

KRATOPHANY 12

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# KRATOPHANY

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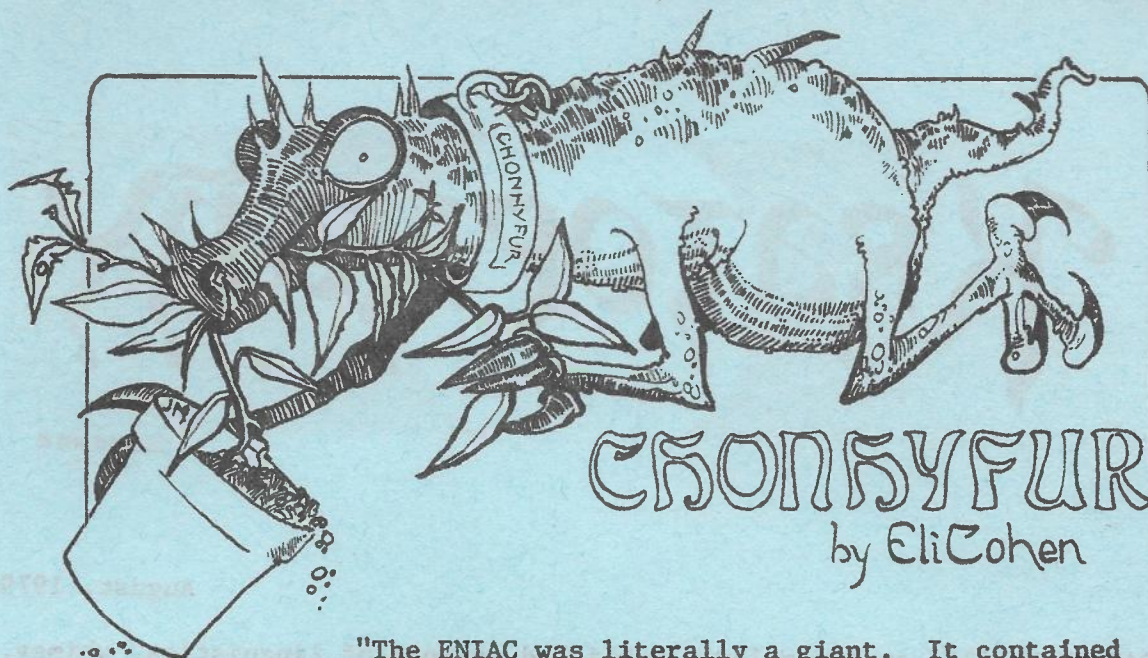
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## CHONSYFUR

by Eli Cohen

"The ENIAC was literally a giant. It contained more than 18,000 vacuum tubes, weighed 30 tons, and occupied a room 30 by 50 feet."

-- *Encyclopedia of Computer Science*,  
Anthony Ralston and C.L. Meek, editors

I bought a computer this year. It has no vacuum tubes, weighs 13 lbs., and measures 19" by 13" by 4", occupying one whole corner of a table; it is at least 20 times faster than the ENIAC, has far more memory, and if you count transistors as vacuum tube replacements, probably has twice as many components. It is also about a thousandth as expensive.

The two machines are less than 35 years apart.

Well, it impresses *me*!

I bought it somewhat by accident. Actually, I had been thinking about getting a home computer for at least a year and a half, ever since I played TREK-80 on a SOL microcomputer in a Berkeley store. But no system ever seemed quite right -- either the screen didn't hold enough information (16 lines of 64 characters seemed standard), or you had to spend too much money on extras before you could even turn the thing on, or you had to own a color TV already to make it economical (I don't) or ...

I naively felt that if I were going to spend that much money, I ought to be able to get what I wanted (and for what I was interested in, the price for most systems was over \$2000 Canadian).

Enter the Sorcerer, as Exidy, Inc. calls their computer.

The basic unit, with a substantial amount (16K bytes) of memory, was advertised for \$1150 in the U.S. By adding a cheap cassette tape recorder and a video monitor (or, in a pinch, a \$30 adaptor and any old TV set), you had a working computer.

It had innumerable cute features, like special graphics characters for drawing pictures (you could also define your own personal character set if you wanted, which could be anything from the Greek alphabet to an array of faces), and a pop-in, solid-state memory cartridge (called a "ROM Pac") which enabled you to switch from, say, programming in BASIC to typing with a word processor in about 30 seconds. It also had a 30 line screen (albeit still only 64 characters across), which at least would let you see an acceptable chunk of



information at a time.

Unfortunately, nine of the four retail computer stores in Vancouver had it, so I went back to drooling over ads and playing with the computer at work.

Well, last December I happened to be in Seattle, riding in a car with Jane Hawkins, when out of the corner of my eye I saw a store called "The Computer Shoppe" -- and it had a big banner in its window announcing THE EXIDY SORCERER IS HERE!

Clearly, it was fate.

"I just want to look at it," I told everyone in the vicinity, i.e. Jane.

"Right. Sure, Eli, you just want to look at it."

I immediately fell in love with its keyboard (its 79 keys include a "REPEAT" key: as long as you hold it down, the last character typed is repeated -- zip -- right across the screen; it also has one design feature intended purely to make things easier for left handers).

On the other hand, all that money ...

I wandered back and forth between the salesperson and the machine. I mumbled. I used the machine to calculate what it would cost me. I went back to the salesperson. We talked; he knocked \$50 off the price. I went back to the machine and wrote a program with an endless print loop, which I watched as if hypnotized.

"Save me, Jane!" I cried. But Jane was too busy playing with one of the other computers.

Finally, I gave in. (Was there a hint of Mephistophelian laughter from the Computalker Speech Synthesizer in the corner?)

Now, I could have walked out with the machine then and there (through the miracle of credit cards). But allow me to digress briefly: Vancouver is in Canada. Seattle is in the United States. See also "border, longest undefended in the world."

Canadian Customs demands its pound of flesh immediately; I didn't have that much money with me, and as far as miraculous credit cards are concerned, Customs is atheist -- cash or certified check only. So I gave the store a down payment, and arranged to pick up the computer on my next visit to Seattle, which turned out to be a month later.

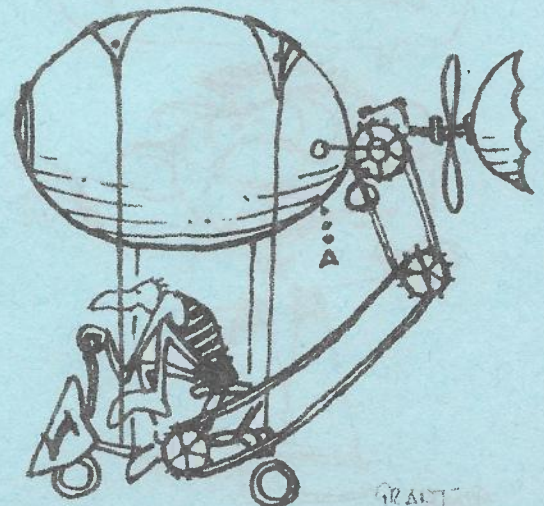
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"It should never have been called a Computer in the first place. (John Von Neumann, one of the first theorists of computers, insisted that it should be called the all-purpose machine, and he was right, but the first thing it was put to doing was repeated calculations, and thus it got the wrong name in the hands of narrow-minded people."

-- Ted Nelson,  
*The Home Computer Revolution*

\* \* \*

Susan and I drove up to Customs at the Peace Arch crossing.





"Anything to declare?" asked the bored official.

"Uh, yes -- a microcomputer."

There ensued a brief discussion in which I tried to explain why a private individual would be carrying a computer in the car trunk.

"Please pull over to that building on your left and tell them about it." (I had been expecting this; the last time the car I was in was told to pull over was the time Ginjer Buchanan tried to explain to the Customs official about the four-foot high styrofoam unicorn in *her* trunk.)

So I toddled in to the Customs building (Susan stayed in the car and read). "What do you have to declare?" "A microcomputer."

This clearly meant nothing to the man and he started asking strange questions to, I think, determine how I had heard about this device. When I mentioned the key words -- "magazine ads" -- he asked me to show him some. I obliged by hauling out the current issue of CREATIVE COMPUTING, which had a glowing review of the Sorcerer.

He began poring through the magazine like a fan searching for egoboo. I showed him brochures from the store. I even went and got the computer itself, but he wasn't interested in that. Finally, he looked up, as if he was about to commence meaningful financial negotiations ...

Did I mention that it was 4:45 when I walked in? It was now 5:00. Do you know what time the shift changes?

And now for someone completely different.

"This gentleman over here will take care of you," said my departing officer.

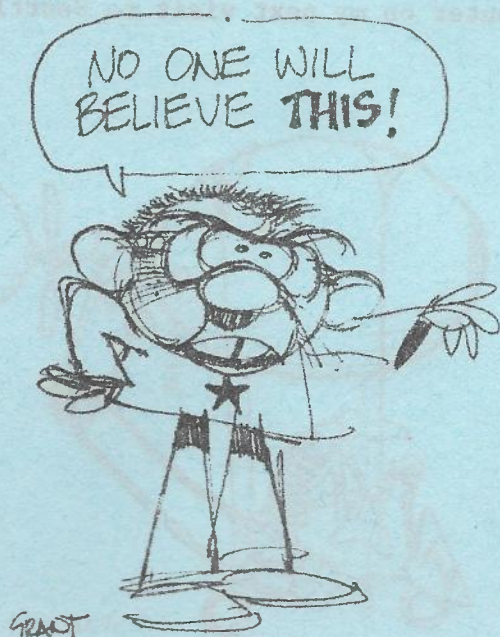
"Well," said the new guy, heartily, "what do we have here?"

"A microcomputer," I replied, watching the telltale glaze of noncomprehension settle over his face.

It only took 15 minutes to convince him that the equipment was not to be used for any commercial purpose whatsoever, after which all we had to do was ascertain what category it belonged to.

Now, I am not entirely dumb. Before embarking on this venture I had called the Vancouver Customs office, and the guy I talked to told me the duty rate -- 10% -- right off the top of his head. He even went on to discuss disk drives and other paraphernalia that have different rates. So, at every opportunity, I told my friendly official that the rate was 10%. He paid no attention.

He went off to the far end of the building to consult a massive volume, returning from time to time to ask me a question or two. Finally, he called me over to the book and asked me to point to the description that best fit my machine. I allowed as how "digital computing equipment, assembled" fit better than either "analog computing equipment, assembled" or "digital computing equipment, parts." He thanked me, and told me to go back to





where I had been. I repeated my story about calling in Vancouver and being told 10%. He ignored me.

Some time later, he again called me over. This time he had with him an older, obviously more experienced Customs Officer.

"We are going to read you two descriptions," they told me. "Tell us which one fits better." I simply adore tests.

The first description was really a long list of things that, I recall, included washing machines, but said nothing about computers unless you counted "office calculating machines." This was not too surprising, since the book appeared to date from about 1945.

The second description was entirely teleological, concerning anything whose purpose was primarily educational, scientific, connected with research, etc.

They did not seem to be exactly zeroing in.

Finally, in desperation, I asked how they handled video games, figuring they *must* have had to deal with some of those. They conferred among themselves. The duty rate for video games was 10%.

Bingo.

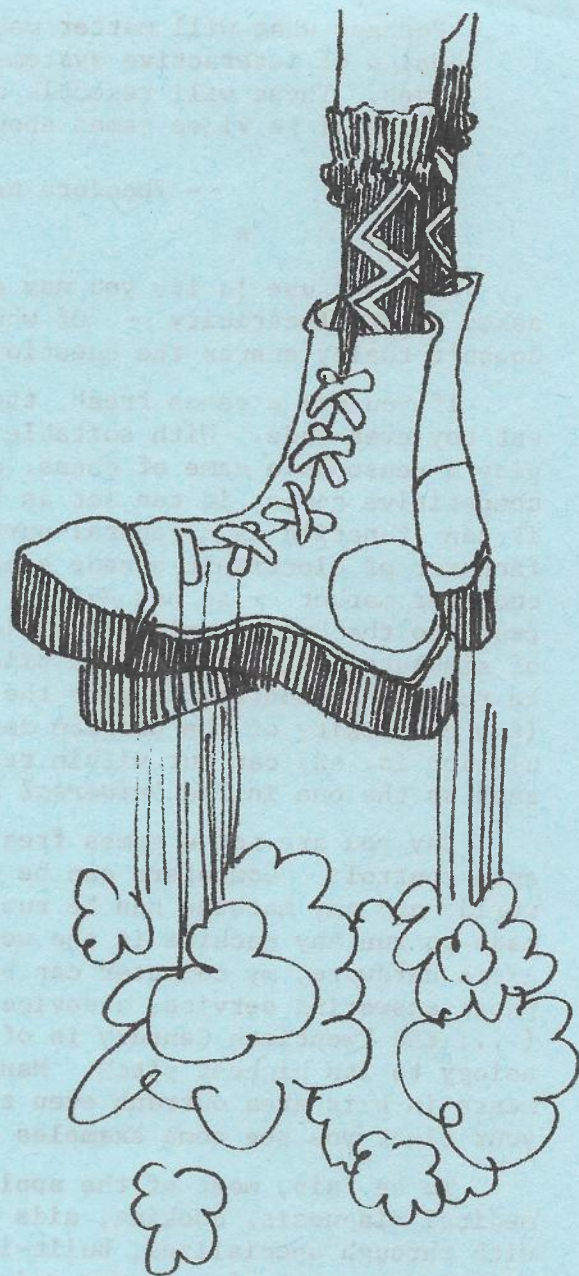
So we agreed to treat my new computer, representing the cutting edge of microelectronic technology, as an expensive video game.

Now that we agreed on what it was, it was time to haggle over the price. To my disgust, they insisted on including the 5.5% Seattle sales tax in the cost. Then they converted it to Canadian dollars, which that day meant adding 17%. Then they added 10% duty. And *then*, and this is what really gets to me, they added 9% Federal sales tax -- not 9% of the cost of the computer, but 9% of the cost *plus* duty! In other words, the Canadian government has the gall to make you pay sales tax on the duty they charge you (after already making you pay duty on someone else's sales tax!).

It was perhaps at this point that I became a convinced anarchist. But I shouldn't complain -- at least the computer didn't need landed immigrant papers.

What do you call a spirit duplicator?  
Obviously, a *Geistetner*.

-- Yarik P. Thrip





"Perhaps what will matter most in the coming decade will be the design of interactive systems for people to use in their everyday lives. These will resemble nothing so much as video games; but they will be video games about real life and video games for the mind."

--- Theodore Nelson, *The Home Computer Revolution*

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But what use is it, you may ask. I could reply as Faraday did when asked about electricity -- "Of what use is a newborn child?" -- but that doesn't really answer the question.

If you are a games freak, the answer is that the computer is the greatest toy ever made. With suitable programs, my computer or an equivalent can play a reasonable game of chess, checkers, backgammon, or a host of other competitive games; it can act as board and referee between human players; it can function as a general-purpose arcade game (Exidy is in fact a manufacturer of electronic arcade games that decided to branch out into the home computer market -- so has Bally, the pinball company), thereby lending some truth to the Customs classification; it can put you in the middle of a variety of simulated situations, from piloting a moon lander (or the U.S.S. Enterprise) to running a country, playing the role of Nature as you act out your fantasies (the complexity of the program determines how realistic or interesting the simulation is, and can put within reach of the average person private universes such as the one in *The Universal Baseball Association*).

Say you are not a games freak. Well, there's the vast area of appliance control: "Computers can be hooked up to any electrical device in the world; and any machine can be run by electricity. Thus the computer can be made to run any machine in the world," says Ted Nelson. With the appropriate extra hardware, my computer can be an intelligent music synthesizer, a telephone answering service, a device for converting TV camera images to print ... ("... the Twentieth Century is of course remembered for bringing T-shirt technology to its highest pitch. Many scholars feel that at its peak the achievements in this area outrank even the invention of Coca-Cola in importance; on your right you see some examples of the art-form in its early stages ...")

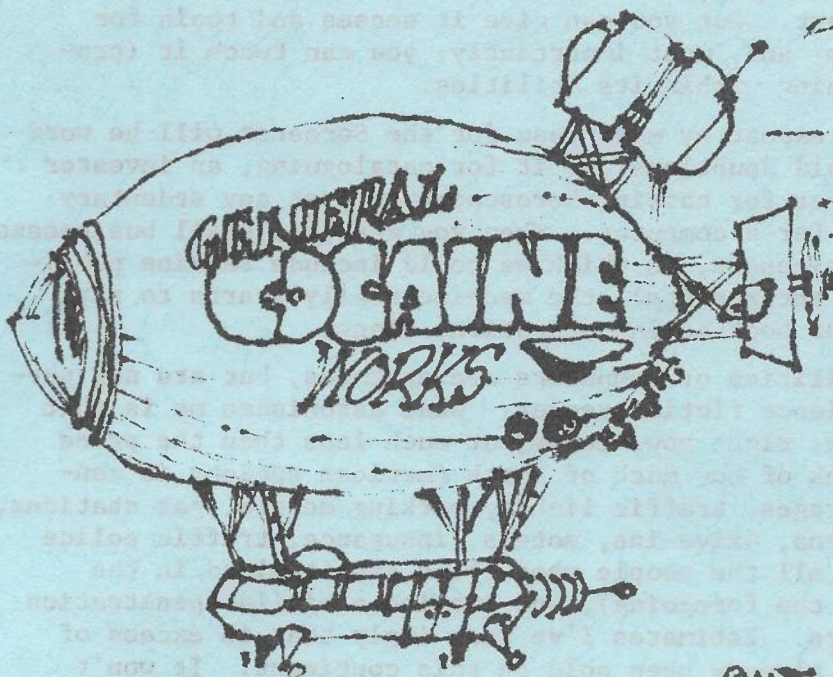
To be fair, most of the appliance applications (home energy control, medical diagnosis, cooking, aids for the handicapped, etc.) are better dealt with through specialized, built-in computer chips -- though one person has worked out a set of programs and equipment that lets his home computer monitor a baby's respiration to prevent crib death.

In any case, my personal interest in this area pretty much ends with hooking up a joystick control so I can play Breakout, putting us back with the games freaks.

OK. Let's say you have no desire to crash a rocket on the moon, get assassinated while ruling a country, or exterminate the Klingons; let's say you're tone deaf or otherwise uninterested in a music machine, your thermostat is sealed and under warranty, and nobody ever calls you anyway. What can this computer do?

How about producing a fanzine with justified margins, no re-typing after the first draft, all cut-and-pasting of text done electronically, and *no more corflu*? Bingo. What I'm talking about is "word processing" -- the ability to record and manipulate words (information) electronically and put them out any way you want. For writing, this means being able to edit, correct, and move words around without re-typing, and then print the final draft automatically (the justified margins are a bonus). For a mailing list, it means being able





to print  
address  
labels in  
any order  
(say by zip  
code), select  
addresses on  
the basis of  
stored infor-  
mation (how  
many foreign-  
ers we got  
here, anyway?  
\*gasp\* And  
with the new  
postal rates  
... show me  
the ones I'm  
trading with,  
now), and  
never having

to type anything more than once. It's a combination intelligent typewriter and information storage/retrieval system.

Now, you may have deduced from the unjustified state of affairs around here that this fannish Utopia has not yet come to pass. The problem is simply that my Sorcerer doesn't have a printer. Until I hook it up to a typewriter, it really is merely an expensive toy. It's just that typewriters that a computer can talk to are very expensive, once you ask for more than a 20-column **wide thermal printer**. A printer that produces letter-quality stuff (i.e. suitable for business correspondence) would double the cost of my system (at least here in Canada) --- and you have no idea of the problems caused (not to mention the looks you get) when you demand that the printer be able to type stencils!

There is a simple alternative, though: if one starts out with a Selectric typewriter, a fairly simple and not-too-expensive conversion exists which will turn it into a computer-operable printer while preserving its integrity as a typewriter for people. Converted Selectrics are also available on the market (still at astronomical prices in Canada) --- I've seen them advertised in the U.S. for anything from \$1900 for a fancy brand-new model, to \$1000 for a guaranteed, reconditioned one, to \$400 for a used one described simply as "working". What appeals to me most about this choice is that you are getting a typewriter *and* a printer for the price of a printer. Unfortunately, Susan has taken what I consider to be a very narrow-minded, proprietarian view towards her Selectric, so Utopia will have to wait. Meanwhile, it's back to the Klingons.

"Little runways of gold and silver run up, down, and around each other on several levels, like the subways and tunnels and sewers beneath bustling streets." (description of a microprocessor chip)

--- Ted Nelson, *The Home Computer Revolution*



The point of all of the foregoing is not that a home computer can be a smart typewriter, or a Star Trek game, or can sing "Daisy". It's that the computer can do *all* of these things, and much more. It starts out deaf, dumb, blind, and completely ignorant. But you can give it senses and tools for perception and communication; and, most importantly, you can teach it (program it) to do things, anything within its abilities.

As a fanzine editor, I expect my major use for the Sorcerer will be word processing. A collector would doubtless use it for cataloguing, an investor for bookkeeping, an astrologer for casting horoscopes -- most any sedentary hobby probably has some use for a computer. When you get into small businesses (I think especially home businesses, in which we could include fanzine publication and other non-profit enterprises), the machine really starts to pay off, just on mailing list and bookkeeping operations alone.

The theoretical possibilities of computers are enormous, but are not particularly strange to any science fiction reader. What astonishes me is that they are, many of them, *here*, right now, today, at much less than the price of an automobile. Just think of how much of North American society is connected with cars (roads, garages, traffic lights, parking meters, gas stations, car tape recorders, road signs, drive-ins, motels, insurance, traffic police and courts, etc., etc., and all the people whose jobs are involved in the creation and maintenance of the foregoing), and imagine a similar penetration of society by small computers. Estimates I've seen imply that in excess of 250,000 home computers have already been sold on this continent. It won't be long before the author of a "hit" program could retire on the royalties (if the copyright problems in the field are ever solved, that is).

I've been talking about these devices mainly as individual units -- but one of the most exciting uses is something I just read about: A company called "Telecomputing Corp. of America (TCA)" has developed a telecomputing network they call "Source". Anyone with a microcomputer can plug into this network through their telephone (you need a special piece of hardware, called a "modem", to let your computer use a phone, but if you have one, you're all set); it costs \$100 to subscribe to the network, and thereafter it's \$2.75/hr for use during non-business hours *including the cost of the phone call!* Since one of the services available is the ability to send messages to anyone else in the net, this feature alone may make it worthwhile. But of course they are also offering access to their data banks. I don't know what that might include, but I expect information would range from recipes to stock market quotations, and conceivably news from wire services. And the games that would be available ... (Note: the rates during business hours are \$15/hr. I gather the whole thing hinges on leasing existing communication lines during off-hours when they're not used much.)

Imagine being able to bypass the Post Office -- at least to other people with computers. And when the Library of Congress goes on the net ... One point -- I hope I'm not being over-optimistic, but it seems to me that with a computer at the individual's end (rather than just a dumb terminal), there is a good chance the control of information and the power associated with it will remain distributed, spread out. Rather than a monolithic national data bank (controlled by a monolithic super-computer owned by a monolithic government bureau), we may be fortunate enough to get a network of people, each with their own little libraries, with access controlled by them, and coordination done through local or regional switching systems (routing your fanzine to Roscoe Truefan the way a phone call is sent). Incidentally, cheap computers make possible unbreakable codes that can be used to ensure privacy for such transmissions, as well as protecting against forgery (see the August SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN for details).

It certainly is a wonderful thing.



Let me put in a brief plug: Edmonton fandom will be putting on NONCON 2 on Oct. 5-7 in, of all places, Edmonton. Pro Guest of Honor will be Gordie Dickson. Fan GoH is someone by the name of Eli Cohen ... I can't really see what he's done to deserve being a con guest of honor, other than surviving fandom for a decade. Why, he's never even been in FAPA! Anyway, the address is NonCon, P.O. Box 1740, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 2P1. The con will be at the Edmonton Inn. There. With that taken care of, I can go back to panicking.

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#### THE ADVENTURES OF GRAYSON GREENSWARD

The Michigan University Paratime Expedition was in a sorry state. It had been set up to study Norse mythology at first hand, but a malfunctioning paratime transporter had deposited Professors Nordstrom, Ostby, and Bjornstadt in mythological Greece instead. Furthermore, the transporter had landed in the middle of a sacred grove; the transgression was immediately punished with a bolt of lightning, reducing the machine and most of their supplies to smoldering wreckage -- all that they managed to salvage was a heavy cloth coat, a first aid kit, and two electric blankets.

The stranded expedition members decided to head for the oracle at Delphi, hoping to get some advice. After many weeks of wandering, the weary travellers reached their objective. To their astonishment, they heard a voice call in English: "Why, Professor Nordstrom -- what are you doing here?"

"Greensward, is that you?" she asked in amazement. It was indeed the famous Grayson Greensward. "What are *you* doing here?"

"Well," Greensward said, "I had planned a little holiday in Samarkand, and I rented a Frobozz paratime transporter ..."

"That's the brand *we* used!" interrupted Nordstrom.

"Then I needn't describe what happened. In any case, I've been amusing myself as a consulting oracle -- the money is good, though I have to remember to keep a sybil tongue in my head."

"Er, yes. But Greensward, can you help us get home?"

"Hmmm. Yes, I think so. First of all, give me that coat you're carrying." He put the coat on the ground, walked around it several times, and then chanted what sounded like a football cheer. Immediately, an apparition rose out of the coat and solidified into a mighty-thewed Greek.

"I am Heracles. What is your wish?"

"Be a good fellow and send us home please."

A puff of smoke later the four found themselves in Nordstrom's office.

"Why, Greensward, that's astonishing! Whatever did you do?"

"Quite simple, really," replied Greensward. "It was just a case of *deus ex mackinaw*."

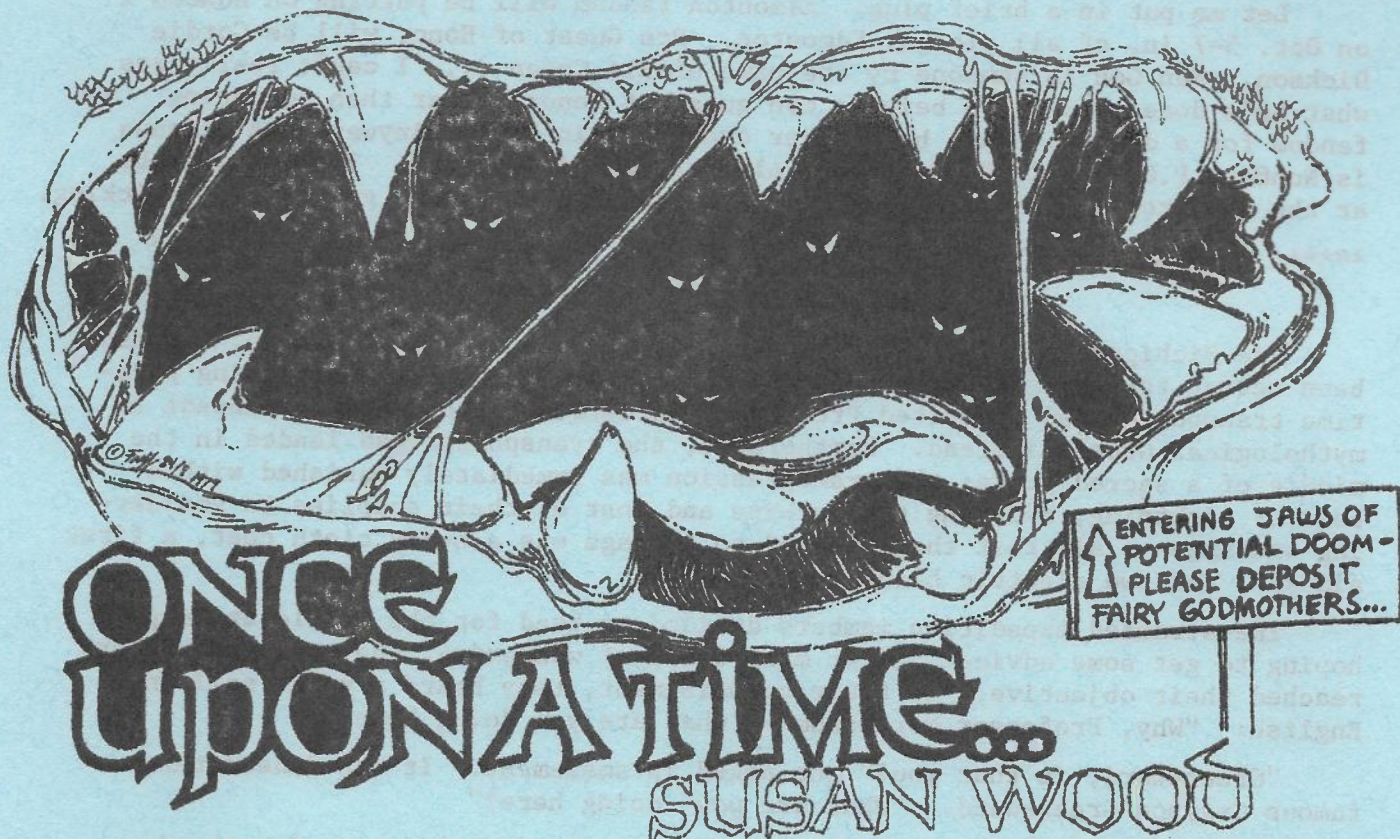
-- Yarick P. Thrip (with thanks to Ole Kvern)

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"More disquieting, if no surprise to the serious Systems-student, is the fact that the Bell Telephone System, largest in the world, is beginning to exhibit cracks in the System -- vagaries of behavior that not even the company experts can entirely explain. The crucial change probably began about the time when the operator's familiar request, "Number, please" suddenly reversed its meaning. No longer was the young lady at Central asking you to tell her the number you wanted to reach; she was asking for *your own number*, for purposes beyond a layman's comprehension."

-- John Gall, *Systemantics*





I have now met my first fairy godmother.

It was a classic encounter. In fact, Iona and Peter Opie, who edited *The Classic Fairy Tales*, would have applauded its adherence to basic patterns.

Scene: young persons (well... I was still under 30, though Eli was a shade over; ask him about The Frog sometime) are setting out on A Quest. (We were, too -- we were 20 minutes late, and hastening to find our seats for the Warren Zevon/Wendy Waldman concert.) Young persons see grandmotherly lady, white-haired and dignified, in distress. (She was, too; the only bus off the University Endowment Lands for the next 30 minutes had just sailed past, leaving her breathing hard several meters from the bus stop.) Others might not have helped; but the virtue of the fairy tale hero(ine) is always revealed by his/her kindness and compassion. Aid the crushed ant, the trapped mouse, the stranded grandmother. Good may come of it. So we did. I pulled over, and we offered her a lift. She thanked us, and we chatted amicably, she with a distinct Germanic accent (a true Brothers Grimm accent) until we reached her destination. We thought no further of the incident.

The next morning at 7 AM, I was bouncing round the house collecting necessary gear for a six-week trip to California. Typewriter: check. Box of books and paper: check. Trail mix, apple juice and so on in backpack: check. Water plants. Feed cats. Goodbye, Eli; don't forget to water the plants in the office, and eat your veggies: check. Everything proceeded normally, with the cats, especially Samantha, frisking under, about and between my feet as I took each box to the car.

Let me digress. This isn't so much a story about a fairy godmother as it is -- fooled you, Jeanne Gomoll -- a story about cats.

The summer before last, when I drove to San Francisco for five weeks, Eli went to visit friends for dinner. They plied him with liquor, and dropped



several spare kittens, purring, into his lap. Right. My first letter from Eli announced that he was now the plaything of Harlequin. She is orange-black-and-white, in patches (hence the name), somewhat aloof, and feisty. (I rushed up to John Berry at the Vancouver Westercon, saying "I just got back and met Quin for the first time; she's little and orange and cute and she bites." John looked at me oddly and said, "But I thought you knew Quinn Yarbrow already?")

Naturally, when I returned home, I agreed to get a sister for Quin, to keep her company and provide something she could chew instead of my houseplants. We went to the pound, where we found two cages full of female kittens, all adorable. I reached to pet one ... and an aggressive, largeish, black-and-white number of surpassing Presence sauntered over to announce: "Hello. I'm Samantha. I'm gorgeous. Take me."

"Yeah, you're cute, but... well, we wanted to look around..."

"No, not her. Me."

"I wanted someone a little younger, maybe orange ..."

"No. You want me. See how dignified and elegant I am? Me."

This went on for about 10 minutes until finally Eli and I agreed we had no choice at all. This kitten was about 10 weeks old, close to Quin's age, and surely able to handle Quin despite the latter's seniority in possession of the house, food dish, litter box, and human. (Quin never really did get used to me.) Besides, she was gorgeous. Besides, she had chosen us. We took her home.

We put Samantha (I don't even like the name, but that's what *she* wanted to be called) down on the kitchen floor. She approved. We let Quin in. Quin looked at the interloper, made one bounce, and landed smack in the middle of Samantha's stomach. Sam went "squeak" like a rubber duckie, and fell over. Quinn pinned her to the floor, and proceeded ... to lick her ears. Sam squeaked again, and looked dazed.

Dignity? Grace? The truth was revealed. This cat is a klutz. This cat is Very Silly.

Sam is beautiful. Sam is also Very Dim. As a kitten, she enjoyed sitting on the edge of the bathtub, watching the occupant, and falling in. Regularly. At least once a week. "Oh," she'd say, after a 30-second pause. "Oh. This is wet." And scramble out, dripping, and wander off to take a nap in the middle of my bed. Still dripping. Now her favorite occupation is to sit in the sink, and let water from the randomly-dripping faucet fall on her. If you turn the faucet full on, on top of her head, she sits blinking at you. Her second favorite occupation is to crawl into my closet, or a desk drawer, or behind a bookcase, and get shut in for hours; I once found her, as a small kitten, asleep in the cutlery drawer, where she'd spent the night. She has, at least, now learned to get down from the top of the bathroom door, the plum tree, and the roof over the front porch, in a simple manner; instead of yowling for rescue, she falls onto her head. Her chief occupations are sleeping, eating, chasing dogs, knocking over books, plants, and piles of termpapers, going out in the rain, jumping into chairs just as you're about to sit down, and Looking Cute. She has it made.

(Samantha is not actually a cat at all. You can tell, because her pupils are round, not slit. She is a beautiful alien princess, raised in luxury in a remote castle beside the seas of the water-planet Arcturus IV. When an evil usurper besieged her castle, she fled in her one-person sports cruiser; reaching Terra, she disguised herself as a domestic feline so she would continue to be pampered and loved just for being Cute. The water-fetish gives her away, but we'll keep her secret, won't we? On Arcturus IV, of course, she was the best and brightest of her kind; the usurper had no trouble at all, usurping.)





End digression. We return you to Susan, trying to make progress. Pack trunk of car: check. Eat breakfast: yech. Open fridge, remove yogurt, kick fridge door, take load of tapes for cassette player to car: check. Realize fridge door is still open, kick shut in passing: check. Check house: windows closed, stove off, doors locked since Eli plans to debug programs til midnight at the hospital. Pet Harlequin goodbye. Sam's vanished, probably exhausted from "helping" me. Exit Susan enroute to San Francisco ...

No. Wait. Sudden impulse. Inexplicable urge. "Make a peanut-butter sandwich for brunch between here and Seattle." The order comes from nowhere, from my subconscious. I obey. I open the refrigerator ...

And there is Samantha, asleep on the bottom shelf.

"Sam!" I shriek. She -- shut up in the cold and dark -- opens one eye. "Whaaaa? Why're you interrupting my nice nap?" She puts a paw over her face, and yawns. I haul her out. She has been there, as far as I can tell, 45 minutes at least. She seems fine, if resentful, and stalks off to shed hair on my corduroy chair.

I was about to leave for California. Eli was working til midnight. Sam would have frozen, or asphyxiated, or ... I'm shaking. She's fine. I make a peanut-butter-and-cathair sandwich, and call Eli. ("She what? OK, I'll make sure I check the fridge any time I go out.") I pull out of town, still shaking.

Two hours later, I pull into the rest-stop near Bellingham, Washington. ("Where are you going?" "San Francisco." "How long are you staying?" "Six weeks." "What's the purpose of the trip?" "I'm doing a book." "What's your citizenship?" "Canadian." "OK. Have a nice trip." I still remember vividly the hours-long border crossings, true rite of passage, when everything from our clothing to our tuna-fish sandwiches was inspected; this casual attitude to visits by Non-Resident Aliens still amazes me.)

Stop car. Remove keys from ignition. Put keys on seat, while I get my bag. Exit car, locking door as I .... Oh, shit. Merde, alors.



Panic. For the first time in my life, I've locked the keys in the car. The spare key for the front bumper never did work, and we didn't have another made. Eli's keys are 2 hours away, and ...

I am an ex-Girl Guide. I am Prepared. Calmly, I reach for my wallet, some change, and my Automobile Association card, go to the pay phone, dial emergency road service ... and notice my card is a year out of date. Check chequebook: yes, I renewed. They never sent the card. And I'm driving to California.

I return to the car. There are the keys, on the passenger seat. On their BCAA ring. The window on the driver's side is open about an inch. I have wire hangers in the trunk ... which is locked. A friendly family nearby has hangers in their trunk, which is unlocked. Fifteen minutes and some careful manoeuvring later, I have the keys hooked on a line made of two hangars; I have drawn them to the window; and I have wiggled them, one by one, into my hands. I call the AA back, and tell them not to send the truck.

I eat my peanut-butter-and-cathair sandwich, and ponder.

Last night, I performed a Good Deed.

This morning, I have been given three miracles: finding Samantha, rescuing my keys, and discovering I need a new BCAA card *before* I really need emergency road service. (As soon as I got to Seattle, I wrote to the BCAA; a new card awaited me in San Francisco.)

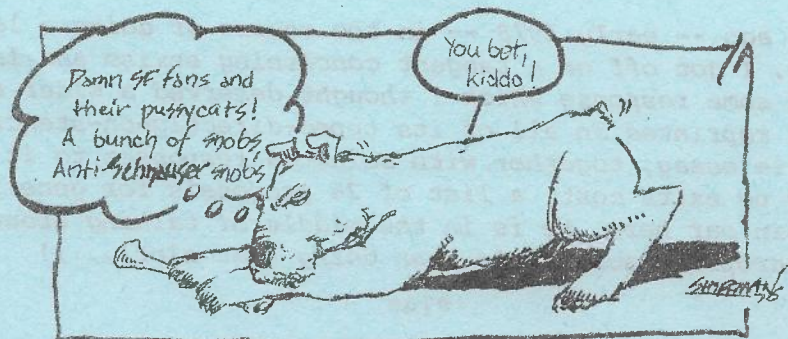
Maybe in the middle ages, people wanted pots of gold, and marriage to a prince(ss). I'll settle for Sam alive, and myself speeding down I-5, whipping round the curves of Mt. Shasta in my little turquoise Datsun, trailing music like bright streamers in the air. Oh, the joys of the open road: poop-poop!

Thanks, fairy godmother.

\*\*\*\*\*

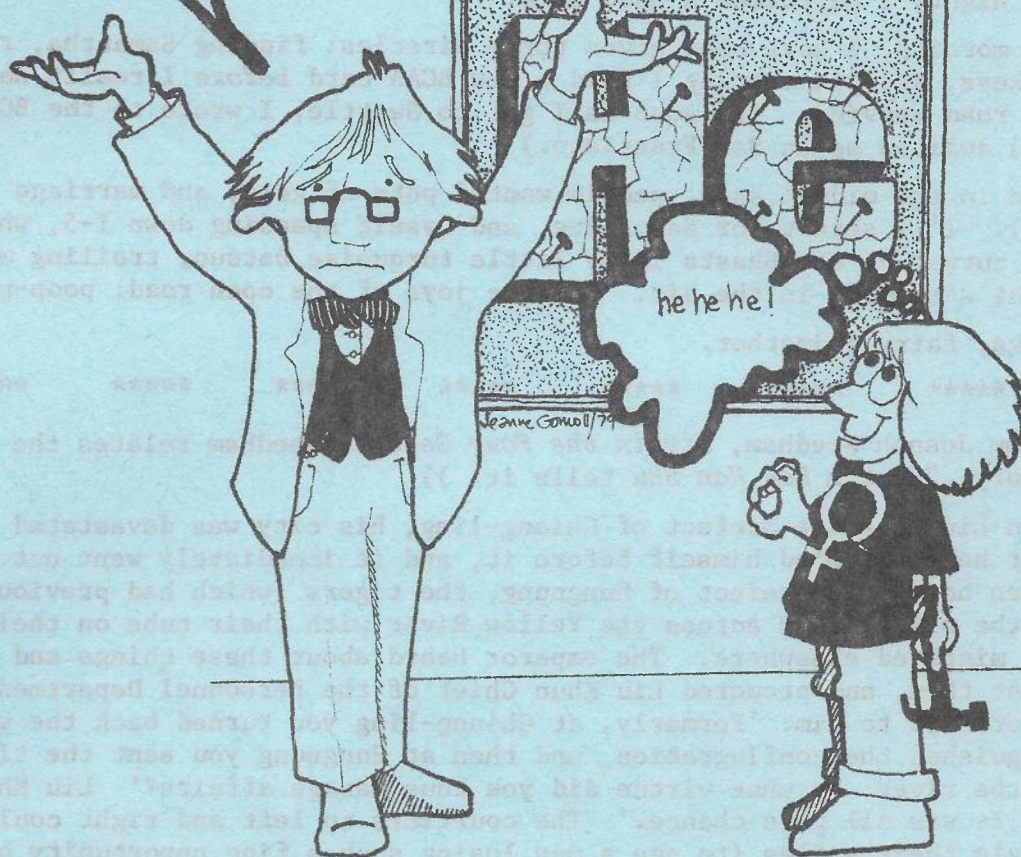
((From Joseph Needham, *Within the Four Seas* -- Needham relates the following story, "as the Hou Han Shu tells it: ))

"When Liu Khun was prefect of Chiang-ling, his city was devastated by fire. But he prostrated himself before it, and it immediately went out. Later, when he became prefect of Hungnung, the tigers (which had previously infested the place) swam across the Yellow River with their cubs on their backs and migrated elsewhere. The emperor heard about these things and wondered at them, and promoted Liu Khun Chief of the Personnel Department. The emperor said to him: 'Formerly, at Chiang-ling you turned back the wind and extinguished the conflagration, and then at Hungnung you sent the tigers north of the river; by what virtue did you thus manage affairs?' Liu Khun replied: 'It was all pure chance.' The courtiers to left and right could not restrain their smiles (to see a man losing such a fine opportunity of getting on in the world). But the emperor said: 'This reply is worthy of a really superior man. Let the annalists record it.'"





# THE PRONOUN— AN ENGENDERED SPECIES?!



(( A while ago -- early 1978 -- in the course of doing a letter-substitute, I got off on a tangent concerning sexism and language. It sparked some response which I thought deserved a wider audience. Following, reprinted in all of its typed-directly-on-stencil clarity, is my little essay, together with selected responses to it, and, at absolutely no extra cost, a list of 26 proposals for generic pronouns. When we join our hero, he is in the middle of talking about the wonders of microprocessors (he's been doing that alot)...))



... Should I tell you about the microprocessor-controlled tombstone? Well, why not -- it'll be on the market any day now ...

To begin with, it's powered by solar energy, so it will last for eternity (except perhaps in the Pacific Northwest). An appropriate sensor, voice activated perhaps, turns it on when people approach the deceased's grave, and it then proceeds to play a recording on the life of the deceased.

There are all kinds of extras that I can see being added. In particular, I figure it would be relatively easy to have the microprocessor keyed to recognize certain words or phrases, which, in combination with the rotisserie attachment to the coffin, could cause the deceased to turn over in ... yeah.

A funny thing happened on the way to the ellipsis back there. It suddenly occurred to me that the normal next word should be "his", but of course I didn't want to assume that the corpse in question was male; and anything on the order of "his/her" ruins the cliché. There are all kinds of circumlocutions and special phrasings one can use in expressions to avoid the pronoun problem, but what does one do in the middle of a cliché, whose familiarity and standard form is the point? People's best friend? This night's not fit for human nor beast? Admittedly, "one person's meat is another person's poison" keeps an alliteration ... (How then, can you presume Pope's lines still scan/When the proper study of humanity is people?)

Well, we can be glad that one cliché has made the transition: instead of "my man Friday", these days it's almost universally "girl Friday" ... oops ...

But seriously, folks. I think to some extent this is the heart of the problem, and the reason I expect English to remain sexist for long after society ceases to be. It's not just a matter of a few nouns being modified (a process which happens all the time anyway -- or has the Dept. of Labor bothered to find an alternate, non-sexist title for "highwayman"?). It's a question of thousands of phrases, probably most of the average person's stock of conversational building blocks, that would have to be changed. Example: Not too long ago, I was sitting amidst a group of fen discussing, ironically, this very matter of pronouns. I got into a heated discussion with Jeff Frane about English grammar and the use of "they"; at the height of my harangue on the real, subconscious rules of grammar that nobody tells you about but everybody obeys (harangue #42B), I became aware that Denys Howard was trying to get my attention, and had been for the past few minutes. "Eli, why do you assume that all schoolchildren are male?" I had, of course, been using "he" and "him" quite unconsciously for the previous five minutes, as soon as I had started concentrating on what I was trying to say, and let my tongue worry about how. I sheepishly shut up and meditated on my sins.

It's a question of dialect. A non-sexist form of English would be a new dialect, with large areas of overlap, to be sure, but at least as different from standard English as, say, Black English. I could follow a conversation in Black English, more or less, though the vocabulary probably has enough unfamiliar nouns to make it difficult (do you people know about "dozens"?). But I couldn't possibly speak it. The grammatical rules are different, you see, and learning a different grammar takes lots of practice and lots of samples to practice with. No way you start with an intellectual rule like "The negative in the sentence is attracted to the first two indefinites" or "Anywhere standard English allows a contraction, Black English allows a deletion of the copula," and apply that rule in fluent speech.

There are people who are very good at picking up languages, or dialects, or accents. But I suspect that even they have to be exposed to a good chunk of examples. This is why all those proposals for "tey" or "per" or "hesh" won't work. You would have to form a community, block off TV and radio, practice like crazy, and then raise a generation of kids who spoke that way naturally.



Anyway, even if some sort of self-sustaining non-sexist English dialect did develop, there would be an awful lot of translating to be done. Which is what I started to say about clichés. Proverbs, stock phrases, well-known quotations, all would have to be translated or re-created (I mean wherever necessary), and some standard form would have to be accepted before they became recognizable. I mean, if I alluded to Genesis, say in the punchline of a joke, I could hardly use the phrase "When God created Heaven and Earth"; yet this is the opening line of the translation we used in my freshman humanities course at Columbia. When it comes to quoting from the Tao, I would hardly expect someone to recognize a paragraph from a phrase, just because there are so many translations around that none is standard. In English, I mean. (I'm sure that anyone fluent in Chinese could write a Feghoot that depended on some common *Tao te ching* line, and be understood; in English, even the spelling of the title isn't standard.)

This is a matter of shared culture, I suppose. The problem with trying to change the grammatical structure of English (as opposed to merely adding some extra words like "Ms.") is that if you succeeded, to that extent you would be cutting yourself off from the shared culture that English speakers now have in common. Normally, such changes take many generations, and are slow enough that continuity is preserved. I doubt seriously that it would be even possible to construct a working, non-sexist dialect without an immense amount of trial and error and continuous revision. I sympathize with the reasoning behind re-naming job titles and such, but it would be a hell of a lot easier, and more thorough a change, if due to real shifts in the sex balance of jobs, the "-man" in "foreman", "mailman", "doorman", etc. changed its meaning to person (the same way that in Canada, at least, "bush" as in "roughing it in the bush" came to mean any collection of trees, shrubs, and dense undergrowth).

Paul Novitski      In *The Dispossessed*, Le Guin pointed out indirectly the  
1203 18th Ave. E.      frequency with which we use personal possessives in English  
Seattle, WA 98112      (and other languages); remember baby Shevek claiming possession of the sun? A lot of sexist expressions can be humanitized (?) by exchanging "she" or "he" with "the" or "a" -- in your example, the rotisserie attachment... could cause the deceased to turn over in the grave. What loss? There are some instances in which this kind of change seems awkward ... say for example an anatomy text warning that "the aroma of a well-used cadaver may cause the student to get sick to the stomach," instead of sick to his stomach, but that I think is simply unfamiliarity and will be ameliorated with time. Terms like "weatherperson" and "spokesperson" were poo-pooed a few years ago, yet now I'm sure most people don't even notice their usage on TV and radio.

I object, incidentally, to your suggestion that we "let" the word "man" expand in meaning to include women and men. That's the situation now, Eli, and that's what we're trying to get away from, that idea that the class of women is subsumed in the class of men. Obviously many words have multiple meanings and connotations, but as long as "man" means male adult to the exclusion of female adults, I cannot imagine "man" (person) losing its present sexist weight. We began using "man" to mean "person" when all the "persons" (or most of them) of social and economic significance were men. I think the usage is damaging.

In German, for instance, *Mann* is male adult and *man* is the indefinite pronoun, as in "man wurde mich gesehen" ("I would have been seen" or "One would have seen me"). (If my Deutsch isn't perfect, I apologize...). I don't believe that anyone can completely eradicate at least unconscious awareness



that "man" is homonymous with "Mann".

No, if we must change our language (and I believe we must), I would rather give a neutral term broader meaning (like "they") than give a biased word broader meaning (like "man").

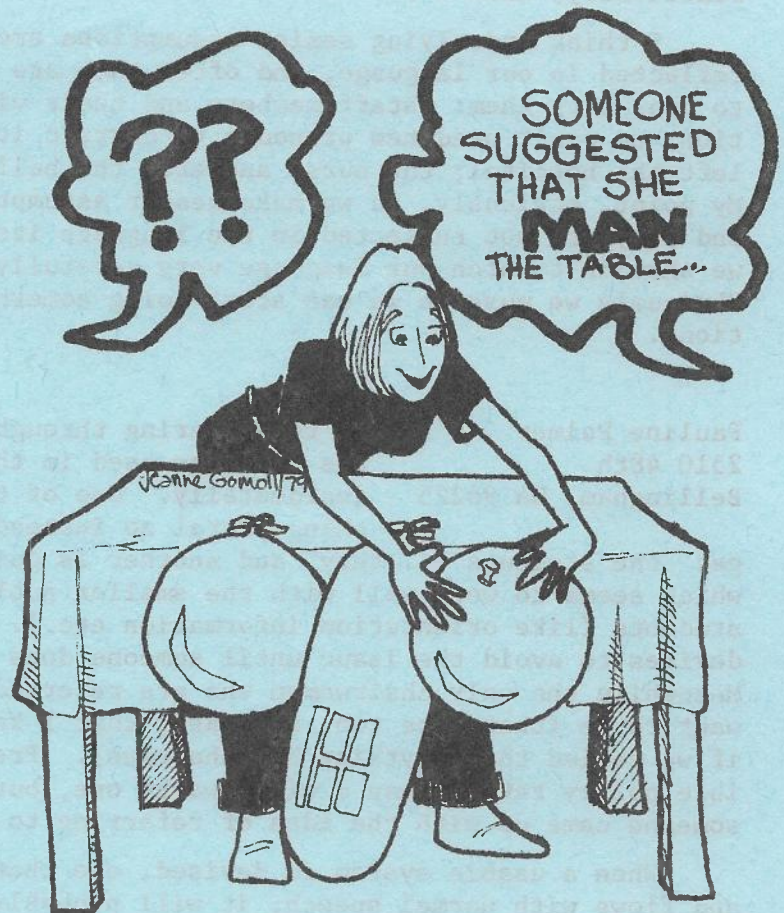
((Let me butt in here briefly to clarify what I meant: I didn't intend to suggest that the word "man" expand its meaning -- I meant the suffix "-man", which since the syllable is often unstressed, in most speech is pronounced more like "min" anyway (technically, the vowel is a "schwa", and is represented by a backwards "e"). In fact, it comes out much further away from "man" than, say, the first syllable of manufacture (etymologically unrelated to male human). Suppose I tried to convince you that "mailman" meant someone who hand-delivers your mail? I didn't think so ...))

I think in most cases, sexist usages like "anchorman" and "workman" can be detoxified without appending the clumsy morpheme "person." There's worker, anchor, the chair of a meeting (and "chairman" itself is a pretty meaningless term -- why not facilitator or leader or ...?), sportscaster, weather analyst or reporter, etc. Either take away "man" and add "-er", or pick a word that easily takes "-er" and better describes the task.

I think the greatest purpose of converting to non-sexist job descriptions (like "spokesperson") (Why not "speaker"???) is to remove the hobbles on children's future-dreams. I've met women whose occupational names ended in "-man" who said they were not bothered at all by it and in fact were damn proud of it! etc. It's not them I'm so worried about. They're already digging the ditches, repairing the cars, forging the steel and so on. It's the coming generation I want to think clearly about genders and occupations.

Sharon Barbour  
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Edmonton, ALTA. T6E 1K2

I was most interested in your discussion of sexism in language: it's very well done and I think right. I also think, risky as it might be to admit it in some quarters, that the meaning of a certain pronoun is already quite adequate -- "his." To each his own does not mean the same thing as it does in "He put his foot in his mouth." In the first, "his" is inclusive of both sexes; in the second, a different context, it is only a masculine pronoun -- or it is a pronoun that is only masculine. Like lots of other words it changes its meaning in context --





reactionary, aren't I?

I think underlying sexist assumptions are the problem. When they are reflected in our language, and often they are not, obviously we have to try to deal with them: staff members and their wives -- genuine sexist assumption; we don't need new pronouns to correct it. But what about: The doctor left the hospital; the nurse answered the bell; the architect drove a Mercedes. My point, obviously, is we make gender assumptions in sentences like these, and they are not reflected in the language itself. All this is not to say we shouldn't watch our language very carefully for sexist assumptions. Obviously we must so we can start doing something about changing the assumptions.

Pauline Palmer                      We're suffering through trying to get gender out of  
2510 48th                            the language used in the official college publications,  
Bellingham, WA 98225              incidentally. One of the solutions is to turn every-  
   thing plural so instead of "the student ... he" we  
get "the students ... they" and another is going completely to second person, which seems to work well with the smaller publications aimed directly at students (like orientation information etc.). But these really are just devices to avoid the issue until someone does come up with a real solution. Meanwhile the only chairwomen who are referred to as such are the ones who want to be (there are two, at least, that I know of who would be quite upset if we called them anything but chairmen). Prefer to think of this as a flexible policy rather than a wishy-washy one, but we did draw the line when someone came up with the idea of referring to the "freshperson" class ...

When a usable system is devised, one that everyone is comfortable with and flows with normal speech, it will probably not be one created by persons who speak legalese, however ...

((Following is the text of a newspaper article Pauline sent me, headed "IRS HAS TROUBLE MAKING TRANSITION":))

"Women's new economic role is forcing many institutions to re-think old ways of doing things and old regulations. The Internal Revenue Service has struggled manfully to adjust to the new ways and has produced, to the amusement of local accountants, this gem of modern thinking:

HUSBAND AND WIFE -- As used in Sections 71, 152(b)(4), 215, and 682, if the husband and wife therein referred to are divorced, wherever appropriate to the meaning of such sections, the term "wife" shall be read "former wife" and the term "husband" shall be read "former husband"; and if the payments described in such sections are made by or on behalf of the wife or former wife to the husband or former husband instead of vice versa, wherever appropriate to the meaning of such sections, the term "husband" shall be read "wife" and the term "wife" shall be read "husband".

\*\*\*\*\*            \*\*\*\*\*            \*\*\*\*\*            \*\*\*\*\*            \*\*\*\*\*            \*\*\*\*\*            \*\*\*\*\*

Man I. 1. A human being (irrespective of sex or age); in OE. the prevailing sense.

a. In many OE instances, and in a few of later date, used explicitly as a designation equally applicable to either sex (Obs) (In OE, the words distinctive of sex were *wer* and *wif*, *wæthman* and *wifman*)

Girl 1. a child or young person of either sex, a youth or maiden. (Obs)

-- Oxford English Dictionary



Patrick McGuire  
5764 Stevens Forest Rd., #204  
Columbia, MD 21045

((Discussing a Strugatsky translation he was working on))

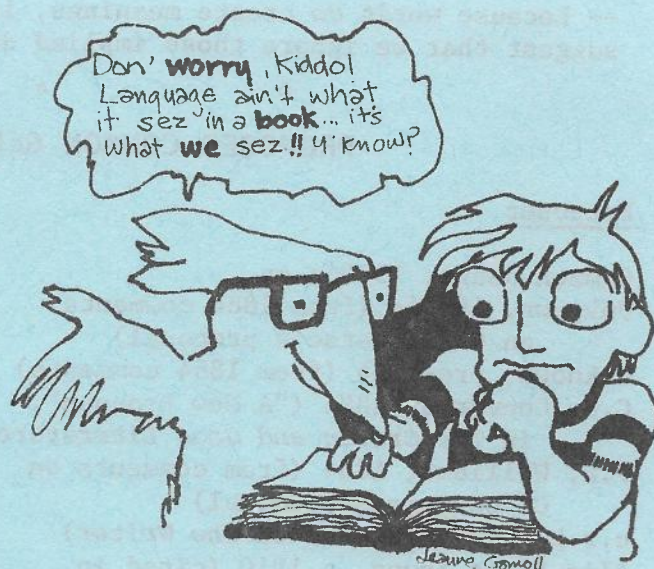
...Russian isn't quite as sexist as English. Not in the specified respect, anyhow. (But then a *sekretar* (m) is a responsible official -- Party "secretary" or whatnot, while a *sekretarsha* (f) is a secretary in the other sense.) Unless there is a particular reason to emphasize maleness, the word for "man" used in Russian is *chelovek*, which just means "person". (Though its grammatical gender is masculine.) Anyhow, that seemed to supply justification for using as non-sexist a translation as I could get away with, especially for generalizations about Man and whatnot. Saying "humankind" instead of "mankind" usually works pretty well, but for capital-M Man, it got sort of tricky. "Human beings," most often plural, sometimes worked. In one or two places, I even resorted to Latin -- something that might have been rendered "Man the Almighty" I gave as *homo omnipotens* -- which was justified by the fact that the Russians do use Latin less in their biological classifications, though they do use it some. And according to an old article by Dorothy Sayers, *homo* in Latin was much like *chelovek* in Russian, and when you wanted to emphasize maleness you said *vir*.

I'm sure you're correct that the language won't be desexed until long after/if society is, but by then maybe no one will care. There is no clear way to get rid of "he" as a general pronoun soon, but after other changes it may have no more significance than the fact that one often uses the second person singular for God. And now even that's changing, a mere two centuries or so after it died off in other contexts.

I think the old forms would just survive fossilized in quotations -- we use Shakesperian taglines all the time even though they have nonstandard grammar. Music hath charms and all that. Thus when quoting Pope one could say "of man is man," but not in one's own language, not in everyday discourse. Some quotations or idioms might fall out of use because they seemed offensive. One doesn't say "shylock" or "to jew down" any more.

Jeanne Gomoll  
2018 Jennifer St.  
Madison, WI 53704

I disagree with you, Eli, on the language "problem". I think you're exaggerating the problem. I say this because in my own life, in the case of many of my friends, it was a relatively easy process to stop using the term "girls" when speaking of grown women and in fact that was the hardest thing to learn (for me anyway) -- far easier was stopping using "he" in a generic sense. It's difficult to the point where it has to be conscious for a while -- but the consciousness of shifting usages goes away remarkably easily. Perhaps because non-sexist words and usages match my thoughts and function better in reflecting what I want to say, I have found it easy to change ... not at all a comparable task to learning a new dialect I think. Now I feel like I'm hearing chalk squeek across a black board when I hear the other sort





-- because words do create meanings, it wouldn't help, it doesn't help to suggest that we ignore those implied derogatory labels.

\*

\*

\*

## PROPOSED COMMON GENDER PRONOUNS

<u>Proposer</u>	<u>Nominative</u>	<u>Possessive</u>	<u>Objective</u>
Common usage, 1500's on	they	their	them
Unknown, 1850's (from 1884 comments on C. Converse's proposal)	ne	nis hiser	nim
Unknown, pre-1884 (from 1884 comments)			
C.C. Converse, 1884 ("A New Pronoun", in <i>The Critic and Good Literature</i> )	thon	thons	thon
F.H. Williams, 1884 (from comments on C. Converse's proposal)	hi	hes	hem
c.r.b., 1839 (letter to <i>The Writer</i> )	ons		
Ella Flagg Young, c.1910 (cited in Mencken's <i>The American Language</i> )		hiser	himer
Funk and Wagnalls, 1913	heer	hiser	himer
James F. Morton, pre-1936 (cited in Mencken)	hesh		
Unknown, pre-1936 (cited in Mencken)			heer
Lincoln King, pre-1936 (cited in Mencken)	ha	hez	hem
C.O.D., 1935 (letter to Washington Post)	hes	hir	hem
P.Y. Chao, 1945 ( <i>How to Cook and Eat In Chinese</i> )	hse		
D. Densmore, 1970 ("Speech is the Form of Thought," in <i>The Female State: A Journal of Female Liberation</i> )	she	heris	herm
Mary Orovan, 1971 ("Humanizing English", in <i>Art &amp; Copy</i> )	co	cos	co
" "	E	e's	em
Varda One, 1971 ("Manglish", in <i>Everywoman</i> )	ve	vis	ver
Abigail Cringle, 1971 (letter to Washington Post)	z		
C. Swift and K. Miller, 1972 ("De-sexing the English Language," <i>Ms.</i> )	tey	ter hiser	tem hirm
D. Silverman, 1972-1973 ( <i>Word Ways</i> )			
Don Rickter, 1973 (cited by Silverman)	xe	xes	xem
David Stern, 1974 (letter to Los Angeles Times)	en	es	ar
Various, c. 1974 (cited in T.Middleton, "Light Refractions", <i>Saturday Review</i> )		hisher	himmer
Fred Wilhelms, 1974 ("After All", <i>Today's Education</i> )	ne	nis	ner
C. M. Elverson, 1975 (Chicago Tribune)	ey	eir	em
H. R. Lee, 1975 (letter to <i>Forbes</i> )	se		

-- Philip M. Cohen, "He, She, It, Tey"  
*Word Ways*, August 1977

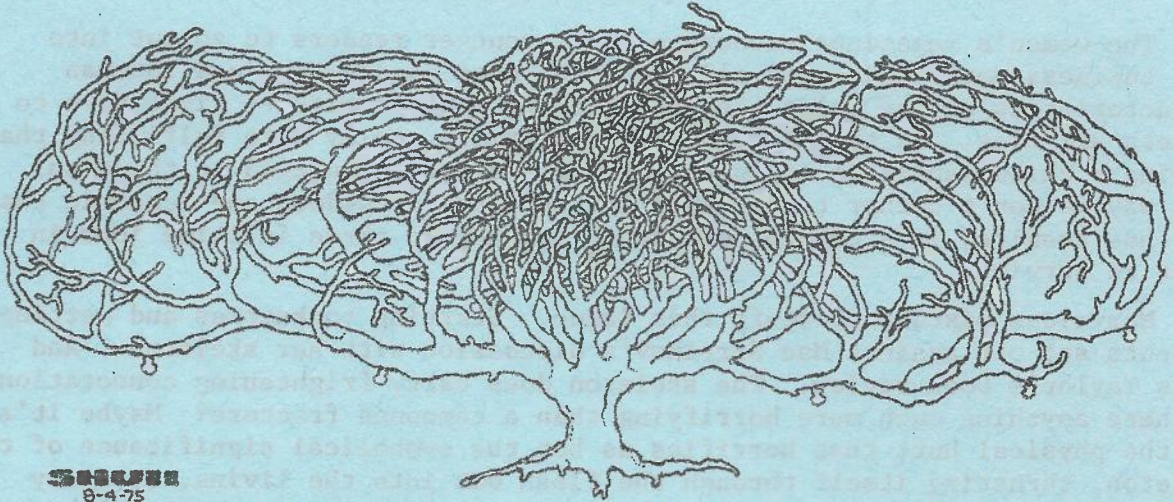
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"Canadians have no constitutional rights except to make sure that the proper level of government is oppressing them."

-- Jennifer K. Bankier, ORCA 2



## BRANCHES



SHORE  
8-4-75

Eric Mayer  
175 Congress, #5F  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Chonhyfur is quite excellent. You've condensed a whole year into a concise, coherent essay. After graduating from college with an English Degree I spent many months looking for a job with no success. I wouldn't wish an English degree on anyone these days. So far as potential employers are concerned it's just a give away that you're interested in an aspect of the human condition that the modern business world does everything in its power to suppress. In a few paragraphs you have described what I felt during that time as well as I've ever seen it described. It got to the point where I avoided people completely simply because I was unable to answer that innocent question everyone invariably asks -- "So, what've you been doing?"

Since moving to New York City I have moved considerably toward the right in my attitudes towards crime. It is difficult to advocate leniency when you are actually surrounded by human wolves. But, intellectually if not emotionally, my bout with unemployment has made me aware of how so much crime starts. It isn't the lack of money accompanying a lack of jobs which makes people go out and rob stores, commit burglaries etc. It is, I think, the alienation -- the sense that society doesn't give a damn about you so why should you give a damn about it. When a succession of fat, ignorant and insensitive businessmen show you the door, tell you in effect you might as well put a bullet in your head because there's just no place for you in this society, you might, if you've been raised in a less genteel environment than I, decide to put the bullet through somebody else's head.

I don't know how your six months affected your general outlook. I know that my experience has made a permanent impression on me and I think it's an experience I share with many others my age. In the past this country and the world have been shaped by people whose attitudes were formed first by the depression, then by WWII. Would the wild consumption of the fifties have taken place if our leaders didn't remember the depression? Would Vietnam have occurred without the WWII attitudes which refused to acknowledge that this particular war was unjust? But I wonder if this new common experience will, twenty years from now, shape society. How many of us who have shared it will be in a position either politically or more importantly economically to shape anything?

I find the tendency to devalue the role of housewife grotesque. I think it has nothing to do with feminism but rather with economics. It is becoming increasingly difficult for one person to support a family. How convenient to



pretend that maintaining a household in this complex age is not a full time job, how convenient to talk about self-fulfillment.

The women's magazines encourage their younger readers to go out into the business world and adopt all the worst most destructive and inhuman characteristics of the males they are told to compete with -- right down to jackets and ties. Is this destructive conformity really more fulfilling than raising a child sanely in an insane world? We are encouraged to think so. That way we don't bother to question the societal breakdown and economic chaos that has resulted in a couple needing to somehow do three fulltime jobs in order to survive.

Marvelous mixture of stuff this issue. Starting bookstores and getting haircuts set off against Mae Strelkov's discussion with her skeleton. And Angus Taylor's book review. The skeleton does carry frightening connotations. Is there anything much more horrifying than a compound fracture? Maybe it's not the physical hurt that horrifies us but the symbolical significance of the skeleton, thrusting itself through the flesh out into the living, everyday world. Kathy and I used to eat roasted rock cornish hens -- small chickens -- one to a person, but their intact little skeletons looked so sickening after the meal that we finally stopped buying them.

Roy Tackett  
915 Green Valley Rd. NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87107

Eli ... you all hung up on the Puritan work ethic?  
Well now... maybe it is because I am older or because  
of what I've done over the years but the idea of  
there being some sort of status involved in having

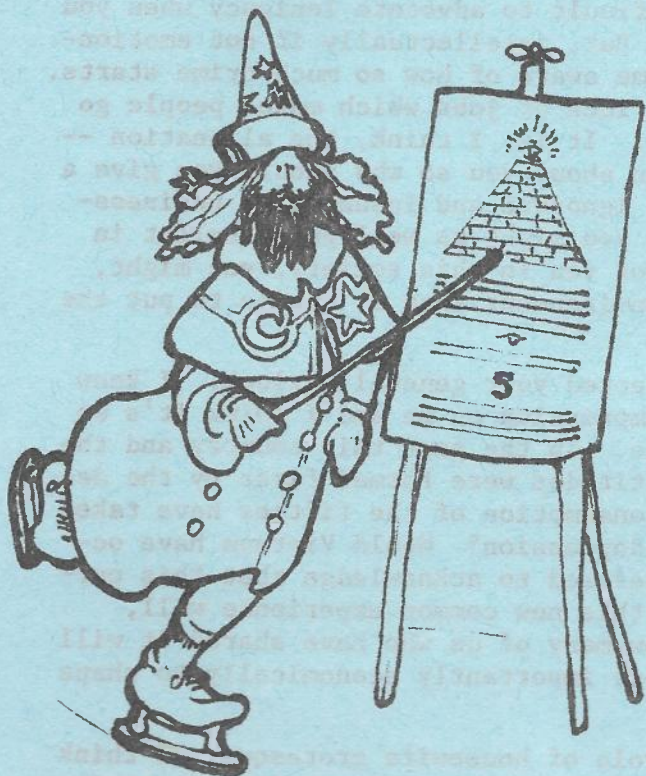
a job ... hmmm.

I work because I have to; because I've got the bills to pay and the family to feed. The idea that there is some status involved doesn't enter into it. Believe me if I could pay the mortgage and buy the groceries without having a job I'd jump at the opportunity.

In a few more years the mortgage will be paid off and daughter will be through the university (I hope) and I can retire and when people say "and what do you do" I can answer, gloriously, "Nothing."

I'm not one of those who believes one must be "gainfully employed" to make a contribution to society ... that's part of the propaganda we've all been brain-washed with for generations to provide a labor pool. I've been making my contribution to society since I was 17. It's about time society made some contribution to me.

((There are two factors involved here -- the first and most obvious one is money to pay the bills. When I was out of work there was no problem with money in the short run (thanks to my savings and Unemployment Insurance), but the uncertainty in the long run meant





I couldn't make any major purchases, I couldn't save, and I could not support myself in the style to which I would like to become accustomed. So, in that sense, money was a factor.

On the other hand, gainfully employed or no, one does need to feel that one is making "a contribution to society" -- whether it's raising children, passing on wisdom in a fanzine, or plugging away at a conventional job. Let me say here and now that if Michael Anthony handed me a check for one million dollars I would have no problem being gainfully unemployed -- I would blissfully putter around my microcomputer, and if anyone asked me what I did (shorthand for how do I fit in society), I would cheerfully reply that although I had worked as a statistician and a systems analyst, I was now independently wealthy. This is a far cry from wanting to work and not being able to get hired.

(Being retired is a perfectly acceptable niche, with its implication of past service; being a "welfare bum" isn't..)

It's really hard to separate the money factor, though. Personally, I could fake a societal niche by pretending to be a free-lance writer, or programmer. But I'm far too lazy to earn any decent amount on a free-lance basis -- I need the all-or-nothing discipline of a salaried job to avoid starving (not to mention supporting my computer..))



POCKET CAVALIER

Phil Stephensen-Payne  
c/o Systime Ltd.  
432 Dewsbury Rd.  
Leeds, LS11 7DF  
England

Lovely piece by Debbie Notkin. I'd always wondered about how people start up an SF bookshop -- I still do! Her comment on the fourth Earthsea book reminds me of the classic tale Rog Peyton tells of a thick Birminghammer (or whatever the natives are called) asking after the first two volumes of a trilogy -- as he'd just read and enjoyed the third -- *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Ah well, goes well with the people wishing Howard would write another Conan story.

Jerry Kaufman's piece was unbelievable. I knew the Americans were mad, but grabbing someone at random to take part in a haircutting display is fantastic. Mind you the haircutting display itself is a bit weird. Tripe-splicing, and similar exhibitionist sports I can understand, but haircutting?

Sam Long  
1338 Crestview Dr.  
Springfield, IL 62702

By the way, I learned from the OED, which I was consulting before I began this letter, that the combining form of "kratos", strength, should be "krateo-". As it stands, strictly speaking, "kratophany" means "appearance of head" rather than "appearance of strength". But, as the OED observes, nobody who has used the "krato" form has been the least troubled by the fact that their Greek is "wrong", so don't you be either.

Is Chonhyfur anything like mo-hair? Or Nauga hyde?

((Now, why else did you think I would have an article on getting a haircut? ... Actually, I usually translate the title as "manifestation of power", which has a little more class. P.S. "Chonhyfur"



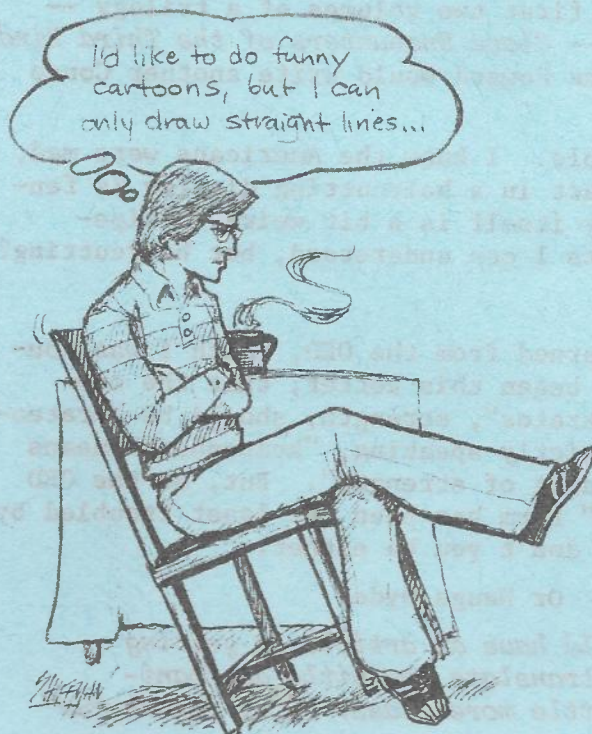
has to be researched in a Karok dictionary, if at all.))

R.I. Barycz  
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I'm glad to see that at least one of your correspondents mentioned the fact that modern quantum mechanics and relativity do not claim to be descriptions of reality, they are merely models of reality that, for the moment, are able not only to explain things in the world that have been previously explained by Newtonian physics *and* get the same answers as Newtonian physics; but can also explain and more importantly *predict* discrepancies and anomalies in the Newtonian worldview. Relativity and quantum mechanics came about because people attempted to "tidy up" Newtonian physics by investigating anomalies and peculiarities that somehow did not fit into the neat order of things as propounded by Newtonian physics -- they set about cosmetic surgery and wound up rebuilding the whole kit and caboodle. Once you accept the idea of a model the whole dichotomy of "reality" and "illusion" becomes meaningless -- a model is just a model; not only does it explain but it also predicts and how well it does that is an indication of how close a model of an otherwise unknowable reality (in the direct sense that is -- an atom is, after all, a purely metaphysical concept, you can't see one or experience one) the model is. The magic word after all, is *prediction*. Prophecy if you like -- one of the reasons perhaps why Eastern religions will never strike deep roots in the Western psyche; neither Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, or Zen is interested in tomorrow, to them the idea of prophecy is meaningless, unessential, trivial even. The West prefers its prophets to come all hairy out of the wilderness to announce that the sun will stand still on June the First, and the sun *does* stand still on that date. A model works only as long as its prophecies do; after that the fudge-factor comes more and more into play until someone sits down and rethinks the whole thing once more.

Hertz on the "tao" and the book he uses to buttress his argument annoys greatly. Mai-mai Sze indulges in the sort of philosophical expansion of linguistic analysis that went out with the Elder Varro in about 30 B.C. Words

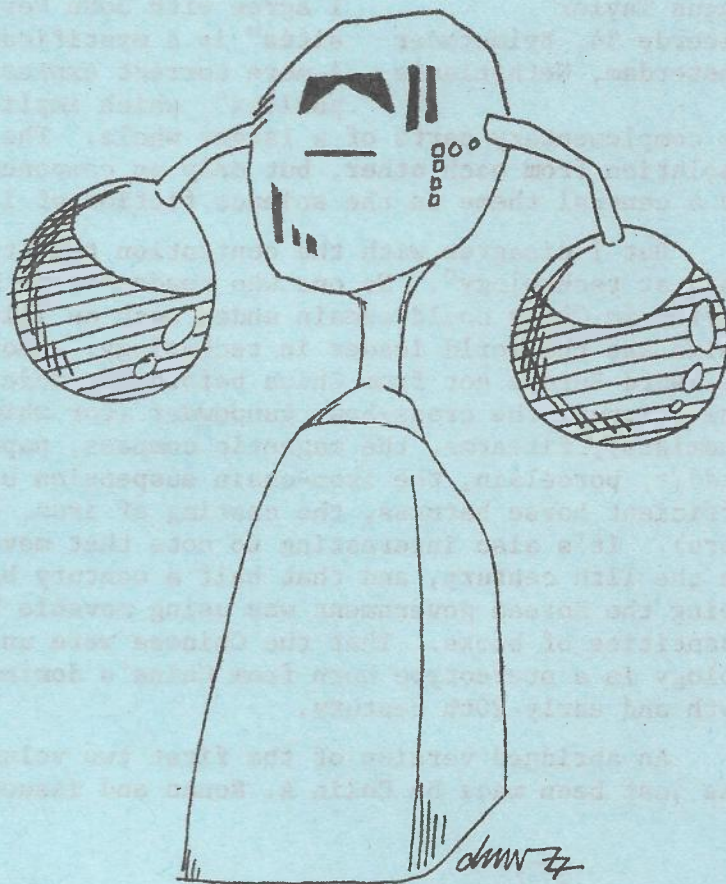
are just words, they are not the thing or the action described. I suggest Hertz look up a history of Buddhism in China -- there is one I know which indicates that the Chinese had great difficulty in adequately translating one of the crucial concepts of Buddhism into Chinese. They solved their difficulty, not by inventing a new character, but by taking the character for an already existing and unconnected word rarely used in polite literary circles and using that as the translation, the word was "mud" or something like it. "tao" may represent all that it is composed of viz "shou" and "ch'o"; then again it has to be pointed out that though the Chinese language has thousands of characters they are *all* made up of about thirty or so brush strokes. The possibilities of one being able to derive lots of words





from just one Chinese character seem limitless, especially when one considers that words tend to travel in families, especially in ideographic languages such as Chinese -- the word for foot has dozens of relatives for things to do with the foot and even more, some of them totally abstracted from their derivations. A phenomenon known as literary conservatism also comes into play -- the moment a language assumes a written form it tends to "freeze" and in the course of time certain words are likely to assume double meanings: the meaning they have in the context in which they were used at a certain point in time; and now their current meaning in the same language. I think of a word such as "politician" which in Shakespeare's day described a certain person as a schemer, a plotter, a somewhat devious character, but which nowadays has lost a lot of its bad odour, it has become neutral, the mere name of a profession. Or to take a more technologically oriented word: "typewriter" in the 1890's described a young lady's profession, today it describes the machine rather than the person that uses it.

Ah, Marx. I think it was Popper who put his finger on the fundamental error of Marxism -- its habit of applying dialectic to everything except Marxism itself. As a description of History it was assumed to be free of History itself. It is the paradox of Marxism that if Marx had kept quiet the Marxian revolution would have occurred exactly on time and in all the right countries, automatically, as the natural outcome of the growth of capitalism and history, etc. But Marx did not keep quiet and in describing History he managed to change it utterly. He may have woken the workers of the world to their future as something in their own hands; but he also woke Capitalism into an awareness of itself, a set of self protective reflexes that prevented it from rigidifying into the sort of pure hereditary class that would have been overthrown by an equally pure hereditary worker class in the blind scheme of things as outlined by Marx. Currently, over here at least, the word "Socialist" is just "State Capitalist" writ small. Such is History. The forms of power have a curious durability -- millionaire socialists and old trade union warhorses take their \$32 a day in the House of Lords without too many blushes. Marxism today reminds me in a curious way of the Middle Ages -- and it has a curious parallel with Christianity as well. The middle ages came about because in A.D. 1000 the world, as was widely expected at the time, did not come to an end and Christianity subtly altered with that fact -- the whole of the middle ages can be thought of as the attempt to build the New Jerusalem here on earth; the construction of a theocracy that would resolve all contradiction in the human condition. It might have worked; if that is the Black Death had not





put up the price of labour and wiped out serfdom to bring about the Renaissance, the Reformation etc. As far as orthodox Marxism is concerned the Millenium has been indefinitely postponed and the age of what you might call Scholastic Marxism has dawned. Somewhere some Marxist Aquinas is busy on a *Summa Socialista*, the air is heavy with the smell of roast heretic and the use of the fudge factor to explain why what should have happened did not happen has reached epidemic proportions. You can find this demonstrated quite simply by the fact that, unlike Marx, Marxists of today do not bore you with meticulously marshalled statistics *and* sums *and* figures to prove that the working classes are getting screwed -- they substitute rhetoric instead, emotionalism, the appeal to the gut, the exhibition of the relics of martyrs, the stories of saints, etc.

Angus Taylor  
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Amsterdam, Netherlands

I agree with John Hertz that the "identity of opposites" is a mystification which can lead to no good. A more correct expression here is the "unity of opposites", which implies that distinct phenomena may be complementary parts of a larger whole. The parts cannot be understood in isolation from each other, but only as components of the larger system: this is a central theme in the science fiction of Ian Watson, by the way.

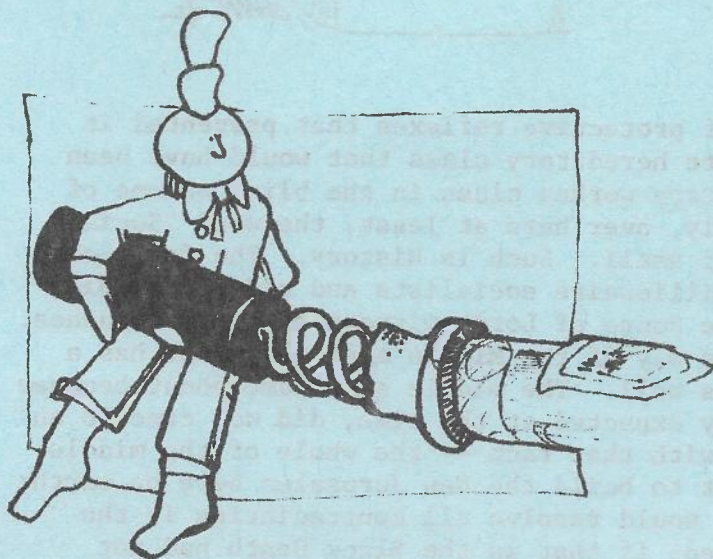
But I disagree with the contention that traditional Chinese culture was "bad at technology". No one who reads Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* could remain under such an illusion. Ancient and medieval China was the world leader in technology. Among the many inventions that backward Europe got from China before the modern scientific revolution were the stirrup, the cross-bow, gunpowder (for which we have to thank Taoist alchemists), firearms, the magnetic compass, paper, block printing, the axial rudder, porcelain, the iron-chain suspension bridge, the wheelbarrow, an efficient horse harness, the casting of iron, the spinning wheel (and there's more). It's also interesting to note that movable type was invented in China in the 11th century, and that half a century before Gutenberg got his press going the Korean government was using movable brass type to churn out great quantities of books. That the Chinese were uninterested in science and technology is a stereotype born from China's domination by western powers in the 19th and early 20th century.

An abridged version of the first two volumes of Needham's masterpiece has just been made by Colin A. Ronan and issued by Cambridge University Press.

It's *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China*, and I recommend it most highly to anyone who's interested in Chinese history, science, and philosophy -- including Taoism.

Angus Taylor ((from another letter))

You may remember from earlier writings to you that I said, or implied, that I found Taoism too passive for my liking. Also, I made a nasty remark about Buddhism's considering the world an illusion. Well, I have now found things that have made me revise





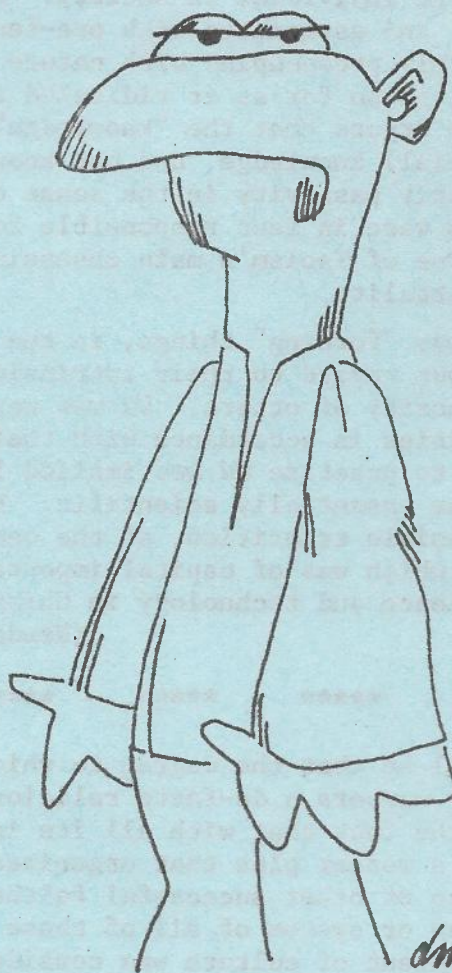
my opinion of Taoism, and have confirmed my opinion of Buddhism. You may be interested too.

First, to set the scene, this quote from p. 94 of *The Invention of Printing in China* by T.F. Carter and L.C. Goodrich:

"One reason why few Taoist books have survived is the determined attempt made by the Buddhists, often with imperial backing, to destroy them. In 1258 the Great Khan Mangu deputed his brother Kublai to represent him at a debate which was held in Kublai's presence between Buddhist and Taoist representatives with regard to the authenticity of the tradition concerning Lao-tzu's activities in Central Asia. The Taoists were defeated, and the result was an imperial order to the head of the Taoist religion that he should bring all Taoist books to the capital and burn them, and that all the blocks for printing such books should be burned at the same time. This order not being completely effective, Kublai, now emperor of all China, issued a second edict decreeing the further burning of Taoists works."

Now why this ill-feeling between the two religions/philosophies? Basically, I think, it's because they take fundamentally different stances about the nature of the world. The Taoists are materialists, or naturalists, while the Buddhists are lunatic-fringe idealists. As regards the basic philosophical question of the relation of mind to matter (the external world), there are two basic positions: idealism, which asserts that mind or spirit is primary, and materialism, which asserts that matter or nature is primary. (I hope this little lecture isn't boring...) Now, each position has a lunatic fringe -- there are extreme idealists who claim that the external world doesn't really exist; it's some sort of illusion which hopefully you will wake up from (logically this seems to lead to solipsism) -- and there are extreme materialists who claim that consciousness is just an illusion (you may think you think, but you don't really, it's just mechanical reactions to external stimuli... come in, B.F. Skinner). However, most idealists admit that the external world is real (but say that in some way it is dependent on mind or idea -- perhaps God), and most materialists admit that mind is real, and important (but say that mind is embedded within nature, rather than vice-versa). Taoists are clearly materialists, while Buddhists are extreme idealists.

Now, to move right along... In Chinese history the two main philosophical strands have been Confucianism and Taoism, both of which were very much oriented to *this* world. Confucianism, the orthodoxy, the ideology of the state until this century, for a long time had no cosmology; it concerned itself ex-



AND, OF COURSE, ONE MUST NOT FORGET THAT PEANUT BUTTER TENDS TO STICK TO THE ROOF OF ONE'S MOUTH.



clusively with the individual in society. On the other hand, Taoism (somewhat unorthodox, and associated with pre-feudal agrarian collectivism in China) was almost entirely preoccupied with nature -- and only with society in a sort of negative way, in so far as it ridiculed the pretensions of the scholars and nobles. Needham argues that the "knowledge" disdained by Taoism is Confucian (superficial social) knowledge, and not knowledge in general, and that Taoist "passivity" is only passivity in the sense of not going against the grain of nature. Taoists were in fact responsible for most of China's proto-scientific achievements. One of Taoism's main obsessions was trying to discover the secret of physical immortality.

*Wei*, then was "forcing" things, in the interests of private gain, without regard to their intrinsic principles, and relying on the authority of others. *Wu wei* was letting things work out their destinies in accordance with their intrinsic principles. To be able to practise *wu wei* implied learning from Nature by observations essentially scientific. Hence we find ourselves, by an insensible transition, at the beginning of that thread of *empiricism* which was of capital importance for the whole development of science and technology in China.

(Needham, p. 71)

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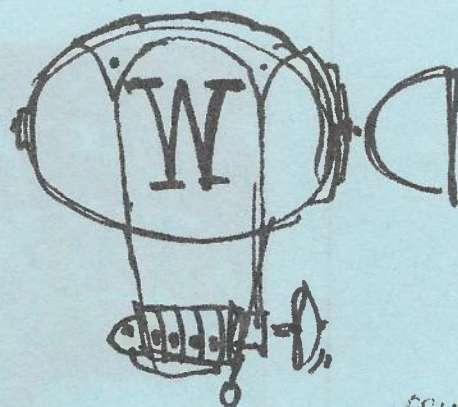
"It may well be that the degree to which science has of late become for growing numbers a de-facto religion, or equivalent of religion, is due to the fact that with all its intricacy it possesses a coherence, a master plan that organizes innumerable items. This is true also of other successful faiths, notably the world religions. But the plan or system of all of these was devised a long time ago, when the content of culture was considerably simpler. Science on the contrary has largely grown contemporaneously with the growing wealth and complexity of Western civilization in the last few centuries, so that its system may well be more conformable with the total civilization."

-- A.L. Kroeber, *Anthropology: Biology and Race*





Elinor Busby                      The book review by Angus  
 2852 14th Ave. W.              Taylor reminded me of  
 Seattle, WA 98119              *Star Well* by Alexei  
    Panshin, in which two  
 characters have a very happy conversation,  
 one of them thinking they are discussing  
 theology, the other, physics.



Hal Davis                              The following is  
 345 Main St., Apt. 5A              not really proper  
 White Plains, NY 10601              for "Food for  
    Thought", but it  
 might fit in somewhere: A NOMINAL EGG.  
 Very expensive, as in, "It cost a  
 nominal egg."

Seth Goldberg                      The article by Debbie Notkin was great. Ghod, that was  
 Dept. of Chemistry              an incredible amount of work just to open the store.  
 Univ. of Hawaii                      Absolutely amazing. My cousin runs a bookstore,  
 Honolulu, HI 96822              University Press Bookstore, just across the street (Durant)  
    from Other Change of Hobbit.

I should at least mention that I also enjoyed Jerry Kaufman's article.

Your illos were great. I loved Grant Canfield's blimp series, especially  
 cat blimp. I also love the Stu Shiffman illos. He is a personal favorite of  
 mine. I liked his great moments in Jewish Fantasy set. But my favorite of  
 all was Taral's cartoon on p.29 ("Cwazy duck" indeed).

J. Owen Hanner                      I must agree with whoever it was said that KRAT is  
 338 Jackson St., Apt. 2              a good-looking zine. The artwork is just great.  
 Libertyville, IL 60048              Grant Canfield's blimp illos are beautiful, es-  
    pecially the cat blimp and the chocolate covered  
 cake doughnut blimp.

Lee Pelton                              Grant's illos on pages 11, 24, and 32 were hilarious.  
 1204 Harmon Place, #10              Although I prefer Zeppelins (obviously) these were  
 Minneapolis, MN 55403              funny. Stu Shiffman's Jewish history highlights were  
    a scream.

Ron Salomon                              A swell set of illos all through the ish, especially  
 1014 Concord St.                      Stu S.'s Jewish Fantasy illos. Like the cover too,  
 Framingham, MA 01701              whatever it is supposed to be.

A bookstore that just grewed. A lovely article  
 by Debbie Notkin.

Terry Garey                              This is, or was, an attempt to do The Right Thing:  
 372 Shotwell St.                      an article for KRATOPHANY. I was thinking of all  
 San Francisco, CA. 94110              the enjoyment I get out of KRATOPHANY and decided  
    that the proper thing to do was to write an article.  
 But I hate writing articles, and I just couldn't think of a subject, other  
 than fava bean cookery, why I hate moving, and how could I have double exposed  
 that last roll of film ONLY IN THE MIDDLE.





I thought then of doing a letter of comment, but I did that last time and it cast some kind of spell because there wasn't another KRATOPHANY for a year and by then I had forgotten that I had written anything so it really didn't count, since it was painless.

And I'm afraid that if I call this a LOC I might never see KRATOPHANY again and my heart will be broke.

I thought of a telegram, but they never deliver the silly things when I send them. I thought of a homing pigeon but they are hard to electrostencil.

The ocean currents go south from here rather than north, so that knocks out a message in a bottle.

So this is just a plain old letter, not an article or a LOC, and if you need to fill some space you could just accidentally glue this in the letter column. On the other hand you could just read it and know that both you and KRATOPHANY have a special place in my heart and my letterfile.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Buck Coulson ("I wouldn't mind running a bookstore, but I draw the line at having to build it first."), Alan Bostick, Randy Reichardt, Yuval Peduel, Susanna Jacobson, Sarah Prince, Doug Barbour, Stephen Eber, Dave Szurek, Wayne Hooks, Harry Andruschak, and Charles Seelig.

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WHY YOU GOT THIS:

- ☐ Trade and/or review
- ☐ It seemed like the thing to do at the time
- ☐ You are mentioned
- ☐ You contributed
- ☐ You LoCed
- ☐ You paid



# AT LONG LAST REVEALED, THE TRUE STORY OF AVOCADO PRIMEVAL

Long, long ago in ancient prehistoric forests, the life of an avocado was **TOUGH** indeed.....

