more extreme than that of the larger world he inhabits, but adheres nonetheless to the same literary technique (hence the monolithic unity of the book). Coover's early-fifties world is a thing of disporting patterns of artfully arranged facts from all quarters (newspapers, congressional records, pop culture and what-not) and pyrotechnic invention (Uncle Sam, *Time* magazine—the national poet laureate, the spectacular dark night of our country's soul, not to mention grand flights of mere metaphor)—all of this evoking a program contrary to "objective" reality.

"Richard Nixon", however, as a human creation is still more amazing. His character is built from the inside rather than the outside; the arrangements of biological detail feel spontaneous and free-associational; the emotional colorations of the language are more subtle and quirky. And the point where fact gives way to fiction is hard to identify.

Oh, we know that the world "Nixon" inhabits never was, literally, and that he does things his real-life version clearly never did. But these are only the extremes. It's the middle ground that's the problem.

In strictly material terms, there's no telling how much research Coover did on Nixon's background,

and where. In order to probe the fluid interface between fact and fiction, one would have to match his research. Could this be done? Could one mark off all the "real" details?

Sheer reason tells us that most of the thoughts and feeling attributed to Nixon about real events in his life (we won't trouble with the fictional ones) are, to varying degrees, unlikely. Maybe. But the only man who could verify all this is the real model for "Nixon". And what would the verification be worth? Consider: Can you account for all the stray reactions, the inward drift of your thoughts, as you doubtless can the major outward actions of your life? To what extent have the former been lost to the personal history you've forged yourself with directed consciousness and deliberate activity?

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Coover's characterization is beyond mere psychology. That discipline, like sociology, is open to the charge H. G. Wells once laid at the latter's door (in "The So-Called Science of Sociology"): it "must be neither art simply, nor science in the narrow meaning of the word at all, but knowledge rendered imaginatively." Coover accepts this. It is psychology that lies because it presumes to objectivity, an authority based on facts and observations in "reasonable" theoretical arrangement.

The achievement of this charge by Coover is more than most practitioners of "poetic license" ever dreamed of.

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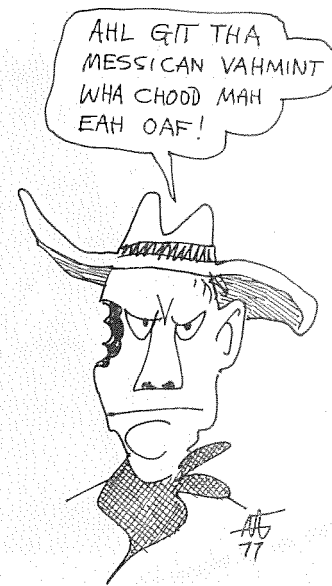
Does it matter in what points "Nixon" is factual, to what degree probable, in his relationship to the real man? There's a continuum of phenomena: thoughts and feelings a person experiences; those he becomes aware of in a more simplified way once the impulses have been channelled into cognitive and perceptual faculties; those he claims to have executed in written or spoken and acted discourse—tempered by the ability to express and intention to express faithfully; and those he's represented as experiencing by others and even by the context he appears in. He works all this into some coherent order for himself, an identity. It's not a stable thing: it's influenced by what's gone before, and the further choices he makes—the part(s) he plays out—are



be, but then it all seems to be hooked together, too, in some strange way, like Pavlov and Pavlova.

It turns out that Pynchon has written, instead of an ultra-modern agony of angst and alienation, an old-fashioned romance. In every way he is traditional, classical, and romantic, even in his sensationalism, coarse pornography, sentimentality, nauseating vulgarity, puns, limericks, and graffiti. *Gravity's Rainbow* is a tale of love, adventure, and happy endings. Slothrop gets away; Tchitcherine ends up in a culvert with his witch; Katje and Pirate Prentice meet with the promise of more to happen, but pleasant; most of the sympathetic characters survive while the despicable Pointsman, Weissman, and Marvy are killed, castrated, and, worst of all, left with unfunded projects. We too survive. Although the rocket's tip is poised above our skulls, it has yet to fall and may not fall, because if it does, too many might die with us.

Technology has not crushed or killed us, or even enslaved us. A person is better than a machine and can defeat it. Pynchon is not the angel of the Apocalypse. He is the clever, if a little weird, boy from down the block who says, "Gee, guys, things do look tough, but how about let's try this, huh?" and pulls from his pocket a screwdriver, a piece of wire, and a funny little box that looks as if it might contain something electrical. ☺



affected by the image of him that the larger world has already received and keeps bouncing back at him through all the media. It's all a large mess, that continuum of raw data, and Coover bulls right through it and assaults the reader with his characterization.

In effect, the author's act here calls into question the reader's traditional prerogative. No longer does she have, as a matter of course, the right to bestow the willing suspension of disbelief, depending on her detached appraisal of the author's performance. That performance, here, calls into question the reader's criteria for believing or disbelieving. That "Nixon" isn't (a respectable, supportable reflection of) the real Nixon doesn't matter—he's realer than the real one. What is the real Nixon, the "man you love to hate", but a piecemeal image come together, willy-nilly, from various media?

Once Coover has you hesitating like this over what's there on the page, he's got you. Personally, I find it awesome: "Nixon"—by turns obnoxious, hilarious, contemptible, even inspiring so as to make you cheer him despite your real-world politics—seems at times realer than I am as I sit reading.

"If you can't convince 'em," says Uncle Sam, "confuse 'em!" Confusion is Coover's first intention, here as throughout the book. He never means to convince in the conventional sense: conviction involves belief, the thing he wants to pry you loose from. It involves objectivity, history. In effect, he breaks all the taboos—the habitual literary assumptions, the courtesies toward public figures.

"...I felt an incredible new power, a new freedom," says Dick during the love scene. "Where did it come from? Uncle Sam? The Phantom? Both at once? From neither, I supposed. There was nothing overhead any more, I had escaped them both! I was outside guarded time! I was my own man at last!"

So, for a moment, are we. Before the comic closure of history resumes, and Dick and Ethel disengage from their impossible embrace.

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What begins in metafiction and pure scrutiny of literary technique ends in the simply human experience of fictional art. Coover creates a commanding character—considered in the sense of "traditional" novelists—but he does it using his own

unorthodox methods and in the service of a radical vision. "Nixon" is perhaps a greater accomplishment in portraiture than any other of today's metafictionists has yet been able to manage, each on his own terms. And this protagonist is created without the foundation of a clearly defined and engaging social context that brings out character through two-sided interaction with other characters. Even SF or fantasy novels that produce memorable (let alone great) characters obey this technique. But "Nixon" is all monologue: others appear mainly to set his thoughts bouncing into new corners of his microcosm; and when he appears in the chapters he doesn't narrate, under the bird's eye view, he's simply a counter with a name, a momentary verbal gesture on the stage of events.

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That Coover is a compassionate writer, one can hardly doubt. But his compassion is not an easy partisan choice in an era of human injustices. It is a bringing into telling vision of the human condition that sets these activities going.

That Coover is a moral writer, I've no doubt. But not in the sense of John Gardner, who believes that fiction should inspire by showing us how to live. Rather, Coover's task is destructive to such an end, providing instead—in the words of Robert Scholes, which he quotes in *Pricksongs*—"an imaginative experience which is necessary to our imaginative well-being..." He means to sensitize us to the possibilities of life, despite our having to live with a chosen subset only. Perhaps we are helped in our choosing. Certainly we are in our understanding.

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The Ovidian stories all concern transformation; now that is not a startlingly new subject—after all, fairy tales, animal fables, and the like, deal with it—but I suddenly realized that the basic, constant struggle for all of us is against metamorphosis, against giving in to the inevitability of the process. Encountering in Ovid the same agon that underlay my own writing was liberating; I realized that what I was doing was not only possible but essential.

—Robert Coover, in *First Person* ☺



books that fit the standard definitions of science fiction & yet are not adolescent trash. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., dealt with the problem by announcing loudly & repeatedly that his work was not science fiction. By that, he may have meant that his work bore a much closer resemblance to the work of Huxley & Orwell & others who were not considered "science-fiction" writers than it did to Buck Rogers. If indeed that is what he meant, he was absolutely correct. Today Harlan Ellison denies that he is a science-fiction writer, for similar reasons & with similar justifications.

We may say, however, that the bigotry problem is not too serious. Today science fiction is beginning to gain some respect. It is being taught in the schools, it is the source of popular movies, and just the other day I read an article about a meeting of mystery writers where they were bewailing the "science-

There are things that Everyone Knows, and it often pays to take a look at these, for it frequently turns out that what Everyone Knows is wrong, or at least misleading. Everyone Knows that there is such a thing as science fiction.

Like many things believed to be universal truths, the existence of science fiction is a 20th Century American phenomenon. About 50 years ago Hugo Gernsback said, "Let there be science fiction," and there was science fiction. Many critics would agree that there was such a thing as science fiction before then, but no one knew it until St. Hugo spoke.

According to the standard histories, that was the Creation; according to Darrell Schweitzer's revisionist history, it was the Original Sin. But either way, Gernsback won. Before long, it was generally assumed that there is such a thing as science fiction, and now there are science-fiction magazines, science-fiction books (carefully marked as such to be easily recognizable), and in general, a science-fiction sub-culture.

But there are problems. For one thing, it seems that the publishers do not put the "science-fiction" label on all those books and only those books which really are science fiction. There are well-known and beloved mainstream classics like *Brave New World*, *1984*, & *Magister Lud* which certainly seem to resemble science fiction. There are also a few books like Mack Reynolds's North Africa Trilogy, which are hard to distinguish from mainstream political thrillers, & yet are sold as science fiction, perhaps because the author is known as a science-fiction writer. Are we dealing here with mere consumer fraud or publisher ignorance, or do we have to consider an even greater question.

"Science fiction" is a term we apply to certain books, magazines, films, etc. As Korzybski said, the map is not the territory, so when we ask whether there is such a thing as science fiction, we are really asking whether the term "science fiction" can be defined so that it becomes useful to apply it to certain works & not to others.

One problem with the term is that many people are literary bigots, assuming that anything which is called science fiction must be violent, trashy adventure, suitable only for teenage boys who can't get dates. This is a problem for those writers who do

fiction craze," which (they said) was threatening to run their works off the shelves. Another problem is more serious: The definitions may not be sufficient to distinguish between what is & is not science fiction.

The ideal definition should include a decision-making procedure which can determine with 100% accuracy whether a given object belongs to the defined set. Very few definitions outside the exact sciences live up to this ideal, and certainly almost no literary definitions do. (Can you give a 100% accurate definition of "novel" or "poem"? There are many definitions of "science fiction," from "cognitive estrangement" to "fiction with a lot of science in it," but I know of none which comes anywhere near the ideal of 100% decisiveness.

This problem is particularly acute when one is dealing with science fiction, since, in my opinion and that of others, some of the most interesting fiction being done today falls precisely into the area where there is trouble drawing the line. Robert Silverberg, after years of turning out reams of "product," took up the writing of serious science-fictional studies of the human condition. He found that publishers preferred his old hackwork & retired from the field. Barry Malzberg, a believer in the values of mimetic fiction, projected his profound understanding of the paranoid viciousness of the Nixon years onto a series of grim futures. He was widely attacked by science-fiction critics, and he too announced his retirement. Samuel R. Delany wrote *Dhalgren*, a very long book with little specifically science-fictional content. It sold well outside the field, but convinced many science-fiction reviewers that Delany had fallen apart and would never write any real science fiction again. (Some of these were so convinced that they didn't even have to look at *Triton*.) Satirical science fiction, like Sladek's *The Reproductive System* and

*The Muller-Fokker Effect* and Shea & Wilson's *Illuminatus!*, has tended to baffle those science-fiction critics who did not succeed in ignoring it. Other writers with literary ambition, such as Geo. Alec Effinger, Thomas Disch, & Pamela Sargent, have had trouble finding their niche in science fiction.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the border (or on the same side, depending on where you draw the line), interesting things are going on. Thomas Pynchon writes of conspiratorial worlds which may be our own, but one hopes not, and I have suggested elsewhere that *The Crying of Lot 49* can be seen as being in the great science-fictional tradition of the visit to a strange and unEarthly culture, even if the one in question happens to be Southern California. E. L. Doctorow writes *Ragtime*, an apparently historical work in which the narrator openly and shamelessly invents tales about his famous characters (Freud, Stanford White, et al.) when mere known fact seems insufficient for the tale he wishes to tell. Philip Roth (*The Great American Novel*) invents a third major league (baseball) which has been wiped from the books by a conspiracy of silence. Tom Robbins turns the gag about "Cancel Easter; they found the body" into a novel (*Another Roadside Attraction*), and then writes a huge and delightful book called *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, which, along with many other inventions, contains giant thumbs and Indians who live inside the Earth and other not-quite-mimetic devices. Robert Coover (*The Public Burning*) takes the assumptions of the U. S. Government (ca. 1952) to their logical conclusion and creates a fantasy horror world that surpasses Lovecraft. Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada* includes a live telecast of Lincoln's assassination, though Reed ignores the science-fiction convention of specifying a branch point at which this separate reality diverged from ours. And so on.

The science-fiction community occasionally notices these people. *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Ragtime* appeared on the final Nebula ballots. Algis Budrys, Richard Delap, and other adventurous SF critics have

~~failed~~ journals, etc. I conclude that most of the academic world has accepted the idea of the separateness of science fiction and in fact, has taken science fiction on its own terms.

Much of the academic study of science fiction uses Academe's own beloved Historical approach. (I agree with Ben Bova that this method is singularly inappropriate for the study of science fiction, but let that pass.) But when they do get into contemporary (post-WW2) science fiction, it would seem to me that 6 names predominate—Asimov, Clarke, Dick, Heinlein, Herbert, and Le Guin. (I omit Bradbury and Vonnegut on the grounds that they have succeeded in severing themselves from the science-fiction community and often are taught in courses where no admitted science fiction writers appear.)

I'm not saying that's a bad list; in fact, about half of them would probably appear on my list. What I am saying, though is that it's the same list the science-fiction community itself would make up, or close to it. As a further sign that the academic community has accepted science fiction's view of itself, note that most of the textbooks and student guides have lists of Hugo winners.

One can sympathize with the professors. Wading through all of science fiction without a guide is not something I would wish on the most pompous pedant. Looking to what the science-fiction world itself has recognized at least reduces the problem to manageable proportions. And yet it leads to an unpleasant irony. Silverberg and others have allegedly failed to gain notice within the field because their work is too "literary" and/or too "academic." Yet this very "failing" keeps them from being noticed in the "literary" and "academic" worlds.

And so assuming that there is such a thing as science fiction leads to problems, and it is tempting to think of doing what Ellison and others have sug-

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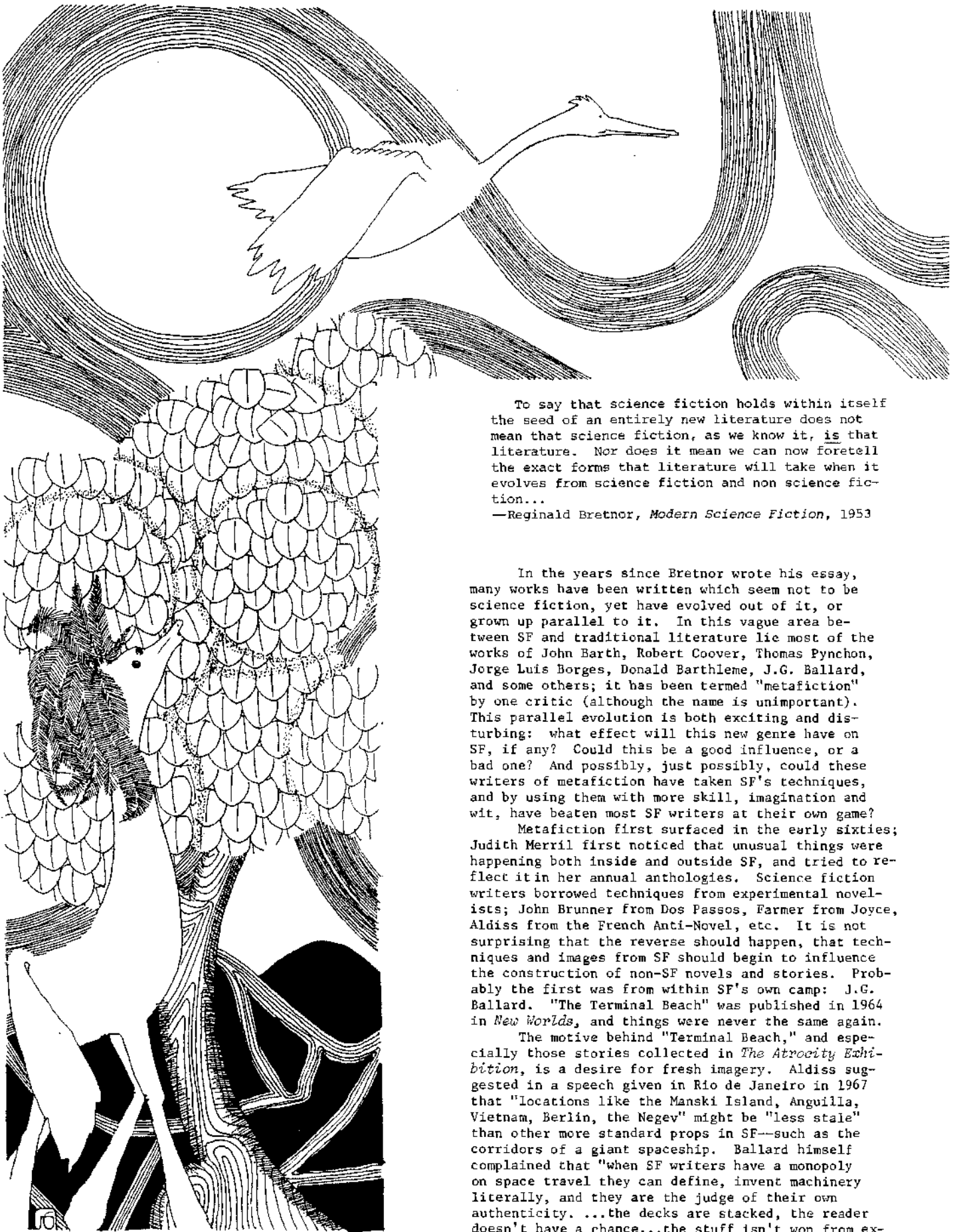
taken a look at one or another of these writers. And yet many science-fiction people assume that all these people are on the other side of the line. And yet what attracts me about these alleged "mainstream" writers is precisely what I like about my favorite science-fiction writers—the inventiveness, the willingness to question assumptions and to deny the supposed givens of consensus reality. I cannot get over the feeling that, for instance, Pynchon and Sladek are writing the same sort of thing.

I had hoped that the academic recognition of science fiction might bring about a recognition of these similarities, and of the science fiction which has failed to gain acceptance from the hard-core science-fiction audience. That does not seem to be taking place, however. Of course, I do not claim to know what is going on in all the colleges and universities where science fiction is being studied, but one can draw certain conclusions from looking at the University Press books, the Student Guides, the academic

ARTHUR D. HEALD







To say that science fiction holds within itself the seed of an entirely new literature does not mean that science fiction, as we know it, is that literature. Nor does it mean we can now foretell the exact forms that literature will take when it evolves from science fiction and non science fiction...

—Reginald Bretnor, *Modern Science Fiction*, 1953

In the years since Bretnor wrote his essay, many works have been written which seem not to be science fiction, yet have evolved out of it, or grown up parallel to it. In this vague area between SF and traditional literature lie most of the works of John Barth, Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon, Jorge Luis Borges, Donald Barthelme, J.G. Ballard, and some others; it has been termed "metafiction" by one critic (although the name is unimportant). This parallel evolution is both exciting and disturbing: what effect will this new genre have on SF, if any? Could this be a good influence, or a bad one? And possibly, just possibly, could these writers of metafiction have taken SF's techniques, and by using them with more skill, imagination and wit, have beaten most SF writers at their own game?

Metafiction first surfaced in the early sixties; Judith Merrill first noticed that unusual things were happening both inside and outside SF, and tried to reflect it in her annual anthologies. Science fiction writers borrowed techniques from experimental novelists; John Brunner from Dos Passos, Farmer from Joyce, Aldiss from the French Anti-Novel, etc. It is not surprising that the reverse should happen, that techniques and images from SF should begin to influence the construction of non-SF novels and stories. Probably the first was from within SF's own camp: J.G. Ballard. "The Terminal Beach" was published in 1964 in *New Worlds*, and things were never the same again.

The motive behind "Terminal Beach," and especially those stories collected in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, is a desire for fresh imagery. Aldiss suggested in a speech given in Rio de Janeiro in 1967 that "locations like the Manski Island, Anguilla, Vietnam, Berlin, the Negev" might be "less stale" than other more standard props in SF—such as the corridors of a giant spaceship. Ballard himself complained that "when SF writers have a monopoly on space travel they can define, invent machinery literally, and they are the judge of their own authenticity. ...the decks are stacked, the reader doesn't have a chance...the stuff isn't won from ex-

# DON'T FORGET I'M AN ARTIFICE

CY CHAUVIN

perience." (Interview, *Vector* 73) This led the writers that wrote for *New Worlds* to make their fiction oriented more towards the present day. It was easy to do, because many of the images of SF were becoming part of the real world.

In contrast to Aldiss and Ballard, John Barth said in an interview given in 1969 that "What (my favorite) writers...share (except for Robbe-Grillet) is a more or less fantastical, or as Borges would say, 'irrealist', view of realism; and this...is all that I would confidently predict is likely to characterise the prose fiction of the 1970's. I welcome this (if it turns out to be...true), because unlike those critics who regard realism as what literature has been aiming at all along, I tend to regard it as a kind of aberration in the history of literature." (*New American Review* 15, p. 136)

Barth's prediction has largely come true. Science fiction writers might greet his comments with enthusiasm, yet metafiction has many fundamental differences from SF, even if the two genres share much of the same imagery. They do not make comfortable bed fellows.

In metafiction, the contemporary world always predominates; the 'irrealistic' elements are foreign. They are exceptional, and not minor background details added for verisimilitude (in fact, the basic reality of such stories always seems in doubt). In a science fiction story, imaginative details are added to make the invented world seem more "real", more believable; Barth or Pynchon, on the other hand, use the same details and images to destroy the reality of the contemporary world.

The strongest point of much science fiction is its vision, which absorbs the reader despite the poor writing. Some readers become so absorbed in the vision that it becomes quasi-real; the many concordances, appendixes, histories, etc., added to *The Lord of the Rings* or even *Star Trek* attest to this. They want to know more details about the author's creation than the author created. In contrast, the artificiality of literature is often stressed in metafiction. In "Life Story", John Barth screams at the reader: "Another story about a writer writing a story! Another regression infinitum! Who doesn't prefer art that at least overtly imitates something other than its own processes? That doesn't continually proclaim, 'Don't forget I'm an artifice?' That takes for granted its mimetic nature instead of asserting it in order (not so slyly after all) to deny it, or vice versa?" (from *Lost in the Furhouse*, p. 114).

Spaceships become metaphors in metafiction.

To a large degree, so do characters. Words are treated as words, images as images, rather than as representing something else. Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* is an extended pun; the writer plays games with the reader, and makes this obvious. Science fiction writers occasionally do this as well: Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps" is largely a game. But it is a serious one; Pynchon is (at least superficially) comic. So are most of the other writers of metafiction.

Many of the literary devices used in these works are distancing devices, and make the reader more consciously aware that they are reading fiction, rather than involving the reader in an unconscious manner. The other-worldly elements reinforce this; the reader can take nothing for granted.

SF, on the other hand (as the Fanshins have argued), is a very unconscious literature; its writers are rarely in control of their visions. Metafiction is inward oriented, SF outward. The point of so many of the novels of Barth, Pynchon, Coover, etc., is that there is no point. The stories are introverted because the authors believe that all meaning comes from ourselves, from humanity. Science fiction novels at worst are naively optimistic; at best, they are transcendent. They take us beyond ourselves.

George Turner says this of SF: "The characters do not determine as they generally do in realistic fiction, the action of the story; instead they move within an environment and demonstrate by their activities what the effect of the environment are. Plot is no longer 'character in action', but the action of an environment on the humanity within it." (*The Visual Encyclopedia of SF*, ed. Brian Ash, p. 258) If the environment of the story has the ontological status of metaphor, the story is not SF. I think that *The Crying of Lot 49* is an experiment in the use of environment as a determining factor of plot and characterization, but the environment is metaphoric, rather than pseudo-realistic. In *Dying Inside*, Robert Silverberg used the psi powers of his protagonist, David Selig, to reveal things about the other characters for which writers of realistic fiction use literary conventions, such as changing viewpoints, direct thoughts, etc. It is the means of contemporary fiction made reality; the protagonist is something like the omniscient author of fiction. In metafiction, this process is reversed. The effects are more self-conscious; "reality" is turned into a literary device, eg. "The Magician", in Coover's *Pricksongs & Descants*. Coover's magician does one outrageous thing after another in his act, but it doesn't have any effect until the story's climax. "The Elevator" is a col-



## FOR ANDY

This is no easy thing we do —  
to fly when all are sure we have no wings  
Yet fierce freedom is in our blood  
We are the children of dragons  
and will create our own history  
and will be free

1977/Denys Howard

## Hlavaty

gested—to refrain entirely from using the "science-fiction" label. After all, if "science fiction" means whatever we point to when we say, "science fiction," then if we could just get people to stop pointing, there wouldn't be such a thing.

But no. It wouldn't work. The map is indeed not the territory, but you can't fold up the territory and put it in your glove compartment. After all, no one points at random when saying, "science fiction." And while some science-fiction readers may be the sort who would read anything with enough action in it, it seems reasonable to assume that there is a sizeable readership which is attracted to the futuristic and outer-space settings, to the magical science and the flight from Earth—in other words, to precisely those qualities which lead people to point to the books and

say, "science fiction." Assuming that it is possible to get rid of a label which leads large numbers of people to what they want, and will pay for, is far too idealistic for me.

So we are faced with a double bind, like the Zen novice when the master asks a question and says, "If you say Yes, I will punch you in the mouth; if you say No, I will punch you in the mouth; if you remain silent, I will punch you in the mouth." In a situation like that the best hope is to change the subject very fast—to think in other categories.

If we draw a line between science fiction and the mainstream, we have a problem. If we do not draw a line between science fiction and the mainstream, we have chaos. And yet we have an area of books which could plausibly be called either.

Now here's my plan. We draw a circle around all of them—Silverberg and Pynchon and Reed and Gene

## Chauvin

lection of incidents in an elevator, different alternatives that the protagonist apparently imagines, but we are never given a clue as to which is "real". Furthermore, Coover's protagonist never worries about which alternative is "real" (Philip K. Dick's always do). That doesn't matter; all the segments of the story are given equal importance, it is all equally "real", and this is not a question that is even relevant to the story. These are not parallel worlds; they are not delusions induced by drugs. They are "fictions", realities induced by literature. A device with as much reality as a footnote. (Coover's style and imagery here reminds me very much of Barry Malzberg's work.)

A certain kind of style predominates in these stories. John Brunner has pointed out one aspect of it: "The regular reader of SF, coming to the opening section of *Gravity's Rainbow*, would certainly be struck by Mr. Pynchon's employment of a technique greatly akin to that used by Michael Moorcock in his Jerry Cornelius stories...: a piling on of details elaborately catalogued, observed as though through a state of acute fatigue or while tripping out on drugs, combining to induce in the reader a respectful acceptance of verisimilitude of fiction." (*Foundation* 10, June 1976, p.24) The "Cataloguing" links together otherwise unrelated images into long, rambling metaphori-

cal passages, into what is a sort of "informational noise." The writing is deliberately casual—"One summer afternoon Mrs. Oedipa Maas came home from a Tupperware party..." (Pynchon)—and often mannered, but the descriptions are never stock. They are also outrageous, silly; and often densely written. "Behind the initials was a metaphor, a *delirium tremens*, a trembling unfurrowing of the mind's plowshare. The saint whose water can light lamps, the clairvoyant whose lapse in recall is the breath of God, the true paranoid for whom all is organized in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself [*sic*] the dreamer whose puns probe ancient fetid shafts and tunnels of truth all act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever is the word there, buffering, to protect us from." (from *The Crying of Lot 49*, p.95) The passage is written rather like a poem, and its information and emotion is conveyed by image and association, rather than straightforward description. It is a highly artificial construction, a digression, a highly intellectualized stream-of-consciousness. It seems a protest against concrete and linear description. It is not an image anyone can contain within their mind, but is wedded to paper. An intellectual exercise rather than a vision.

I called metafiction "introverted;" a game. Its images are often drawn from fiction (this is especially obvious in Borges). In Barth's "Life

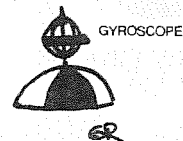
## THE NAKED BEANIE, Part 3:

The bi-metallic earplug on this model easily converts waste body heat into electrical energy.



## THE NAKED BEANIE, Part 4:

This useful model helps keep drunken fans upright and on a steady course.



Wolfe and...you know, people like that. Perhaps we try to enlarge the borders a bit. Le Guin and Tiptree are science fiction by just about any definition, but we could find some excuse.... We have an area which then can be studied. There can be articles on "The Metafictionist as Evangelist: *Giles Goat-Boy* and *What Entropy Means to Me*," and such. We can recommend Sladek to Tom Robbins fans (and vice versa) without feeling that we're Crossing A Line. And we can call this new area....

I knew there was a catch to it. I can't think of a name. I got a letter from Jeanne Gomoll, suggesting that I write about this very area,...and she can't think of a name either.

And we have to have a name. Without a name, we cannot really have a theory, and as Tom Wolfe said, without a theory, the critics can't see a thing. I have tried a couple—ALTERNATE REALISM!!!! THIRD-

Story," the author says he has had complaints about his works from those "who preferred life to literature." It is literature about other literature.

In contrast, while there is much bad science fiction that uses stock situations and ideas from other stories, it is not an intrinsic feature of SF. SF writers do want to change their reader's lives, they want to influence our actions, even in many otherwise bad stories. I used to wonder if SF writers should try to change the world (the attempt seemed to ruin many good stories), but I've come to think that it is a valid function. The best art changes us. And despite Ballard's reservations, I can't help but believe that SF like *The Female Man* is "won from experience." In bad SF, the men and women are cardboard, and the aliens less than that, but in the best SF the status quo is altered. This is not true of metafiction, because it does not view the future as a real event or anything other than an extension of the present, and so we encounter elaborate metaphorical assemblages, but no changed human beings. One can't complain, however; this simply isn't within its purview.

In his essay in *Modern Science Fiction*, Reginald Brettnor says that "Eventually, we will have an integrated literature. It will owe much, artistically, to non-SF. But its dominant attitudes and purposes... will have evolved from those of modern SF..."

FORCE FICTION!!!! (There's a thought—echoes of both Dr. Maslow and Obi-Wan Kenobi.) But neither is quite right. And so I need help. It may of course be a doomed effort. I myself have been trying to encourage the science-fiction community to read some of the alleged "mainstream" books in the undefined area. I have been making repeated references to Pynchon, for instance, in *The Diagonal Relationship*, and the recognition rate appears to be about 1%. But there may be hope.

As I said in the beginning, it is possible to believe that there really and truly is no such thing as science fiction, and in a sense you would be right if you believed that. Today no one believes that; there is such a thing as \_\_\_\_\_ fiction. But now *Janus* is doing a special issue on it, and maybe in the course of the discussion, someone will think of the name. And then there will be such a thing.☺

(Quoted in *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, ed. Clareson, p. 84). I do feel that metafiction is the link between SF and contemporary literature, but I think the homogenization of SF with other fictions would be unfortunate. There is something called cultural diversity, which is important. And SF and metafiction really do not have similar functions or limitations.

In *Saturday Review* in March, 1973, Richard Poirer reviewed *Gravity's Rainbow*. He wrote that "literary techniques are perhaps less powerfully revealing about human nature and history than are scientific ones." and "There are forms of inquiry into the nature of life that are beyond the reach of the Novelist's imagination." (pp. 62-63). I'm sure this is true. Poirer is very enthusiastic about Pynchon's novel, and feels it goes further in these directions than most fiction. He even says that there will be some readers who will be impatient with the book, because they will be "too literary" in their responses to it.

As with so much fiction, what it means seems to depend a lot on what we bring to it. Metafiction does not make SF obsolete, or even necessarily destroy old forms. It should only make us more aware of those things SF can be used for most profitably, those areas of the human experience it views most uniquely.☺

# UNIDY GAIN AROUND

THOMAS J. MURN

Living inside the System is like riding across the country in a bus driven by a maniac bent on suicide.

—Gravity's Rainbow, Thomas Pynchon

Under the sun, among the vast spawn of evolution's wake, this System proffers only one sure thing. And so the quotation above.

*Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) details the coming-of-age of one of the greatest creations of the System: the rocket. Out of the complex stage which is the world at the end of WW2, a play about the rocket is enacted. —Or, more likely, a movie. The "film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out" at the end of the book, leaving the reader to his/her own imagination—and more importantly to the flow of forces which the System has set in motion, which no one can really interfere with or affect. These forces have shaped the world which we must deal with today; and they are the same forces which will continue to dominate the course of events, into the unknowable future....

There was much hope for the scientific world at the beginning of the 20th Century. The physical world was being dissected and ordered on a vast scale. The elements did their dance for Mendeleev and fell into a neatly ordered table. Wagner accomplished what had been an impossibility by synthesizing an organic compound in the laboratory, Roentgen's work with X-rays indicated a theoretical structuring of the energy radiation spectrum.

That nature should be so neatly pigeonholed seemed too good to be true—or should of...and so it was. Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" (1926) was the precursor of a more open-ended physics, the beginning of the great 20th Century "shaking of the

foundations" (to bastardize Tillich).

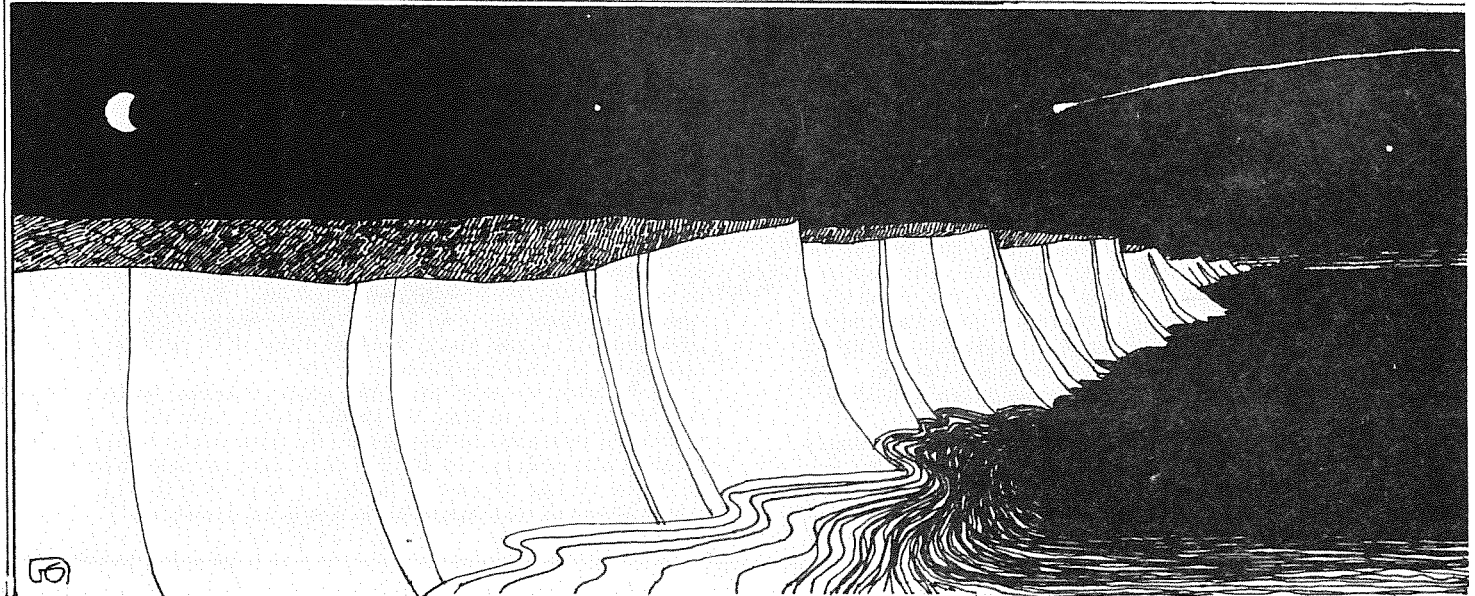
And yet through the 1950's and into the later 1960's, Americans refused, perhaps out of some nostalgic inertia, to apply the implications of the uncertainty principle to real life. Hence, someone like Barth, writing novels populated by the inwardly lost, some not even searching for the things that they are obviously missing in their lives. Hence, Presley, Berry, and Lewis, doing their do to a now-receptive youth, feeling more keenly the isolation and helplessness dictated by a system which maintains that reality is simple, when in fact it is horrifyingly complex. Commercial TV still perpetuates this simplicity syndrome; cf. *LaVerne* and *Shirley*, or better, *Kojak* and such ilk, where the "bad guys" not only lose but are humiliated in the process for not knowing of the inexorability of the System.

All this by way of easing into the multiplex universe of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, a book which covers, simply, a stupendous amount of territory. Pynchon knows all about the modern Western world, and he demonstrates it. Political and psychological implications of organic chemistry, Khirgitz linguistics, the history of the Hereroes of South-West Africa. Diversity is the primary feature, although all objects and characters are affected to some degree by the world war—and by the System. In European oblique fashion the Revolution (aah, you know which one) gets some mention:

"The Revolution died—with Rosa Luxembourg. The best there is to believe in right now is a Revolution-in-exile-in-residence...."

Strangers in your land, pretty funny, huh? But any inertia left from the Revolution is bound to be more than absorbed by the inertia of the System...

"A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now." GRAVITY'S RAINBOW





# THE LOOP

GRAVITY'S RAINBOW/THOMAS PYNCHON

By now I'm sure some of you are tearing your hair, screaming "What System? There are lots of systems, big ones, small ones, what the hell does he mean?"

By way of answering, I refer to Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture*, an excellent book which begins by exploring the Culture to which the C. C. is opposed:

The distinctive feature of the regime of experts lies in the fact that, while possessing ample power to coerce, it prefers to charm conformity from us by exploiting our deep-seated commitment to the scientific world-view and by manipulating the securities and creature comforts of the industrial affluence which science has given us. (p. 9)

But the System, Pynchon's System anyway, goes beyond the "regime of experts" to a kind of conspiracy with historical and economic roots. The way Pynchon hints at it in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the cooperation of the large Western corporations and concerns has lead to their perpetration in such a way as to be uncontrollable. Did G. E. really collaborate with GmbH Krupp, or Farben, in the uneasy years directly preceeding the war? How about the international money market, Swiss bankers pulling unseen strings? And what do the intelligence agencies of the major powers know—and do?

By now, you know that there are no simple answers.

The System is powered by organic forces, though we might not recognize the derivative laws. But what exactly did happen when Kekule dreamed his benzene dream? The cycles of force and whim go round and round; the System taps the wavelengths, gets 'em chuggin' for profits instead of for its own sweet karma, and gets rid of interference. Ob-

jective and uncaring, the System will take what it wants to. Pynchon's prose, laden like poetry, can tell about it better than I:

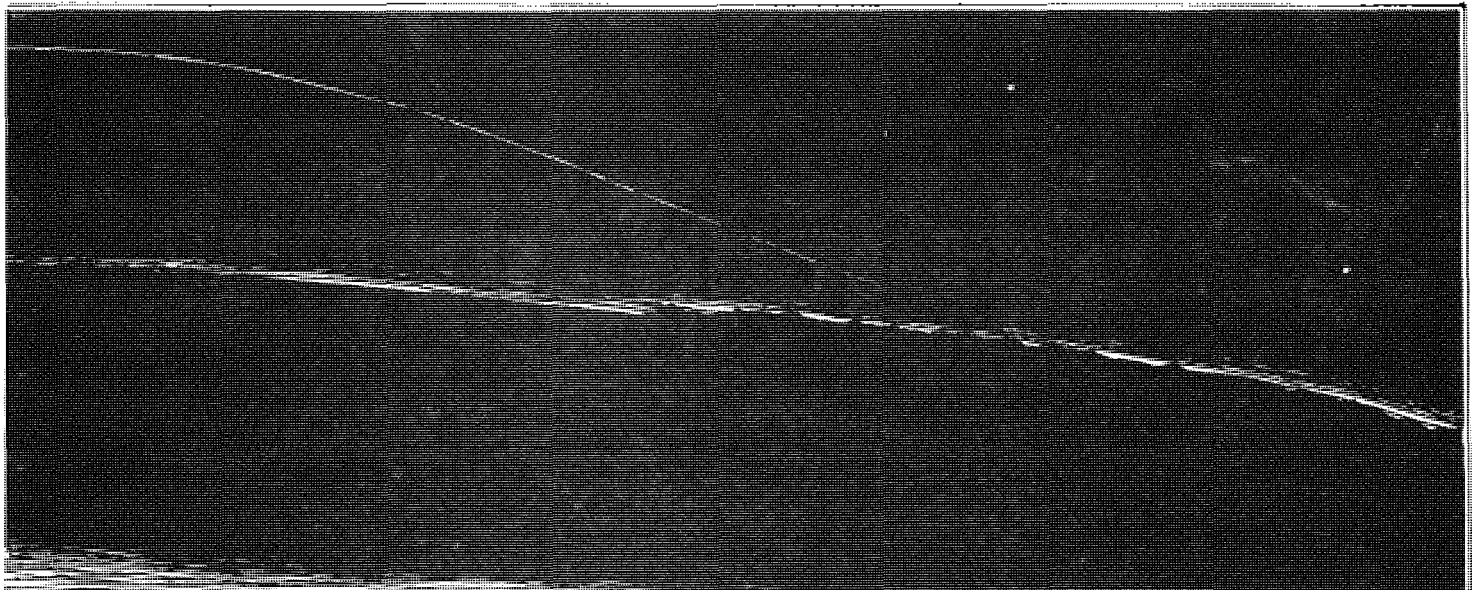
...Unity gain around the loop, unity gain, zero change, and hush, that way, forever, these were the secret rhymes of the childhood of the Discipline of Control—secret and terrible, as the scarlet histories say. Diverging oscillations of any kind were nearly the worst threat.

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Let's get clinical for a while and compare *Gravity's Rainbow* with the best intentions of modern SF. The novel of the mid-60's and onward often tried to present the real world, full of its misery and formlessness, as a "distinctive form of waste-land"<sup>1</sup> that allows the reader to take a discerning look at her/his own environment, which is usually too close to allow an honest and intense look on our own. Perhaps in the fictional journey through the waste-land, the reader can "learn some way to cope with it."<sup>2</sup> Lotsa modern SF novels do this by creating an "extrapolation" from our contemporary world to a universe featuring a certain problem or set of problems which the author wishes to diatribe about (I am thinking here in terms of Thomas Scortia's "imaginary experiment"). It's easier to present this problem-solving vignette in SF form than in contemporary novel form, since the "real-world" novelist must work with our own world which we all know to be complex. The SF writer creates a world which is as

<sup>1</sup>*Beyond the Waste Land*, Raymond Olderman (Yale University Press, 1972) 4th ed., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid* p. 8.



stable as he/she wants it to be. If you want to ignore Marxism or french fries or Marilyn Monroe, go right ahead, and planet Xaler's inhabitants will be remarkably free of the objectionable quality. But if you're writing about NewYak or Londown or Madizone in A.D. 1978, young people have to know about John Denver, intellectuals have to have some position on structuralism or DNA research, most nurses read *Cosmo*, most doctors are rich, etc. You'd better have your *weltanschauung* together or the novel that you write will be relegated to the harlequin shelf in believability and meaningfulness, not to mention interest or inspiration.

You can see that it's not an easy thing to make a mainstream novel into an SF novel. To take a whole culture (much less a world) and extrapolate into the future is a staggeringly immense task. Some people, most notably Sam Delany, are able to write stories where the people are actually believably diverse and interesting in their interests—most SF, though, can't depend on daily life scenes for plot. It has to be action, 'cause there ain't nothin' else to fill the white pages with.

Back to *Gravity's Rainbow*. Pynchon has done a kind of reverse extrapolation, writing about 1945 from a 1973 position. There is no other way to explain some of the scenes in *Gravity's Rainbow* such as hashish dealing in the Occupied Zone, the smoking of psychedelic mushrooms by odd young Englishmen, the episodedetailing a method of telling your fortune by reading the creases in the cigaret paper of the joint that you have just rolled...not to mention the quotation which introduces the fourth section of *Gravity's Rainbow*: Richard Nixon, saying—"What?"

(He was probably asking about what I meant by "System.")

(Actually, Nixon is the modern epitome of unwitting perpetrator of the System, a leader totally ignorant of the unobjective, the un-controlled... another example of this can be found in a speech by J. F. Kennedy, quoted by Roszak in the aforementioned book: "What is at stake...is not some grand warfare of rival ideologies which will sweep the country with passion, but the practical management of a modern economy...I am suggesting that the problems...demand

subtle challenges for which technical answers—not political answers—must be provided...")

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Just like the modern world, *Gravity's Rainbow's* hero, Tyrone Slothrop, is *de trop*. His roots go back to Puritan New England, his ancestors were there for the conception of the United States and now their descendant is fighting for democracy in WW2. But the whole scene over there in England does not seem to resemble the most straightforward and functional war effort. Slothrop is stationed at ACHTUNG (Allied Clearing House, Technical Units, North Germany), an obscure arm of British intelligence, where he plots Poisson distribution graphs of V-2 strikes on Greater London. The strikes follow the rules of randomness to a T. So it seems does Slothrop, who it becomes clear is more than he first appeared. For some reason another British intelligence arm, ARF (Abreaction Research Facility, where Pavlov preoccupies everybody) becomes interested in Slothrop. Somehow he's tied up with the appearance of the synthetic flexible plastic, Imipolax, which is also by some quirk of fate or the System used in crucial parts of the new Nazi Aggregat-4 rocket. The A-4 is in its developmental stages, at Nordhausen and Peenemünde, but as the Allies move in and shut down the Nazi war machine, the A-4 parts and plans and technicians are left for the postwar scavengers of the Occupied Zone.

And they flock to the Zone from all over the world: Russians, British, American intelligence, also GE from the American Industries, looking after its patents perhaps, Farben reps hover somewhere in the background with hungry DP's and evacuees....

The A-4 is finally fired, a symbolic rather than destructive shot, as if it made any difference. The first human to move beyond the biosphere is strapped into the A-4's body, experiences Brenschluss, the delta-T, the top of the arc before descent.

The bell-graph of the rocket's flight assumes several dimensions of symbolism in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The bell-graph form mimics the distribution of a great number of things in nature, from energy-use and IQ of organisms, plant pollination incidence within set radii, rain under a cloud....

The bell-graph also contains, as an X-Y axis, those complimentary literary phenomena known as synchronism and disynchronism. The frozen horizontal movement of an April day in 1945, with vertical (time-wise) ripple effects rolling from that moment, all throughout future history. But though the rocket mimics nature, its flight may signal the end of the "natural" progression of civilization. The ultimate question may be if this dissolution is occurring; if the empty, amoral procedures of our created System will bring it to extinction, taking us along with it...

By now, you know that there are no simple answers.

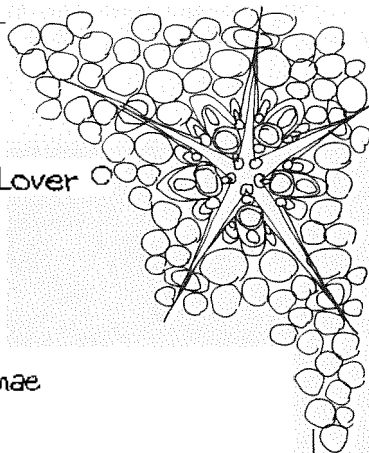
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There are so many connections, cosmic or otherwise, so many odd niches and corners in *Gravity's Rainbow*, that I have only been able to hint at some of the content and procedure by which the modern world is laid bare. The book could and probably will be the subject of intense scholarship. Of course, ironically, those scholars will work inside of the System, that part of it near ivory towers, that is. 'Til then, watch the random skies, keep in mind the rainbow of diversity which our world has been blessed/cursed with—and hope that the steady force of a blind system does not come to overthrow gravity.

## Choosing a Lover

His hand —  
do the feelers look  
like five swollen antennae  
eyeing you full length?  
then  
gather, warm  
by rubbing.

Leslie Dock



In order to read Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as science fiction, I propose that the protagonist's narrative be treated as if it were a readout from a highly sophisticated information-gathering computer housed in the body of a human-like robot. The computer-robot, known as Jack or Jack the Bear, has been programmed in such a way as to give us as much information as possible about per's\* encounter with a world that is totally alien to us. Jack's program is based on one major and several minor axioms. First, the world in which per functions is divided into two classes of intelligent creatures that are identical except in each other's perceptions. But also, the two classes differentiate themselves on the basis of the amount of pigmentation or melanin in the outer layer of their skins. The two classes are thus named black and white with white superior, while black = inferior.

Jack is black and does not know per is a robot. Per accepts per's inferiority and looks at skin color as a kind of curse that is to be escaped from. This escape is to be achieved through a series of complex interactions which take place almost entirely with whites. To make Jack as authentic as possible and so that per will not "blow his cover", per has been programmed to feel that there is a thing per can do to lose this blackness.

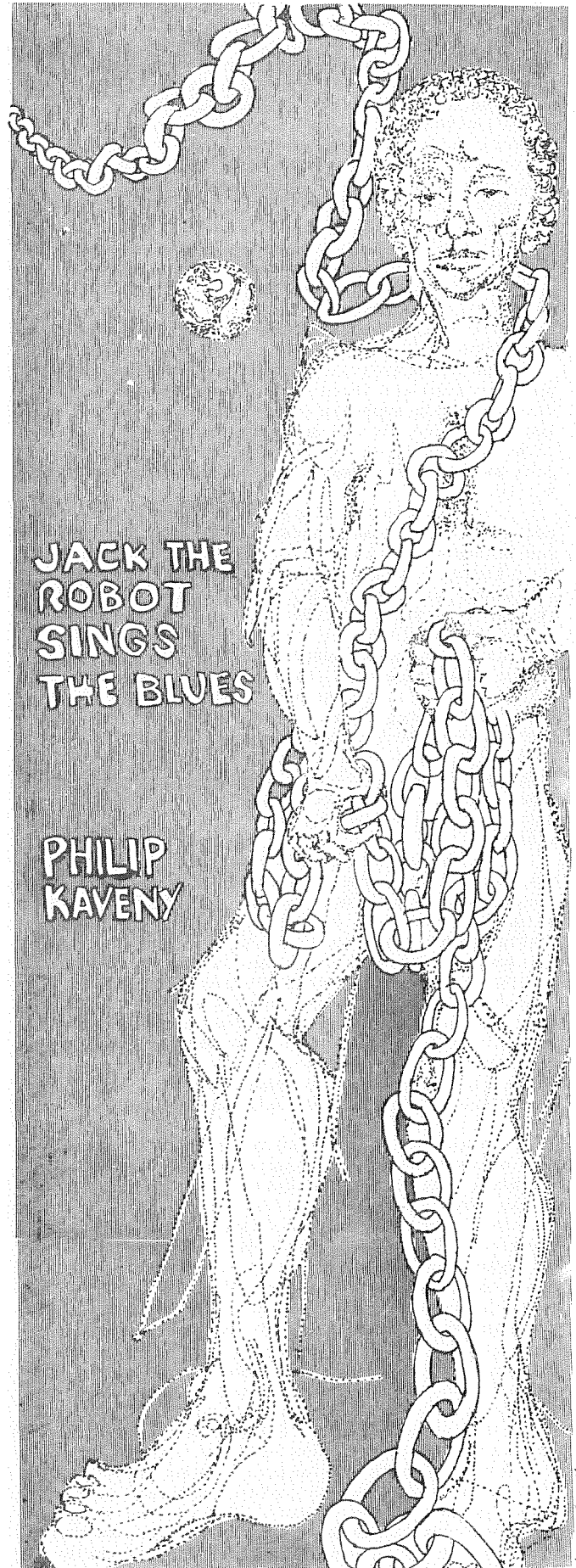
In interpreting Jack's readout, we will make a major shift of perspective which will bring the background against which Jack functions into a sharp, multi-dimensional focus. We will leave aside such questions as character motivation and development, as they have no significance for a robot and also in order that we might gain some understanding of the structure, values, and dynamics of this alien world.

The time frame for Jack's investigations is a three- or four-year period just before the outset of several industrially developed nations on the planet Terra. Jack's activities are localized in a place called the Deep South, where per attends an educational institution called a university, and in a living area which is a section of a large Northern city. The city is called New York, and the section of it in which Jack lives, Harlem.

In the first section of the readout, it seems per is suffering from an acute information overload. It is as if per's memory has been welded into a kind of overlapping matrix of associations which move in and out of temporal-spatial relationship almost randomly. (As a point of information, Jack is a model which is much in advance of the current state of the art. Per's information is stored in a topological-contextual manner. This leads to a much more confused readout than one might get by using a binary flipflop system. However, it is hoped that the new process will allow us to more accurately approximate the behavior and operation of what is referred to as human intelligence.)

From a cave of white light deep beneath the earth in Harlem, Jack's readout moves in and out of time. Per says that, not too long before, whites held blacks as property, but that this is no longer the case. Jack tells us per is invisible. This invisibility has caused per to take predatory, even murderous action against a white who did not acknowledge per's existence after they had bumped into each other on a street corner. Yet, we know that blacks can certainly see whites. Jack asks, "What did I do to be so black and blue?"

It would seem that the basis for the relationship which causes Jack to ask this question lies in a number of contradictory expectations that whites and blacks have for each other. For example, at the start of Jack's narrative per is making a speech, accepting an honor bestowed for per's intelligence and scholarship. This honor will allow per to go to a Negro college where per hopes to lose much of per's rudeness. (College is a place where young, intelligent blacks go in the hope of losing their black-



ness.) Before Jack makes per's speech, per must first watch a naked white woman be mauled by the serious men who are the leading educators of per's community. After per is titillated by watching this white woman, per must engage in what is known as a battle royal. This is a blindfold fight in which ten black boys are stripped to the waist and made to fight till all but one can no longer function. The crowd seems to want to kill them all. The fight ends after all the young blacks scramble for money, which is actually fake, on an electrified rug which burns them badly. Against this background, Jack makes a slip of the tongue on a key word. Per substitutes the term "social equality" for "responsibility". One wonders how the choice of a word almost cost Jack's life. Jack's program has been designed to accommodate a superhuman level of contradiction.

It is important to note that Jack feels that per's actions are appropriate in this context. We feel a certain sympathy for per, but we must remember not to look at the material from per's perspective. Remember, we are reading science fiction. Jack may closely resemble a black human, but per is a robot.

Do blacks exist simply as objects of torture and scorn for whites? Later sections of the read-out indicate that this statement is far too simple. At college, Jack comes in contact with Dr. Bledsoe, a blackman of great power, who presides over a small college on a small section of pastoral land beautifully decorated with ivy-covered buildings. The college is in marked contrast to the poverty and apparent backwardness of the rest of the community of rural blacks. I earlier mentioned that this was a place where young blacks, designated as intelligent human beings, were taught to hate their blackness. Bledsoe's power lay in his ability to manipulate this factory of self-hate. Another aspect of Bledsoe's power lies in his special relationship with certain white men from the North who are referred to as trustees.

Jack's interaction with the trustee Norton, a Northern factory-owner, highlights the complexity of the relationship between whites and blacks. Norton tells Jack that Jack is part of his destiny. This destiny is tied somehow with the sanctification of the death of Norton's daughter. Norton tells Jack that she died in late puberty because she was too pure for life. Norton has heavily endowed the college, perhaps to fill the void created by her death. At this point, it is important to note that one of the most important taboos in human society is the prohibition of intercourse between parents and children. Incest is thought of as a loathsome, subhuman act.

Jack is told by Norton to drive into the countryside away from the college so that Norton can see the black folk at their simplest. Norton is taken to the Trueblood shack where he notices that both Trueblood women, mother and daughter, are pregnant. Trueblood has violated the incest taboo and his life has never been better. He tells the story of his sexual encounter as if it were a complex lyrical dream in which his daughter has been transposed through time and space to recreate a beauty that was perhaps the high point of Trueblood's life. Seldom has the sex act been portrayed with more power and beauty. Jack is appalled by Trueblood's account. Norton is enthralled by the story. Trueblood tells us how he was persecuted by those uppity folks from the college. "I went to see the white folks and they gave me help. That's what I don't understand. I done the worst thing a man could ever do in his family and instead of chasin' me out of the country, they gave me more help than they ever give another colored man, no matter how good a niggah he was." Norton awards Trueblood with a hundred dollar bill for his account of the

event. It appears that, for doing one of the most unspeakable things possible, Trueblood has been protected and rewarded by whites.

Why has Trueblood done the proper thing in his dealings with whites? First, he has reaffirmed the local whites' expectations of his own baseness by committing incest with his daughter. He has also acted out Norton's most hidden compulsion. Trueblood has confronted his own chaotic feelings of lust and shame. This represents a strong element of vicarious wish fulfillment, not only for Norton, but for the whites for whom he tells and retells his story of incest.

Jack must pay the price for Norton's experience. Norton is taken to the Golden Day, a saloon for mad black veterans, after he is overcome by the heat of the sun and the heat of Trueblood's experience. Here, he is helped by a brilliant black doctor who has chosen insanity as a haven from a world in which white is right and from all that follows. Norton is forced to focus on the contradiction upon which so much of his power is based. White is right, the lie told by slaves and pragmatists alike. This is the same axiom by which the robot, Jack, is motivated. It is clear by now that Jack is running as fast and as hard as possible from per's blackness. Jack is expelled from college for being either subversive or stupid. Per, however, is given letters of introduction to trustees in New York, the contents of which remain hidden. The fact that these letters remain unopened shows us the power of the axioms upon which Jack's behavior is based. Per is selectively screening out black voices that might help per to survive. Jack's program has a very strong learning component. This learning component works in a manner similar to human experience. Jack is continually integrating per's experience with the axiom that white is right. Bledsoe, though black, speaks in a complex extension of white voices that control Jack's life. Even in the text we find the voice of the insane doctor refer to Jack as a robot. Jack's persona is a set of conditional responses which are, in essence, nothing more than per's attempts to understand what expectations the various white voices per's life have for per. Because these expectations are manifold and contradictory, Jack suffers greatly.

The section of New York called Harlem is different from anything else in Jack's experience. For the first time, he sees black and white moving together in crowds. He thinks of touching white women, but darts away. Harlem could be an explosion of freedom for Jack, but it is only another place for per to listen for the proper white voice. After finding by accident the true nature of per's sealed letters of introduction, Jack is given a job working for the Liberty Paint Company. It is interesting to note that the interaction between black and white workers represents a basic principle which seems to keep individuals with similar interests from taking collective action. Black and white workers are kept apart by the reinforced perceptions that they have about one another. Jack is excluded from a union of white workers basically because, in their minds, per's color is equated with untrustworthiness. Though the white workers are human, their behavior is very similar to Jack's. It would appear that what I have referred to as the axiom of black is an integral part of this society. Since neither black nor white worker benefits from this, what purpose does it serve?

Jack tells us that the product of Liberty Paint Company, "optic white" paint, is made perfect by including a drop of black paint into the white paint, which then acquires the perfect hue. This paint is used primarily to cover national monuments. Here, of course, we see that black is something to be used to cover unsightly surfaces. The products and operations of the Liberty Paint Company reflect a general process by which this society maintains itself. Jack

misunderstands this process and spoils a batch of paint, for which per is sent in disgrace into the depths of the factory. Here per works with an old black man in a room full of gauges, and high pressure steam lines, pigments, dopes, and dyes. The old black man who runs this room is a kind of wizard who holds the secret of "optic white". For this he is rewarded by being allowed to work in a kind of dungeon of his own hate and fear. Even in the depths of the factory both black men cannot escape the operation of the axiom, "white is right". The two beings fight, as they must: the older to protect the secret which keeps him in the basement and the younger out of a feeling of rage and frustration. Jack reassures the keeper of the secret that per is not after that secret by attacking him. As they fight, there is an explosion, which injures Jack badly.

I think that at this point we see Jack defining per's limits for dealing with contradictions. There are white voices inside and outside of per's head, but they are lost in the scream of the explosion. Per is physically injured and emotionally disfunctional. In the factory hospital per is treated as if per were some broken-down piece of equipment. Why is it not discovered that per is a robot at this point? The answer, I think, is simply per has behaved perfectly according to the expectations of the whites to whom

couple evicted. Per associates the material objects of their modest lives with a set of broken expectations that start at the end of the period called "slavery" and extend through 70 years of pain. Jack speaks, and thus incites a riot. The experience is too powerful, and Jack is suddenly free from white voices for just this instant. This point represents a burst of energy which can only briefly override per's basic program. At these points, Jack's data became almost incomprehensible. It is not random, but it is chaotic.

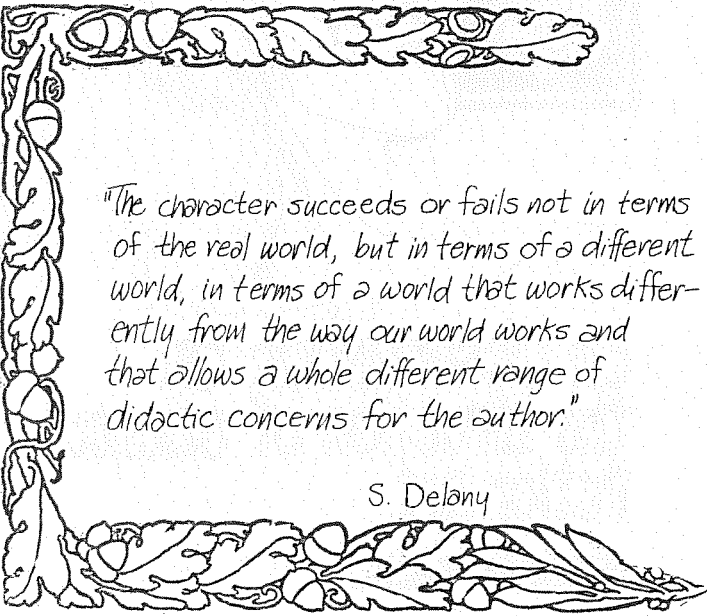
Through Jack's interaction with the brotherhood, we see per's program gradually reassert itself. Jack is again looking for the right thing to do to escape blackness, and per looks to white voices to give per the word. The brotherhood's understanding of Jack is in many ways tied to a rather complex set of sexual expectations that Jack, with per's allegiance, embodies. Jack has the power, in per's words, to move both blacks and whites to action. This emotion is set in a strong contradiction to the brotherhood's perception of the logic or internal dynamism of historical process. Jack's role with the brotherhood is one of the most compelling sections of per's narrative. Per tells us that the brotherhood is pragmatic and opportunistic at per's expense. It is clear that per considers herself to be the victim of per's environment rather than per's own perception.

Jack has intercourse with a white woman who claims to see per as a source of ideas, but really sees per as something to fill a great emptiness in her life. The readout would lead us to think that whites express themselves often in a language of sexual expectation which utterly transcends the realm of physical experience. This language is exceedingly complex. I can say that, within the framework of Jack's narrative, the nature of per's sexual encounters are nothing more than a depersonification for per. Jack has become a symbol or embodiment for per's partners. Per could, in a sense, be interchangeable with any other young black who would embody these white expectations. For these white partners per's sexual activity is nothing more than an extension of their narcissism. I am drawn to the section of the readout in which Jack is asked to say certain phrases to heighten the intensity of the experience. Per is asked repeatedly to utter the phrase "drop your drawers, bitch". Jack, at this point, has become a kind of disembodied fantasy. Earlier, I noted that, to white males, Jack was both an object of hate and a source of wish fulfillment.

As part of per's experience, Jack is forced to deal with two blacks who have the power to override per's flight from blackness. The first is Tod Clifton, who is very similar to Jack, though a great deal less contradictory. It is interesting that Jack perceives Tod as beautiful in a way beyond comprehension. Tod Clifton has a fatal human fault. He will not run away from his blackness. Tod is young and strong, and he reacts to contradiction with his fists. This leads him to embody a death wish, which is fulfilled when he asserts himself with his fists against white police. Jack perceives that Tod dies a victim of white expectations. Does this mean that to step outside of white expectations is to be equated with death?

I noted earlier that there was a time some 70 years before our narrative when blacks were slaves or property, therefore not free. In the time frame of the present narrative, a rather subtle though powerful transposition has taken place. The physical state of slavery has been cleverly transposed into a slavery of contradictory expectations, which Jack's experience has defined for us. On the basis of Jack's experience in several different milieux it seems to me that the slavery of contradictory expectations is a principle of control used to maintain the existing power relationships in this society both in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



*"The character succeeds or fails not in terms of the real world, but in terms of a different world, in terms of a world that works differently from the way our world works and that allows a whole different range of didactic concerns for the author."*

S. Delany

per has listened all along. Jack does not understand that this is what per was supposed to do all along.

Earlier in the readout, we gain information about the relationship between black and white sexuality. In the hospital, they play around with the idea of removing Jack's testicles as a cure for per's disfunction. This is not done, but it is important information to try to integrate later into the readout of Jack's experience. Jack really never is able to use this set of white expectations to per's benefit because they are tied to a blackness which per is trying to escape. Jack's sexuality, which is defined by a white-dominated political movement with a certain political vitalism, is discovered through an accident.

Jack is moved when per sees an elderly black



There are many issues to which we should address ourselves as artists. Whether amateur, fan, pro, working, commercial, designer, or master...you can fall into anyone of these levels or categories and still do honor to the title "artist" by virtue of your approach to your efforts. There is no way that all the issues can be detailed in a short article. One thing I want to draw attention to is the lack of women artists the genre. In my research of the past and present records, I can find only five female names in the field of pro SF art. I would like to go into this matter more deeply at another time, in a feminist forum. If anyone has any relevant information I would appreciate your dropping me a note about it.

I would like to acknowledge an indebtedness to Kelly Freas and Harlan Ellison, not only for the absolute integrity of their work but for their published words. They speak to us all.

Every single artist should run or write immediately to the nearest source and buy *The Art of Science Fiction* by Kelly Freas. And read it. And I don't mean look at the pretty pictures. READ IT!! If his words don't speak to you, there is no way in hell mine will.

Artists are not notoriously verbal. Possibly because they have been convinced for a long time that no one ever listens to them. I intend to find out if this is true... I don't think it is.

With a mighty leap and a fierce Kiai yell, EE-yaagghhh!! , let's plunge in together.

You know that art came before writing. (You didn't know?) It was for the most part fantasy art. The minute the pictures became a depiction of things that could not be seen, smelt, heard, or touched, they entered the realm of fantasy. Yes, it is the likes of us who took man out of the cave...and he still needs all the help we can give him. Now, let's leap ahead a couple of years: 1939, the first World SF Con in NYC. The guest of honor was Frank R. Paul, an artist, not an author. This tribute has rarely been given to any artist since.

What does SF art mean now? There was a time when it meant pulp covers; around 1954 it became paperbacks. We are at 1978.

We could dwell on the fact that at one time publishers tended to minimize the value of art over story titles and authors so that more lettering than art was seen. The fact that some of them continue to think this is our own fault. But I am not here to discuss the problems with publishers.

There are numerous applications for the competent, commercial (and don't you tell me that's a dirty word) artists. Posters, product packaging, TV, cinema, book covers and jackets, record sleeves ...to name a few. But this does not answer the question of what our art means. And I am questioning the direction it is taking, or rather not taking.

Several years ago I was captured by a picture called *Overpopulation* by John Pitré. It told a story, created a "sense of wonder" of the future, albeit a bleak and devastating one. But the most important thing is the fact that it delivered in one instant the impact of a world without birth control. He has made other vivid, visual comments on humanity and evidently I am not alone in the admiration of his work, for his posters are never out of print. Why is this such a singular voice?

We live in a time when all around us there are cries to throw off the passive for the active. Why then are we not doing this with our art? From the first, SF art has been subservient to the writing. Can we not make statements about the issues that surround us? It is our obligation to become a force like that which began 10 years ago with the writers who established the New Wave, compelling people to take notice of the way things are and what the possible results may be if these things are allowed to continue without correction. If the artists can catch the dreams shaped by the writers, why aren't they shaping



an observation on  
the direction of science  
fiction art

VIRGINIA GALKO

some dreams of their own?

SF art makes the impossible logical. It should be the art of inquiry and alternatives. It is not exclusively visual and emotional. (If you don't think so, you haven't paid any attention to M. C. Escher.) It is, and must be, cerebral also. Intellectual, thought out, driving into the minds as well as the senses of the viewers. The very essence of our art is communication, most especially of the things which are vital to humanity.

There was a time when the necessary function was to make somewhat banal scenes, such as the cabin of a space ship, come to life with feeling. Now there are movies and TV, and the SF artist is no longer needed as a projectionist. Astronomical scenes have been overshadowed by photos taken in space. SF illustrations in the monthlies have been reduced to Grafix Duo-Shade, instant rub-down, peel-off, do-it-yourself excuses for art. There are a few exceptions. You can count them on your thumbs. It was not always this way. But I am not going to give you a history lesson. It should tell you something that two of the most honored artists, who were and are legends in their own time—Finlay and Freas—have taken so much care in the performance of their work. I defy anyone to find anything done by either man where he has taken sloppy short-cuts (that is, of course, outside their wastebaskets).

For quite a few years now SF writers have placed an enormous emphasis on the quality of their craft. There are workshops and seminars devoted strictly to the writing of SF literature. Why isn't there the same concern and dedication by the artists? Nowhere have I heard even a discussion of the necessity of this. These excuses for artists are so smug and complacent in their narcissistic backscratching that they shudder that anyone daign to question or offer an opinion of their abilities, let alone their motivations. I call this artistic masturbation, and name it for what it is. If we continue as artists on this course, we deserve the oblivion to which we are condemning ourselves. We deserve the lack of interest in and respect for our work. And if you don't think the state of our art is unhealthy and in danger, I suggest you think about the fact that, of the top SF publications, at least one contains absolutely no interior art at all. And most of the covers are a disgrace to the otherwise brilliant people who indifferently sign their names to this garbage.

In the introduction to *A Requiem for Astounding* Alva Rogers says that "no longer do the pulps decorate with their gaudy dynamic covers." Has SF art become so polite that there is no longer a place for the "dynamic"? Have we come all this way to be reduced to uninspired clichés for covers and illustrations? As Brian Aldiss says in his book, "Rocketships decorously arranged and Saturn behaving overhead with insipid good taste." At best the work is perfunctory.

Powerhouses (Finlay, Bok, Escher) have shown the way. Neither anyone nor anything can thrive on memories. When are we going to pick up where they have left off?

SF art has long since broken the original pulp format, but we must close the gap between art and the SF writing, which is exerting an influence beyond the traditional confines of the genre. Are the writers the only ones with deeper, darker, "dangerous visions"? We too must articulate visions.

The SF Writer's Association is a body which aids writers critically and practically (or so I have been told.) In the same spirit we must beg, borrow, develop, acquire, and learn anyway we can, but most especially from each other, as artists. Those of you who apparently feel you will lose something in the exchange are fools. You can only gain by an interchange with each other.

Last year I sat in at a meeting of artists who had come together for the purpose of trying to form

an association. For almost an hour they argued back and forth as to who should be eligible and how they could boycott publishers, while one concerned voice kept trying to draw everyone's attention to the fact that these were not the most important issues. One of the writers who had experience with this sort of thing came to help. He too knew that these people needed to join together. He might as well have stayed away for all the impression he made on the mumblers. It still seems incredible to me that there is not an integrated nucleus of SF artists.

Recognition of our ideas is the prime object. It usually follows that we become recognized as individuals. That is a fringe benefit. But if we do nothing about the execution of our ideas we are not going to become known on any level. Most of the artwork is caught in a cul-de-sac that keeps coming back on itself...or worse yet, in a dead end. It's as if we've said, "Let's stop. We can't go any further."

We are supposed to be prime movers. But we must establish ideas before they can take hold on their own and be recognized. We must have a product. One of our time, of here and now, not of what has been. The real tribute we can pay to those who have come before us is to pick up where they left off and continue on.

If you are going to call yourself artists, then you must never doubt the importance of your profession. Doubt is fatal. There are a great many of you out there who seem to doubt the importance of being an artist; you don't have the courage of your convictions. Or is it just apathy?

I agree, a lot is going on out there, but let us not ennoble the graffiti in most of the fan- and per-zines by calling it art. Mind you, there are some into which time and energy have been consciously used. But you don't need a computer to count them. For the most part, SF art runs rampant, responsible to no one. And when it is so obvious that the writers take so much care as to what they are saying and how they say it, I ask you why it is that the artists do not make at least half the effort.

It is not just technical ability I am taking issue with, but the waste of energy and money that irks me. The audience is there, the editors are there, the publications are there...so why aren't you taking advantage of that fact? With fandom you have at your disposal a network of correspondence without equal. A captured audience, receptive to your ideas and willing to listen to and look at your conclusions. The only hitch is they know whether you have anything to say or not, and when you don't say anything, they are simply going to ignore you, and rightly so. Personally, I think that it would be a whole lot better if there were some controversy stirred up and we began stepping on a few proverbial toes.

Where are the visions, the ideas, the joys of our art? We have at our fingertips the means to develop ideas into something far more impressive than even the writers have been able to imagine. We are the storytellers who haven't learned to type. The readers, the dreamers come to us, expecting us to open doors. They want to appreciate us, and for the most part they have been given chopped liver.

To the few who see visions is given the wherewithall to make people aware of the nature of the culture in which we are living today, what that culture will breed for tomorrow and what the alternatives are.

In all the world of art, we in SF have a unique situation. We have to think to execute our work. I am not talking about just personal concerns, but the preoccupations of our era.

SF art began by exemplifying humanity's destiny in that most of those who pioneered space grew up sharing the dreams of science fiction. Now there are other realms which we must try and keep trying

rural South and in Harlem. How viable is this as a means of holding this society at a functional level? Here we are at the limits of Jack's narrative, but not at the end of per's readout.

We learn about the character Ras from Jack. Ras is a voice which questions the basic axiom, "white is right". In the end, Jack mortally wounds Ras in part of a general battle and uprising which is in part the result of outrage on the part of the black community to the murder of Tod Clifton. Ras has the power in his word to break the force of enslavement of contradictory expectations. The battle for Harlem of course ends in black defeat this time, but, we ask, what about the next time and the time after?

The character Rinehart is never seen and is only identified to us by an accident of identity in which Jack, by wearing sunglasses, finds herself identified as a clergyman, a pimp, and a dope dealer. all this makes per further reject the black voices who see Rinehart as a multiplicity of identities. Jack sees this only as a reason to further scorn per's blackness.

In the end, the readout loops back upon itself, and we find Jack the predator alive in per's cave of light. Per is now, in a sense, ultimately dysfunctional. Per still feels the impulse to escape per's blackness through the proper mode of interaction with whites. Jack's readout now conveys to us a picture of a place that existed in per's mind some 40 years ago. Per presents the sum of per's experience in a mode of expression which is rooted in some classical tragic mode. The tragic elements lie in the constriction of per's own experience.

Jack's axioms are related to us by per as part of some universal moral imperative. It would be interesting to study the readout of a computer like Norton or Bledsoe, or Trueblood or Rinehart. It would be interesting to study the concept of the slavery of contradictory expectations tied in with the necessity of moral imperative in a contemporary time frame. Can we extrapolate the possibility for change in the places called the Old South, the college, the factory, Harlem, or Jack's cave? The key, I think, is that in dealing with our computer it takes no more energy to develop these axioms than to change elements in a learning program. In the case of a human social system these same things may take more energy than those in power in this society have available. It would appear that what happens at that point might fall into the realm of what might be inferred from catastrophe theory. This is not to say that Jack's readout represents a synecdoche for the society as a whole. It would only indicate that the data would lead to a conclusion that is not allowable within the confines of the model.\*

\*The pronoun "per" has been substituted for sex-specific pronouns as an experiment; also, since a robot technically has no sex, it more correctly denotes the robot as a subject than a sex-specific pronoun would.

## Galko

to pioneer, pumping fresh blood into and through the veins of the world.

Most people recognize that art is a vital part of, not an outcast from, imagination. We are restricted only by our own individual limitations in the performance of our knowledge of our craft. We can say things the writers would say if their medium permitted...especially human reaction or interaction, which would take pages of words. Try taking some of Ellison's stories and putting the ideas into pictures. It won't be easy. It will be worth the effort.

If there is anyone who is going to argue that we are not a force unto ourselves, I suggest you think about the posters by Kelly Freas, done in support of a then-dwindling space program. There are hanging in the Smithsonian and helped revive the interest of a mundane, indifferent public to the issue of space



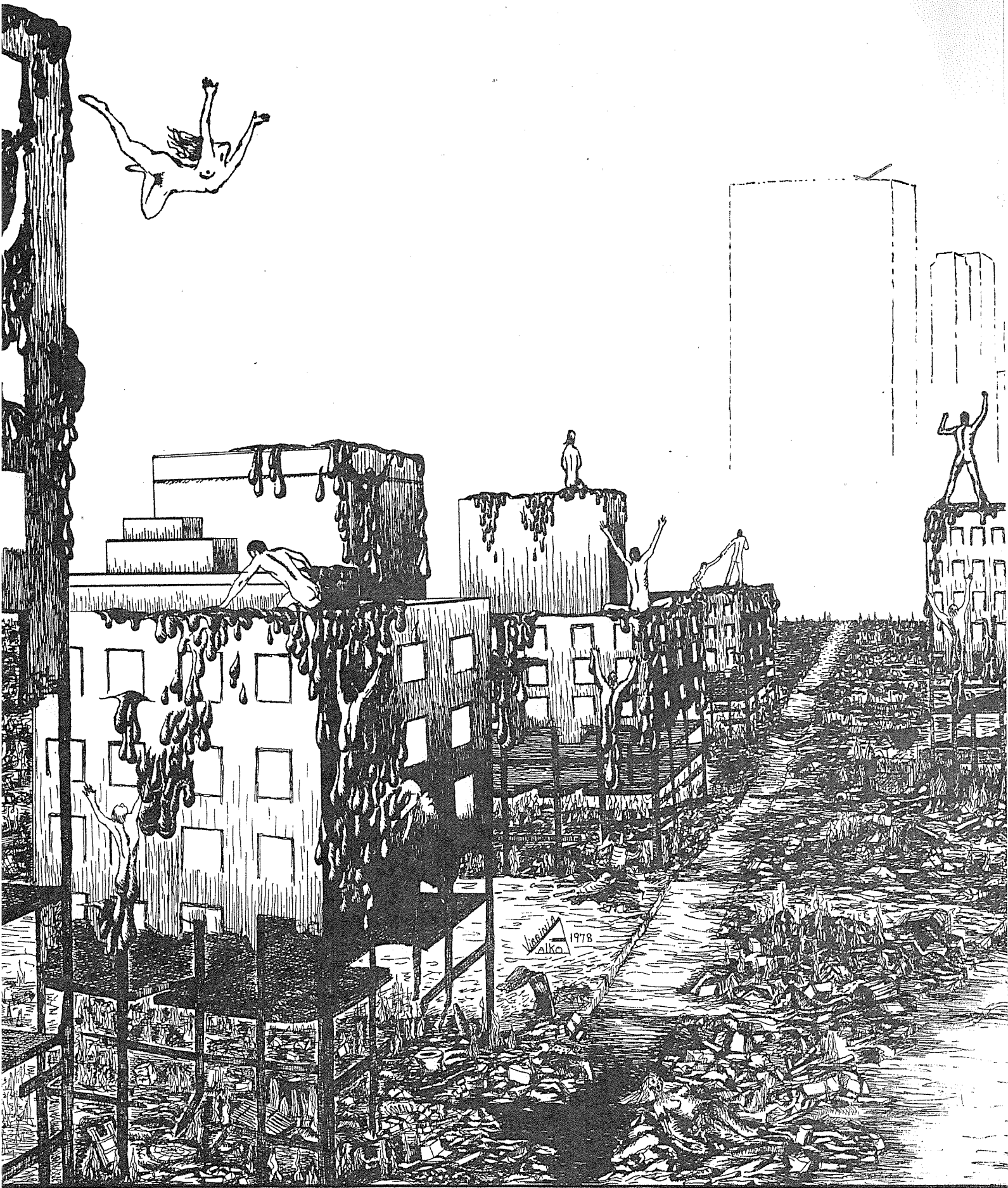
Though to the echoes of losses I turn  
My pitted back and lift my goggled eyes  
From dust to the glittering stars that burn  
In the blackness, shine from sand-shadowed skies,  
I fear tomorrow's dawning and I dread  
To board the gleaming friction-polished spire.  
Does it mark the tomb whence I join my dead  
Or point to life 'midst the suns of Lyre?  
Trapped in this sunswept land, ne'er can I breach  
These bonds of birth I so sorely beween,  
Strive for my hidden fantasies, or reach  
Beyond myself to the endless unknown.  
And so I have to leave you, my friend:  
Each fresh beginning marks some venture's end.

Bill Hartman

flight.

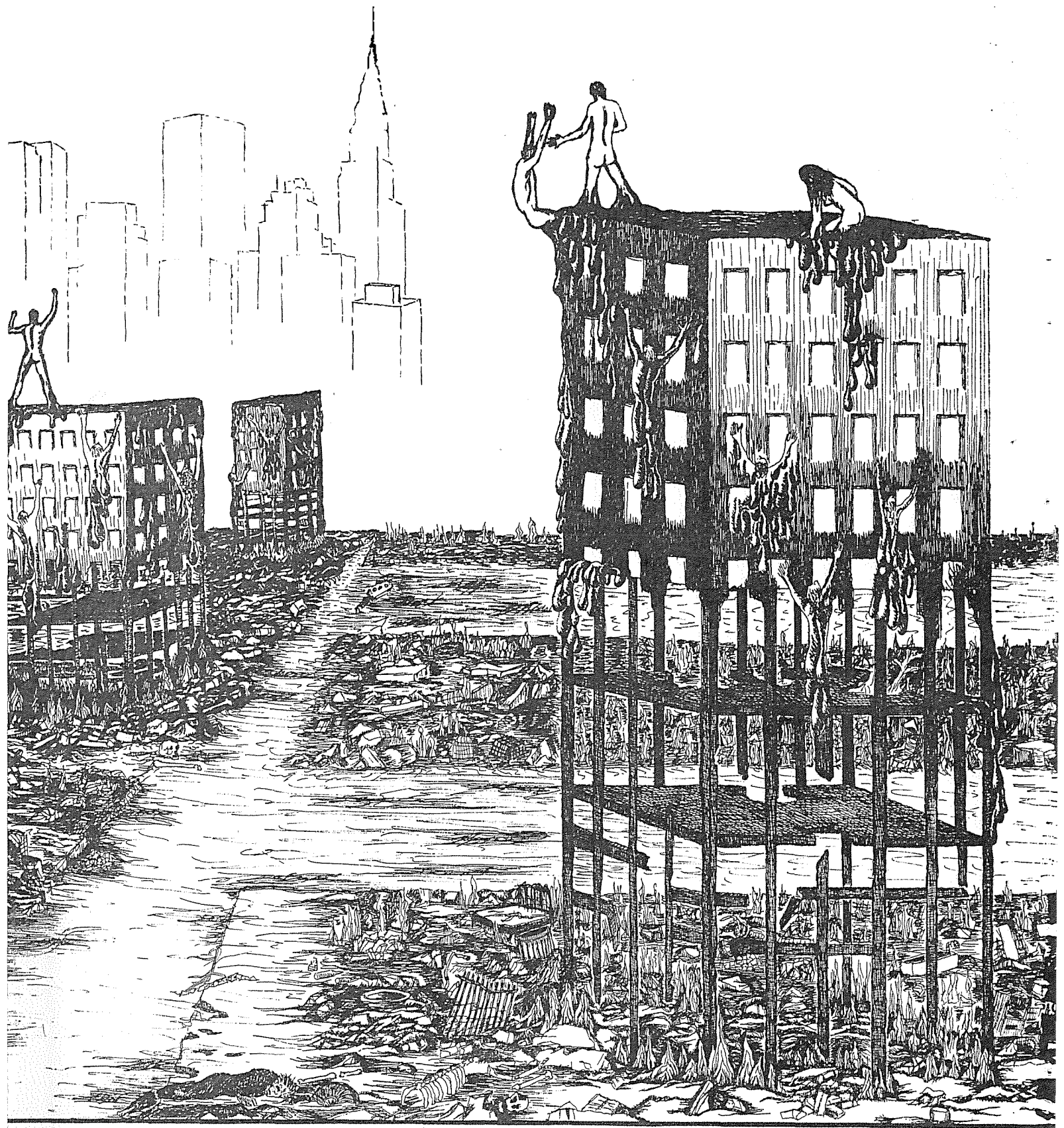
Well, people, I have pushed this as far as your editors have the space to allow me. If an offended mob doesn't rush in crying "For shame! For shame! Philistine!" and stone me to death, I hope we can take up some of the other issues surrounding our art and do something about them.

As all the people of the Madison Science Fiction Group can testify, I am by nature a quiet, shy, retiring person, the very soul of decorum. But when it comes to gross negligence I can and will scream, kick, sink my teeth in for a looong grip, and step on those toes. If you care about your function as an artist you are not going to be offended by the things I have said here and will not be afraid to make a commitment to your work. As for the others, don't worry, there is always someone who is willing to print your transgressions. Worse luck! ☹



"TODAY'S TOMORROW"

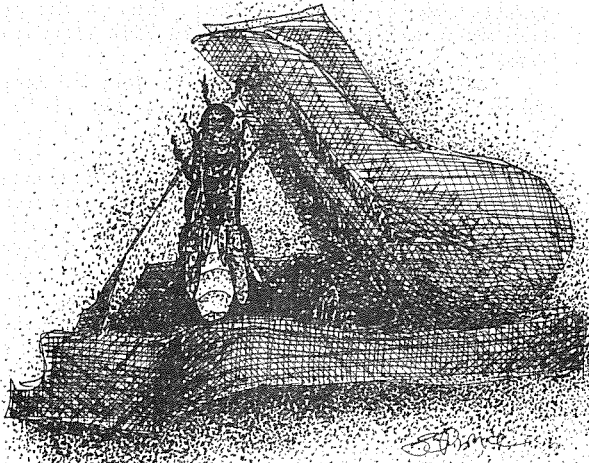






# SF AS SURREALISM:

## IMAGINATION & THE UNCONSCIOUS



JANICE BOGSTAD

In common usage, the term "surrealism" has come to mean "unusual", "slightly strange", or "extraordinarily impressive". It does, however, have a much more specific meaning both with regard to the movement called by that name and the philosophy which stands behind the name. Since science fiction shares something with examples of the movement philosophically, I intend to explore the two types of creative activity in comparison in the next few pages. This exploration will begin with a few specialized definitions for which, luckily, I will not have to rely solely on my own knowledge.

A discussion of the premises upon which Disch's novel, *Camp Concentration*, was created prompted Samuel Delany to make this observation about the use of the imagination in science fiction: "But the laws of logic are only the laws of local reality, bounded by a sleep and a sleep." [*The Jewel-Ringed Jaw*, p. 235.] This reflects upon one of the basic conceptions incorporated into the French surrealist movement, which began around 1917 and ended around 1935. (It is still considered by some people to be going on.) The conception revolved around a desire to re-inform the general conception of the limits of reality. The surrealists, through their most vocal spokesperson, André Breton, felt that the then current division of dreams and the unconscious aspects of an individual's existence from experiential reality was too sharply drawn in the minds of the greater part of the populace of the '20s and '30s. Thus, heavily influenced by Freud's writings, such as "The Dreamwork", which related dreams to unconscious desires and to the creative imagination, the surrealists decided to seek a means through which to re-forge the link between the non-conscious and the conscious aspects of the individual. They sought, through their particular approach to artistic prac-

tice (writing, painting, drama, and music) a metaphorical structure which would reveal to the often unwilling audience that reality was actually a much broader phenomenon than was allowed for under the confines of rationalist thought that was most popular at that time.

They hoped to arrive at this metaphor through the use of methods that would shock the audience into a new form of perception and through the pursuit of that most elusive of human motivations, desire. The surrealists made use of the belief that desires were a powerful force informing upon and motivating human activity to a greater extent than was commonly recognized. Thus they sought to represent the desire, expressed through dreams and flights of the imagination, as well as the human activity to which it gave rise. They represented, through their art, a super-realism, reflecting more aspects of the experience than would usually appear from the point of view of an outside observer. Actual surrealist works of art resemble SF art for that reason. The actual artifacts—the literature, movies, paintings—themselves have to somehow represent more than what can be seen from the outside. They must also show humanity's dreams, hopes, and aspirations.

SF and surrealism appear similar in two fashions. First, they both represent consciously non-mimetic material, scenery, and occurrences, though for different artistic reasons and with somewhat different results. Second, the manifestations of this material refer in some recognizable fashion to contemporary external reality, either in terms of positing its difference from that which is found in the artistic creation or in terms of causing the reader to recognize something about her or his own grasp on reality, seeing an altered truth in the piece of fictional or imaginative creation.

The scene opens in a dingy basement laboratory. A peculiarly pale young man, dressed in a long black robe with a clerical collar of white, is clutching a flask in one hand and a *coquille* (scallop shell) in the other. He pours some viscous fluid from the shell into the flask, examines the flask with a look of disgust, and then drops it crashing into an already existing mound of glass, from which a wisp of smoke arises. Following his upturned face, one sees the door of the cellar open to admit three men, one of them dressed as a bishop; the bishop appears again a second later, suspended by his shoulders from the ceiling of the basement at the point of one corner.

Does this sound like the beginning of an SF film about an alchemist? Well, it's actually the first few sequences from a film called *Le Coquille et le Clergyman*. Made in the '20s in France, it tells the fantastically depicted story of a clergyman's sexual desires and imaginings about these desires—desires the presentation of which leads the viewer from the cellar to an interminable palace with trick doorways and halls that never end and finally to another scallop shell which turns into a pool of water in which the clergyman's face is reflected as he is brought into a room of heavily dressed and painted women. The point is, in order to suggest what this poor individual might really want to do with his time, the artist has had to depict some events that are very unreal in appearance. Yet the relationship to experiential reality is there all the same. The events depicted represent mere extensions of the character's imagination about his real situation.

Now let's try another film description. A man is going on a long journey. His wife has killed herself, and this has made a great impression on him, as he considers it to be his fault, having arisen out of his neglect of her need for physical affection. After he reaches his destination, he is met by colleagues who are somewhat disturbed by their inability to solve a problem that they have been working on. He is also unable, in this unhappy and potentially unfulfilling situation, to forget about his sorrow and guilt over his wife's actions. He starts to imagine that she is alive and there with him, and so she appears, first in the clothes in which he originally found her dead body and then in the same ones that she wore for a photograph that he has looked at many times. He seems to become insane, trying to destroy this simulacrum of his wife that he associates with a real rather than a dream manifestation. His colleagues agree with his delusional perception, claiming that they have experienced their own, and that these "ghosts" from their pasts are all about them.

For those of you who have seen *Solaris*, this scene should begin to sound familiar, and the interposition of the fact that this plot takes place on a space station suspended above a planet covered by a sentient ocean does not totally explain the nature of the delusions under which the individuals labor. It is merely an explanation offered to substantiate the realness of the appearance of people from the individuals' pasts to them. They become real to us also as we think of them being brought into the flesh through the intercession of the massive ocean-intelligence.

Both of these movies, one labelled surrealist and the other SF, depend upon our relating the visual manifestations to our own experience, but they also relate something through their use of non-mimetic (that is, non-realistic) materials that could not easily be brought to mind otherwise. They describe an individual's desires and psychological make-up through demonstration rather than through narration. One might expect this relationship to change when

the switch is made from film to literature. It would seem that literature, being a written form, can only narrate. This is true in a certain very particular sense. Yet, through the narration of events and activities that do not attempt to imitate exterior reality, an author can sometimes more effectively cause the reader to examine previous conceptions of that reality, adding factors that don't usually come to our attention. This is the principle upon which a lot of SF and surrealist literature is based.

Much of SF makes use of the idea of dreams as the starting-off point for stories, but these dreams or imaginative elements, sometimes masked as "scientific theories", are used as explanations for the events which follow, and they are often substantiated with the barest amount of scientific pseudo-expertise. What this says to me is that the explanations are not as important as the freedom they offer as pretexts for explorations of the imaginative sort. Surrealism says that, in essence, given a certain action on the part of the individual, there are several other actions he or she might have planned and there are several desires felt or conceptualized by the individual that are never realized. It seeks to represent some of these alternative realities. SF, on the other hand, works something like this: it says, given a certain premise, what would the life of an individual be like? Given that an individual could live a life that is presently only conjured up in the imagination of the author, what would that life be like? These processes are not exactly the same, but they often produce similar results, as has been demonstrated by the movie scenarios mentioned above. And these manifestations both bear a similar relationship to reality for the reader. They both start with some given. In the case of surrealism, it is the activity or experience of some individual to which her/his desires, dreams, or unconscious aspect is added. In science fiction, it is a premise that is an extension of something already in existence in the world that is expanded upon or carried to its logical conclusion. This is true even of the most fantastic of sword-and-sorcery literature, which often mirrors our knowledge of history but nevertheless also reflects the present state of relationships between people or, more correctly, people's unconscious perceptions of them and desires with regard to them. Delany offers an interesting explanation for the attractiveness of sword-and-sorcery to young American men in that they are reluctant to take on the roles that society offers them. Thus an unconscious desire has become the basis for an entire sector of SF literature. And this literature likewise reflects the real desire on the part of many people to escape a distasteful fate. Without this fate, the alternative would not appear in literature in quite the same way or have quite the same appeal.

A case can be made for the relationship between SF and surrealist literature, but what is the use of such an intellectual exercise? Does it reveal something about the nature of either of these kinds of literature or about those who read them? Can it help us understand surrealism or science fiction? I think that it can and does.

First, I think that the kinds of things done with the nature of the individual in surrealism had a direct effect on the kinds of freedom for the exploration of the imagination that appears in SF. How is this so?

Surrealism was the first real literary or artistic attempt to non-mimetically reflect reality. Now before you assert, as does Delany, for example,\* that the history of literature is the history of non-mime-

\*See this issue's guest editorial.

sis, remember that this was not an attempt to say that the things reflected were real—were a part of reality—but rather that they were things that were pleasing to imagine. Surrealism is different. It attempts to say that the things reflected are as real as the actions that they sometimes give rise to. They make little distinction between a desire or dream that is realized in exterior reality and one that isn't.

Science fiction, then, adds something to this basic use of the imagination in that it posits the realization of one such imagined possibility and then explores the consequences of such a realization in the classically novelistic form, that is, through the working out of the imagined situation with regard to an individual or group of individuals. Surrealism increased the potential of literature to use the "unreal" to reflect the real, and science fiction has built upon that potential by refusing to think of anything as unreal, but rather to write of anything that is imagined as if it were real and could affect the lives of individuals as we know them now.

As the relationship becomes more defined, the need for examples arises. But since the point of this article is not to prove that all science fiction is nothing but surrealism, but rather that surrealist literature can be creatively read as science fiction, I will draw these examples equally from SF literature and surrealist writings of the '20s and '30s.

To illustrate the importance of the dream as an imaginative element in SF, I need only bring up a few stories that are known to many SF readers.

First, there is a story which deals with a person who leads one life while he is awake and another, on another planet, light-years and time-warps away, while he is asleep. Traditional literature would come up with a character like Walter Mitty, who has a secret imagined life; in a science-fiction story, that imagined life can be made into a "real" possibility. The character could be a law clerk in one time-space continuum and a barbarian warrior in another, and thus the SF story works to substantiate imagination.

Another story involves the character in communication with alien life on a spaceship above the Earth. He can only communicate while in a trance and this only through the use of drugs and conditioning. There is nothing described that substantiates his contact with this alien other than his own description of it as an experience; true, there is some scientific indication that an alien craft has invaded the solar system, but our telepath is the only person who knows for sure what he is experiencing in that he is the only one who contacts the alien. Thus his contact with this alien takes on an aura of unreality.

In talking about this topic, this way of approaching the beginning of a story, I discovered that there are a lot of science-fiction stories that begin with a dream, imaginings, and telepathy as a way to substantiate the reader's entry into the unreal situation that is about to be described. This is a very surrealist-seeming technique in that the dream is then the starting-off point, but then the novel goes on to describe the events, setting, or other imagined occurrence as if it followed naturally or really from the initial postulation.

The real value of such a perception of the relationship between SF and surrealism would seem to me to come with a science-fictional reading of a surrealist novel. It would seem, if I am right about the relationship, that this would require only the extension of those aspects that are depicted as representations of the characters' wishes and desires into representations of what is considered to be actually happening. In some of the surrealist films

this is easier to achieve than in the novels, as the films do not make a distinction between the depiction of actual events and the depiction of fantasies. It is difficult to make such a distinction on the movie screen, as only visual representation is available, and it is hard to accord this representation gradations of realism. If a ghost is depicted, for example, we can only guess that it is to represent the character's imagination rather than that we are supposed to believe it is actually there. In surrealist prose (There is some question of whether there are such things as surrealist novels, as they also attempt to break through our normal conceptions of what a novel is and call attention to themselves as something that is written rather than as imitation of reality.) this science-fictional reading would take a bit more effort. But one could, for example, simply agree with the narrator in Breton's *Nadja* that there was some subconscious force drawing him and Nadja together as two beings and perhaps think of this force as mental telepathy. Or, with regard to a work called *Paris Peasant*, by another surrealist, Louis Aragon, one would be able to read such things as an obelisk in a park as having a certain significance to the person who encounters it because it actually gives off some sort of emanation.

The point is that the manifestations that are mentioned in these and other surrealist works can make sense as parts of a science-fiction story more easily than other literature can, because they are trying in the same way to say something about real existence without mirroring that existence and because they therefore both create unreal landscapes and occurrences and attempt to give them the positive valuation of being real, though in different fashions and for different reasons.

A close reading of a surrealist novel with regard to science-fiction expectations would thus reveal something about the nature of SF, surrealism, and also the real closeness that exists between perceivable reality and whatever we can imagine and then write down as an extension of that reality.

## Every-Family-Has-Its-Ups-&-Downs Dept.



380. Many fannish households break up following one of the partner's neglect of their duty to send JANUS a COA!

By Philip Kaveny

Every time I go to town, the boys keep kicking  
my dog around. It makes no difference that she's  
a hound, the boys keep kicking my dog around.

—Pop song

I think that the above rhyme expresses a major problem with the current state of science-fiction criticism. It has been my experience, reading and listening to academic criticism, that what takes place in the text of a work is often ignored. At a panel during the recent meeting of the Science Fiction Research Association, held in Waterloo, Iowa, a paper was presented on philosophical ideas in science fiction. One of the speakers, a graduate student in philosophy, said that he had just discovered that there were important ideas in science fiction. He asked the audience to give him a list of science-fiction stories that might have philosophical questions present in them. The point is that the speaker had read perhaps six science-fiction stories in his life. He didn't really want to study ideas in science fiction *per se*; he wanted to study philosophy in some traditional mode. He was looking to pursue his own discipline through the body of literature called science fiction. This is a problem which is not limited to graduate students delivering their first professional papers. Even the compelling works of Ursula Le Guin are crammed into some antiquated, archetypal, Jungian, peanut-brittle jar. The hope, it seems, is to get the lid on as fast as possible and close it before too much SF gets out and has to be dealt with as literature.

One of my favorite writers and critics was not kind enough to use a peanut-brittle jar to contain "bad" SF. He used a garbage pail. This is the image that I have of Stanislaw Lem. As he writes of science fiction, he is sitting on the lid of that garbage pail, and the gods help literature if any SF gets out. Lem goes so far as to say that most science fiction should not be written. He tells us that, according to information theory, if too much is written, then channels by which a great work develops will be blocked by the noise. According to Lem, there are no great works of science fiction; therefore there are no standards to measure the body of that literature against. His arguments are facile but a bit too tedious to expound upon at this point.

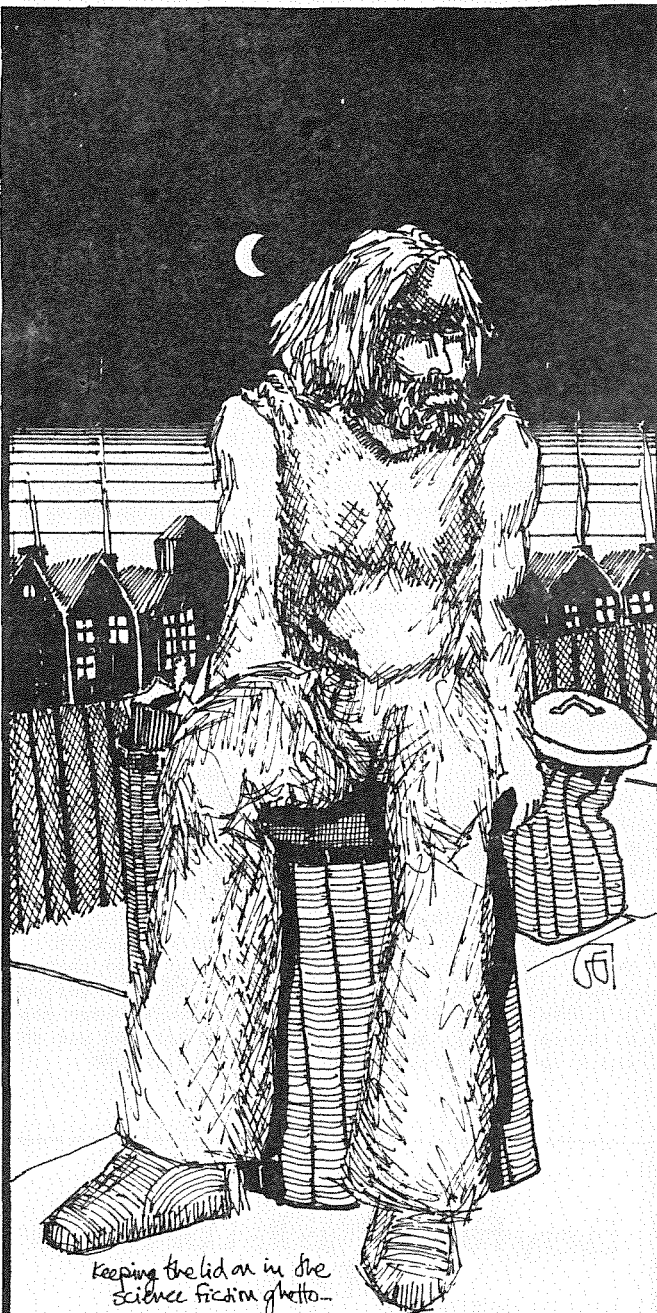
Another method of dealing with science fiction is to say that if it is obviously good then we must somehow prove that it is not science fiction. It must be "metafiction", "innovative fiction", "historical romance", or whatever.

It is no wonder that most fans treat criticism of science fiction as so much bullshit.

This is a sad state of affairs for everyone. Incisive criticism is a useful tool to draw the reader to a greater appreciation and understanding of a particular text. Further, it can be a means of bringing previously inaccessible levels of meaning to the surface. At its best, criticism is, in my opinion, as creative as original writing. The problem is that, in the case of the criticism of science fiction, many critics agree with Lem and the archetypists in trying to keep the lid on the pail or, worse yet, simply call all interesting SF by another name so as to distinguish it from that which they do not consider to be worthy of notice.

When I was a child, we had a peanut-brittle jar that was really a party joke. When it was opened, six green snakes made of compressed springs and felt would jump out at the hapless victim. When I think of the way that the collection of essays called *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*\* works, I recall some of my glee at

\*Samuel R. Delany, *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1977; also New York: Berkley, 1978).



Keeping the lid on in the  
science fiction ghetto.

## WORKING THE JEWEL-HINGED JAW

Philip Kaveny  
Janice Bogstad

the lid coming off the peanut-brittle jar in some heretofore sober and unsuspecting face. Bert and Ernie are irrevocably out of the garbage can, and Lem must thus be in retreat as a neon sign starts to flash, saying: Remember, when you are reading science fiction you are reading a literary text. Repeat this: SF is a text. Repeat: This is science fiction, in which words work in a different manner than in other literature. They have different textures and a totally different significance. This is not to say that Chip is some sort of wizard or shaman. He is only saying something that we all always knew but somehow never said before. A friend of mine encountered the word "spaceboots" and tried to make them; I tried to deny "The Cold Equations" by stripping radar from the ship, throwing out the doors, or pushing out extra food, clothes, or air; we all know that things are different in science-fiction stories. They make us do more imagining, work more with our minds, but no one has really said that before.

"Perhaps, then," the fan in me says, "it is not all bullshit. Perhaps the lid sitters are afraid to take a long, hard look at science fiction. Or, more kindly, perhaps they don't know how to read neon signs."

\* \* \*

By Janice Bogstad

*The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* is a collection of non-homogeneous approaches to the criticism of SF. The essays vary from general statements concerning the nature of SF criticism, through discussions of how to write SF, to detailed essays on specific works of specific authors. The structure of the individual essays varies as much as does their subject matter. The most unusual is not an essay at all. It is titled "Shadows" and consists of a series of often intensely personal ruminations about literature, language, and art and their relationship to the human condition. Yet despite its unconventional structure, "Shadows" contains some of the most exciting and artistically breathtaking narratives of the collection. If, as Phil has said above (and I generally agree), criticism can be a creative art form, then this is where it is most creative. I am not sure, for example, that such a language as Glotolog (Rumination 34) exists. If so, I am glad to see in his discussion of it a confirmation of my own beliefs that some things are more easily thought in one language than in another and that particular languages intimately affect the thinking process. If not, this particular rumination is a skillful and exciting example of SF itself. In any case, it fulfills my expectations for criticism, as do most of the longer and more specific essays dealing with Disch, Zelazny, Russ, and Le Guin.

Good criticism is an art form when it both informs upon a specific piece of literature or a literary practice (such as SF or surrealism) and reveals known territory in a new perspective just as does good literature. Essays in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* do both of these things more often than not. I am not qualified to criticize someone else's suggestions for creative writing as I'm no writer myself. I can only compare the selections of Part 3 to my similar experiences with translation workshops. Learning about the difficulties of translation, another re-creative art like criticism, is a bit like learning about writing. One discovers ways of finding adequate substitutes across languages where there is no possibility of correspondence. This also teaches one the difficulty of using language to express ideas of any sort. The exercises described in "Teaching S-F Writing" are likewise designed, it seems, to teach one to think of alternatives and to see the world of experience through new perspectives. Teaching writ-

ing is a sensitive problem, for the teachers must separate their own personal viewpoints from things that they have learned about the craft itself. This distinction will ensure that they teach the craft but also allow their students to recognize individual and collective biases.

Those essays that really affected me in terms of my own critical criteria were the ones that dealt with specific works. These were presented in the fourth section of the collection, also titled "The Jewel-Hinged Jaw". I have not yet been able to read *Camp Concentration*, nor have I read Russ's Alyx stories or much of Zelazny. Three of the four essays concern these authors, and in dealing with the essays I will bring up what it is about Delany's criticism that has enticed me towards being able to enjoy these works. Only then will I take up the new pathways opened for me by the criticism. On the other hand, I have read, lovingly and many times, *The Dispossessed*. My discussion of "To Read *The Dispossessed*" will point out the new perspective that the criticism creates towards the novel, especially with regard to character development. I also hope here to move beyond Delany's criticism, showing not that his essay falsifies the intentions of the novel, as has been argued in conversation, but rather that in locating the novel's fault in its reflection of the novelist's biases, Delany has put aside (perhaps for the purposes of argument) one of his own most often voiced axioms, that is that science fiction actually reflects the present in a set of relationships and metaphorically motivated associations which are radically different from those of mimetic fiction. (For clarification of this concept, see the guest editorial elsewhere in *Janus*.)

The first critical essay of Part 4, "Faust and Archimedes", celebrates the works of Disch and Zelazny by presenting an argument for their relationship to the symbolist approach to the reflection of reality. It is basically also an argument for his belief that science fiction is about the present and not about the future at all. To make this argument, Delany outlines two kinds of symbolism and discusses how certain works of each author correspond to the symbolist relationship of fictional representation to experiential reality. "Reductive symbolism", he claims, is a non-mimetic way of representing reality which emphasizes structural relationships between objects in the world. (I assume he includes people in this part of the definition.) It does this by impoverishing the objects themselves, making them less important than the relationships between them, which thus take on a greater meaning for the purposes of the story. He places Zelazny's *Creatures of Light and Darkness* and Disch's *The Squirrel Cage*, among others, in this category. "Intensive symbolism", linked to the French poets of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine, operates through the intensification of the individual experience. This intensification takes place at the risk of obscuring the relationships between individuals and between individuals and objects. Delany links this form of representation to Zelazny's *He Who Shapes* and Disch's *Camp Concentration*.

The critic's representation of the thesis in *Creatures of Light and Darkness* is interesting in relationship to much of the writing of 20th Century American poets, such as T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens. These persons represent the preciousness of life as being linked to its transitory nature. Zelazny's more hopeful view claims that, according to Delany, "Given all eternity to live, each experience becomes a jewel." The revelation of *Camp Concentration* as another telling of the Faust story is equally enticing. As a result of being exposed to these critical theses, I find that I want to read the





cited texts to test for myself the truth or falsity of these theses. In addition, the theses provide me with a new perspective from which to pursue the reading of all science fiction. SF may be telling us something about the nature of contemporary reality that is more hopeful than anything found in contemporary mundane fiction, and thus the tale, in its telling, may be of use to its perceivers.

The Alyx stories by Joanna Russ are not unknown to me. Yet, although I have read a great deal of Russ's work—some of it many times—I have not yet managed to get through the Alyx stories. I do not know why this is the case, but perhaps the inability on my part stems from an animosity that I feel towards sword-and-sorcery SF, in relationship to which Delany discusses Russ's stories.

"Alyx", as the second essay is called, is more a discussion of character and writer development than of specific novels, though the last section is devoted to *Picnic on Paradise*. It is also a celebration of the insight of the author into the writing of fiction which Delany describes as part of his personal experience of Russ. I prefer to concentrate on his analysis of the character Alyx and *Picnic on Paradise* with relationship to the position Delany accords to sword-and-sorcery in contemporary America, the context out of which he believes this character and the series is drawn.

The argument for the virtuosity of *Picnic on Paradise* and the uniqueness of Alyx as a character arises from a thesis about sword-and-sorcery and the adolescent male. According to Delany, the adolescent male in America responds to the stock Conan-type males and Sonya-type females out of his fear for and rejection of the responsibilities of marriage and the American casting of his role as that of provider/protector. The argument is interesting, even though it fails to account for the women and older males who appreciate sword-and-sorcery fiction for the action it provides. Or does it? Perhaps there is an eternal adolescent in each of us. Certainly I find Red Sonya's independence much more attractive than the contemplation of my own dependence on others, both male and female. It's not sexuality itself that is the distasteful aspect of relations between people but the pain of adjusting to others' expectations of those relationships, though the relationships may nevertheless be both pleasurable and creative. In any case, this only serves to outline the uniqueness of Alyx as a character, for she is a sword-and-sorcery figure who is nonetheless involved in the training of other females rather than the conquering of other males as her primary task. She is not there merely to be worthy of some superior Conan. Good show.

As with much of the Delany text, this one is uneven and does not make its point as completely or concretely as traditional criticism seems to demand. It makes instead many interesting and ponderable points. In seeking to excite the readers, the author has succeeded in leading them back to the original work. He has not closed off the possibility of other approaches to the text and yet has read the Alyx stories as science fiction, putting the character in an SF tradition. He thus avoids the Lem-like claim that SF cannot be properly criticized because no acceptable norms exist within the field against which to measure it. He has drawn his norms from the field as it exists and shown what a virtuoso treatment can make of them. He has thus provided yet another approach to the criticism of SF, one that is internally motivated.

The third essay in the "Jewel-Hinged Jaw" section deals with Disch's *Camp Concentration*, a novel I have tried to read several times. He moved me towards it by discussing the relationship between linguistic elements (that is, the choice and order-

ing of words in the narrative) and the narrative's overall meaning. This celebration of Disch's novel is also the site of another of Delany's oft-made arguments. I agree with his claim that the story is in the telling and not in some reducible-to philosophical thesis. If it is true, as he says at the end of the essay, that "we have been shown something with the arrangement of Language", then *Camp Concentration* deserves another look, especially because he also alludes to a common surrealist theme discussed elsewhere in this *Janus*. The language of a work of literature must do more than argue, it must show; it must enrich the reader experientially if it is to be great. That's what literature is all about.

Perhaps I shouldn't try to treat "To Read *The Dispossessed*". This discussion is of one novel that I have been profoundly affected by and that I like very much. And yet I have also been profoundly affected by Delany's discussion, which has been often criticized for its harshness towards the book. I do not shy away from that harshness, only from the implication that the author is personally responsible for some of the false consciousness that Delany points out as being represented in the novel. Throughout *The Dispossessed*, as the relationship between people and between the two cultures on Anarres and Urras, as they affected individuals, was revealed with the gradual unfolding of the novel in two directions in time, I kept saying to myself, "Yes, yes, this is what this kind of economy implies for the individual." I think that Delany and Le Guin are both right, Le Guin in bringing up the relationship between individual interactions and economic/social givens of a particular time and place, and Delany in pointing out the prejudices inherent in her method of representing this relationship. When I read Delany's essay, I also experienced the thrill of recognition. Yes, there is an unwarranted equation made between the sex of the individuals and the way the economy affects them. Yes, there is too much weight placed on "normal sexuality", which is as abnormal to me as a woman who is seeking to realize my potential as an individual before my potential as a female-individual defined solely by my sexual function as it is to Delany. But no, it is not Le Guin herself who is at fault. It seems to me that she has reflected an understanding of contemporary reality that is all around us by taking those assumptions into consideration. For example, Marcuse's *Counter Revolution and Revolt* could easily be used to confirm the statements made in *The Dispossessed* about the way sexuality is affected by capitalism, and yet Marcuse is bound to time and place by his judgments, as is *The Dispossessed*. Why are people afraid to be critical of great SF? Delany does not denigrate the novel by according it so much critical attention. Rather, he gives it the honor of being as important to him as Dostoyevsky seems to be to literature departments in the academy.

What is the function of *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*? It almost seems to rest somewhere between academic and fan criticism in that it uses many of the terms and methods of the academy—terms that the academy has not yet deigned to use of SF in most cases, as the members who are conversant with the critical methodology quite often disdain this form of literature just as Latin scholars disdained anything written in the vernacular before the 14th Century or Chinese literati disdained a serious discussion of classical Chinese novels before the early 20th Century, when contact with the Western world caused its intelligentsia to reevaluate the value of the novel form. Delany's book is not only a discussion of the ideas in books, it is also a guide to reading in general. It could, if you were receptive to it, tell you something about how to read that would really turn you on—just as good SF novels do. ☺

[In the beginning there were no fanzines. By about the second or third issue of Janus, however, the fanzines started piling up. We hadn't yet evolved an efficient system whereby everyone in the group who wanted to see them could have a chance to do so, and at first it was decided that, each issue, a different member of the group would take on the duty of reading the fanzines that had come in since the last issue of Janus was published, and write the column. Well, the system worked well enough for a few issues, but then the fanzines stopped just piling up; they began to tower and move into whosever apartment they ended up at. It began to be difficult to convince members to volunteer for the awesome duty. And, as the number of incoming fanzines increased, it became increasingly difficult to circulate and still keep track of the zines. Thus, Dick Russell, known for such things,<sup>1</sup> came up with the S\*Y\*S\*T\*E\*M.

[The S\*Y\*S\*T\*E\*M was really neat...except that it didn't work. What we did was to tack these green sheets of paper, called "Fanzine Routing Sheets", on each fanzine after it had come in and I'd noted it in my card file. On the green sheet was a list of people who wanted to see fanzines (and places they could check off having seen them and also note their dissatisfaction should they care to label it a "crudzine"<sup>2</sup>). On the bottom half of the green sheet was a space for reviews. Anyone who was interested, intrigued, or disgusted enough by a particular zine was supposed to write his or her reactions in that space. It didn't work because only a couple of people ended up writing reviews (instead of this column being more of a group effort, as it was intended), and the zines got bogged down in certain apartments anyway and failed to reach many of the group members...which may account for the first problem.

[In any case, this column is the stunted result of the S\*Y\*S\*T\*E\*M that didn't work. Greg Rihn and I did most of the reviews. Jan did one because she's the only one who can read French well enough to competently comment on Requiem. Maybe next time we'll have to come up with a system that works and involves a lot of folks and covers a good percentage of the fanzines we get...or perhaps one that will involve only an individual or two and result in fewer, but more in-depth fanzine reviews. We'll see.

[Following each review you will notice initials of the reviewers set in parentheses: JB = Jan Bogstad; JG = Jeanne Gomoll; DM = Diane Martin; GR = Greg Rihn. —JEANNE GOMOLL]

**Albatross** (Winter 1978) Stacy M. Fairchild, Box 2046 Central Station, East Orange, NJ, 07019; \$1.50 per issue, \$7.00/year. *Albatross* is bad. It is boring. It is dumb. Most of the artwork is not worth the expensive, justified, offset, saddle-stapled paper upon which it is printed. The lettercol is insane—including waste-of-space letters from subscription renewers. And the politics of the zine—consisting mainly of childish, destructive infighting—is of no inspiration to the "sisters" that this purportedly "lesbian feminist satire magazine [sic]" says it is aiming at. There are superficial reviews (one of *The Clewiston Test* that fails to say anything about the prominent lesbian fall-person character, and in general, gives it a flimsy, approving nod); there are terribly executed funnies, and rather disgusting limericks not even written in proper meter;

<sup>1</sup>originator and facilitator of the idea to make us a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation.

<sup>2</sup>A drawback to this was that some people thought the space was put there for them to check off the fanzine after they'd read it. Thus, we have a few votes (mainly from the same people) to consider *SF Commentary*, *Maya*, *SF Review*, etc. as crudzines.

# Fanzine REVIEWS

## & THE S\*Y\*S\*T\*E\*M

There is fiction that passes itself for witty, satirical barbs at society and Anita Bryant and her ilk, but is too amateurishly written to cause even a chuckle, except one of embarrassment. Unfortunately, not recommended. (JG)

**Ash-Wing** 23 (March 1978), Frank Denton, 14654 8th Av. SW, Seattle, WA, 98166; the usual. This year has seen and will see the resurgence of a number of classic fanzines, of which *Ash-Wing* is one. It is generally quite fannish, in an oldfan way, and has that mellow appearance of mimeo or twiltone that is easy on the eye, but unfortunately does no credit to the artwork, which in this issue is nice, and competent, but not striking. As a sword-and-sorcery fan, I really enjoyed "Demon Eve" by Ross F. Bagby. It is the best crafted piece of fan fiction I have seen in a while and strikes me as being good enough to appear in *Swords Against Darkness* or a similar anthology. I recommend this zine. (GR)

**Empire: For the SF Writer** 12 (November 1977), Mark J. McGarry, c/o Ron Rogers, Box 774, Christianburg, VA, 24073; \$1.50 each or \$5/yr. Not bad, attempting to be a prozine for pro writers. Articles are mainly about authors and writing. (GR)

**Fanny Hill** 3, Dan Joy and Somtow Sucharitkul, 3815 Whispering Lane, Falls Church, VA, 22041; \$1 each or the usual, or \$3.50/4. Unlike certain other zines published by young people, *Fanny Hill* retains an undefinable air of adolescence, which still somehow does not detract from its quality, which is good. The subtitle of this issue's editorial, "Thots Thot While Not Thinking Too Hard", well expresses the light tone of this zine. Layout leaves a bit to be desired, but there are lots of cartoons by Alexis Gilliland, who is one of my favorites.

**Fanny Hill** 4, same as above. #4's layout and general appearance improves drastically over that of #3. There is a beautifully drawn cover by V. M. Wyman that would be that would be perfect except that it seems to be going the wrong way, with the real focal point on the back cover and the movement on the front cover directing one's eyes to the back. If you were not careful, you'd finish the zine without looking inside. That is nit-picking, though. The idea of centaur women battling men on horseback is a striking image. Inside, Dan gruesomely offers a Swiftian solution for Trekkies and Wookies, and Somtow Sucharitkul delightfully confirms his survival in an "editorial" account of ComposerCon (known to most of the attendees as Asian Composers Expo 78). In both this article and in the fragment of the epic poem, "The Idiot and the Oddity—II, Part 2—Paradigm Lost", Somtow proves himself to



Jeanne Gomoll

JANUS

Diane Martin

be an extremely witty and marvelous writer. Also in this issue is an interview with Dave Bischoff by Dan Joy, a weird story about Death and his day off (He goes to Dairy Queen.), LoCs, and not nearly enough Gilliland cartoons. Good artwork throughout, highlighted and enhanced, I think, by the less crowded layout employed with this issue. And, gawd, they're numbering their pages consecutively beginning with their first issue. Nonetheless, recommended. (JG)

**Feinzine 1** (April-May 1978), Adrienne Fein, 260 Oakwood Av., White Plains, NY 10605; \$1 each or the usual, or \$4/4. Although this zine has been long awaited (according to the editor), it could have stood a bit more work before going to the presses. The layout is chaotic, the artwork crude, and, though Adrienne makes much of her efforts at calligraphy, I find most of it very uneven and hard to read. Writ-ten contents fair to mediocre. Lots of rough edges on this one. (GR)

As Greg notes, there are indeed a lot of rough edges in this zine. This is more unfortunate because there are several rather worthwhile things in this issue—Hlavaty's article, for instance, and the re-produced Hite questionnaire (preliminary for the new Hite Report—on men). (JG)

**Fear 'n' Loathin'** 3 (Vol. 1 No. 3), Ira Thornhill, 1900 Perdido St., New Orleans, LA, 70112; the usual. I liked this one. Good recipe for Red Beans and Rice. Thank you, Ira! (DM)

**File 770 1** (January 6, 1978) Mike Glycer, 14974 Osceola St., Sylmar, CA, 91342; \$1/4 or news. *File 770* is a "data source about fandom and its opinions, including news and reviews...all facts verified by Ugandan Military Intelligence." And the zine that looks as if it can replace *Karass* as fan-nish newzine: In Issue #1 is an article about World-Con politics and bidding on the 1981 con, a fanzine review column that starts out by talking about Buck Coulson's humongous reviewzine (of other zines) *Devlin's Review*, and a discussion of how Mike sees the future and role of *File 770*. Most interesting to me, as both fan artist and fanzine editor, was an article that could have been entitled "On the Care and Feeding of the Fan Artist by the Fanzine Editor". My best wishes go to Mike for his news-zine. It looks like a Good Thing, less gossipy than *Week*, more friendly than *Karass*.

[Later...] Since I wrote the above review, there have been several issues of *File 770*, which have confirmed my impression that the zine is a zest-ful and competent one to take on this much needed

## ★ JANUS BACK ISSUES ★

Yes! Back issues of Janus are available! Each issue costs \$1.00, plus 50¢ for postage and handling.

Whole Number	Vol. No.	Date	Description	No. Left
1	1-1	Aug 75	mimeo	5
2	1-2	Dec 75	mimeo	none
3	2-1	Mar 76	mimeo	2
4	2-2	Jun 76	mimeo	49
5	2-3	Aug 76	mimeo	22
6	2-4	Dec 76	offset blue/green	51
7	3-1	Spr 77	offset WisCon 1	28
8	3-2	Sum 77	offset green	none
9	3-3	Aut 77	offset blue/gold	84
10	3-4	Win 77	offset brown	52
11	4-1	Spr 78	offset WisCon 2	15

Collection of JANUS 12

function of fannish news-and-gossip forum. Already started there and soon to explode in a special theme issue is/will be some discussion on feminist-oriented fanzines and fanac. Should be rather interesting. Generally good artwork, some of it mine even. Recommended. (JG)

**"It's No Good Captain..."** (April 1978), R. I. Barycz, 16 Musgrove Rd., New Cross Gate, London, SE 14 5PW, England; the usual. Gawd. (JG)

The actual title of this zine appears to be *YCE*. For what reason, I cannot tell. Evidently, there is some kind of trend in British zinehacking toward combining stream-of-consciousness with absolute *non sequitur*, as I have seen a couple of others exhibiting similar aberrations. This is rather better than some, for the author manages to say some cogent things in his obligatory *Star Wars* comment, but I had to slog through several (blessedly small) pages of apparent babbling to get to it. (GR)

**Hedgehog 2**, Jeff Frane, Box 1923, Seattle, WA, 98111; the usual, or \$1 each. A good, solid zine, nicely put together. Some of the best book reviews I've read in a while, by a variety of people. Recommended. (GR)

And don't forget to look up the Dan Steffan/Grant Canfield portfolio in which the two artists play off each other's sometimes hilariously absurd ideas. Yes, recommended. (JG)

**Khatru 7** (February 1978), Jeffrey D. Smith and Jeffrey A. Frane, respectively 1339 Weldon Av., Baltimore, MD, 21211, and Box 1923, Seattle, WA, 98111; \$1.25 each, or the usual, or \$4/4. *Khatru* is alive and well and living in Baltimore, MD...and Seattle, WA? Yes, well, new co-editor Jeff Frane describes his and Jeff Smith's "association" as a '30s film: "Oh Jeff, this is mad, impossible. It will kill your wife." "Yes, yes, it's all wrong." Kiss, kiss, mad passionate embrace, and they go ahead and run away, even though you know they'll come to a bad end." Jeff Smith reveals another collaboration effort with Jeff Levin and mumbles something about having to collaborate with Jeff Clark on something. In this excellent "come-back" issue there are to be found the thought-provoking and fine book reviews that both Jeffs have been known for. There is also a wonderful section on (and in parts by) Tiptree/Sheldon, a "must" issue for this reason alone. Also an interview with Jon Anderson of Yes by Freff. Artwork is excellent, though scarce, throughout, especially the section logos by Ole Kvern, beautifully mythical executions of Yes titles and phrases. Unfortunately, however,



these are much damaged by the not so excellent mime-ography. The Jeffs promise a schedule near to quarterly for the year. Send subs to the Jeff whose turn it is to publish (at this point, Frane). (JG)

**Mad Scientist's Digest 4** (December 1977), Brian Earl Brown, 16711 Burt Rd., Detroit, MI, 48219; 75¢ or the usual. Good, informative personalzine, as well as can be told from this issue, which is composed largely of LoCs on the first three issues. Normal issues include book reviews and articles, making it somewhat more than the average perzine. (GR)

**Mijok 1**, Cal Johnson, 803 N. 37th St., Corsicana, TX, 75110; 30¢ or three 15¢ stamps or the usual. Promising neozine. Art, repro, typing poor. Writing is fair effort at a perzine by high-school fan. (GR)

**Prothallus 3** (March 1978), Sarah Symonds Prince, 2369 Williams St. #A, Columbus, OH, 43202; the usual. Another "Flushing in '80" zine, lots funnier than *Raffles* (in part because it's only a fourth as long). Dedicated to humor in ferndom—yes, ferndom. See "The Ferntastic Four" (a comic strip by Sarah)—worth the issue in itself! (GR)

**Raffles 1** (end of 1977), Larry Carnody and Stu Shiffman, respectively 118 Lincoln Av., NY, NY, 11501, and 880 W. 181st St., NY, NY, 10033; \$1 each or the usual. Generally irrelevant and slightly humorous zine. Hard to comment on because the articles are significant to nothing outside themselves. Supports the Flushing in '80 WorldCon bid. (GR)

**Requiem 19** (Vol. 4 No. 1), Norbert Spehner, 1085 St. Jean, Longueuil, PQ, J4H 2Z3, Canada; \$1 each or the usual or \$5/yr. I can only read the pictures. It looks real good! (DM)

Believe it or not, this issue of *Requiem* is critically more dense than previous ones I've read, but since I found myself reading the short stories first, I'll mention my reactions in that area initially. A piece by Michel Belil, called "*Laissez moi vous Raconter*" ("*Raconter*" means "to tell"), was obviously in the tradition of Lovecraft-Poe horror stories, which I don't really like. So, I found it a little less interesting than "King Kong III". This derivative piece, by Jean Pierre April, was interestingly like Robbe-Grillet passages (*Jalousie* or *Dans le Labyrinthe*) in its use of imitation-cinematic discontinuity of narrative. I didn't warm to the story initially, but, as I think about it, trying to sort the story of the berserk machine-monster King Kong III from that of the film-maker trying to work with it to make his King Kong movie (I hope that's the plot of the story.) was really a lot of fun, especially in a foreign language.

Well, as to the critical parts of this issue, let me refer you to Jean-Marc Heol's explication of D. Suvin's book of criticism, called *Pour Une Poétique de la Science Fiction*. Not satisfied with giving his reactions to Suvin's highly theoretical work, Heol offers an outline and explication of the salient points of Suvin's poetic of science fiction. He has made the argument for the relationship between science fiction as a novel form and the pastorate form seem fascinating. Now I have to figure out if I agree with the argument. The issue also includes another list of juvenile science fiction in French that is available to young Quebecois. Will someone please tell me what the "*Rederaste*" is? (JB)

**Rothnium 4** (March 1978), David Hull, Box 471, Owen Sound, Ont., N4K 5P7, Canada; \$1.25 each or the usual. *Rothnium* continues to be a very impressive fanzine—not just due to this issue's glossy (!) covers. I found the best things in chish to be "The Age of Unreason", by George Steiver, and "About Writing", by Mark J. McGary—both excellent, thought-provoking pieces. Layout is clean, uncluttered, and readable. Artwork is chiefly cartoony, with Derek

Carter's work most in evidence. Also, a token abstract by Lisa Beaulieu, and a pointless cartoon strip by Ronn Sutton. I highly recommend this zine on the basis of its features. *Rothnium* will no longer publish fiction after this issue. The two short pieces in this ish were unremarkable. (GR)

**Rune 51** (Vol. 8 No. 3), Lee Pelton and Carol Kennedy, 1204 Harmon Pl., Minneapolis, MN, 55403; 50¢ each or the usual, or \$2/yr. The second issue of the resurrected *Rune* continues to struggle toward a new format. Lee Pelton and Carol Kennedy have taken over as editors (the second replacement in as many issues after the end of the long reign of Fred Haskell) and are badly in need of contributions. Although this *Rune* had some funny stuff, like "Who's on Four?", a fiction schedule for SF fan TV programming, the longest item in the zine is "Minicon 12.75", a con/party report of the "how I came to Minneapolis and met all those people" sort, which I find quite boring. Artwork is scarce, and I can hardly believe that a zine like *Rune* has been reduced to printing its last two covers (50 and 51), which have been nothing short of execrable. It would be good to help this zine back on its feet with some good contributions. Folks, are you listening? (GR)

Number 52 has just arrived (as I type, in fact) and is improved considerably. There is an astounding number of artists represented in this issue, and in general the transformation of its appearance is Pygmalion-like. If this keeps up, *Rune* will soon be a beautiful zine again. (JG)

**Science Fiction Review 25** (Vol. 7 No. 2, May 1978), Richard E. Geis, Box 11408, Portland, OR, 97211; \$1.50 each. I am reviewing this ish mainly because it contains fiction by Geis, something I've never seen before. "One Immortal Man" shows craft. It has action, pace, and sparse and hard-hitting language. I found it somewhat entertaining. It is, so far, awfully bloody and has a sexist and, probably, racist setting. It should prove controversial. Features are good. However, I find "Coverup Lowdown" and Geis's eternal screeching about the big bad government wearisome after a few months.

**Scientifrication 9** (November 1977), Mike Glyer, 14974 Osceola St., Sylmar, CA, 91345; \$1 each or the usual. Reading the zine from back to front, I came first (over the lettercol) upon the riotous article/checklist "Cat versus Dog" by Mike Parkash. Then there were Dave Locke's "Beyond the Shiftkey", which illuminates and proposes suggestions to the subtle complexities that differentiate Midwest from West Coast cons, and Carl Bennett's crazy "Growing Up Is Learning To Scream Civilly", which is printed among a maze of short SF book reviews. By the time I got to the articles by Lou Stathis ("Urban Blitz", on slushpile reading for *Fantastic*) and the excerpts from Campbell's letters, I had to read three or four paragraphs into them to realize and douse my suspicion that these, too, were humorous put-ons. As it turned out, they were well written and informative views of the world of prozine editors/slushpile readers and their relationship and interaction with those who submit their stories. An enjoyable zine with very funny and remarkably interesting offerings, lots of book reviews, conversational LoC col, and meaty editorial section. (JG)

**So It Goes 15** (December 1977), Tim C. Marion, 614 72nd St., Newport News, VA, 23605; 50¢ each or the usual or \$2/5. Rambling, very personal zine. Mainly recounts author's experiences partying with the same group of people at various cons. (GR)

**The Stone and the Stars 1**, Tess and Charlie Hamilton, c/o CSVS, Box 14259, Minneapolis, MN, 55414; 75¢ each or \$2.50/4. Interesting zine, new from Minneapolis, and aspiring to be a genzine. Generally good and unbiased con reporting and book and film reviewing. The editors' specific interests (fantasy) seem to overlap mine, so I think I will like this one. Recommended. (GR)





# THE INDISTINGUISHABLE SCIENCE GREG G.H. RIHN

Arthur C. Clarke once postulated, and science fiction fanciers are fond of repeating, that "Any sufficiently advanced science is indistinguishable from magic." The future may or may not bear this theory out, but it's a good theory. I know I've used it myself in explicating the similarities between many sword-and-planet stories featuring technologies with no visible means of support (Barsroom, Darkover, et al.) and common sword-and-sorcery.

Unfortunately, judging by some of the things we are currently seeing on the film scene these days, there are some supposedly modern people who cannot distinguish current science from magic. Who are these benighted souls? They are the writers and producers of "science-fiction" films, that's who.

The biggest current offender is *The Incredible Melting Man*. Now, this is billed as a horror movie (and is a horrible movie, besides), but, because the title character is an astronaut who returns from Saturn afflicted with a hideous and unknown disease, you know that the Great Unwashed out there smugly tells itself that this is science fiction.

Fooley. All right, so this fellow has a degenerative condition of the connective tissue, perhaps extending right down to the cell walls themselves, causing him to literally come apart at the seams. If we disregard the illogical progress of the disease, which causes the flesh to melt off his bones while

heart, lungs, etc. seem to stay firmly in place and functioning, the worst is yet to come. It seems the only thing that alleviates the symptoms is for the victim to eat raw, preferable living, human flesh. Somehow, he knows this instinctively. And it works! Meanwhile, the scientists shake their heads and marvel. And well they should, because this isn't science, it is magic. "Like affects like" is one of the most ancient laws of magic. Call it sympathy, affinity, contagion, homeopathy, it is the principle on which the voo-doo doll is supposed to work. The magician, by damaging a doll containing a bit of hair or other material from the victim's body, can bewitch the whole of that body. A man whose flesh is diseased eats flesh to heal himself. A hunter eats a lion's heart to gain its courage, a bear's liver to gain its strength. Perhaps one might theorize that some protein or other found in normal flesh was lacking from the afflicted man. But if that were so, it could have been provided artificially. Instead, only flesh torn from the body of another human works. Why? Magic!

Another flick that hasn't yet sullied the screens in Madison has received PR under the title *Laserblast*. This thing concerns a kid who discovers a frightfully destructive weapon that once belonged to an alien criminal and wreaks havoc with it. As he remains in contact with the device, he gradually turns into a blue-skinned, white-haired, red-eyed alien...the image of the weapon's former user. This sort of demonic possession by the dead, for that it what it is, is familiar to many writers and readers of fantasy and horror. (Edgar Allen Poe used the theme many times. His *Ligeia* is a fine example.) Meanwhile, the scientists agree that the transformation is a mystery unknown to human science. It is, but not unknown to human witch doctors, or to human writers.

The trouble is, most human writers wouldn't write these stories. Those who write occult fiction know that the occult element has to be present to provide the internally self-consistent logic necessary to explain these events in an artistically satisfying manner. Science fiction writers know enough science to know that no science, however advanced, can explain events like these. But the schlock writers who are writing these stories expect the aud-

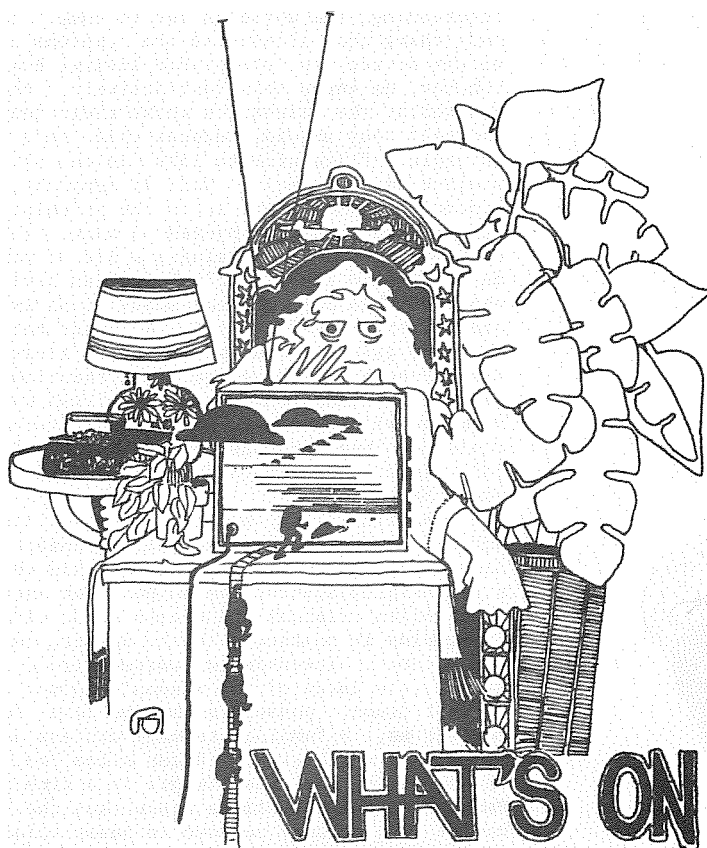


He says he's what sort of a chemist?

ience to be satisfied with the cop-out of saying that these are things beyond the scope of man's knowledge.

Indistinguishable science? Damn right. If there's any science in these films, it's indistinguishable. These ideas are just excuses for movie exploiters to slosh gobs of gore across the screen.

Fans, unite! Don't patronize slop like this! Don't be exploited! Don't book them at your cons, or nominate them for awards! Strike for GOOD science fiction films! And then you'll be able to say that you are an (\*ahem\*) distinguishing audience. ☺



## WHAT'S ON THE TUBE BOOB? GREG G.H. RHN

When the faltering supply of SF films dries up, and you just can't look another book in the print, the other visual medium, television, may sometimes provide an alternate means of soothing your hungry sense-of-wonder. Sometimes. There are lots of old shows in syndication around the country, everything from Flash Gordon serials and *Superman* to *The Outer Limits*. *Star Trek* is ubiquitous. If you have cable TV, you can sometimes refresh your memory twice, or more often, a day. If you want to. And the hopeless crew of *Space 1999* keeps bumbling on. But what's new on TV, you ask? Well, let's see...there's

□ **Quark**, NBC, Friday, 7:00p.m. CST. This long-awaited (-dreaded?) SF comedy is basically a *Star Trek* parody with other bits thrown in, and is often quite subtle in the lengths that it goes to. Even the music track closely follows *Star Trek* themes, bridge sound effects are identical, etc. The plot steals are quite obvious. The first show, in which Quark and crew meet evil counterparts from an alternate universe, and in which Quark goes prematurely old, might as well be designated by their *Star Trek* titles ("Mirror, Mirror", and "The Deadly Years", respectively).

The science in the show is predictably, and forgivably, ludicrous, but the acting is scarcely better. Richard Benjamin, who plays Quark, alternates between a stupid smirk and a look of hopeless bewilderment when expression is called for. Richard Kelton as Ficus--the emotionless plant-man, has likewise only one expression, smiling (inane) urbanity. The twin clones, Betty<sub>1</sub> and Betty<sub>2</sub> (Cyb and Tricia Barnstable) alternate between chanting their few lines in chorus or in Huey-Dewey-Louie antiphony. The character Gene/Jean, whose double-pun name is one of the best jokes

in the show, is an outwardly male humanoid who possesses two complete sets of chromosomes, male and female. Instead of trying to deal with a truly bisexual being, the writers have given him/her a split personality that alternates between an uncontrollably macho and aggressive male persona and a comparatively coolheaded and efficient female one. Actor Timothy Thomerson plays the material the way it's written: crude and broad. The last member of Quark's menagerie is Andy, Quark's homebuilt robot. Andy (Bobby Porter) resembles Robot from *Lost in Space* (flinch!) down to waving arms, but is build of junk parts.

As long as the show's writers have *Star Trek* plots to parody, the show might stay away from standard sitcom plots and at least give the TV viewer something that's a bit different. The show is good for chuckles, if you can stand the general silliness, the uninspired acting, and the general sexism. On the premiere show, Gene's male side beat up Gorgon stormtroopers by the dozen while it took both Bettys to find a communicator and contact the home base. These two seem to be there only to enhance the view, and with two already useless females cluttering up the set, the Jean half of Gene/Jean stays in the background as well.

It's too bad, really. Science fiction can be damned funny. Could you imagine SF shows plotted by Ron Goulart, Keith Laumer, or Spider Robinson, say? (\*Sigh\*)

Oh, well, on to:

□ **Project: UFO**, NBC, Sunday, 7:00p.m. CST. If most people had been asked to imagine a marginally SF TV show produced by Jack Webb (*Dragnet*, *Adam-12*, *Emergency*, *CHiPs*, *Sam*), they would probably have imagined *Future Cop*. (See below.)

Instead, Webb has produced an interesting program based upon the Project Blue Book investigations. It is not likely to make any friends among those who believe that Blue Book was a cover-up operation, as it puts the Air Force in a very good light. (Webb is unabashedly loyal to Our Men in Uniform. Further, the show's producer is a retired USAF colonel. Research is by another Air Force officer.) In all fairness, however, the show seems to present as many unexplained sightings as it does frauds or explained sightings. Special effects are workman-like and done with an apparent eye toward recreating the accounts of observers in a hard-edged looking way. A lot of money and time seems to be going into the models for each show, and I must say they are good-looking. Production values, scripting, and acting are about on a par with *Adam 12*, say, which isn't bad compared with a lot of TV, considering there's little real action in the show. The Air Force investigators, played by William Jordan and Caskey Swain, are super-competent, super-cool, and totally non-committal in the Gannon-Friday tradition. I'll bet the Air Force wishes it had had a dozen more like them.

□ **The Incredible Hulk**, CBS, Friday, 8:00p.m. CST. At first glance, this show has a lot of things going for it--a smooth adaptation of the Hulk's origin from the original comic to an updated, more screenable version, the talented Bill Bixby, the awesome Lou Ferrigno, casting, acting, plots--but then you realize that the reason everyone seems so competent at what they are doing is because they have done it all before. Of course we all know that the Hulk's origins lie with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (more so in the current version), but after its first two episodes the show has boiled down to what Harlan Ellison identified as one of the archetypal TV adventure plots--the hunted/driven man on the run/move. We've seen it before in *Logan's Run*, *The Invaders*, and *The Immortal*, and before that in *Branded*, *Coronet Blue*, *Then Came Bronson*, *The Fugitive* (the idea's most basic expression), and many others. *The Hulk* is a shiny new retread of this basic plotline with some possibilities new to the theme, but bound to get tired fast.

Pass me the oxygen, we're down to

□ **The Return of Captain Nemo**, CBS, Wednesday, 7:00p.m. CST. For the duration of this three-show miniseries (maxi-pilot?) you could tune in your TV to the spectacle of Jules Verne being turned over in his grave. It is hard to see how even Irwin Allen, who gave us episode after episode of a single plot on *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Seaview* vs. giant burbbling monster, could have done such violence to one of the best known characters of science fiction. On second thought, perhaps only Irwin Allen could have done it. They have taken Verne's enigmatic and misanthropic Nemo and turned him into a sociable old man (played by Jose Ferrar) who proves willing to let the US Navy refit the *Nautilus* and turn it into an auxiliary cruiser, and to go out and save the world from seedy mad scientist Prof. Cunningham (Burgess Meredith). He clutters his miraculous *Nautilus* (fusion-powered, laser-armed) with a crew of bad actors so wooden it's hard to tell when they're under the influence of the bad guy's paralysis beam and when they aren't. The plot is utterly asinine and the science even worse. Example: Cunningham--who already has a wonder sub, a delta-beam (a sort of underwater photon torpedo), a Z-ray (paralyzes, stuns, or kills), billiard-ball-sized bombs capable of devastating cities, a crew of robots and cyborgs, a mind-control device, and a projector that turns memories into sound and pictures--needs to wash Nemo's brain so that he can have the secret of Nemo's laser beam. (Eh? Yes, you read correctly.) Meanwhile, the US Navy is talk-

ing to itself on video communicators that look like Dr. Zarkov built them in his spare time. Utter trash, and the worst piece of literary desecration since Dino Di Laurentis screwed up *King Kong*.

I'll get you, Irwin Allen, wherever you are!

□ **The Cops and Robin**, (formerly *Future Cop*), ABC, oneshot. The network is again testing this semi-popular vehicle about an experimental robot policeman. Just another cop show, though Ernest Borgnine and John Amos are skillful enough actors to exploit the comic situations caused by the deadpan, literally minded robot's attempts to deal with the human problems of police work and manage to generate some sympathy for the main character through their concern for its welfare.

What's on Saturday morning, kiddies?

□ **Space Academy**, NBC, Saturday, 10:30a.m., CST. Though Isaac Asimov took this show to task in *TV Guide* for misrepresenting science to tender young minds (regarding a plot involving going "through" a black hole and coming out in one piece [also done in the first episode of *Quark*]), it is currently the only straight SF adventure show on network television. Scripts are as juvenile as the cast--ages 6 and up--and unrelievedly moral and uplifting (a trend begun by *Fat Albert* and done to death by *Shogun*, *Tets*, and *Superfriends*). Dialog and special effects show the influence of the show's Japanese origin. At least it's interesting to see Jonathan Harris doing something besides wringing his hands, groaning, and plotting venial skullduggery. Along with *Land of the Lost*, *Space Academy* is probably the best thing on Saturday morning. If you're worried about scientific accuracy, have the kids watch *Nova*. At least they won't be watching *Far Out Space Nuts* or *The Three Stooges*. (Ghoul!)

And last, but not least, there's

□ **The Muppet Show**, ITC, syndicated. I'm mentioning this show, now in its second season, so that if you're not getting it where you are, you can be motivated to find out why not. The show is worth watching just to see Kermit the Frog and the cast of uncanny, miraculous Muppets--many of which are as fantastic and alien as any SF writer's wildest dreams. Besides that, there are the first class actors that guest star, many not seen elsewhere. The late Zero Mostel, Peter Ustinov, Peter Sellers, Vincent Price, and Judy Collins have all taken the stage with a supporting cast entirely of Muppets. "Pigs in Space" has become a regular sketch on the show, and may be the best SF satire on TV, *Quark* notwithstanding. Then there are the semi-regular spots for "Muppet Labs--Where Tomorrow Is Being Built Today", and occasional SF bits like "Mating Ritual on the Planet Kuzbane". The whole show is an exercise in wonderful surrealism. This is not a kiddie show. It is good. Four stars.

So there you have it. So far, big television still seems to have no idea what science fiction is or can be. The current scene seems to indicate that prime-time TV will become a series of live-action comic strips. By the time you read this, Captain Nemo will have been replaced by *Spider Man* who is up for a five-week stint. The Sub-mariner is waiting in the wings, somewhat deterred by the failure of *The Man from Atlantis*. Meanwhile the bionics keep on bionicing, the Hulk keeps on a-hulkin', and, like Wonder Woman, we are wonderin'--what it will all come to. (Pass the supe, Superman.)

However, the word is out about a possible new mini-series to be called *Galactica*. It is rumored to have good people working on it, and probably to be a *Star Wars*-type adventure vehicle. Oh, well, it might be good. Maybe. Let's keep our fingers crossed. ☞

# FUTURE INSULATION CTEIN

Q: Name genetic's biggest contribution to entertainment.

A: Cloney Orlando and Dawn Dawn Dawn

—Herb Caen, 1978

## INTRODUCTION

Hello out there. It is April 3 as I write this; for the past two months I have been learning that it's much harder to keep ahead of the future than I thought. It's not fair; really it isn't! Writing about "da future" is a hell of a lot easier when you don't have to take reality into consideration, lemme tell you.

Four days ago, J. B. Lippencott released a book by freelance writer David Rorvik entitled *In His Own Image: The Cloning of a Man*. Rorvik claims this book is factual reporting rather than speculative fiction. My column will deal with Rorvik's book, the reactions to it, and the implications of his scenario. The follow-up to Part 1 that I promised will appear at some future date. I can't say when; at the moment I am faced with too many unknowns—not the least of which is that I can't read the book before having to write this column. Thankfully the newspaper accounts have been extensive. In any case, I don't want you to be able to say a little ignorance stopped Ctein from shooting off his typewriter.

Before I get too far into this, I'm going to catch up with questions raised in letters and previous columns. Some of these bear heavily on Rorvik's book.

## OLD BUSINESS

I spent a day curled up with the *Citation Index*, tracing down leads on extra-uterine gestation. I am obliged to award that round to George Fergus; he was correct in asserting that no real breakthroughs had been made. The early-1960s experiments I remembered do exist, but the details were considerably different from my memory. I plead youth on that one—I was 12 when the research was published! The work was done by Dr. Danielle Petrucci in Italy; I could not find any references to his work, by him or others, after about 1965. He claimed to have kept an embryo alive for eight weeks. His techniques were totally inappropriate for the kind of social changes I'm considering; his artificial womb solved only mechanical, not biochemical problems. To feed his embryos, he needed plasma donations from several women at the same stage of pregnancy—an impractical technique at best! And somewhat unsatisfactory for a number of social reasons. More on that later.

There have been letters and comments. Alexis wonders if I "will discuss the machines that will nurse, nurture, raise...educate, indoctrinate, and

socialize" the cloned children. Gladly; such a machine already exists—we call it television. Unfortunately, no one figured this out 30 years ago, and we have yet to understand or cope with the results. But, why do you assume the parents of clones wouldn't want to raise them, considering the trouble they will probably have to go to to get them? Perhaps you want to stick your neck out and claim that those unable or unwilling to bear children (such as men?) are unfit to raise them? No comment.

Jeff raises questions about evolution and human egoism. Jeff, so long as we are talking about a high-technology culture (the only kind in which cloning is a realistic possibility, after all) the "natural" evolutionary process is immaterial, irrelevant, and essentially nonexistent. Cloning does not mean the end of evolution unless everyone does it. Besides, genetic manipulation should be rather common, at least it will be if we need it to cope with some "environmental threat". Why do you feel such a strong requirement that everyone participate in good old-fashioned random gene-shuffling? I doubt that a few clone-perpetuated genotypes and conscious gene-manipulations signal the decline of humanity.

I'm a pantheist—we can discuss religious beliefs in private. I read your remarks as saying, "I don't believe in this stuff about afterlife and deities and all—therefore it's a bunch of hooey!" Bad logic, sir. Nor does it change the historical observation that religion and reproduction have been deep-seated and basic concerns of the human race for a long time. I don't see any changes in the near future; either; what you call "egoism" sounds so fundamental to me that I might even go so far as to call it a part of human nature. In any case, it is important and it is here, and you can't dismiss it by calling it unreasonable. The first rule of futuristics is pragmatism: what is, is.

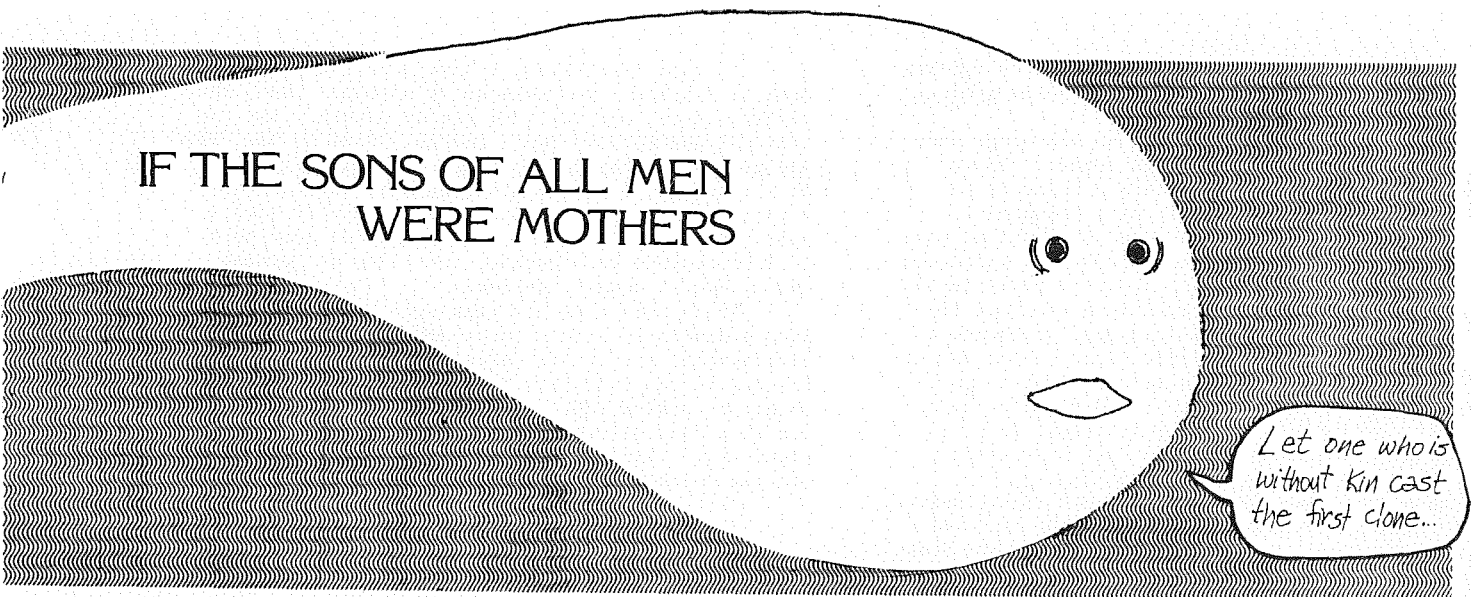
I don't particularly understand why cloning should give us control over cancer; I see some aspects which are less than compatible with women's freedom. But then, this is my month for cynicism.

Rats! Eli, you weren't supposed to say anything about the cloning!

## NEW BUSINESS

Who is Rorvik, anyway? According to the papers (You can always trust the papers, right?), he wrote the medical and science columns of *Time* for two years. He has written a great deal about cloning and reproduction. He is slightly eccentric and not always accurate. He has also talked about writing SF. But he claims *In His Image* is fact; there exists a cloned human child almost 1½ years old, according to him.

## IF THE SONS OF ALL MEN WERE MOTHERS



Let one who is  
without kin cast  
the first clone...

Is it true? Did a single millionaire really get cloned? Is the whole story an elaborate hoax designed to make Rorvik a bundle o'bucks? In my infinite wisdom and omniscience, I am prepared to say, "Damned if I know."

No one else does, either. Most (but not all) bets are against him. Still, even if we assume the story is false, we can treat it as a work of literature. In particular, a work constructed so as to be plausible to as many people as possible. Don't forget that Rorvik is very knowledgeable in the applicable fields. He probably knows as much as anyone about the real possibilities for cloning. I don't know how far away cloning really is (despite my willingness to wager); Rorvik thinks he can pull off the story.

Here is the scenario Rorvik has constructed. Don't think of it as history; treat it as cultural myth, designed to be compatible with science and societal preconceptions, so far as possible.

One upon a time, there was a millionaire named Max (Rorvik assigned fictitious names to all the parties involved.) Max was 67, single, childless, and an orphan—in short, about as genetically isolated as a sociobiologist could imagine. Max wanted an heir, a bit of genetic immortality, so he decided to have himself cloned. He contacted Rorvik, who used his extensive set of contacts, gained as a journalist, to find the people to do the job. Rorvik assembled a research team (headed by a man code-named Darwin!) which set up a laboratory in a third-world country. There, a suitable host-mother—a young woman named Sparrow—was recruited and hired. After suitable manipulations of eggs and nuclei from Max's cells, a fertile ovum containing Max's genes was produced and implanted in Sparrow. A child was born.

That is not quite the end. During this adventure, Max became emotionally attached to Sparrow. Now loving the mother of his son, he chose to bring her back with him and Max<sub>2</sub> to the US, where they all lived happily ever after.

I'm starting to see a pattern. I'll get back to it.

The academic denials have been running about 5 to 1 against Rorvik's claim. That may simply be a case of Clarke's Law. No one knows if Rorvik is telling the truth. If he has done a really good job as a responsible journalist, no one will.

There have been the usual peculiar assertions in the press. "Max<sub>1</sub> and Max<sub>2</sub> would have the same fingerprints". Just like identical twins, right? Wrong. "Cloning reeks of Hitler, because the Nazis

used concentration campers for eugenics research". There's a non sequitur. "Cloning is dangerous because someone might clone a million Einsteins, Hitlers, or (worst of all?) Nixons, thereby plunging humanity into jeopardy". That one fascinates me. First off, you have to assume that nature is 100% of a person and nature is nothing. Arguable, to say the least. You must also believe that history is made only by individuals, and circumstances have nothing to do with it. If you believe both of those, then there is indeed a danger.

Slightly more reasonable fears have been expressed that certain physical types would be bred for the good of society, like big, docile laborers, and small, deft, dumb assembly-line workers. First you'd have to get a law declaring clones "wards of the state" (fancy language for slaves). Then you'd have to find a cheap enough way to breed them that a job-recruitment campaign wouldn't be more cost-effective. The most sensible thing would be to clone celebrities who depend on their looks. Imagine a world filled with a million Arnold Schwarzeneggers or Farrah Fawcett-Majorses. Barbell makers would pay for the former and blow-dryer makers for the latter, I'm sure.

Back to reality, of a sort. As soon as the book was announced, science writers Jeremy Rifkin and Ted Howard (authors of *Who Should Play God?*) formed a group called the People's Interest Commission, which called on Carter, Congress, and the UN to investigate the claims. To quote Rifkin:

The President has to make the decision if this kind of information can be publically disseminated. The government wouldn't permit information on how to produce an atomic bomb to be published. We'll go to court if we have to, to halt publication of a book describing how to clone a human being.

It's odd, but I rarely find a group with "People's" in its name that actually seems to be looking out for "people's" interests. Or mine, for that matter. It makes one wonder about oneself, it does.

Be that as it may, the government has published plenty of information on constructing an A-Bomb, as we all know. I find it difficult to put clones in the same category; the societal impact may be large, but I would think the destructive potential of a clone is considerably less. I would also guess that neither Rifkin nor Howard are gay or infertile. (Presumably, gays and infertiles, like fans, are Slans?) I could be in error; during the Congressional hearings on recombinant DNA safety, one Congressperson



asked about the risks involved in terrorists gaining possession of genetic material! Apparently someone equated it with nuclear material.

After all the noise started to die down, some useful information on cloning did appear. There are several new techniques which are going to be tried. One uses cancer cells! Many researchers think that the cellular mechanisms that inhibit gene expression (hence cloning) are inactive in cancerous cells. If this is so, then it might be possible to take the chromosomes from a cancerous cell and insert that nucleus in a fertilized egg, producing a fully active set of genes in the right circumstances to produce a clone. I have some real doubts about that technique (I subscribe to the cumulative-mutation theory of cancer.), but if it works, it could make for an interesting twist on Jeff's remarks: cancer might give us the answer to cloning.

There are some new chromosomes-doubling tricks, also. These are really closer to parthenogenesis, and are subject to the recessive gene problems that George brought up. The article from the *Chicago Trib* mentions another "major problem" with this technique: "This cloning technique will be difficult to use on humans.... For one thing, only females could be produced...." Let's start looking at the assumptions behind all this. Petrucci grew his fetuses from plasma taken from pregnant women. Max hires a third-world woman to be his walking incubator. Gene-doubling is is a "problem" because it only produces women.

Does this all sound depressingly familiar to you? One line that runs through all these experiments is artificial reproduction as a means of taking even more of the control out of the hands of women. With the absence of a workable EUG technique, all these techniques are dependent on women for "production facilities" of sort or another. But placed into the context of big-business medicine, basic research, and business deals, they come under the control of standard male-dominated customs. At least pregnancy was vaguely thought of as "women's business" when it was personal. The closest any of these techniques comes to involving women on a decision-making level is Sparrow. And her decisions stop as soon as she is hired. That's the way of business; the hirer is the boss, the hiree does what the boss says.

Okay, it's true that at least a host mother is getting paid for something most women are forced into by custom or socialization. But she has also lost control of her body; it does not seem like a good exchange for getting control of some money. In essence, it takes procreation back to the days before romantic love or chivalry were invented. That's an awful long way back. Women aren't freed from a thing. Instead, they become an overtly exploitable resource. Uncle Sam wants your womb. What does love have to do with it? There goes that great old question, "But will you love me in the morning?" Love? This is business.

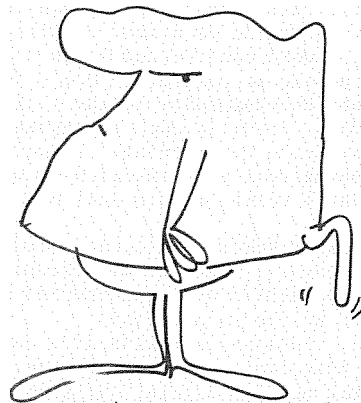
Marge Piercy, in *Woman on the Edge of Time* suggests that the only way women can be freed of their chains is to give up the control over reproduction. Possibly she is right, but the scenarios and experiments discussed in this column require women to give up the controls, while retaining the chains.

Even Rorvik seems aware of this, in a backwards sort of way. He felt obliged to have Max fall in love with Sparrow, thereby, I assume, making it all right that she was just a hired body. In essence, the philosophy is too similar to the custom of some cultures requiring a rapist to marry the woman he raped, thereby making an honest woman of her, and repairing her reputation. (Doesn't mention what it does to him.) I am saying that Sparrow is treated as a thing, a commodity, and that falling in love with her after the fact does not in any way remedy that.

In this discussion, I have been treating the book as fiction. But suppose it's fact. Then, Max, really exists, and the love really exists. But the societal assumptions don't change. Here is Max, who has managed to remain childless and single for 2/3 of a century. Yet he just happens to fall in love with a woman he hires solely because she'll make a good breeder? C'mon. There's got to be some sort of subconscious exculpation, some idea of "making her an honest woman" involved.

Where does this all take us? Well, pretty much into a dead end, unless there are some very impressive medical and social reforms. And some drastic changes in the culture's view of women. Or, unless we get a working EUG. I still don't hold much hope for that kind of research going on in this country, right now. Califano has laid down new federal financing rules which, in effect, say you can't do

## A MINOR INCONSISTENCY IN THE GENETIC STRUCTURE



NOTHING TO GET EXCITED ABOUT —

fetal experiments unless the experiments prolong the life of the fetus involved. (In essence, don't experiment unless you know its outcome ahead of time. Catch-22.) There is some argument over whether this will inhibit EUG research, but I don't like it. I don't think EUG should be that hard to do, but that doesn't mean anyone will get around to doing it on this side of the Iron Curtain for some time. (There is research, according to George, in the USSR.)

In any case, when I pick this topic again, I'll discuss the possible social and economics effects of a mass-market interest in cloning, as I promised before, (assuming nothing new happens to throw me off the track).

If I'm feeling irrelevant instead, the next column will be on time travel. The one after that will definitely (barring a deadline shift) be on the biochemistry of behavior. Stay tuned.

### FOLLOW UP TO PREVIOUS COLUMN

George Fergus has recommended two books by Ted Nelson: *Computer Lib* and *The Home Computer Revolution*.

And one disclaimer: I do know the difference between silicon and silicone. I also know which one ICs are made of. It ain't silicone! Blame the bloody printers' devils for that one. [Oops! —copy editor]☞



## CONVENTION REPORTS

### 1. Terri Gregory

Since I've never been to a con other than in Madison, I do not know what a science fiction convention is "supposed" to be like, or even if there is any norm. Therefore, you may take my comments with a grain of salt or not at all. Some of them are mine, some second hand—grumbings or grinnings overheard in passing—and a couple I solicited.

First, Vonda McIntyre said it was a good convention. (Vonda, I think, is the soul of goodness and could find something good in Jerry Pournelle, but it was nice of her to say it.) I tend to agree with Vonda because I personally had a great time (mostly). It was just big enough to have a great many fascinating people there, small enough to find them. Crowds are so damned intimidating.

The highest points of all were guests of honor Susan Wood and Vonda McIntyre. I'd never forget Vonda anyway, who gave us not only excellent informative presentations, sensitive readings, Harlan Ellison stories (Yes, I confess—I am an unrepentant Ellison groupie.), allowed us to meet Ygor (We really should have video-taped Friday night's skit, for Ygor if nothing else, though the rest of it was smashing, if I do say so myself.), but—crocheted a jock-strap for the harlequin figure holding up the lamp in the basement women's john of Wisconsin Center. I broke rules and showed it to a couple of men friends of mine who sniggered appreciatively.

I thank all of you schedulers for giving me the chance to meet Vonda, Susan, and all the others; some I hope will grow into friends; all enriched my life

just for meeting them.

Now, to get down to the serious business of criticizing the con:

(1) It seems there may have been too much programming around a single issue and not enough entertainment for "hard-core" fans. Not being hard-core anything, I find the criticism hard to empathize with. I did not go to all the feminist panels and still found enough to keep me busy. You'll have to evaluate this to see if it's valid.

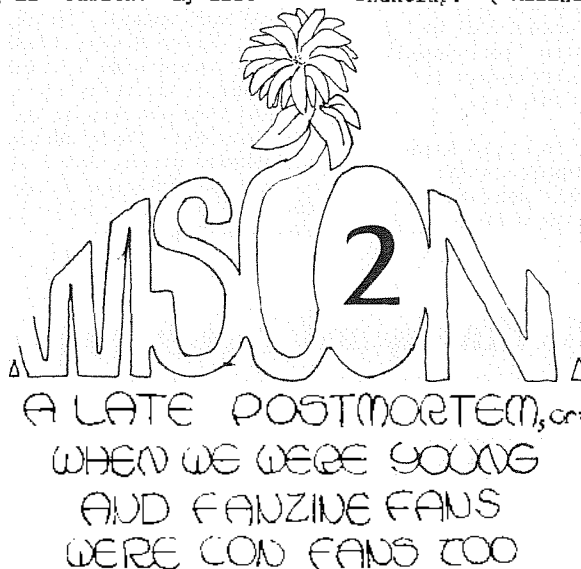
(2) The band was an unnecessary expenditure and may even have detracted. I hate rock so can't be dispassionate about it. This is what I heard others say.

(3) Kudos and much praise to Lynne Morse and her hardy band of gophers! What a marvelous institution. (Teenagers are so energetic. How nice to have it channeled in our direction.) Lynne deserves at least a medal of honor for organization. Maybe you can think of something better.

(4) Programming too tightly scheduled; e.g., people at the Sunday auction didn't get to listen to Vonda's reading, nor did the auctioneer.

(5) The reception and arts award ceremony on Saturday night was good. I'm glad Susan didn't get a chance to give her talk then; once again, we would've wound up cramming too much into a single piece of time. She got a much better audience on Sunday.

(6) Madison Parade of Cats was another plus, though I did not participate. The guide book for it was enchanting. ("Melanie at night" indeed!)



## 2. Greg G. H. Rihn

Films: Another reasonably successful film program, thanks to the efforts of Perri Corrick-West and Rick White. High spots included *Barbarella*, which was much better, funnier, and slicker than I had expected it would be (Dino De Laurentis should have stuck to this stuff, instead of goofing around with King Kong); *I Married a Witch*, based on the Thorne Smith novel—witty, romantic fantasy, with a distinguished cast; *Curse of the Cat People*, a mysterious eerie story, which is only loosely related to Val Lewton's earlier success, *The Cat People*—a good film, though some audiences never get over wondering where the "cat people" are (there are none)—the title was added at the studio's insistence to tie this semi-sequel to its predecessor more closely; *The Snow Queen*, Russian animation, English dubbed. Although the Hans Christian Anderson story is better in its original form, the animation is nice, and worth seeing.

Distinguished short features: *Pickles*, an animation anthology including work by Bruno Bozetto of *Allogro Non Troppo* fame, and showing thematic relation to that work; *Seven Authors in Search of a Reader*, fantastic, surreal art film wherein seven authors bring the world to a standstill with their writings; *The Critic*, Mel Brooks; and *The Family that Dwelt Apart*, which would be an ornament to any film program solely for its wit, even if the artistic style of the animation were not also humorous in itself.

Thanks also to Dave Mruz, who brought down a part of his copious animation collection.

For the second year in a row, films at the con ran on time. Amazing, isn't it?

Panel: *Silmarillion*: Richard West, Roger Schlobin, and I discussed language, linguistics, myth, creation of myth, and relation or non-relation to the Christian mythos. Lively interplay with the audience made this panel interesting and rewarding.

Education: Though audience turnout was disappointingly small, Ken Zahorski and Bob Boyer (St. Norbert's College, co-editors of *The Fantastic Imagination*) and Richard Doxtator (University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point) discussed the problems and rewards of establishing and teaching a course on Science Fiction. Fannie Le Moine (University of Wisconsin—Madison) and Roger Schlobin (Purdue) threw fuel on the fire from the audience. I feel more fans should take an interest in the way academia represents (or misrepresents) the literature we know and love better than anyone.

Dungeons and Dragons Marathon: The real marathon went on before the con as Dungeonmasters Mitchell, Rihn, Russell, and Luznicky, ably assisted by Assistants Meyer-Mitchell, Marrs, and Hoffman

worked to create an artificial "pocket universe," its nine cubical (!) planetoids (physical data available from Dick Russell on request), three sunlets, thirty-six prefactored characters, an Evil Overlord, complete with minions and fiendishly boobytrapped base of operations, flying machine, etc., in time to have it run at the con. The game ran for forty-eight straight hours, with many adventures too numerous to recount here. With the eleventh hour approaching (when we had to be out of the hotel room) and the evil Gorthaur breathing down Our Heroes' necks, the players accomplished the objective of discovering a way to escape from the Overlord's dimension and find a way home. Continued next WisCon? Can Our Heroes manage to evacuate the other serfs of Gorthaur from his dimension before he destroys them? Be there and see! (Special mention to Bill Hoffman, whose "Entire History of the Whole Universe" was worth coming to the D&D room just to read.) Needless to say, a good time was had by all participants.



Comments: Everything I did at the con I enjoyed, from drawing posters on Thursday night to the last minute on Sunday when I fell asleep. It was an emotional weekend. I talked, argued, exchanged ideas, met new people. I played games, showed movies, showed slides, acted, was almost interviewed for community TV (but fell asleep instead), and drew cats. What more could one fan have done? Next year will tell—onward and upward. My personal thanks to Virginia Galko, Elinor Busby, Diane Martin, the Fan From Boston (whose name I didn't catch), a woman I only remember as being an expert on Oz stories, and anyone else who was at the dinner table with me Sunday evening. Their conversation saved me from an ignominious death, which would have been due to falling asleep and drowning in my lasagna sauce. ("Mama mia!" the coroner said, whey-faced, "His lungs are full of riccotta!")

## 3. Philip Kaveny and Luther Nagle

Albert Speer, the producer of the Third Reich, and Steven Spielberg, the producer of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, have much in common. Spielberg, though barely 30, has been able to make millions by selling his film. Speer, at a similar age, was able to popularize and sell an ideology to millions of Germans. At what point do the minds of these wonder-kids intersect? I would suggest that it is their

ability to connect their products in the collective mind of an audience with that audience's longings, the poorly defined but strong desires for integration with the whole, surrender to emotion and vague, religious identification with the omnipotent; to stab the night sky with a blinding searchlight for the grey-shaded masses to gaze up to. They can take a situation which would be ludicrous if described in plain,

rational language and elevate it to an ecstatic level which motivates millions to goose-step about or buy movie tickets, being convinced that this is the way to the feeling that everything, after all, is all right. The product is connected, in the mind of the consumer, with a longing for the irrational, and the sale is made.

An idea was sold to the German people in this way and suddenly a hundred thousand veterans armed with pickaxes, pruning shears, and posthole diggers (but not yet guns) marched out ready to establish the Thousand Year Reich. A little closer to home, a group of skygazers in Muncie, Indiana, who would otherwise be candidates for the looney bin or the Dick Cavett show, have their experiences redefined and sanctified and sold back to them as if they were to be part of the millennium. It would not take much to break the tone of reverence in either case, but it is surprising how seldom that happens. This, I think, is what we tried to do at the symposium on "Fascism in Science Fiction" at Wiscon 2. Reverence was cast aside and we started to sift through the garbage.

At the symposium, *Close Encounters* was used as a starting reference point for the discussion of fascism in science fiction. The comparison was made between the reverential treatment of the first meeting with aliens and a Nuremberg rally; lights in the sky, a Wagnerian sense of drama, a stupefied mass of people staring upward. Various members of the symposium discussed the relationships among religion, government, and marketing, all very real things in the real world, and how these elements were treated in *Encounters* and other SF. It was pointed out how, in the movie, average people first became aware of the alien presence and how, gradually, the function of making contact with these creatures was methodically (and gently) taken away from the citizen and assumed by the "proper authorities", i.e., the army and the government. This, within the context of the movie, was portrayed as a good thing; the control of important matters is best placed in the hands of a kindly and firm paternal leadership. The movie clearly attempted to impose its message on an audience through awe and revelation, in a blaze of light and music.

Symposium members took sharp issue with the form and content of *Encounters*, somewhat surprisingly, for this was supposed to be a collection of fans. They saw the film as being definitely propagandistic in a very negative and dangerous way, an ominous message from leadership to the citizenry about where the power really is and should be. And the power, whether terrestrial or alien, is presented as benign. Some, however, agreed with the theme of the movie, that strong authority is essential to society. Some, on the other hand, felt that it had no real significance at all, that it was just entertainment, or just trash. One woman pointed out that, while Dreyfuss went off to arrange a meeting with the aliens, his wife was left to clean up his messes at home.

In contrast to the usurpation of organization as exercised by the "authorities" in *Encounters* is the possibility for popular organization that does, occasionally, occur in real life. There is, for instance, the fraternization that frequently exists when armies or migrating populations come in contact with each other. When the Red Army met up with the US Army in Germany in 1945, the two got along fine at first, though lacking a common language and culture. They exchanged cigarettes for vodka, played guitar and balalika duets, and danced and sang together. This was not allowed to go on for long. Their respective governments quickly termed their markets "black" and ruthlessly repressed any and all friendly activities between the two armies. Fraternization became a sin and a blasphemy. The idea expressed here is that people are quite capable of conducting their affairs without interference from a power or cultural elite.



this is  
pitcher of  
a space  
creacher  
I drew

BY DANNY GOMOLL, 8 YEARS OLD  
A flagrant example of fanish nepotism

This idea elicited some anxiety among the members of the symposium, but was not discussed at length. There seemed to be, in fact, some feeling that, in spite of the symposium's criticism of *Encounters*, an elite of some sort was necessary, that the unlettered should probably not have too much control over things. In short, a managerial tone could be detected in the symposium.

In the 80 years since H. G. Wells first used his aliens to bounce the British Navy about like rubber ducks in a bubble bath, we have seen some changes in the ways that the alien has been presented in relationships with existing powers. *War of the Worlds*, either as a book or radio play, does not make one feel good. It does not make the military look good. It does not make anybody look good except the microbes that finally do in the Martians. How is it that, in

the last 80 years, the alien has come to be almost the same as ourselves, its function being, if not to make us look good, then at least not to make us look bad?

Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, and Edgar Rice Burrough's characters fought with cruel and repulsive aliens, fascistic creatures who wanted to destroy or enslave the peace-loving and democratic earthlings. Their battles usually took place in outer space or on strange planets and were over clear-cut issues, no ambiguity. In the 1950s, the aliens came closer, moving within our borders, derailing trains and trying to get control of our resources. In this period it was fairly obvious, especially in the movies, that the alien was Communism in general and Russia in particular. But there was still a very definite delineation between good and evil, us and them. More recently, the alien moved into the neighborhood. But he was reduced from being grossly evil to merely sinister, still dangerous, but a little easier to put up with. "We have met the enemy and they are us." *Close Encounters* brings the alien right to us; we are

able to meet, look at, touch, and talk with him. He is quite congenial, actually. We have met the enemy and they are us, and we're certainly not bad people, are we? Still, communication with the alien is best left in the hands of those who know more about it than we do. We willingly delegate these functions to duly appointed experts. It's all for the best.

In this manner, we have come from being a people who assumed, however mistakenly, that we had the power of choice in our own hands to a docile constituency of benevolent despotism. Fascism in science fiction and in life: it may not make the trains run quite on time, but it makes them run.

I was pleased to note, during the symposium, that everyone seemed to know the difference between fascism as a mere concept (those nasty but somewhat funny Nazis from way back when) and as an everyday, undramatic threat to our freedom of action in a highly technological culture. Fascism is not something we defeated 30 years ago for good and all but something that lives among us.

## 4. Virginia Galko

Out of the goodness of my heart (which even now is fluttering in a glass jar on my desk),\* I was moved to send a token of my esteem to Harlan Ellison upon reading his open letter in the winter issue of *Janus*. After deliberating as to what to give a man who has probably been given everything, I made the decision to create a lucite iguana, a memento of the theme of the WorldCon which is honoring him this year.

It seemed like a good idea.

So I drafted a 12" figure. I know it was 12" because that is the size of the paper I use. When I had finished cutting and sanding and polishing the sculpture, I began to wrap it. To my surprise, it wouldn't quite fit into the 15" box I had set aside for this purpose. "Oh well," I mused, "I must have miscalculated." I proceeded to look for a larger carton and didn't give the matter a second thought.

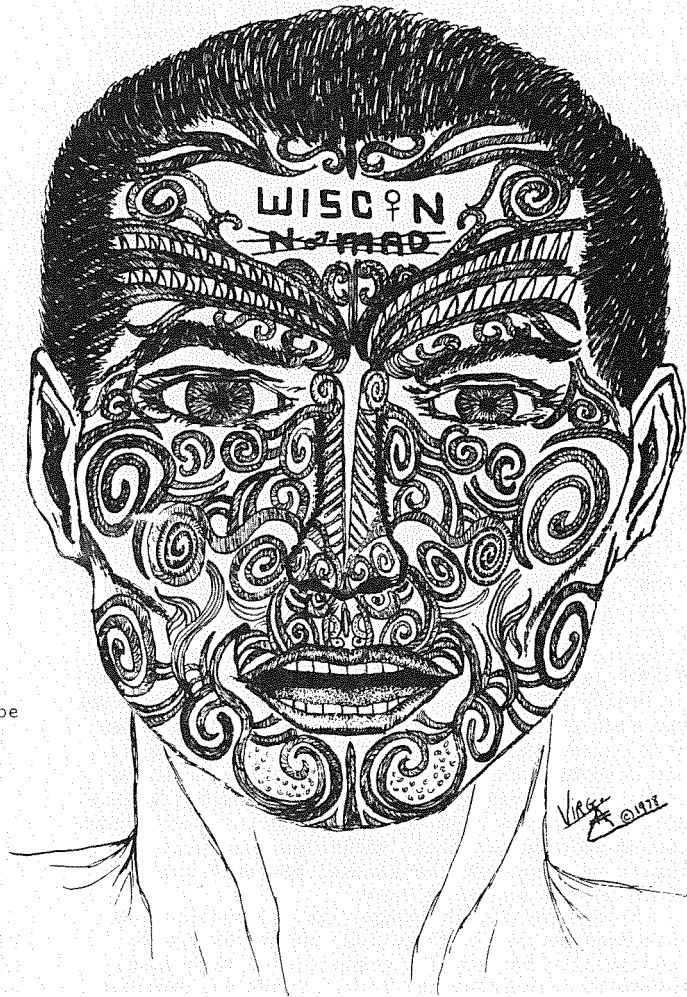
Ten days later, I received this "thankyou, sorta" note in the mail with a speculating query as to what does one do with an 18" lucite iguana. Now we all know that Mr. Ellison is an honest, honorable, exacting man. So... I began to wonder. 18"? How can that be? Maybe the rulers are wrong. It couldn't be he or me.

The following Thursday, while standing in the lobby of the Madison (Wisconsin) Inn waiting for the icicles to thaw from my nose, having just arrived from the land of sin and oranges, I was approached by a WisCon fan who asked, "Aren't you the one who sent that two-foot lucite iguana to Harlan Ellison?" Answering in the affirmative, I not only wondered but began to consciously worry, and perplexedly shaking my head ventured forth into the bowels of the elevator that carried me up to the frix and fray of WisCon 2 fanactivities.

By midnight all this was well behind me in some ethereal "never-never" file. But as I entered the raucous hilarity of the suite of the Milwaukee fans, who were in the midst of an ebullient discussion about the sexual ramifications of *Star Wars*, I heard a quasi-familiar voice behind me calling for my attention. "Hey, Virginia, what's this I hear about a 3-foot lucite iguana?"

Somewhere above the bladder and to the left of where my veriform appendix used to be is the sigmoid. And I think it has decide to leave home, because there

\*Apologies to Robert Bloch.



is a definite vacuous feeling emanating from that point and working its way upward along the small intestine, which is definitely making me feel very sick. And very weak.

It is not a nice feeling.

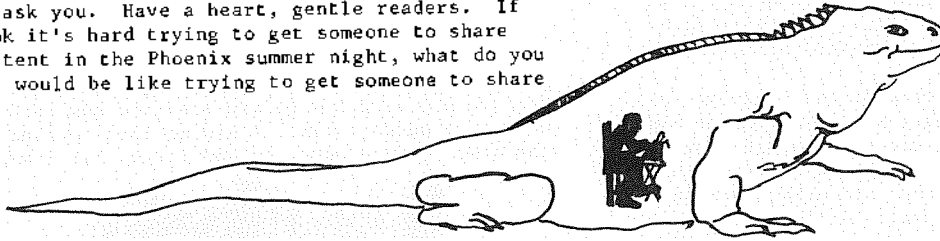
And as my breathing starts coming and going in rapid, belabored spurts I realize that I have hit the panic button! My gods! It's growing! I've created a monster! Before the weekend is out it will be over 5 feet long and still growing. And taking over Ellisonwonderland!

So, it is with deep, sincere feelings of guilt



that I send this appeal. Hey, Out There! If no one hears from Ellison in the next couple days, send someone over to find out if the Iguanamonster ate him. It'll be easy to tell. The iggy is clear and you can see right through the belly. Of course, if it's a girl, it's just possible that Harlan may have started doing some of his weirdness, in which case she may have beat him to death with her tail.

I ask you. Have a heart, gentle readers. If you think it's hard trying to get someone to share an open tent in the Phoenix summer night, what do you think it would be like trying to get someone to share



## 5. Lynne Morse

I finally decided why I waited 5½ months to write a WisCon 2 report. Something seems to have gone awry both during and after the convention. It looked as if MadSTF had split into two warring camps during that period right after the convention. The fur started flying thick and fast, especially when WisCon's pro-feminist stand was discussed. Each side was soon too busy accusing the other of not thinking and trying to force their opinions on an already opinionated faction. (At this point I'm not sure which side is wrong and am beginning to have my doubts if either has a monopoly on the right and true of the situation.)

I was busy enough being gofer captain (the first time I was responsible for something at a convention) and finding old friends, that I missed the panels, completely. (To those whom I left with the impression of diligently attending each and every panel, I'm sorry; this was unintentional.) Mostly, I would just pop my head in the door to see if everything was going all right, then I would leave again.

The first sign I had that all was not well was when I asked a couple of friends how they liked WisCon, their first SF convention. The answer was very negative. I talked with other folks, both friends and strangers. There were positive comments, praising the feminist emphasis, and then there were comments I heard more often, like, "I'll have a little convention with my conference, thank you.", "Moebius [Theater] got screwed. They were promised control of the lights and a stage, and they didn't get anything!", "Five different buildings? In the middle of February in Wisconsin?", "We don't need to be told these [feminist] things.", "By and large, fandom isn't feminist, it's humanist.", and "I don't like being preached at, and those feminists were preaching."

Originally, I was aligned with the "WisCon had absolutely no redeeming qualities" side, despite the fact that I had a moderately good time at the con (It hurts to watch friends gripe and suffer.), or that I pretty much missed all the panels. And, until recently, I never talked to either Jan or Jeanne (both of the "other" faction), because it was easier and less painful to condemn their ideas without ever hearing what they had to say about the con.

After I had submitted the first draft of this article to Jan, where I only hinted at my misgivings, she was prompted to ask me precisely what my misgivings were. I didn't really voice them at that time, but Jan and I had a talk and she told me calmly about the view from the other side. I sat and thought about both of these views.

My mistake (I'm far from alone in this.) was

a lucite iguanamonster? Huh? (Something tells me I shouldn't have started all this.)

Of course, one can always look at the bright side. It could have been GodzillaCon or.... Well, let's just be grateful for small blessings.

Today I drafted a 12" red-nosed tatooed dragon. I wonder if Bill Rotsler is still picking up his mail at the Los Angeles Post Office?☹

in not listening to anyone other than those of my own opinion. *Mea culpa*, and let's be done with that.

The active stand WisCon proclaims on feminism seems to come under attack the most often, though maybe one-quarter of the programs were actually feminist. Now, that isn't really all that unbalanced. Some felt that the WisCon approach to feminism was somewhat redundant, and others thought it was hostile, especially some of the panels. Jan's comment on the redundancy was that "maybe some of those women felt more comfortable establishing old ideas. Besides, you hear the same old dirty-joke panels at convention after convention and nobody objects because they are at the expense of women." (I'm somewhat skeptical about whether that is the case, but I haven't had that much experience with conventions.) To be fair, the feminists that I met at WisCon were not man-haters.

Another comment Jan had on the subject of complaints was that she needed something concrete to act on. She couldn't do anything until people could identify what they wanted changed. But, she added, those who currently work on WisCon are, by and large, doing all the work because they want to investigate feminism with regard to SF. None of the committee has time to squander, what with school and/or jobs and *Janus* and just plain survival in the mundane world to contend with as well as the convention. If some feel that WisCon has to change (to become more fannish, for example), then they have to correct it themselves. However, the people who have put the most energy into WisCon in the past are working on their own programs and don't want to work on something they don't believe in. The panels won't be done for those who want them, but by those who want them. And because of the emphasis on feminism, they can be sensitive to (but not necessarily intimidated by) the feminists and their beliefs. And the arrangement should be reciprocal.

Moebius Theater is a strange fish. I remember before WisCon 2 that Doug, who was the liaison between Moebius and the committee, announced that the group would need a stage and lights. There was no discussion after this announcement, just, "Yeah, well, go ahead.", and no one was put in charge of making sure that that was taken care of. It was clear that neither condition was fulfilled. Doug is still upset because of this. I guess he thought it was all in the bag. I'm not sure who he holds responsible, the entire committee or any one person. Jan feels that the thing Doug's responsibility from the first and that that was made abundantly clear

to him. She says he left all objections until the eleventh hour.<sup>1</sup>

No bheer in the bathtub? The committee advertised that it was only going to provide Coke in the con suite. MadSTF doesn't seem to need alcohol to have a good time and, frankly, I don't want to end up paying for someone else's loop. The smell of beer permeating the consuite at any hotel turns my stomach, as the smell of someone who's been sick in the hall. BYOB isn't bad at all. It's nicer to be pleasantly surprised by the generosity of friends and acquaintances.

Another major gripe concerns our location (s). WisCon 1 was in two buildings, Wisconsin Center and Lowell Hall. For WisCon 2, three buildings were added, Memorial Union, Helen C. White Library, and the Madison Inn. It seems that all-night partying at SF conventions was not Lowell Hall's cup of tea, but Madison Inn was well-pleased with the experience. This set up has its good and bad points. It feels good to get out and walk after staying indoors at other conventions, but there's a small problem. It's cold in February in Wisconsin and there's ice on the walks.

But WisCon fills a gap in Midwestern convention scheduling. That's the reason for the dates, and February isn't ever warm in Wisconsin.

Moving to a hotel—one with convention facilities—has been suggested, but there are two problems with this. There really isn't a hotel that can give us the services and convenience and there definitely isn't one that can provide us with all the free space and equipment that we get through the University of Wisconsin system.<sup>2</sup>

Phew, all this out of what was once an article

<sup>1</sup>As Doug said, it was his presentation. He insisted on it, even though some of the rest of us weren't sure we could provide for it. And, in fact, we only had one possible time and place where they could be scheduled, and we didn't know for sure they'd be there until a few hours in advance of that time.

—Jan Bogstad

<sup>2</sup>I've checked into Madison's Inn on the Park, and I think it could do about as well as the university as regards space, though not free equipment. But that whole subject has led to another bone of contention. Nothing's ever simple, but life would sure be dull without differences of opinion. —Richard S. Russell

full of thank yous to deserving people who helped out with the work and didn't get mentioned in the pocket program.

By the way, the last thing I want is for someone to take this as a personal attack or a stab in the back. I feel that it's something that needs to be written down, perhaps as a starting point for solving the problem of factionalism about the convention.

Now for the thanks. There were three people who volunteered at the convention; Leah Bestler, David Pfeiffer, and Nancy Smith. To these last minute draftees, thanks a lot. Also, for all the folks who told me how good the gofers were and how hard they worked, I needed that. I had no idea how bad or good the other gofers were, by and large, but I was sure



ReformaCon illustrations, München Germany 1573

something would go wrong and it seems nothing major did.

And now for something a little different. On Friday night of WisCon, I forgot a blue plastic shopping bag at Memorial Union. It contained the deep-red dress with gold trim that I had worn for the opening ceremonies at Wisconsin Center. When I went back for it the next morning, it was gone and could not be found in the lost and found of any of the WisCon buildings. If one of you attending fans ended up with it and is wondering where it belongs, please send it along to me as quickly as possible, c/o SF<sup>3</sup>.

## 6. Janice Bogstad

WISCON  
FEBRUARY 17-19  
WISCONSIN CENTER  
MADISON INN  
MADISON, WI

X-CON  
JUNE 2-4  
HOLIDAY INN CENTRAL  
MILWAUKEE, WI

When I'm in the thick of convention production, I tend to misplace my reasons for wanting to be involved in this creative artform. Recently, my participation in a panel on "Adventurous Amazons" at X-Con reminded me. Conventions are interesting, fun, and, most of all, one of the best chances for the interchange of ideas that is available to the greater part of us fans. From the other side, conventions are always worth the trouble.

Why did I get off the track then? Well, I wasn't happy during or after WisCon. There was much too much to keep track of and too many people pulling in too many directions (including two employers and schoolwork). I think this was partly due to my own desires. I wanted to be sure that everything ran

smoothly, which it pretty much did and may have anyway. In our second year, most of the small but eager WisCon crew were pretty well organized. At the same time, I wanted to make friends with hundreds of people, and that's just not possible when you're part of the group running the convention. (You have to limit yourself to 30 or so.) So I got frazzled.

Looking back at it, I'd say it was a good convention, especially since we keep getting letters from people telling us what they liked as well as a few of the sort that Lynne alludes to in her WisCon report. And just the other evening, at the WisCon meeting, I heard a relatively new MadSTFian say, "I can't wait until the next WisCon," so the disagreements we've all had about what the next convention should be like have been pretty well discussed, and we've hopefully come to a truce situation with regard to representing all the interests in the group. WisCon will be back next year, and it will be feminist-oriented, but I think we've all learned that the pro-

programming will depend on the initiative of individuals who are committed enough to suggest and plan their own programs. I'm certainly committed to seeing that any program has a reasonable chance of being included.

Anyway, the reason I came to realize why we go through all the grief that any con committee will quickly tell you is associated with any convention, no matter how unpretentious, was that I had such a damned good time at X-Con. Last year, X-Con had a little trouble in the proverbial 11th Hour. This year, they amply proved their competence, foresight, and togetherness with X-Con 2. True, the con suite was taken over by a bunch of loud barbershoppers, but they had rather nice voices. True, I missed "The Littlest Dragon Boy", but I heard that it was excellent, and the costumes were certainly well done. True, my panel was held on Friday afternoon, not usually thought of as a prime time, but then I could relax for the rest of the con. Dorothy Dean, Karen Axness, and I, who made up the discussion, didn't mind a bit, as we were followed by two other interesting panels and so thoroughly enjoyed our-

selves.

Now, as for the panel, who would have thought that feminism could creep into another convention? Not to mention a panel on fascism and popular culture. Following in our tradition of searching out new themes concerning women and SF, Dorothy, Karen, and I decided to look for positive role models in SF; that is, we decided to talk about the female characters in SF who had inspired us and why this was so. And we were met with, not hostility, but genuine interest and openness on the part of the audience. Well, folks, you may have feminist tendencies and not even know it, but don't worry: it's not only less fatal than cancer, it could change your lives—it certainly has changed mine.

All in all, I think that Wisconsin has come a long way towards establishing a firm fandom base in the southern part of the state. The two conventions are interesting and very different. It is to the credit of both groups and to the credit of fandom itself that such diversity not only survives but flourishes.☺

## 7. Diane Martin

MINICON 13  
MARCH 24-26  
LEAMINGTON HOTEL  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN

I didn't go to any programming. I didn't go to any parties or movies. I didn't go to the banquet. I signed up for *Rune*—but didn't get it. I didn't smoke or get drunk or lie on the floor in the lobby. I didn't even get stuck in the elevator. Why am I writing a con report? What could I possibly have to tell?

Well, I did go to the huckster's room and was willingly—eagerly—hucked by Rick Gellman. But that's not unusual.

I didn't speak to any of the guests of honor (Spider Robinson, Chip Delany, and Bob Tucker). I did look at them.

And I met other people of interest. One was Nadine St. Louis, an English professor at UW-Eau Claire. She was my advisor for an independent-study project I did on roles of women in SF in 1972. She is a lovely woman, but I have never forgiven her for not telling me about fandom. (Maybe she didn't know.) And then there was Dorothy Dean, from Milwaukee. She was initiated into Madison fandom during the course of dinner at the Nankin—a quasi-Chinese joint. Our party of six capitalists (who each ordered separate dinners) and six socialists (who shared a dinner-for-six) was served by Wendell the waiter. He even took a group picture for us.

Many interesting uses for our chopsticks were demonstrated that evening, including eating ice cream. And we tramped back to the hotel wearing them as antennae.

I watched as Rick White demonstrated the basics of juggling. Later several of us retired to my room to practice on oranges from the cooler. (We found the oranges much more durable than the apples, and more wieldy than the bananas.)

We watched *Saturday Night Live*. (Couldn't we have done this at home?) I particularly identified with one of the skits, a preview of the "movie", *The Thing That Wouldn't Leave*. Seems that when midnight rolled around and I was turning into a pumpkin (I am a were-pumpkin.) there were all these wide-awake people in my room.

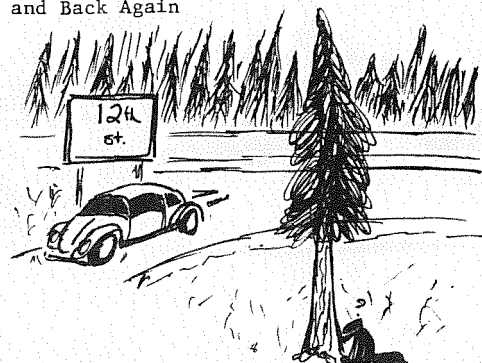
I took photographs, as usual. This con was memorable for me as it was the last con at which I used my pocket camera. Since then I've graduated to the big time and have been using my new SLR. I managed to drop a flash cube in the banquet hall when Spider Robinson was speaking. Those Magicubes go off on impact—all four sides at once. Luckily no one noticed.

And of course there was the obligatory shopping trip up and down Nicollet Mall, not once, not twice, but three times. I had money that I didn't spend, but some of us spent money we didn't have. It all averages out in the end.☺

## 8. Greg G.H. Rihn

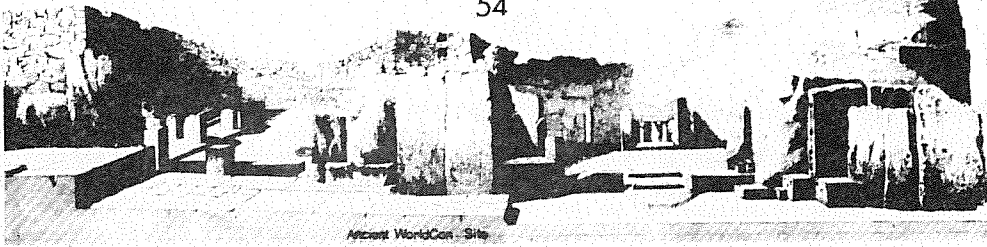
The following constitutes the Getting-to-Minneapolis report by Doug Price, Lynne Morse, and Rex Nelson, as told to intrepid tattle-tale, Greg Rihn.

#1 - Where? and Back Again



"Wrong 12th Street? Don't be ridiculous!"

GR



## 9. Lucy Nash

DUBUQON  
APRIL 14-16  
JULIEN INN  
DUBUQUE, IA

During the weekend of April 14-16, Dubuque held its first science-fiction convention. It was a very worthwhile weekend for those of us from Madison who attended, at least that is the impression I received from the rest of our group. I enjoyed myself very much.

Things did get off to a rather slow start as far as programming goes. The dealers' room opened earlier, but there were no presentations of any sort until 9:00 p.m. It was well worth waiting for, however. George R. R. Martin read an unpublished short story about the woman who walks between worlds; it captivated the entire audience. He made excellent use of atmosphere by turning off all the lights in the room, the only illumination being a lamp on his podium. He spoke quietly, yet we had no trouble hearing. His voice wove a spell on us, and there was an audible sigh in the room when he finished, as if we had all awakened from a dream into the real world.

As always, there were enough goodies in the dealers' room to lure my hard-earned dollars from my purse. I went home with an empty one, as I usually do from a con. My prize purchase came from a different source, an auction held to raise money to send Bob Tucker to SeaCon next year. I am now the proud owner of an original *Star Trek* script, "Amok Time". And we also raised a nice little sum to help Mr. Tucker on his way. Among the more unusual items in the auction was a half hour of George R. R. Martin's time. The winner got to choose when and where to spend that time. We never did hear the outcome of that one.

Another of the highlights of the con was a short-story reading by pro GoH Algis Budrys. Entitled "The Last Brunette", it was a rather strange story but in its own way just as compelling as the fantasy George had read previously.

There was also a panel on writing, aimed at helping new writers get ideas and also offering other advice. The slide presentation on space colonies,

narrated by Robert Lovell, was another particularly interesting event.

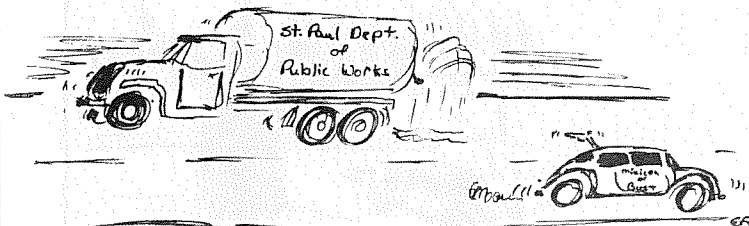
The highlight of Saturday had to be the banquet. Although it started out rather poorly with a long-winded and uninteresting speech from the fan GoH, it improved greatly after that. The Madison group ended up all together at the same table and soon became quite uproarious. In fact, I think we had the best time of anyone in the room. Algis gave a speech that was much better received than the first one. The food was indifferent, as banquet food often is, but what followed more than made up for it.

Dubuqon was made the official Midwest presentation event for the Nebula Awards. As we received the results, various members of the audience who in some way most resembled the actual winner went forward to receive their "awards", pieces of cake. Bob Tucker received a miniature bottle of Beam's Choice encased in clear lucite. Oh, he also got a real one of normal size, which he proceeded to sample; he pronounced it, in his own unmatched style, to be "smoooooth". There were other awards made to the rest of the honored guests, but it's been so long now that I can't remember what they were. Sorry about that.

We did attend a con party Saturday night, getting a chance to get acquainted with another special guest, Gordon R. Dickson. We had met him earlier in the con when he was autographing his books. Having acquired a copy of *The Far Call*, my husband and I headed for the room where the author was signing. When he opened the book to its title page, there was, much to our surprise, already an autograph there. Gordie signed it again to "verify" the other one. I had heard that Gordie was a party-goer, and it did look as though he was enjoying himself immensely. I hope to see him again at some future con. He's a very interesting man.

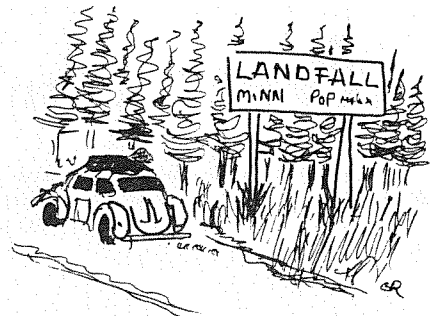
All in all, I and my husband both found Dubuqon a good con. I hope they have more. A little more programming would help, but if they have the kind of quality in the future that they had at this one, we'll certainly go again. ☺

#2 - Where? and Back Again



"That doesn't mean anything—it's mobile!"

#3 - Where? and Back Again



"Hm—what an interesting name for a town..."

"Ah—We've been here before."

"Oh.... Well, I don't look at signs."

# 10. Richard S. Russell

X-CON 2  
JUNE 2-4  
HOLIDAY INN CENTRAL  
MILWAUKEE, WI

Thank you, Agnes McConnell.

Who? Well, Anne McCaffrey, the lady who writes the wonderful books about dragons, attributed a lot of the encouragement she got as a child to her Aunt Agnes. She made this comment during the course of a long guest-of-honor speech at X-Con. Despite the overload on the room's rated capacity, and the tremendous overload on the air-conditioning system, nobody protested the length of the speech, mainly because McCaffrey used the occasion to tell us all how she came to write about the Dragonriders of Pern. It seems she was inspired by this poem about a dragonfly with higher aspirations, and it took off from there.

The CoH speech was the highlight of X-Con for me, but there were a number of other attractive features as well. I know it's supposed to be tremendously fannish to claim to never attend the programming—to contend that "only neos do that" and that the true fans go to cons to see their friends. Well, jeez, that's why there's day and night, don't you know? Daytime is for programming, and nighttime is for socializing. And I liked the programming.

A good panel featured Judith Clark, Beverly Friend, and Cathy McClenahan as the academics and Mike Lowrey as the "token fan" discussing "Who's Afraid of the PhDs?". The conclusion: nobody, as long as the PhDs are fans first and know whereof they speak. (All three of the academics, as might be expected at a con, fit the definition.) That opened up the con. On the wrapup side of the weekend, Ken Coltz posed as the neofan interested in starting his own fanzine, while Robert Garcia and Kevin McAnn (of *Tesseract*) and Mike Clicksohn (of *Xenium*, *inter alia*) provided the answers to his well thought-out questions. It was pleasant to hear *Jamus* used as a Good Example, but I got quite a chuckle out of the reference to our "committee of 30 or 40 people" who put it out.

In between the PhDs and the neo-fanzine publisher was a variety of other events. In an exercise in *gaucherie*, one group trucked out all of the cheapie sci-fi commercial products they could find, and the audience alternately roared and groaned over the utter lack of taste displayed. The film program consisted mainly of movies I'd already seen, so I checked out

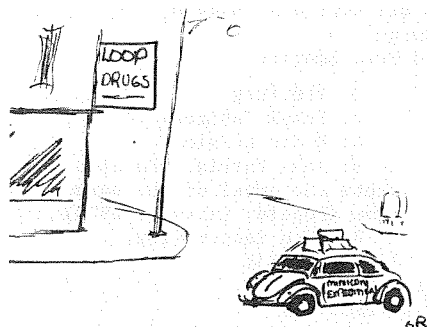
some of the aforementioned socializing, which was adequate, though not up to the volume (both fluid and aural) I'd been exposed to at MiniCon. The art show was a bit disappointing, although it was evidently somewhat larger than planned, since there were items being propped up on the floor (god!) for display. But I had friends who came away smiling after the art auction. They were pleased with the art they'd picked up; I was tickled (lit. & fig.) by Cleo, a real nice boa one of the fans had brought. Diane, I regret to say, is an unreconstructed herpetophobe and did not share my enthusiasm. She was stuck in the con suite for half an hour because the lady with the snake was engaged in a conversation just outside the door, and Diane didn't want to get close to it.

One event which I had anticipated with relish was Phil Taterczynski's lecture on linguistics in SF. Unfortunately, it had to be cancelled. Its replacement was Tauna LeMarbe discussing some of the secret languages of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. This was essentially a rehash of her article in *Fantastic Films* (June 1978) and made no more sense verbally than it did in writing. The entire thing was cloaked (and daggered) in the so-called "Official Secrets Act" (which I thought went out with McCarthy), since LeMarbe works as a CIA cryptologist and evidently doesn't understand that things have to be spelled out a little better for us folks who only understand English.

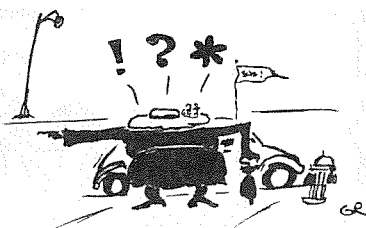
The longest-running event of X-Con was the "Inane Trivia Contest", which was based on a series of questions handed out at registration. Those interested in the answers—real as well as creative—showed up at noon on Sunday armed with pencils and eyebags. One of the first questions was "What do you do with a chocolate-covered manhole cover?". As it happens, that provided the theme for many of the subsequent answers. Another question was "What Hugo and Nebula Award winner begins with the words, 'Sooner ... later it was bound to happen...?'". And no one knew the answer! Not even the panelists, who were drawn, quartered, and chucked down a chocolate manhole at the conclusion of the panel. So, if anyone out there knows the answer, please help to bring X-Con to a conclusion by letting us in on the secret.

Ah, yes, and for the bewildered member of the B'nai B'rith who inquired about the rather unusual costumes bedecking those wandering around the Holiday Inn we shared, no, this isn't the way we dressed at Waupun before we became ex-cons. ☺

#4 - Where? and Back Again

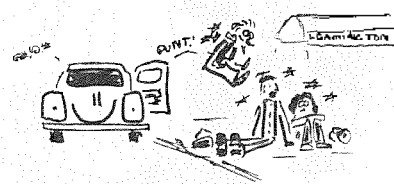


#5 - Where? and Back Again



"The Leamington? You have to go to Minneapolis for that!"

#6 - Where? and Back Again



"I told you not to holler 'We're saved!'."



Our title, of course, is from Marshall McLuhan's statement that "the medium is the message" and is occasioned by having before us three films, each of which has a corresponding book. We have mentioned the book/movie relationship before, but now we'd like to spend a little more time on it.

Books allow the reader to get inside the heads of the characters and listen in on their thoughts; movies have never been able to do this easily—the voice-over (*à la* the self-reading letter) is about the best device that directors have been able to come up with for this purpose, and it interrupts the flow of what's going on too much, since the spoken voice is necessarily much slower than actual thoughts would be.

On the other hand, a picture is worth a thousand words. Pages of background description in a novel can be handled by a simple sweep of a movie camera.

On the third hand, books are permanent. Because of this, you can reread them years (or moments) later, while movies are ephemeral. Furthermore, you can read (and reread) books at your own speed, while movies invariably come at you at the rate of 60 sec./min.

On the fourth hand, movies have a sense of immediacy that few novels can touch. They have color and motion and sound and real people instead of just funny little black squiggles on a white background. This is an advantage which becomes less significant while moving up the scale of the reader's imagination, to the point where some readers complain that



## SHOW and TELL:

# IS THE MEDIUM

the movie has conflicted with all of their book-created images.

Books and movies are about the same price, but you get to keep the book. (Ever try to buy a print of a movie?)

Movies are seen by millions to tens (and even hundreds) of millions. This includes even bad movies. Book sales are measured (if all goes well) in the hundreds of thousands, with a dozen or so best-sellers going over a million each year. Thus movies are much more a part of the common cultural milieu than books and are better able to form a basis for discussion of related subjects. Yet this very mass-market approach means that movies tend toward the superficial, lowest-common-denominator approach.

Books can be of any length and have a fairly wide range in this regard. Movies can theoretically be of any length as well, but practically speaking they run a little under two hours. (\*Ahem\* Note that we are now listing run times.) This can be an artificial restriction but, on the other hand,<sup>1</sup> you know in advance how much you're getting.

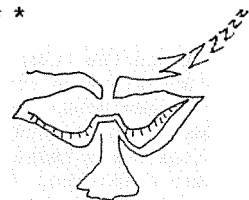
The question all this raises is, "Which medium do you prefer?" To this we respond with a straightforward, unequivocal, "It depends." In general, when we find a book and a movie which both tell the same story, we prefer the book. But in this issue, for the first time, each movie is better than the corresponding book.

\*\*\*

T: *Coma*  
P: Martin Ehrlichman  
D: Michael Crichton  
W: Michael Crichton  
from the novel by Robin Cook (Signet, 1977)

R: United Artists (an MGM production), 1978, PG, 1:52

S: Genevieve Bujold as Dr. Susan Wheeler  
Michael Douglas as Dr. Mark Bellows  
Richard Widmark as Dr. George A. Harris  
Rip Torn as Dr. George  
Elizabeth Ashley as Mrs. Emerson



T: *The Fury*  
P: Frank Yablans  
D: Brian DePalma  
W: John Farris, who also wrote the novel of the same name (Popular Library, 1976)  
R: 20th Century Fox, 1978, R, 1:51

S: Kirk Douglas as Peter Sandza  
Amy Irving as Gillian Bellaver  
John Cassavetes as Childress (Childermass in the novel)

<sup>1</sup>This is at least eight hands by now, and the keyboard is getting crowded.

DIANE MARTIN and RICHARD S. RUSSELL

# THE MESSAGE?



DICK CHUCK UW DIANE

Carrie Snodgrass as Hester Moore  
Charles Durning as Dr. Jim McKeever (Dr. Irving Roth)  
Carol Rossen as Dr. Ellen Lindstrom  
Fiona Lewis as Dr. Susan Charles (Dr. Gwyneth Charles)  
Andrew Sterns as Robin Sandza  
Eleanor Merriam as Mother Nuckells  
SE: A. D. Flowers  
Make-up: Rick Baker

\* \* \*

This is going to be a strange column in one regard, because Diane did not see any of the movies, though she did read the books. It may sound amazing—or even unreasonable—that she can do this, but it's a skill developed over the years as self-protection from needless exposure to trash. Richard, on the other hand,<sup>2</sup> goes to all sorts of awful movies and returns to say, "You were right. You wouldn't have liked it." This has confirmed Diane in her belief that she's always right.

At first glance, it would seem that *The Fury*, as a novel, has more going for it than *Coma*. The author is an author (primarily mysteries) and has gotten good reviews before. Here's an example of how he handles an action sequence:

The wheelman of the Camaro that entered the shed at sixty miles an hour instinctively steered to follow their taillights, but his reaction time was half a second too slow. The impact drove the enormous wrecker's ball back about eight feet; it quivered on its cable and swung forward once again, just as the second chase car ran inside the shed and vaulted over the top of the smashed-down Camaro, meeting the doomsday ball head on. [P. 155.]

The writing style is punchy, sketchy, and telegraphic, in an attempt to give the reader the same idea of breathless pacing that a movie (or a real-life experience) would have. (As it happens, the movie did not use this particular method of getting rid of the chase cars, perhaps because of a shortage of willing stunt people.)

*Coma* is written by a doctor. This is his first work of fiction. Listen to how he handles an action sequence:

The point of the scissors struck between the knuckles of the second and third fingers. The force of the blow carried the blades between the metacarpal bones, shredding the lumbrical muscles and exiting through the back of the hand. The guard screamed in agony, letting go of the door. He staggered back into the corridor with the scissors still embedded in his hand. Holding his breath and grinding his teeth, he pulled them out. A small arterial pumper squirted blood in short pulsating arcs onto the opaque plastic floor, forming a pattern of red polkadots. [P. 281.] Cook throws this clinical detail into his book re-

peatedly. This might work out all right if it were scattered and smoothed in, but it comes in big lumps like the one cited above. It is difficult for the reader to get excited about the scene if the author so obviously is taking it calmly enough to observe the physiological effects in slow motion. Cook also steps out of the narrative on a couple of occasions to lament the horrible treatment that women have received in medicine and to declaim against smoking. His heart is in the right place, but it's artistically ugly to just graft editorials onto the story line like that; better to blend in examples with opprobrious reactions. Still, this is a best-seller, and it will therefore drive home to the average reader the subjects of Cook's sermonets, which have the subtlety of a two-by-four; besides, Cook's sacrifice of his art really doesn't amount to much of a loss.

The difference in expectations between *Coma* and *The Fury* becomes even more pronounced when the movie versions are considered. *The Fury* is directed by a director, Brian DePalma, whose previous experience in this area was the fairly well done and successful *Carrie*. *Coma* is directed by another doctor-turned-writer, Michael Crichton, of *The Andromeda Strain* fame. Where Crichton simply aims his cameras at a scene and lets them run, DePalma uses all the tricks of the trade, like mirror shots, shifting perspectives, looking down gun barrels, and no less than four instant replays—from different angles and in slow motion, yet—of the final climactic scene. John Williams (*The Fury*) knows when to throw in the right kind of background music, as when a tempo of routine pleasantries, which has been building for some minutes, is suddenly gripped by a traumatic turn of events. The Jerry Goldsmith soundtrack for *Coma* is so unmemorable that it was a surprise to find (in an ad in back of the book) that there was any music at all. And the cast of *The Fury* is better overall; Douglas père still outperforms Douglas filé.

Okay, whenever we set you up with expectations like that, you know there's got to be a big "but" coming up, and here it comes. But—*Coma* works much better, as both a book and a movie, than does *The Fury*. It has a plot which could be in tomorrow's headlines—use of comatose bodies as living organ banks—and its characters are people you could reasonably expect to meet every day. *The Fury* is rather convoluted in plot, requiring one to believe that the Multiphasic Operations and Research Group (MORG, which incidentally is never named in the film), a supersecret government agency, is attempting to kidnap teenagers with psionic potential. Peter Sandza, who by a strange coincidence is a MORG agent, is father of one such lad; MORG, seeing him as an obstacle to their plans, keeps trying to bump him off while he keeps trying to rescue his son.

As usual, the blurbs on the books are misleading and have little to do with the course of the story. *The Fury*: "Why did Robin's loving father want to kill him? Why did Gillian's loving mother desperately fear her?" Actually, the relationship

<sup>2</sup>Nine.

of the children to their parents is neither that extreme nor that pervasive. The basic theme is that Robin and Gillian's psi powers may be used for good or evil. Robin loses; Gillian wins. Along the way, whole slews of people get wiped out. DePalma has obviously decided that the only thing wrong with the formula he used in *Carrie* was that he didn't go far enough. By the time the final scene (an exploding body) comes around, many of the people in the theater were just laughing in disbelief.<sup>3</sup> And at that, the movie cuts out a lot of the bullshit of the book. Normally, we like to see a certain passing attempt made at rationally explaining the unusual powers of movie characters, but thankfully we were spared the incredible drivel from the book about Robin having the soul of Gillian's twin brother who died at birth. Even though the movie wasn't very good, it had the dopy, downbeat book beat all hollow.

*Coma's* cover claims that it is a "gripping, terrifying, fast-paced suspense" novel. (How the hell can suspense be fast-paced?) It's actually more like a detective story, as Nancy Drew, personified by Susan Wheeler, ferrets out the clues as to why so (relatively) many patients at Boston Memorial Hospital seem to be going into unexplained comas after simple surgery. (Hint: they all went comatose in Operating Room 8.) The book's problem is credibility. Here Wheeler is, a medical student in her first day as a resident at BMH, and she immediately starts cutting all her classes, breaking hospital rules like crazy, and defying all sorts of opposition and even logic. ("...For someone to immediately assume all cases of coma are related simply because the causative agent is not known is intellectually absurd," she is—quite rightly—told.) Why? Because she's got a hunch about the comatose condition of a patient she's never even met before and is speculating about her research leading to the discovery of "the Wheeler syndrome". This despite all the character background established for her pointing to completely contrary actions. As a woman, she had never before bucked the male medical establishment; she had been an excellent student, not given to unfounded speculation; she had made it a point never to use her attractiveness to gain special favor. And overnight she throws this whole behavior pattern out the window.

In the movie, she is Dr. Wheeler; she is on the BMH staff; the comatose patient was a personal friend; and she obviously is putting in extra (not stolen) hours in her investigations. Further, the opposition to her activities in the movie is presented as milder (less likely to deter) and less serious (more likely to be ignored) than in the book. In this respect, Crichton's screenplay is head and shoulders above Cook's novel.

Yet neither book nor novel is unattractive in its presentation of Susan Wheeler. Motivation aside, she is a very capable, self-possessed woman, instead of the typical decorative Hollywood ninny. She is not constantly making mistakes or drawing the wrong conclusions or screaming or shaking hysterically until you either want to grab and shake her or just sit there feeling embarrassed. She succeeds, against quite respectable odds, in exposing what's going on behind closed doors at the Jefferson Institute. Genevieve Bujold portrays her well, with just the right blend of concern and coolness under fire. One of the flaws of the book is that she ends up as a candidate for coma herself, and the author never tells us whether she woke up; the movie at least resolves the situation.

Diane enjoyed the book but thought the movie

would be too effective, too good, too scary. Richard described the electric-arc-to-the-eyeball scene to her, and she was right again! But she adds that tougher, more hard-boiled types might like *Coma*; Richard concurs.

Oh, those fancy Brian DePalma camera techniques? They weren't nearly as effective as aiming the cameras at the scene and letting them run.

\* \* \*

T: Damien Omen II

F: Harvey Bernhard and Charles Orme in association with Mace Neufeld

D: Don Taylor

W: Stanley Mann and Michael Hodges; novelization by Joseph Howard (Signet, 1978)

R: 20th Century Fox, 1978, R, 1:48

S: William Holden as Richard Thorn

Lee Grant as Ann Thorn

Jonathan Scott-Taylor as Damien Thorn

Robert Foxworth as Paul Buher

Lance Henriksen as Sergeant Neff

Nicholas Pryor as Charles Warren

Lew Ayres as Bill Atherton

Sylvia Sidney as Aunt Marion

Alan Arbus as David Pasarian

Technical Advisor: Dr. W. Steuart McBirnie

\* \* \*

If this movie has a redeeming feature, it's that beautiful portions of it were shot in Lake Geneva and Eagle River, Wisconsin, during the winter. You fans who live near the ocean can get some idea of what WisCon is like if you have had the misfortune to see the picture.

Gee, *The Omen* was such a good picture.<sup>4</sup> It had style. It had elegance. Why was this sequel so bad that Diane didn't even bother to see it? Well, first off, everybody knows that sequels are like remakes: never as good as the original. (What, never? Well, hardly ever!) Then there were the ads, the reviews, the previews, the conversations with friends. It became apparent that *Omen II*, despite being shown with a big ad budget in sit-down, air-conditioned theaters, is cheap, sleazy, drive-in-quality trash. It's a victim of the Hollywood bandwagon disease—a bandwagon sequel to a bandwagon original. Richard, determined to suffer through it in the name of duty, came back dejected and remarked, "You were right. You wouldn't have liked it."

The book was based on a crappy movie, and there's only one thing you can make out of crap.<sup>5</sup> It suffers from all the aforementioned flaws of books *vis-à-vis* movies without any of the advantages traceable to originality.

A quick plot synopsis. Damien Thorn is the Anti-Christ, born of a jackal. He is being raised by his wealthy and powerful aunt and uncle, because his "real" parents (and damn near everybody around them) were mysteriously killed in England seven years earlier. Damien starts out unaware of his true identity but learns about it from two agents of Satan who hover around him in the persons of his sergeant at military school and the new president of Thorn Industries. Anybody who has the faintest glimmering of Damien's nature has about 10 minutes left to live. His uncle, since he's the nominal star of the show, gets to last a little longer, but there's never any doubt about anyone's ultimate fate; after all, this

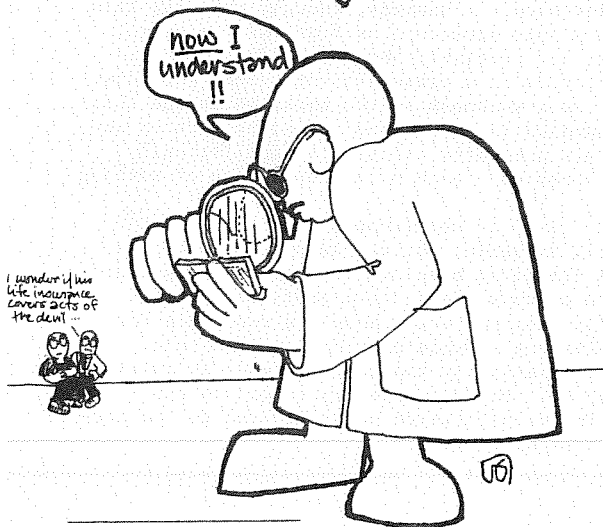
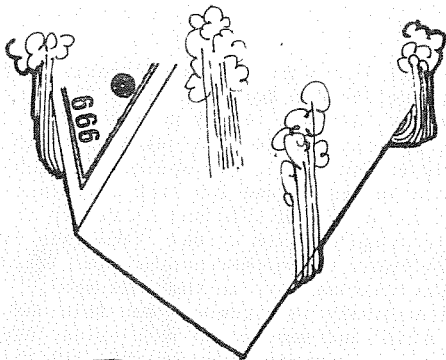
<sup>4</sup>We realize this because we reread our review of it in *JANUS* 5; you should, too. See the back-issue ad elsewhere in this issue. (\*Plug\*)

<sup>5</sup>More of the same.

<sup>3</sup>Again, he leaves Amy Irving as the sole survivor. Nobody's going to want to work with her much after this.

has all been foretold in *The Bible*.<sup>6</sup>

Now all this gore was splattered over the original movie, too (though the local newspaper critic claims that, measured by body count, the sequel is twice as good). Why did it work there and not here? Suspense. Damien was just a little kid in the original; there was some reason to believe that the real people had a chance against him. One terror-ridden victim seemed to be safe as long as he remained closeted in a room festooned with crosses; Damien's father was within a hair trigger of ritually murdering "his" son, and there remained doubt up to the last minute whether he had actually succeeded. In the sequel, there's just no doubt at all. The devil can command any force he wants any time he wants anywhere he wants against anyone he wants. As another reviewer once remarked, "When anything can happen, who cares what does?"



<sup>6</sup>The technical advisor, incidentally, is the guiding force behind a slug of "charitable" overseas-aid outfits that hand out fundamentalist religious propaganda along with the oatmeal.

The most spectacular scene in *The Omen* was of a man being decapitated by a flying sheet of plate glass. *Omen II*'s answer to this was to have a doctor laterally bisected by a cable which rips through a "mysteriously" malfunctioning elevator, about 10 minutes after he gets wise to Damien. Unfortunately, Don Taylor believes himself to be the master of the quick cut. He first shoots the scene looking down the elevator shaft, then looking up, and there is no way for the audience to tell the difference—no gravitational or visual referents. So it wasn't possible to tell if the cable were falling or being raised, and the confusion took the edge off the scene. Other than that, the bisection was performed with grisly realism. (A few people got up and rapidly left the auditorium at this point.)

The original had a bowlegged dog hanging around as some sort of symbol of evil. The sequel has dispensed with the dog but features a large black bird (a raven?), which actually gets to do an Alfred Hitchcock number on a couple of folks. But it disappears halfway through this muddled and incoherent effort. On the other hand,<sup>7</sup> there is one consistency between the two films: typecasting. The strong male lead is played by Gregory Peck/William Holden; his beautiful, socialite wife by Lee Remick/Lee Grant; Damien—of the British accent and single facial expression—by Harvey Stephens/Jonathan Scott-Taylor; etc.

Oh, why bother? This one really belongs in the next section.

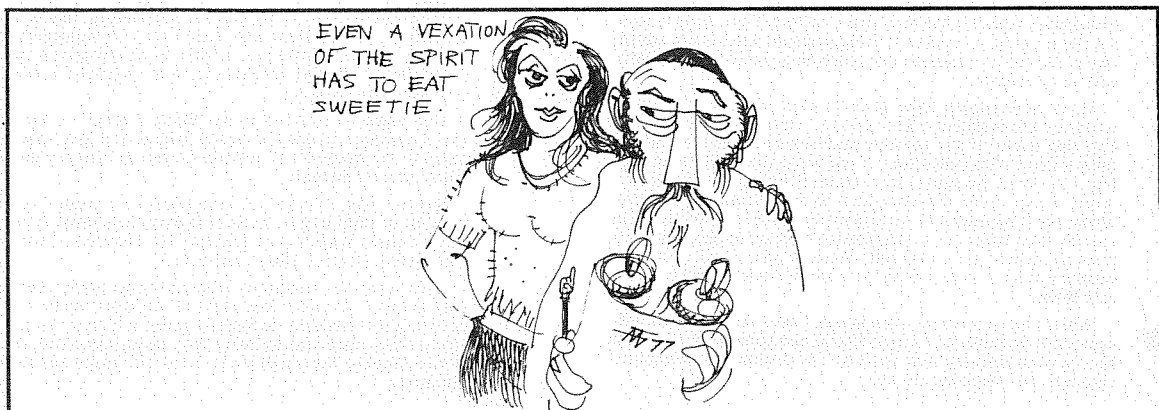
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Peek and Poke Dept. *Space Cruiser*, which Diane saw, is a Japanese animated flick wherein the poorly illustrated hardware performs in lieu of the martial-arts masters who normally appear in this kind of wham-bash-slam cheapie.

All the rest of the movies we have to mention showed up at drive-ins in the Madison area; we didn't see any of them and merely note their passage: *Eaten Alive* and *Devil Times Five*; *Alice*, *Sweet Alice* and *The Incredible Melting Man* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue by Greg Rihn); *Body Snatcher from Hell* and *Bloody Pit of Horror*; *The Evil and Ravid*; *Deathsport* (evidently a followup to *Deathrace 2000*, which also starred David Carradine; this one was teamed with Ron Howard's *Eat My Dust*, evidently figuring the motor freaks would like it more than the sci-fi freaks); *The Medusa Touch*, with Richard Burton; *Autopsy* and *Carrie* (now getting only second billing in re-release); *End of the World* and *Laserblast*; and *Nurse Sherri*.

You will note that, of the 15 SF-related movies listed, 13 appeared as part of a double feature, evidently on the theory that it takes twice as much of this stuff to justify the price of admission. (And second prize is two weeks in Cleveland.)

<sup>7</sup>she had warts.



# LOCS



A FAMILY OF FRIENDS

➡ George Flynn  
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...It seems a bit harsh to call *Star Wars* a "bastardization" of Zen Buddhism ["Samurai of Space" by Jan Bogstad, *Janus* 9], especially by complaining that it "doesn't really go into" the details of the philosophy. Now this would be a valid point if the reference to Zen were explicit, but obviously it isn't. In the absence of such explicit reference, while a given plot element can be criticized for lack of effectiveness or internal consistency, isn't it unfair to go beyond this and criticize it for not having all the attributes of something it doesn't claim to be? (Analysis of how the creators came to choose this particular element is another matter, and Janice's reasoning does seem plausible here. As Suzy McKee Charnas says in the lettercol, there's always more in a work than the writer consciously puts there. But it's one thing to "dive in and pull out whatever you can find" and another to make value judgments about what the writer ought to have intended. I suspect, though, that all this is too much philosophical weight for such a simple adventure as *Star Wars* to bear.) Certainly *The Embedding* is a very fine book, and precisely because it does make explicit use of the theories of the "soft" sciences in a plausible way. But, you know, I think the "interjection of the political" is a weakness in the book: while the theoretical nature of the thinking process is handled in a profound and sophisticated way, the thought processes of political leaders are presented relatively simplistically. But this is a fairly minor fault; a lot of books do a much more glaring job of setting up straw-man villains....

The distinction between "concept" and "idea" SF mentioned by Wayne Hooks (Did someone else introduce this concept earlier?) is valid, but the terminology is dubious. "Concept" and "idea" have practically identical meanings in ordinary usage, and I don't think what shade of difference there is runs along those particular lines. It's difficult enough to impose change on the language when there's a real case for it, but there's hardly much chance of establishing a vague distinction like this. Fortunately, it's unnecessary, since there's a perfectly good word already in critical use: just say "gimmick" SF instead of "idea" SF. Which enables us to get to the deeper question: are "gimmicks" or "ideas" in the pejorative sense limited to the content of the physical sciences, as implied in Wayne's list?...

— Ron Legro  
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Ctein's informative survey of computer writing and editing (Spring '78 *Janus*) was nicely done. But the article's tone was a bit utopian for me. I have used such a system in my job as a newspaper reporter for two years. In fact, I am using it now. As Ctein noted, computer writing systems have many advantages. But by no means do they portend a panacea for writers, editors or readers.

Many newspapers have gone to such systems. The one I work for has installed a \$1.5 million, "state of the art" system that has many of the abilities outlined by Ctein (plus a few others Ctein didn't mention). I can write my story, rearranging it by word, paragraph or section. If I misspell a name or a word, I can order the computer to search out the mistake wherever it appears and automatically make corrections. I can specify type style; get a computation of story length in words, lines or inches; get a printout; combine part or all of several separate stories; even call up wire service stories and incorporate them.

When I leave town on assignment, I take along a small suitcase sized portable unit (cost: \$5,000 and going down), which has its own memory and ties into the newspaper's computer through any telephone circuit.

There is more. Suffice to say this system has been a boon for reporters. Speed, accuracy and flexibility are improved. In the business of daily deadlines, that means more readable, *literate* stories.

Now for the bad news. Twice last week the computer burped and ate two of my stories. Supposedly, this is impossible (sure, and dolphins are dumb, too). It happened despite several "failsafe" systems. Errant electromagnetic radiation (sometimes, perhaps, originating in a misguided user's mind) is a particular bugaboo.

One night — referred to as "Black Friday" — someone at the newspaper pushed a wrong button and just about every story in the system's 17 million character memory drum was inadvertently purged.

[By the way, "purge" is computerese for erase. I've picked up a lot of such jargon, most of it nasty sounding: Purge, Kill, Body Count, Search and Replace, VD Terminal, Execute, Insert String, Control, Hide, and so on.]

Even when the computer is operating properly, connections may be poor. Consider the plight of the sportswriter who was covering a Wisconsin basketball game at Camp Randall Field House. The place was so noisy that, though shielded, the VDT (Video Display Terminal) went crazy. He finally had to dictate his story.





George Fergus  
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...Gina Clarke's sexist remarks in *Janus* 9 bothered me. I suppose that when you print this statement, her immediate reaction will be that she doesn't give a damn whether or not I was bothered. I wish I could say that I don't give a damn whether or not she gives a damn, but I do care when someone with Gina's good reputation accuses me of being "programmed by nature to kick and kill and maim and murder" and wishes that I would drop dead. (I am not as upset when some black person expresses the wish that all whites would drop dead, since I've never heard this suggested by anyone I've had much respect for.)

Admittedly, remarks like Gina's are not as hurtful as the things men have said (not to mention done) against women. Nevertheless, I am hurt. Particularly since Gina is willing to give the benefit of the doubt even to women like Anita Bryant. And on the pragmatic level, I don't see that such remarks are good for anything but fueling the anti-feminist backlash and making men run around shouting, "They're trying to castrate us! They're trying to castrate us!"

Won't anybody stick up for me? The only reaction to Gina's statement in the next issue (*Janus* 10) was Karen Pearlschtein's reiterating how nice it is to dream about a world "where all the men have gone away and dropped dead" because this "can very well lead us to action..." This sort of comment unfortunately makes it a bit easier to understand a remark like the one Robert Bloch made in *Don-O-Saur*. I would rather that our actions were devoted to reducing the sex-role pressures of the current cultural milieu. For one thing, this would reduce the present tendency for men to develop the coronary-prone "Type A" behavior pattern that is, as Gina indicates, one of the main reasons for the differential death rates of men and women in the US....

Jessica Amanda Salmonson  
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Ctein ["Future Insulation", *Janus* 10] is correct that ectogenesis or extra-uterine gestation has had some successful experimentation, and if either he or George Fergus want exact citations I will get them at the

medical library at work. I recall that the experiments were done in Italy, and, when the scientist presented his first paper, the pope intervened, demanding such experimentation cease. It ceased.

Fergus, Ctein, and myself have provided contradicting information in one spot or another re parthenogenesis, and I suspect we can all come up with citations to support each contradiction. Fear of parthenogenesis was so widespread in the Middle Ages that I strongly suspect that healthy, spontaneous parthenogenetic births are not as unlikely as many scientists believe—and an advanced technology may not be necessary to make this a viable means of reproduction. Something I left out of my essay was a single documented case of parthenogenetic birth in this century, because I couldn't find the exact citation and did not want to include any information I couldn't fully support in triplicate. (If Ctein or Fergus happen upon the paper in their studies, I'd appreciate being reintroduced to it, as not photocopying it at the time is really irritating me since I cannot now find it.) The case was reported in Germany, and extensive study was done of the child and mother when the daughter was 20 years old. (She was born in World War 2.) The paper stated that the mother was ovulating during a bombing of a German city, was wounded by debris and in a heightened emotional state of fear, and that a vagrant cell from her own body was driven into her ova, resulting in pregnancy. The child was a healthy and identical offspring....

Or, human error creeps in. Last summer, I was using a portable unit when the screen suddenly went blank. A maintenance man had tried to unplug another appliance and inadvertently had grabbed the VDT cord. Aarrggghhh.

Studies have shown that writing on the VDT is faster, but that editing is slower. At my paper, the two seem to have canceled each other out. However, the computer was supposed to save on production costs; as a result, some composing room jobs were removed (no one was fired; staff size was reduced by attrition) and 15 minutes of deadline time was lost.

In addition, some New York Daily News copy editors are now claiming that the 40 hours a week they spend staring at an image orthicon tube has caused them to develop cataracts.

Like Heinlein said, there ain't no such thing as a free lunch. While resolving conventional problems, any higher technology brings with it a set of higher level problems.

Now: what about the use of these devices at home? I can see myself buying one, someday. Then, I wouldn't have to go into the office very often. Nevertheless, I recently bought a new electric typewriter. I am hanging on to my pens and pencils, too, and if you own a Linotype or a Gestetner or a Web Offset, I'd advise you to do the same.

Unless you're going to put out a really massive amount of material, and unless you plan to use the computer for other purposes (accounting, mathematical problem solving, etc.), you won't get a quick payback. Not if you buy in the next 5 or 10 years.

Even if costs were to go down exponentially, added features will keep prices constant. And there is going to be a new need for maintenance.

In theory, the computer means "hard copy" newspapers are unnecessary. But I think they will continue to exist for the foreseeable future, albeit perhaps in altered form. After all, shopping centers did not wipe out the corner store; they've merely turned it into a specialty shop.

An executive of an electronic banking system whom I recently interviewed said that, just as cash did not replace barter and checks did not replace cash, so computer money machines will not replace checks. Similarly, electronic writing and editing systems should perform some old tasks better and offer some new opportunities, but such systems are unlikely ever to replace the printed book or periodical.

Ctein's comments, of course, are limited to fannish publications. Even so: Perhaps you can imagine sitting at your desk reading a cassette recorded fanzine from a computer screen. Myself, I'd rather be nestled in my rocking chair with a hard copy. And any computer printout approaching offset quality is going to cost. A pretty looking copy of *Janus* at 5 cents a page (Ctein's figure) would cost \$3 an issue.

On the other hand, I can envision eventual development of a readout device that would be held like a book. However, the display quality would have to be several orders higher than now obtainable to be read for long periods without eye strain. Meanwhile, give me color rotogravure on high gloss Watervliet triple coat stock.





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...Jeanne, has anyone ever told you you have a bizarre sense of humor? Loved your graffiti ["The Funnies", *Janus* 10]. Likewise Greg [Rihn]'s "Planets of the Repast Cluster"; how nice to see someone spending their energy now and then on something so thoroughly and unabashedly silly-ass....

Jeff Hecht  
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Having finally seen *Close Encounters*, I can't resist a few comments and an (inevitable, I guess) comparison with *Star Wars*.

The most obvious quality of *Close Encounters* was its unevenness. It ranged from masterful presentation to pure hokum, and there was enough of the latter to spoil the effect for me. It's a shame—it was an ambitious film, far more ambitious than *Star Wars*. But the flaws kept it from being the masterpiece that *Star Wars* was.

Let me explain a bit the criteria on which I'm judging the films. One important one is the goal of the filmmaker. Lucas sought to commit Doc Smith-style SF from the '30s to film. He succeeded magnificently. On an artistic level, there is absolutely no reason why anyone else should bother to try to make such a movie—Lucas did it right, with so much attention to detail that there were very few holes left even for the nitpickers. *Star Wars* was a masterpiece. Yes, there will be sequels that I won't go to see; they serve a commercial purpose, and I understand enough economics to accept them for what they are. And, yes, there is the question of why anybody should bother making a '30s-style film, but—once you accept the premise that it is worthwhile—you have to concede that Lucas did it well.

*Close Encounters* updates SF to the '50s, but not much beyond. By all right and logic, it is Jillian, not Roy, who should have gone with the aliens. Her experience was far more intense and personal and involved her child. But Jillian is female and does not meet the dramatic requirements. And the theme is one that was treated most heavily in the '50s.

The failures in the film—and I'll just pick out a few—are largely matters of sloppiness, compounded by poor editing. The three-year-old boy who's kidnapped by the aliens bears little resemblance to any three-year-old I know—and I live with one. Like Diane and Richard, I am amazed at the aliens' inability to learn Earthly languages juxtaposed with their ability to convey and understand other symbols. Roy and Jillian both seemed to be living in circumstances that didn't correspond to economic reality. Union members are not fired over the telephone without formal hearings. And there was too much repetition and action going nowhere in the middle portion of the film. Was it, I wonder, rushed out when the producers heard about *Star Wars*?

The problems are additive, and I'm left puzzled by motivations and actions. Roy's transformation into believer just doesn't make sense. And there are too many other things, like Lacombe's background, motivations, and interactions with the Army, that are fuzzed over without enough elaboration. The combination of flaws—none of which itself is fatal—leaves me deeply dissatisfied with the film. At least partly it's frustration that Spielberg didn't lavish as much care on *Close Encounters* as Lucas did on *Star Wars*....

Brian Earl Brown  
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..."I'm also sick of tolerance," writes Karen Pearlischtein in the [*Janus* 10] lettercolumn. "Those who tolerate feminists, who tolerate lesbians and gay men, who tolerate blacks or East Indians aren't one whit better than those who out-and-out hate. In fact, I think they're a lot worse. It's much easier to identify and fight against an obvious enemy. They're buying us off with 'tolerance'.... To condemn tolerance is asking for [a return to] the days of the Spanish Inquisition or Hitler's Final Solution.... The growth of the concept of tolerance of others' beliefs or nature was, to my mind, one of the major advances of civilization during the past millennium. To suddenly condemn it now is utter irrationality.

But perhaps Karen is using "tolerate" in some other sense than the usual one of "permit; recognize and respect another's beliefs, practices, etc." How else could those who tolerate what they disagree with be the same as, if not worse than, those who blatantly hate? I think Karen is distinguishing between those who respect another's differences and those who merely refuse to take action against something they actually loathe. The difference between one who accepts another's difference and one who "puts up" with it is that the one who merely puts up with something may at some time reach a point where it is necessary to take action and suddenly turn from (supposed) ally to enemy.

But there is always a danger of betrayal in any movement, since no two people hold the same ideas or goals. To condemn tolerance is inflammatory, since it reduces the number of positions people can take. If it is a greater sin to tolerate what I disagree about, I'll probably not come to accept the legitimacy of what I disagree about, but merely come to openly hate it and work against it. Which is better, a silent majority or a vocal majority that hates you? That is the danger in indiscriminately condemning tolerance.

Angus M. Taylor  
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Amsterdam, Netherlands

Have received and digested *Janus* 10. I suppose there's not that much use in pointing out misprints, but I noticed a badly mangled sentence in my review of *The Iron Heel*. The sentence, on page 13, should read: "If one wants to



argue that cultural aspects of our existence depend to some considerable degree on the economic structure of society, one cannot logically then turn around and deny that social facts depend to some considerable degree on our place in nature."

The other reason for writing this letter is that I'd like to bring to your attention a book I'm sure you'd find very interesting: *Labor and Monopoly Capital* by Harry Braverman (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974). The title makes it sound dull as ditchwater, but, on the contrary, it's a fascinating, eye-opening, and mind-blowing book. I really couldn't put it down once I'd started to read it. I'm sure everyone who reads it is bound to look at society (especially...American [society]) in a new light. You'll learn more about the relation between technological innovation and social structure from this one book than from any hundred SF books. I can't recommend it highly enough. Please spread the word. Interestingly enough, it's already been mentioned in one fanzine: in *Supersonic Snail* 3 Bruce Gillespie said he read it "with awe".

The WisCon workshop on fascism and science fiction sounds quite interesting. I hope you will publish something from/about it in a future *Janus*. I have believed for some time now that quite a bit of SF, and especially the sword-and-sorcery sub-genre, contains distinctly fascist elements. No doubt this is a vicarious compensation for the powerlessness and frustration experienced by so many people under monopoly capitalism. Now all we have to do is wait for things to get unbearable and for a good demagog to turn up.

→ Avedon Carol  
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...[George] Fergus is wrong if he thinks EUG will eliminate all of the reasons for abortion. ["A Premature LoC", *Janus* 10.] Doesn't he realize that many women simply do not consider adoption a viable alternative? There are too many people out there who adopt children who I don't consider good enough to raise any children, let alone mine. Oh, you may think I've got a helluva nerve deciding who's good enough to raise kids and who ain't, but if I've got the power to see that my kid, at least, is not raised by some Anita Bryant fans, or John Birchers, or whatever other kind of anti-human yo-yos society can breed up, then I'm bloody well going to see to it that it doesn't happen. Krist, with so many people thinking that it's perfectly all right to go disowning your kid at the first sign of independence, or locking them up, or any of the numerous other tortures that parents design for kids, how can I in good conscience put my kid into the hands of strangers? Prospective adoptive parents go to agencies and institutions like they are grocery stores, stare at perfectly healthy kids, and then shake their heads and go home wondering why they can't find a kid to adopt—I'm gonna let people like that have a chance to raise my kid? A few months ago a fan, a perfectly nice guy, was kicked out and more or less disowned by his parents because they found out he'd taken LSD. They'd known him for about two decades, never seen him be a horrible person in any way, and here they are disowning him over a thing like that. Happens all the time. And you want me to give a life into hands which could be like that? Forget it, Charlie, I don't want the "decent people" of America getting a crack at my kid....

To Lizzy Lynn [letter, *Janus* 10]: Yeah, but does Kate [Wilhelm] really know any lesbians? Or women, for that matter? I mean, why the assumption that any woman who goes to bat for another woman who is being fucked over must be acting out of sexual desire, however repressed? What disgusted me about that characterization of Deena was not how it treats lesbians but how it treats any show of solidarity between women. Why did Deena have to be a deeply repressed lesbian to give a damn what was happening to Ann? Why must women who passionately defend other women always be portrayed as being psychologically screwed-up (the repression being the fucked-up part, of course—we hope), as if we couldn't support each other just because we can't stomach seeing somebody being fucked over? Why must our motivations always be sexual, as if we aren't capable of simply having real principles? It is merely a convenient device for Wilhelm to use lesbianism this way to devalue relationships between women. Ten years ago she might have used frigidity, or an empty womb, or some such other piece of nonsense. Today she can use lesbianism—it isn't so much how she portrays lesbians as how she uses them to make this insulting and dangerous point about female solidarity that gets to me.... And it really pisses me off that an author like Wilhelm uses the ignorance of her readers about lesbianism to drive home yet another stupid point about women, one which is so calculated to frighten women away from each other, to drive us apart, to keep us isolated from each other.

"Lesbianism is the albatross around the neck of the women's movement." Heh. Heterosexism is the albatross, the salt on our tails, the curse of our movement. Women must stop being afraid of being perceived as lesbians, or of being lesbians, if we are ever really going to get it together....

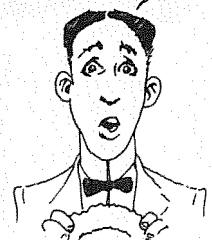
→ Don D'Amassa  
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Ctein is a bit premature with his remark that "the conventional nuclear heterosexual [family] is in the distinct minority." I'm not aware that any such thing has taken place, though I tend to agree with Ctein that it's high time the family did some evolving. But the vast majority of people in this country (and the world, for that matter) are still enmeshed in the nuclear family....

Jessica's objection [letter, *Janus* 10] to what she terms anti-feminist writing in *Janus* is interesting. Apparently she is assuming that there is, or should be, some monolithic feminist structure, with one truth that cannot be questioned. This is obviously untrue. I hope she's not fallen into the trap whereby members of a movement



HEAVENS,  
MADAM!  
YOUR  
LANGUAGE!





are pressured not to argue in front of non-members. That sort of activity lends a tone of illegitimacy to any set of beliefs. If a large number of feminists were to draw up their dream worlds, I'm certain there would be a lot of differences between them. And what one feminist might term "anti-feminist" would not necessarily hold true for another.

John Varley  
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...I'm pleased that [John Bartelt liked] my stories so much and thought ["The Worlds of John Varley" in *Janus* 11] was uncanny in the way it hit the mark, right down to picking out the stories I felt to be my weakest and strongest. There is a strange sort of ambivalence one feels when someone says that a story you thought to be minor is the best you have ever written. I mean, you don't want to contradict the person when he or she enjoyed the story. But in almost every case the stories [Bartelt] seemed to like the best were my own personal favorites.

I hesitate to point out the few errors in the fear that you might think I'm carping; I'm not. I only found two in any case, and will set them straight here not from any need to see them clarified in print but simply because you seem interested enough in the rather disjointed puzzle my series presents that I assume you'd like the real facts for your own use. The first is that my full name is John Herbert Varley, not Herbert John. (Boehm is my mother's maiden name, by the way; not a bad guess there.) The second concerns your conclusion that "Martian Kings" is part of the series (which I've taken to calling the Eight Worlds Series, for reasons that seemed good at the time). While I can't definitely say the story is not from the Eight Worlds—and have felt, after the fact, that it could be placed in that hazy time between now and the Invasion—your statement that a character from the story shows up in *The Ophiuchi Hotline* is not true. I'm assuming the character you're talking about is Javelin, who reveals that her original name was Mary Lisa Bailey and also says that she was the first woman on Mars. Unstated was the fact that she was not the first human on Mars. I can see how the confusion might arise, since many details are not clear to me, either. I know this isn't the best way to write a future history, but the fact is that the series has taken shape as I wrote it, and was not made to conform to any master plan in the manner of Heinlein. I sometimes wonder if this was wise.

[I read "In the Hall of the Martian Kings" a couple of months after *Hotline* and confused the former's Mary Lang with the latter's Mary Lisa Bailey. —JOHN BARTELT]

Oh, yes, there was a third error, also an easy one to make, as it seems I have almost invited confusion on this point. "Bagatelle" is not in the Eight Worlds, either. Lieutenant Bach is in an entirely different and much less inviting universe. The only real clue to this, which I would not expect the reader to pick up easily, is the huge population of New Dresden in the story. At the time of the Invasion, the population of Luna was no more than 5000 people. I think I stated this elsewhere but can't recall in which story. At any rate, Bach has her own series of stories, three of them at this writing. "The Barbie Murders" appeared in *Asimov's*—Number 5, I think—and the third, "The Bellman", will be in *The Last Dangerous Visions*.

There are two sort of "behind the scenes" comments I'd like to give you. One concerns the title of "Bagatelle". In truth, the story got finished without any title at all, which is rare for me. The one I used was the best of a bad lot, but has seemed more appropriate of what I was hoping to say as time has passed. I was seeing the bomb itself as a bagatelle—something not very important in its time and place. I was thinking of how so many people are dreading the advent of the private-enterprise nuclear device, and so set the story on the Moon, where no such bomb had yet been detonated. But I tried to contrast this with the situation on Earth, where many bombs had been exploded with great loss of life, and yet things were still going along pretty much as usual. It was my feeling that even this can be assimilated into the routine catalog of urban technological horror. We are appalled, just as we are at a terrorist kidnapping or a mugging or rape, but it is a commonplace, all the same.

The other thing is an admission. You spoke of the speed-of-light lag and its effects on economics. I really wish I could write that story, but I'm not equipped to do so. Economics is something I think is very important to the shape of possible futures, and something that is usually ignored, and I'm not good enough to deal with it adequately. When I touch on it, it is usually glancingly, just enough to hint at something interesting, without daring to expose my ignorance by getting down to specifics....



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Any chance of getting hold of a copy of "Alien Minds and Science Fiction, Part 1: Cats"? Cats is great. Which reminds me, just for the record, I have a story coming out in *New Voices* 3 [Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979, George

R. R. Martin, ed.], with a cat-character with whom I admit to being much taken. Nothing new in that, though—I have the warmest feelings for all my written-folks, for example the vampire and everybody else in the newest story. A lot of the pleasure of writing is the inner (as opposed to the outer; i.e. readers, other writers, and assorted real people) company, creation of.

Liked your review of *Oh, God!*; I just wish somebody hadn't chopped out a whole chunk of stuff about what the religious scholars had to say when the answers to the exam in Aramaic came in—clearly those big names and big faces were not all assembled there just to have about a line apiece and then get dropped by the wayside. John

Denver was remarkably non-nauseating. My one real complaint is about the never-ending boring pain-in-the-ass character, the whining wife. Cross-cut to the whining wife in *Close Encounters*, another pain in the ass. [That could be because both roles are played by the same person—Teri Garr, who was the police sergeant on TV's *McCloud* before becoming the lab assistant in *Young Frankenstein*. —DIANE MARTIN AND RICHARD S. RUSSELL] This isn't simple sexism exactly—it's illuminated by comparison with *Coma*, a real humdinger of a thriller in which the part of the whining wife ("You are crazy to believe this that you're telling me, and you're wrecking our life." is the gist of it.) is played by Michael Douglas. And you know what? He can't make anything of it either. And it was refreshing to have the hero a woman who is so gutsy and tough that (a) you believe that she's damn well fought her way through medical school and is a tad neurotic as part of that; and (b) you don't mind that at the end Douglas rescues her because she's really and truly done her share of being bright and bold and so on. Only, if the Douglas part had been played by a woman, you know also that the (male) hero (in that case) would have saved himself. Never mind; it's a pip of a film, although not deep. I don't care. Genevieve Bujold is spiffy in it, and is given plenty to do.

Jane Hawkins—thanks for the good words about my work, and my other work at this moment consists entirely in the cat-story abovementioned (It's really about a cat, a space pilot, and a space colony settled by traders from Nigeria.) and the vampire story likewise; the latter hasn't yet been sold, since it isn't quite polished off yet, so I can't tell you where it will appear. Notification soonest, since I'm very proud of this whole new development—I'm the one who has been running around for years protesting that I don't do short pieces because I didn't; and now I do (if 15,000 words is short), and I like it.

☆ Gordon Linzner  
138 W. 70th St. #4B  
New York, NY, 10023

Hooray for Diane Martin and Richard S. Russell and their review of *Close Encounters* [*Janus* 11].... I read that Ray Bradbury, on seeing the film, claimed, "Now they understand us." "They" being the public at large; "us" being SF people. I shudder at

being judged by such a film—it's like judging the appeal of astronomy by the (too prevalent) acceptance of astrology.

☆ Adrienne Fein  
26 Oakwood Av.  
White Plains, NY, 10605

...Maybe it's time for somebody to say a good word about Harlan Ellison. The NOW boycott of unratified states is meant to counter unfair practices on the part of the other side. Some legislators have voted against ERA, contrary

to the expressed will of a majority of voters in their states. They were pressured. By whom, we don't know exactly. The economic boycott is a way of waking up voters, merchants, hotel managers, [etc.] to lobby and apply economic pressure in favor of the expressed will of the voters. Reasonable compromises, especially when these involve honoring prior commitments, are fine, perfectly acceptable. Publicizing the issue is very important. Just what an acceptable compromise consists of is ultimately up to each individual—no matter how much NOW or any person or group can help by contributing ideas. Harlan Ellison has obviously tried very hard to come up with the best possible compromises for himself. Good for him....

[Farther on in the letter column, we are publishing a number of responses to Harlan Ellison's article which were sent directly to him and forwarded to us.]

☆ Victoria Wayne  
Box 156 Station D  
Toronto, Ont., M6P 3J8

...When *Janus* was nominated for a Hugo, my reaction was that I didn't feel it deserved it. Now, with Number 10, I'd say that if all your 1978 issues are as good, next year it will deserve it. But the problem (if such it is) is

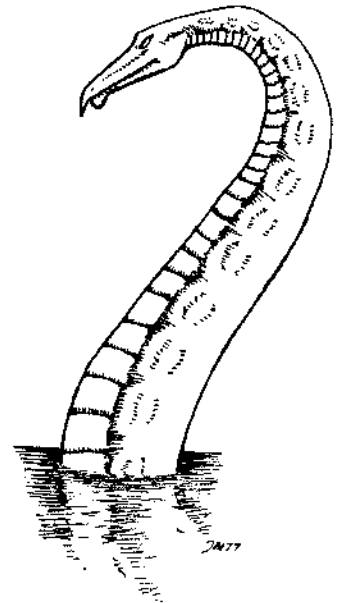
1977, and not *Janus* or the two of you editing it, but the Hugos themselves and the political climate of fandom.

The Hugos are a farce at the moment; *Locus* keeps getting nominated over and over and over, and, although it does its job well enough, one can hardly call it the best when stacked against many of the lower-circulation efforts. *SFR* is a little hazier; I do like it and if it were competing on equal terms with lower-circulation zines I'd feel more comfortable. But what else have we got? *Maya* I think is the only candidate this year that deserves it unreservedly; *Don-O-Saur* quite frankly has seen better days and is riding on momentum of its past glories. And *Mythologies*, a zine that I do think is right up there with the best, wasn't nominated at all, an omission that doubly galls me when I see the actual outcome of the nominations for comparison.

Next year, when (as I suspect it will) *Janus* deserves a Hugo nomination, I would certainly want very much for this nomination to take place and be quite disgruntled with fannish objectivity if it weren't. But, I'd like to see it nominated without the politically motivated voters backing it in the way that I suspect is a strong influence now. Are you sure *Janus* wasn't nominated because it is a feminist fanzine? I'm sure a bad feminist zine wouldn't get such accolades, but I do wonder if such differences are only marginal in quality. I'd be much happier if I were sure *Janus* was on that ballot solely because of its quality....

☆ Hilde M. Hildebrand  
4522 E. Bowker St.  
Phoenix, AZ, 95040

...As the programmer for A Place of Our Own, I am trying to follow Susan's advice. We do have two rooms, one for formal program items and one for a lounge (although chairs may be of the folding type), and I am trying to get as many qualified





women as I can for the panels. As it now stands I have no all-male panels. Our programming has been felt to be of such interest that two of our panels have been scheduled in large meeting rooms as a part of the major programming. I think this new awareness of the importance of non-sexist programming bodes well for the con....

➔ Alexis A. Gilliland  
4030 8th St. S.  
Arlington, VA, 22204

Please let me correct Susan Wood's excellent article ["People's Programming", *Janus* 11] on a point of fact: I did not arrange the programming at DisCon 2. That task was performed by Joe Haldeman, Alan Huff, and Dave Bischoff. Susan most likely remembered our dealings in bringing Mae Strelkov up from Argentina, and thus gives me unmerited credit.

The essence of her proposed Women's Room—a place where one goes to relax with members of one's own sex—is analogous to the all-male club which has existed since the dawn of history....

➔ Jane Hawkins  
Box 1184  
Seattle, WA, 98111

Holy smokes! It's three weeks after WisCon, and I still haven't written to you! Sometimes I look at my stack of things to do and wonder if all my seeming activity is just tail-biting. Do I ever get anything accomplished?

Anyway, I wanted to pass on to you some of my reactions. In particular, I had a discussion with Doug Price Sunday night...that keeps returning to me. I certainly respect Doug for wearing that "Gripe at Me" badge. You know you're going to get shit if you do that, but it's good to give people some outlet. What he said that night was that he'd heard lots of people complaining about WisCon's feminist emphasis. He seemed worried about it, afraid that people had been disappointed by the con. I think he got a very biased sample of opinion. People always cuss louder than they praise, and Doug invited the cussers to hassle him. I frankly have no sympathy for that kind of complaint about WisCon. Anyone who went there and didn't expect a lot of feminist stuff was a fool.

Hey, two feminist GoHs, a fanzine known as feminist, and a con billed that way—where is the surprise? Sure, someone who was hostile to or bored by feminism wouldn't have liked WisCon. BFD. They can go to over a hundred different cons for their belly dancers and sexist jokes. WisCon drew people from all over the country because it was a feminist con, and where else do you find that?

Someone said within earshot of me that the programming was repetitious. I found that amusing, because he was talking to one person while the eight people in our group were groaning over having to miss one panel to hear a reading! Yeah, and all blacks are alike to a bigot. If WisCon was repetitious, I want to be repeated to death.

WisCon did have a few problems, but I felt they were mostly minor. Jeanne tells me that major programming won't be run against the art auction next year, which is good. I got the art I wanted much more easily than I should have. (I suppose that's an odd complaint to make!) Also, I'd like to see a few open opaces in programming for lunch and dinner. I half-starved myself in order to see the stuff I wanted to. (That's another odd complaint, since I didn't mind dropping a few pounds!)

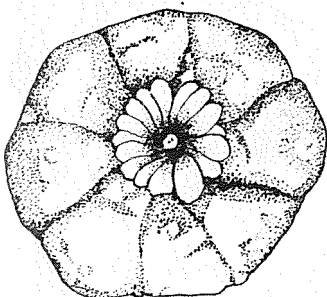
One impressive thing about WisCon was the difference in party atmosphere. There was loud talking, some drinking, people-carpeted floors—all the usual and yet not quite. For one thing, there was virtually no smoking in the parties. I'm a smoker, but I still liked that. I could go into the hallway to smoke, and didn't have to breathe the fumes of 20 other people as well. Even more interesting was the relative lack of heavy drinking. Since there weren't formal prohibitions on that, I was surprised. It seemed that people were bent on talking, getting to know each other, and not on getting stewed to the gills. Neat.

I think that last paragraph is an example of why I'm calling WisCon the best con I've ever been to. I've been to a couple dozen and seldom fail to enjoy myself. But WisCon seemed so pleasantly personal. I mean "personal" as in "friendly" and "accepting" rather than in "nosy" and "pushy"....

Ctein opened quite a can of worms with his article. I found the discussion of possible new reproductive techniques [NRT] interesting, but disagreed with his extrapolations of social effects. I've broken my argument into three rough categories, changes caused by NRT in: sexuality, attitudes towards women, and the acceptance of gays. I believe changes, if any, will be minute....

First, sexuality in humans has little to do with reproduction. Even among heteros, a miniscule percentage of sex acts result in pregnancies. An even smaller percentage is intended to make babies! The existence of any sex drive is certainly related to propagation of the species; however, the expression of that sex drive in an individual is strongly influenced by cultural and personal considerations. I doubt that many people are swayed by reproductive factors in the choice of their sexual expression. There are gays who wish children and active heteros who do not....

The second part of my discussion is the possibility of changes concerning women as a result of NRT.... Ctein says methods such as partheno would increase the autonomy of women. "Any woman going the partheno route doesn't need men...." Our society says women "need" men due to some "natural" dependency. Whether or not women require men in order to have babies, people will still consider a manless woman incomplete. NRT would not mean that "a woman can live her own life, without question...." Ctein feels NRT might change a woman's viewpoint on her own autonomy. If true, such women would be fools. Autonomy at its most basic means the ability to feed, clothe, and



house oneself. Social conditioning combined with discriminatory job practices make this difficult for a woman, even without children. The existence of NRT would not solve these problems.

Gay women who desire children would benefit from NRT. The alternatives of adoption, artificial insemination, or a one-night stand are either closed or distasteful to lesbians. However..., I do not think NRT would benefit the status of gays, either male or female. Ctein suggests that objections to separatism and homosexuality are partly based on nonviability. Maybe, but I doubt that that is a major factor. The Anita Bryants of the world think gays are disgusting, period. If gays started reproducing, such people would probably get even more upset.

In all of the above arguments, I've assumed NRT will be widely available. I doubt that. I think most of them will be very expensive. Even partheno, which might involve simply a chemical douche, would probably be high-priced. For all of these reasons, I think NRT will have negligible impact on our culture. Some people may be able to have babies who presently can't, but the numbers involved wouldn't be enough to even threaten ZPG....

I respect Marlan Ellison's position. Now I must make my decisions. I've only just begun to work on it. Should I go? I'm not a GoH and few people would miss me. If I go, should I camp? I've camped during a Southwest summer, and it is bad. If I camp, how will I get to the hotel?... If I sound plaintive, I am. I really believe in the NOW boycott. I hear Kansas City and Chicago have lost enough money to generate lawsuits against their state legislatures. Just imagine all those money-minded business people out lobbying for ERA!... It's eerie—all this controversy over my equal rights under the law. Why is this such a big deal? I just want the law to recognize women as full people. What is frighteningly radical about that? Sometimes I refuse to believe it's happening, that the ERA could actually go down.... And what am I doing to help?...

➔ **Sara Tompson**  
Lincolnshire W. Apts. #1112  
DeKalb, IL, 60115

...some comments on WisCon 2 itself. My major complaint is that the con distinctly lacked partying: not many attended the Friday night "all-con" party at the union, and the party suite was never very lively,

except for war-gaming. I realize that the con was intended to be somewhat scholarly, but all the scholars I know party occasionally! My friends and I repeatedly got the distinct impression that partying was uncool; if we got at all rowdy, Madisonites would either sneer at us or act as if 'twas unholy to revel at a scholarly con. So, Friday eve we had to resort to the union's *Rathskellar* (not a bad resort!), and Saturday night we had our own "Chicago-area" party, and I swear that we were the only parties in the Madison Inn! It's a shame that the con members weren't friendlier and less uptight, so we could've partied together.

I'm not putting down the scholarly orientation of WisCon, just the attitude of the organizers towards such an orientation, because the main reason I attended WisCon was that I was excited about its feminist/scholarly orientation. Feminism and fantastic fiction are two very important aspects of my life, but they've always been dichotomous. Thus it was real exciting attending WisCon, talking with Susan Wood and Vonda McIntyre, and attending the very stimulating panel on juvenile role models in SF and the more sluggish, but still neat, large panel on "Feminism: To Grasp the Power To Name Ourselves; SF: To Grasp the Power To Name Our Future". I came away from WisCon with a very positive belief that I can integrate the feminist and fantastic fiction (fantasy and SF) aspects of my life, 'cuz other women fans are doing it, and helping each other, and growing stronger...

[It is always frustrating when all the magic that allows people to enjoy the parties at SF conventions doesn't work out. Some of us Madison committee types were probably too wasted by the convention's responsibilities and duties to cut a high profile in the evenings. It is true we had some problems in Madison and also some different priorities. There wasn't a good place for folksinging, for instance. As for our different priorities, when, at one recent convention, early Sunday morning, after the third teenager got done telling me how sick they were or how often they had thrown up, I was suddenly more sure than ever that it really was unnecessary for us to provide free booze. It is so much more efficient and responsible for each individual to bring her or his own vices. On the other hand, the free bar at many cons provides a social focus, a place to hang out and meet people, that seemed to be lacking at WisCon. We were all pleased, though, that you enjoyed WisCon in spite of our difficulties. —HANK LUTTRELL]

➔ **Bill Gibson**  
3180 W. 3rd St.  
Vancouver, BC, V6K 1N3

...Fascism and SF [one of the WisCon panels] is one of my pet topics. In fact, I actually started reading SF again, after having gone off it for seven or eight years—this was about five years ago—because I was working on some Orwell essays when I was a student and read one called "Raffles and Miss Blandish", which deals with Orwell's ideas on pulp lit as an essentially fascist art form. *Re* Speer's architecture—which looked an awful lot like Frank R. Paul's, only classier—anyone looking for a solid semiological basis for a Nazi/sci-fi linkup should find Donald Bush's *The Streamlined Decade* and have a look....

➔ **Buck Coulson**  
Route 3  
Hartford City, IN, 47348

...Lessee. Frankly, I don't think women in science fiction should work so hard at the "separate but equal" status; I'm an integrationist. Fewer women-only panels and more women on panels in general. (But since I don't at-



What kind of con is this —?

tend convention programming anyway, unless a friend is up there speaking, it doesn't really matter, as far as I'm concerned. Wouldn't bother me if the entire program was feminist; I'd attend about the same percentage of it that I do now, which is a pretty small percentage.) However, "separate but equal" seems to be a phase in group development; blacks worked hard to get it, 50 or 60 years ago (and equally hard to get rid of it, 20 years ago, and now seem to be coming back to it in some areas). Women, in and out of fandom, will probably follow the same pattern....

➡ Katherine MacLean  
30 Day St.  
South Portland, ME, 04106

...remembering that I'd gotten put down for [my position on woman's lib] at the first WisCon, I decided that I was fighting some kind of social pressure to be Uncle Tom, nice about it all, and glory in small gains and concessions like the drift of mood in *Janus*. When asked about it, I say generations of slavery breeds for docile happy slaves.

I decided to take the lid off and see just how anti-social I was under a learned habit of not phrasing the basic feeling under my thoroughly aggressive, almost butch, lifestyle.

IQ#5%ç6\*()-- Human sexual instinct is against race survival!

As evolved animals, developing intelligence and skill and speed and foresight and empathy and justice, preserving our seed and the seed of the whole planet, looking forward to spreading sentient delighting life through the empty planets of the universe—in that picture, what the hell place is there for cultivating or admiring a sex impulse that in the male admires two large obstructive dangling bunches of fat on the front of a worker who has to be able to run, carry things against the chest, and use arms and hands in constant work? Don't kid yourselves that it is survival by efficiency that hangs these large, pain-sensitive, inconvenient boobs up front on the female. What put them there was selection by the insane non-survival sex choices of the male.

Even more unbelievable is a sociocultural attraction in the males of this culture toward weak, sickly, skinny, whining, flattering females who have to be helped over puddles and in and out of cars and through doors like someone's doddering grandfather. Some males seem to honestly feel an attraction toward invalidism, anemia, and disease.... Males who honestly want to choose invalids as their breeding partners and 24-hour-a-day houseworker and raiser of their children, would have bred themselves into racial extinction as a personality type if it were not for earnest mothers and older brothers who pass on the word to younger femmes, "Mary, kiddo, you shouldn't beat the boy in the race, and you shouldn't get better marks than he does or he won't like you. You'll never have any dates. Smart girls act dumb." These same "smart girls" acting dumb keep invalid-loving males going....

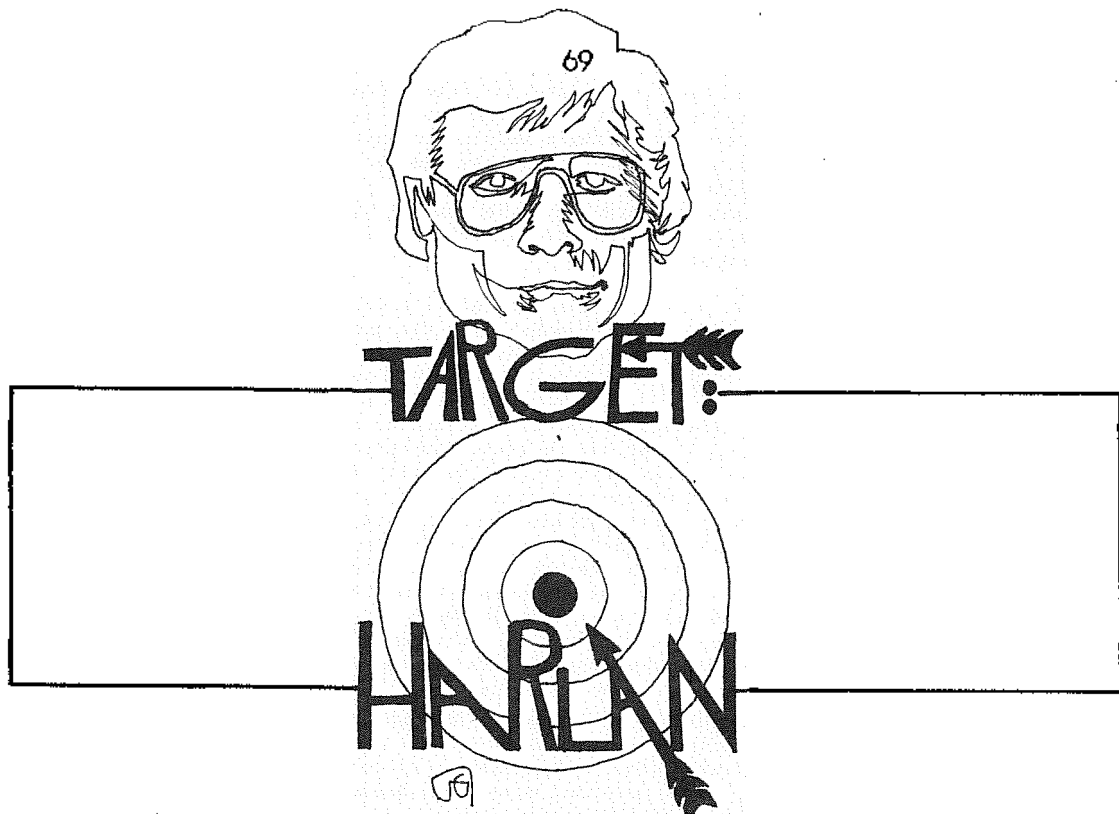
What I mean is, we are all the prey and puppets of ridiculous instincts, and yet we believe we must indulge them in order to have a full life and avoid neurosis—let alone have any adult sex fun. Okay, can't we enjoy lust without letting it make a hash of our thinking power?

I prefer to look forward to an improved human race, somewhere, somewhen, men do not go around obsessed by fat bumps or where women enjoy male ferocity and command...I hope.



wahf

[We also heard from Lester Boutillier, Steve Brown, Richard Bruning (2x), Christine T. Callahan, Lee Carson, Suzy McKee Charnas, C. J. Cherryh (2x), Jeff Clark, Thomas J. Clark, Gina Clarke, C. C. Clingan, Ctein, Leslie Dock, Alex Eisenstein, Harlan Ellison (2x), Adrienne Fein, Robert Frazier, Gil Gaier, Virginia Galko, Terry Garey, J. Owen Hanner, Arthur Hlavaty, Margaret Henry, Internal Revenue Service, Mary Kay Jackson, Rebecca Jirak, Cal Johnson, Ursula K. Le Guin, Vicky Loebel, Liz Lynn, Laurie D. T. Mann, Bill Marcinko, Jim McLeod, Seth McEvoy, Vonda McIntyre, Pauline Palmer, Joyce Corinne Peterson, Victoria Poyser (2x), Neil Rest, Andy Richards, R. H. Ruben, Dan Steffan, Erwin S. "Filthy Pierre" Strauss, Tesseract Science Fiction, Theresa Troise-Heidel, Dave Truesdale, United Bank and Trust, United States Postal Service, John Varley, David Vereschagin, and Susan Wood.]



[As everyone expected, Harlan Ellison's position concerning the ERA and this year's World Science Fiction Convention, published in Janus 10 and elsewhere, provoked a torrent of reactions. We are going to publish an edited selection of that reaction because we feel that it is interesting and instructional. To try to print a truly representative fraction of the response would be beyond the limits of our resources.

[Some of the reaction, such as that of Fan Guest of Honor Bill Bowers, have been published and discussed elsewhere (in Mike Glicksohn's Xenium in Bowers's case). What follows are some of the most interesting, pertinent, and representative of the letters we received or that were forwarded to us by Ellison. Other reactions, such as Roland Green's letter, were simply too long. Green detailed some possible difficulties and suggested positive ways of implementing a limited boycott of Arizona during the convention. Copies of Green's letter and Ellison's response may be requested from Janus. Please include 50¢ for expenses. —THE EDITORS]

➡ **Ruthann Quindlen**  
National Organization for Women  
425 13th St. NW #1001  
Washington, DC, 20004

I am a staff person for [NOW] in Washington, DC. I have always been a fervent and constant lover of science fiction. It is no coincidence that these two loves are combined in one person; I have found science-fiction fans and writers to be pro-

gressive and open-minded.

Thank you for your statement of December 5. It moved my soul (besides sending shivers down my back and a great shout of joy from my mouth). Thank you and thank the WorldCon for providing the forum to publicize the plight of women in this country....

NOW is attempting to bring about ratification through two major strategies—the ERA boycott and a move to extend time for ratification of the ERA. Delaying tactics are being used effectively in state legislatures—the clock runs out in March 1979. An arbitrary deadline is cutting off discussion on the most necessary amendment of our time. A joint resolution requesting the time extension is before Congress now; Congress adjourns in September, and the bill must be passed before then. It appears that the bill is in trouble; the same groups who oppose ratification are opposing the extension. Please appeal to the fans, writers—anyone—to support our efforts.

Thank you again for your stirring words. Your stories will have an even greater impact upon me now that I know the type of person behind those words!

➡ **Judith A. Lucero**  
1115 W. 28th St. #311  
Minneapolis, MN, 55408

Because I support the Equal Rights Amendment and the economic boycott of those states in which the ERA has not been ratified, I intend to spend as little money as possible on Arizona products when I attend IguanaCon.

Harlan Ellison...has made an excellent suggestion: that the IguanaConCom prepare a list of acceptable campsites for convention attendees who don't want to stay at the Phoenix hotels. I strongly urge the committee to prepare such a list and to make it available to IguanaCon members.

Mr. Ellison's suggestion does pose a problem: I will probably be attending the convention alone; no doubt Arizona has its share of nasty people—people whose acquaintance I do not care to make, most especially not at three a.m. on some deserted campground.



It is likely that there are others planning to attend the convention [who would be] experiencing the same dilemma. In light of that fact, [the committee] might consider designating a selected campsite The (Semi-)Official Safety-in-Numbers IguanaCon Alternative to the Hotels, and/or putting together a list of people looking for camp-neighbors.

I sympathize with and am in support of Mr. Ellison's views and intentions as expressed in his above-mentioned letter. I look forward to hearing them in person at the IguanaCon....

Ann Crimmins  
Connecticut NOW  
3 Round Hill Rd.  
Granby, CT, 06035

I have watched with delight your growing feminism (concurrent with mine) over the many years I have enjoyed reading what you write. For a while it was frustrating to read science fiction because I'd become too uppity to tolerate sexist attitudes when I read for pleasure. It's not quite as frustrating today. Any-

way, when I received a copy of your letter concerning the IguanaCon and the ERA economic boycott, I just had to thank you personally. What you are planning to do will no doubt help our efforts to gain equality for all people—and it will help in a way most of us can't manage ourselves.

One thing I have noticed is that most feminists also read SF. This means that most of us will be aware of what's going on in Phoenix at the end of the summer. It's hard to convey the excitement we feel that an Important Person is doing something difficult for him to help the cause of the ERA. We've all been working so hard that it's easy to develop some sort of tunnel vision and begin to believe that nobody out there in the real world knows or cares much about what we're doing. I know it's not true, but hearing from you that ERA is important and worth "walking the walk" gives me and others the needed boost to go out there and do our thing again....

[Jeezus, kiddo, you have no idea what a propitious moment for your letter to arrive. Bolstering, simply bolstering. On a day when the slopebrows really had at me. Six letters today from SF fans—all male, five in states that haven't ratified—assuring me I'm an asshole, subversive beyond belief in my efforts to "undermine fandom" and piss on their convention.

[I suppose I shouldn't be startled that the percentage of schlubs' in fandom is about the same as in the population at large, but when one has served a 30-year apprenticeship as a reader, fan, and writer of SF, to be confronted by such unthinking, selfish, bone stupidity is dismaying beyond belief. I've long known that the mass of SF fans are no better, wiser, hipper, concerned than the American average, and it has turned me into a strident critic. Love has been turned sour. I was brought up to expect so damned much from readers of this genre, and I've been so regularly disappointed, that the milk has curdled.

[I expect Phoenix to be a nightmare.

[But it'll probably be a lot more boring than either Selma or the Century City riot. —HARLAN ELLISON]

F. Paul Wilson  
Box 774  
Breton Woods, NJ, 08723

...Since when do you allow the actions of Bible-thumpers and vote-mongers to determine where you shall meet with your friends and colleagues? Since when do yokels and dunces pull your strings? Do you really mean that if you weren't GoB, you'd stay away from the WorldCon because a state legislature didn't pass an amendment? If ERA goes down and out nationwide—and it looks like it will—are you going to leave the country?

I won't debate ERA since it falls into the same category as "Is there a God?" and "At what instant during gestation does abortion become murder?". But I will say I'm shocked to hear you support a measure that will further increase the near-totalitarian power the federal government now holds over our lives. I never saw you as a do-what-I-do/see-what-I-see/think-what-I-think/be-like-me-or-I'll-throw-you-in-jail mentality. But that's what the ERA is all about.

I've noticed an inherent fascism in the women's movement, and nowhere is it more evident than in the Larry Flynt case: the women's groups slavered—and are still slaving—for his blood. Fuck the First Amendment, give us Flynt's head! They howl about liberation but don't know a goddamn thing about liberty. It's the Monkey Trial all over again, and the women's libbers are backing Wm. Jennings Bryan....

Michael A. Armstrong  
Box 13020 Airgate Branch  
Sarasota, FL, 33578

...In theory you are right, and I think I can in good conscience support you. But there are a few other hard places in this issue, too, and I think you should know about them.

For instance: I live in Sarasota, a nice, quiet, somewhat progressive resort area on the west coast of Florida. It's not Miami Beach, and it's not dizzyworld. In some respects it is your typical Florida tourist trap, but in other respects it is not. Sarasota has nice beaches, good hunks of Florida wilderness that it is trying its best to keep from becoming condo and concrete and phosphate pit.... It has culture, it has art, it has music, and, by the way, one or two SF writers.... There's a small community of young, liberal, progressive people who are trying to make a go at survival. Most, if not all, of these people support the ERA. Unfortunately, they were not strong enough, or big enough, to stop our two state senators, Warren Henderson and Tom Gallen, from killing the ERA in the last session of the legislature.

Hard place: Florida votes "no" on the ERA: NOW says to boycott Florida. Flor-





ida depends on tourist money for its economic survival. Sarasota depends on tourist money. In Sarasota there are small businesses, new artists, writers, actors, and theater groups who depend (in varying degrees) on tourist money. A lot of these progressive Sarasota groups will be hurt (in varying degrees) by the NOW boycott. These people are on the same side as ERA, as NOW. Maybe the NOW boycott will convince Florida to go for ERA—and maybe, in the process, it will destroy what little hope there is for a progressive community in this town....

That's how it is in Florida; I can imagine that in Arizona there must be similar groups of progressive, liberal, pro-ERA people who are trying to change Arizona but who, ironically, must depend on tourist dollars to help effect that change....

Your decision *re* the IguanaCon seems fair. I'll walk the walk with you. In Phoenix there must be bookstores, record stores, movie houses, art cinemas, and theaters that are progressive, that support ERA. If the SF community can support them, while at the same time not supporting the anti-ERA forces and businesses, then, yeah, it's a good thing. I think this is what you are advocating, and, if so, that's fine, that's good. I just feel that you should be aware that some of us out here are in the uncomfortable position of trying to effect change in places that are still struggling out of the Stone Age. It's not easy, and it isn't made any easier by the unfortunate effects of the ERA boycott. But we try....

[...The comments you made, and the conundrums you raise, have, of course, loomed large in my thinking. Such problems of individual inconvenience always arise when an action on a socio-economic level threatens to shake up the status quo. Somebody will always get stiffed a little bit, no matter how thoroughly one tries to plan for all contingencies: a few thugs will make a profit unjustly, and a few good people who are "on the side of the angels" will get jerked around unjustly.

[But I think the danger of personalizing such enormous movements and social currents is that one can immobilize oneself with wild rationalizations and hypothetical problems. Clearly, it is the commonweal that must be served. The good that can be done should be weighed against the actual negative effects on innocents. In this case, all we're talking about is an impairment of "business as usual". No one will lose a meal or his job or the love of her peers. A few less sales will be rung up. That, placed against the benefits to women, is truly inconsequential.

[Nevertheless, ends never justify means if a mass of people will be seriously ravaged. Those who support the good deed, even though they may personally be asked to suffer some small hardship or inconvenience (and I think "inconvenience" is the operable word; there's not even a shadow of possibility of genuine travail here), should and usually do understand that they're caught in the grinder—that because of where they live they'll have to take a part of the rap for their less-conscientious neighbors. But hasn't that ever been the circumstance? Many of us hated Nixon, didn't vote for him, actively fought him, and inevitably helped bring him down; but while he was legally in office we had to suffer under his presidency. It's unfortunate, but inescapable.

[We'd all like the angst to go away. But until we make a better world, those of us who would much prefer to sleep in the VIP suite in 120° Arizona heat will have to grit our teeth and pitch them tents. —HARLAN ELLISON]

[Periodically, someone here in Wisconsin complains that the state as a whole ships off considerably more money to Washington in the form of taxes than it gets back in the form of federal spending. Wisconsin's two US senators, Gaylord Nelson and William Proxmire, point out that that's primarily because they haven't pushed to get any large military bases in the state. They don't apologize for their attitude. I applaud them for it; if it costs me higher state and local taxes, it's a small price to pay for not supporting militarism. —RICHARD S. RUSSELL]

Mark Wakely  
1 S. 437 Lewis Av.  
Lombard, IL, 60148

What I have to say probably won't change certain plans of yours, but when I hear that someone I respect is about to throw himself under the feet of the ignorant masses, I feel compelled to at least make an effort to stop him.

Let me approach it this way. Fans are people. People, in general, are concerned about a handful of things: money, sex, food, clothes, shelter, good times. All else is ancillary. You propose to ask fans to rally to the cause of ERA at the WorldCon this summer. Unfortunately, ERA doesn't fall into any of the previously mentioned categories.

I am not anti-fannish. But fans—in general—don't know, and they don't care, about anything that doesn't directly concern them. If you wanted them to rally for more food at the convention, or more sex, or better rooms, you'd have an overwhelming response. But what you want to do is win support for something that really doesn't mean a goddam thing to fans. Harsh words, perhaps, but true. ERA is important, and the Arizona legislature should pass the amendment immediately, but what in the fuck does ERA have to do with WorldCon?

It is not unlike Vanessa Redgrave denouncing neo-Nazism and Communism at the Academy Awards. And remember what Paddy [Chayefsky] had to say about that. Harlan, you would accomplish more for the ERA with a small demonstration on the steps of the Arizona state capitol than you will by knocking your brains out at WorldCon with 2000 apathetic fans.

After the St. Louis convention in 1969, you wrote that you went through some pretty strange times. But, as the song says, you ain't seen nothin' yet. The worst



HEY, MISTAH!  
YA SEEN  
MY BALL?



thing that could possibly happen to you will happen. You will be virtually ignored. You will sleep outside in your tent, surrounded by a few loyal-to-Harlan supporters, not ERA supporters, then they will disappear one by one and without apologies, and you will be alone in your pursuit of equal rights for women. And if you raise a stink, you will be hated. Not openly hated, not like the St. Louis crowd, but laughed-at hated. Ignored hated. Silently hated.

Why? Because you dare to deny the fans their pursuit of good times. You dare to spread fans around by boycotting the hotel, destroying the sense of community and comradeship the fans expect of every convention. You dare to risk putting the convention in the red by asking fans not to spend money. You dare to make it the World-Con That Wasn't.

I'm sorry, but fans didn't pay \$20 to get in and travel all that way to attend an ERA convention. To them, the issue is science fiction and fun, not mainstream politics. I'm not judging that good or bad, I'm just saying that's the way it is. They're just people, Harlan. What else could you expect? Few of them share your worthwhile ideals.

I like you too much to see your good intentions shattered by jerks, but that's exactly the way things are headed. ERA is imperative, but not at the cost of making Harlan Ellison bitter and resentful of the science-fiction community.

[...thanks for the good thoughts. No one ever said that behaving ethically was comfortable or easy. If it were, there wouldn't be so many "good Germans" or "Nixon apologists" in the world.

[It'll be okay. You'll see. —HARLAN ELLISON]

➡ Juanita S. Bell  
14224 N. Newcastle Dr.  
Sun City, AZ, 85351

...I have some doubts about the method you chose for stressing passage of the ERA. Arizona tourist season is roughly November through April. Wealthy guys and those who run the motels, restaurants, etc., can mostly weather the other six months. Simple and practical. They lay off the help. It follows that any out-of-season convention will mean extra help hired and more tips for all employees. I fear the people most forcefully affected by any boycott will be those who can least afford it. Perhaps I'm wrong....

While I heartily agree with most of the goals of the feminist movement, I am most unhappy about others. Especially in the area of the sexual revolution. I think it may be downright dangerous to insist on full sexual equality. Of course male powers have often and for long been abused; power is abused. And there may be a purely personal element in my objections. Well, of course there is. I would much rather somebody else do the sweating and humping, while I quietly accept and enjoy. I am lazy.

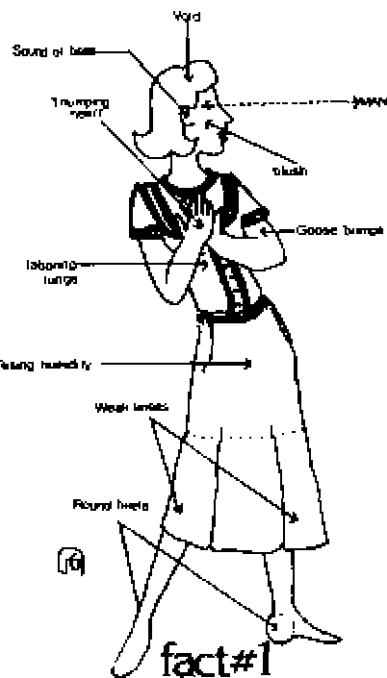
There is, I concede, some point to all the uproar about...a female...being a sexual object or toy. But let's not get all emotional and wrought up. We will stick to facts. Basic, fundamental, irrefutable, cold, hard facts. No Biblical quotations or hysterical screams.

Fact #1. There is a certain special physiological and sexual response made by a woman over which she has absolutely no control. At times—not always, but often enough—a woman is literally overwhelmed by the male presence. Her heart starts pounding, insides just melt away, she has great difficulty in breathing, and her emotions are in turmoil. Then she becomes languorous and weak. Her knees give away, she can't stand up, and truly she just rolls over and waits for it to happen to her. (I'm having trouble even writing about it.) This can be a beautiful or it can be a horrendous experience; it depends entirely on the man involved, dear heart, because the lady definitely is powerless to do anything. She is, for the time being, (1) susceptible, (2) supine, (3) submissive. And don't you by damn dare try to tell me that you don't enjoy every minute of it! You male chauvinist, you.

This reaction never occurs in a man. It is a feminine sexual response that comes without warning, and sometimes even to a man whom you actually dislike. A bewildering, helpless feeling—oh, I give up. Anyway, this is beyond even instinctual response. And in my opinion there must be a terribly important meaning to it,... quite as important as the fear/fight adrenalin response. There is absolutely nothing "equal" about it, Harlan.

Fact #2. Consider this: anthropologists, psychologists, zoologists, and all them there kind of researchers have positively established that throughout the warm-blooded animal kingdom in the mammalian and avian species (and perhaps others I don't know about), the male courts, threatens, chases and woos, and sometimes punishes. The female presents. You can't believe it even after you've seen it as done by whales. It's delicious to watch in sparrows and other small birds. It's noisy and groupie as done by cats and dogs. And by a woman—she steps into your private space with full front to you and tilts her lips into kissing position. She may smooth your hair or adjust your upper clothing in some way. And, brother, you know she is presenting....

I go from the lower orders to homo sap, both genders. We should be very careful before we let the male abandon his responsibilities and...force on the woman an unequal equality. Male supremacy is such a universal factor in warm-blooded animals it verges on the elemental and may even be a categorical imperative. I intuit that by insisting on female sexual equality we are horsing around with an important racial survival trait, and we may be seeking racial suicide....



Barbara Delhotel  
402 S. Roosevelt St.  
Wichita, KS, 67218

...I'd like to urge you not to attend IguanaCon as Guest of Honor. Let me explain why. I attended BYOBCon 5 in 1975; before that time, I voraciously read SF, but only if it were in a plain brown wrapper or if I were in the privacy of my own home. I know no one else in Wichita who read SF, and BYOBCon was my first convention. I shamelessly followed you around, too dumbstruck to introduce myself, and I learned a great deal about you and about writing. I realized that you are a man of integrity in the fine old sense of the word, and that you are truthful and outspoken to an uncomfortable fault. In the light of Watergate, I was amazed to find such an anachronism as Harlan Ellison.

I know you feel you should honor your commitment as GoH. But please consider those of us attending IguanaCon. Not all of us belong to the mindless, devouring hordes of cretins lovingly referred to as "fandom". Some of us attend cons in order to have some contact with writers and their craft, especially those of us not fortunate enough to live in Los Angeles. We revel in the good news that right does overcome, that writers can be successful without selling out to the public, that honesty in life and art does still live. It sounds corny, but what kind of encouragement do you find in the world around you? My answer is, "too damned little". Some of us attend cons to talk SF with friends and strangers who become friends through SF. Turning the con into a demonstration for ERA and against Arizona is unfair to us who have little SF stimulation and conversation back home in Punkin Center, USA.

If you are not GoH, I personally will not attend IguanaCon. It is not worth it to me to spend the money...to be treated to the fiasco of another Robert Heinlein or to the incessant "amonoooth" of a Wilson Tucker. I attend several local cons for fun and do not need to sear my brains in Arizona over Labor Day to enjoy myself. I was looking forward to hearing some straightforward talk about SF and the world around it, but I don't need to battle mobs unless there's an Ellison, Le Guin, or Wilhelm to hear from.

I feel that backing out at this stage of the game is the only solution. If the 5000 possible fans descend on the local KOA in tents or park it on the sidewalk outside the hotel, the resulting publicity and arrests would adversely affect SF conventions in general as well as ERA. Such media exposure would convince the middle-aged housewives against ERA that they are right. They would feel justified in their beliefs that ERA would: (1) draft their daughters and overdevelop their left biceps from carrying M-1 rifles in the war zones; (2) create unisex toilets on the streets like those unspeakable French people have; and (3) seduce their granddaughters and turn them into lesbians like all the rest of the proponents of ERA.

[In the event of your withdrawal] the con committee would have ample time to schedule another GoH [this letter dated February 3], and I would have plenty of time to return my plane ticket. After all, a guest of honor is someone who accepts the hospitality of the host, and it is the con committee who should be taking the stand for ERA, not its guest....

R. Lorraine Tutinasi  
1217 Majestic Way  
Webster, NY, 14580

...There are other writers I enjoy reading, but you are the only one to affect my whole being every time I read your work. Your writing also often starts an avalanche of introspection. I started thinking this letter to you and couldn't rest until I'd written it down.... I just realized that I really care what happens to you, even more than I care about myself. This really blew my mind, because I always thought of myself as a very self-centered person....

I hate to hear or read any criticism of you. I always want to defend you but don't want to put words in your mouth. When your recent statement on the ERA came out...some of my friends asked if I was going to follow your advice. I jokingly replied, "Only if I can stay in Harlan's tent." Later, there was further discussion of your statement by a different group of friends, and I'm afraid I have to agree with them and disagree with you. In boycotting Arizona business, you are not hurting the state directly, and probably very little indirectly. You are hurting private business people, regardless of whether they are for or against the ERA. There was a news item on TV tonight about Missouri, which is being boycotted by NOW because it is against the ERA. The state is appealing to the courts to stop the boycott because it is hurting economically. But the boycott does not seem to have had an effect on the ERA. I really want to see you at IguanaCon, but if you insist on hurting private citizens who may or may not be able to influence the state government, I think it would be better for everyone if you boycott the convention altogether. Please don't hate me because I disagree with you. I agree with your intentions. Though libertarian, I would like to see the ERA pass.

[Many thanks for your kind and concerned letter. No, I don't hate you for disagreeing with my position; that would be silly and mean of me. In fact, one of the principal reasons for my taking this stand—quite apart from the overwhelming ethical imperatives of the situation—is my humble attempt to raise the consciousness of SF fandom, a group that constantly talks about how concerned they and the genre are with human rights, but who go into cardiac arrest if the real world is allowed to impinge on the funmaking and banal fanning. Your awareness of what the ERA means, even if you don't agree with my stand, is a plus.

[Whether the boycott will serve noble ends—or otherwise—is not the relevant





issue, I think. Bringing fandom into the 20th Century is. As for the slight damage the boycott may do to private enterprise, well, I think that is hardly serious when laid against the enormous good that passage of the ERA will bring.

[The only thing wrong with the libertarian sensibility in these matters is that what it espouses de facto in a state of laissez faire in which the strong get stronger and the weak get crushed. I'm not a woman, and yet I'm painfully aware of the almost chattel-like condition of life for far too many women in this country. Libertarianism is an appealing philosophy, and one to which I've cleaved frequently in my life. But I've discovered that, the stronger and more powerful one becomes, the greater grows one's obligation to use that strength and power for the benefit of those who cannot help themselves, who have been economically disenfranchised. It is my observation that far too many people who object to the ERA know nothing about it, know nothing of how simple and direct and utterly logical it is.

[Nevertheless, my ethics demand I take the position I have, even though it has caused me considerable pain and denigration. But that's okay. To have done otherwise would have been even more painful.

[Again, I thank you for your remarks and your concern. —HARLAN ELLISON]◀

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## VULGAR ADVERTISEMENT:

[This has been what you could call a "spontaneous" double issue—sort of like the "spontaneous" in "spontaneous combustion", in the sense of "out of control". This issue of Janus ended up being far larger than either Jan or I planned for. I feel like saying "Well, excuseuuuu meeeeee!" about the remark in "News Nuds" concerning the scarcity of con reports. Luckily I didn't say something equally foolish about empty post-office boxes. Actually, I suspect Dick Russell of having ghost-written half of the con reports, since he was able in some suspicious manner to exhort a stack of essays from our troupe of wide-eyed con-goers, whereas Jan and I merely produced groans and empty rooms with our reminders of the approaching deadline. Anyway: we overshot our usual goal of 40 pages by nearly another 40 pages, and since the prospect of producing two more quarterly Jani before having to begin work on Vol. 5 No. 1 [the WisCon 1979 issue, which has to be out by the end of January] seemed rather grim to all of us—since all of that was very evident to all of us, Jan's double-issue idea was greeted with incredible enthusiasm by all concerned. In fact, the group at Nick's Bar and Grill burst into spontaneous cheers and applause (in some cases, even tears) as we all scrambled to second this wonderful notion. Deliri-

ously, I whispered, "We're ahead now!"

[And indeed we are ahead. The next issue should be in your mailbox by early October. [The deadline is August 15, remember.] Then we'll be starting work on the WisCon 3 issue. An update on the con, by the way: John Varley, author of The Ophiuchi Hotline, has accepted our invitation to be our other guest of honor.

[That's all for now, for this "Notes after Lay-out" or "On the Other Hand" quickie-column. Whatever its name (and it will never have a title because I have this deep-down suspicion that once titled it might grow in the manner of con-report sections and LOC columns) we'll see you again in a couple of months. Artists: with fat issues like this one, I am fast running out of artwork to rubber cement into Janus except for my own, and we really don't want Janus to be a one-artist zine, despite appearances sometimes to the contrary. Help! Write to me and I'll let you know what we need. Writers: the next issue's theme will be Iguanacon [reports, reviews of Hugo nominees, articles based on WorldCon programming, etc.]. If you have ideas, let us know.

[see you in Phoenix.

— Jeanne Gomoll ]



### TESTIMONIALS

Here's what some satisfied (and some not-so-satisfied) readers of Janus have said about it:

"[Janus is] worth the entire shitload of lesser fanzines clotting the mainstream of amateur SF publishing." —Harlan Ellison

"[Janus is] one of the most regular, attractively produced, and interesting of the new fanzines I've seen.... always fun, and stimulating to the mind and eye." —Susan Wood in *Algo!*

"[Janus no longer resembles a warty toad on speed. Now it has the fascinating if somewhat asymmetrical appearance of a web spun by a spider on acid." —Mike Glicksahn

"[The people in SF<sup>3</sup>] virtually rule the city of Madison; the mayor recently capitulated to the inevitable and declared an official SF week." —Steve Brown in *BSPm*

"...put away all thoughts of brass brassieres..." —a crudzine whose title was printed indecipherably

"[Janus is] the magazine of brass brassieres!" —Jeanne Gomoll

Further unsolicited testimonials are herewith solicited. See the address below.

### FANZINES

*SCor* (Perri Corrick-West, ed.) Multi-colored eclecticism.

*Discussions* (John Bartelt, ed.) Long-lost Madison fan holds forth from far Minneapolis.

*Janus* (Janice Bogstad and Jeanne Gomoll, eds.) Hugo-nominated, feminist-oriented genzine. \$1 each or \$4 for 4 issues (1 year).

*Scholarist* (Richard C. West, ed.) Scholarly journal devoted to the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, et alia.

*Starling* (Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell, eds.) Hugo-nominated personal journal of popular culture: music, STP, comic, movies, comics, etc. Now offset. Sample copy: \$1.

### CONVENTION

The Wisconsin Convention of Science Fiction (WisCon) is co-sponsored with the University of Wisconsin Extension. WisCon 3 will be held February 2-4, 1979, with Suzy McKee Charnas, John Varley, and Gina Clarke as guests of honor. Membership: \$5.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Madison Science Fiction Group. Meets Wednesdays at Nick's Bar and Grill, 226 State St. in Madison, except last Wednesday night of each month is the "event", usually discussion of an SF author or theme and held at Union South on the UW campus. New faces eagerly welcomed.

Madison Review of Books. Heard on WORT-1M and cablecast on Community Access Channel 4.

The SF and Fantasy Hour. Heard on WORT-FM; hosted by James Andrew Cox.

Book of the Month Circle. Discusses a different novel each month. Meets informally in people's homes and apartments. Pretzels featured.

Dungeons and Dragons. A corps of dungeon masters hold at least one adventure a week among them.

Speakers' Bureau. Presentations (some with slides) on any SF-related subject, including the metric system.

Library. Group collection of fanzines, paperbacks, magazines, etc. Contributions welcome.

### UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION

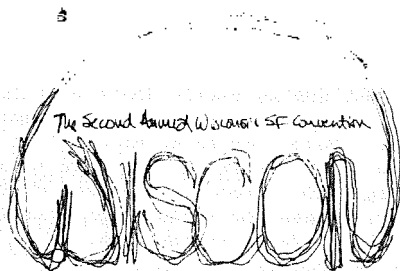
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