

Weber Woman's Wrevenge

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WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE ELEVEN

(Volume 2, Number 5, March 1983)

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Illustrations with Joy Window's trip report supplied by Joy; origin unknown.

Most issues of this fanzine will have a supplement posted with them: the first portion of Eric Lindsay's 1982 Trip Report. In contrast to his 1978 Trip Report (most copies of which have not yet been posted), this one is not being printed by me. However, in the interests of saving postage money, it's being posted as a supplement to Wrevenge. If you aren't on Eric's regular list, I hope you enjoy it.



BUT WHAT'S IT
 GOT TO DO WITH
 SCIENCE FICTION?

by Jean Weber

This fanzine has devoted a lot of space to discussions of major issues of human relationships and personal development. Several times people have asked me (not always in jest): "But what does it have to do with science fiction?" My standard reply, of course, is that these topics are found in science fiction. They may be in the background of a story, but not specifically discussed (as part of the assumptions about a society, including its male-female relationships); or as an integral part of the things that happen naturally as part of the plot (as they are an integral part of life); or as a main focus of a story.

I won't discuss at any length some of the issues here, because they've been well documented elsewhere and are fairly well known to most fans; for example, male-female roles in general; rape and harassment of women; or even homosexuality. Three topics which have received a lot of debate in the pages of this fanzine, but are less well documented, however, are: (a) castration/vasectomy/female sterilization/related reproductive issues; (b) illness vs handicap, and choices for these people and their relatives; and (c) circumcision/genital mutilation.

To take the last first, I must confess I cannot think of a single book or story in which topics of this nature (genital mutilation) are a main focus, but there may be some. The topic is sometimes mentioned in passing -- for example, in Charles Sheffield's My Brother's Keeper, the main protagonist is recognised by one woman as not being his twin brother, because he is not circumcised whereas his twin (raised in a different family) was. However, this was not an issue, and there was no discussion of how either brother may have felt about it (their feelings on this topic would have been largely irrelevant to the story).

Castration and related issues are found in two main contexts: punishment for some crime, and the issue of reproductive freedom. The late 1960's and early '70s saw a spate of overpopulation books, which dealt with the need for population control, ways of achieving it, and people's feelings about reproduction and its control. Most of these books, I believe, were intended to shock people into realising that if they didn't voluntarily limit population growth, a time might come when limits would be forced upon

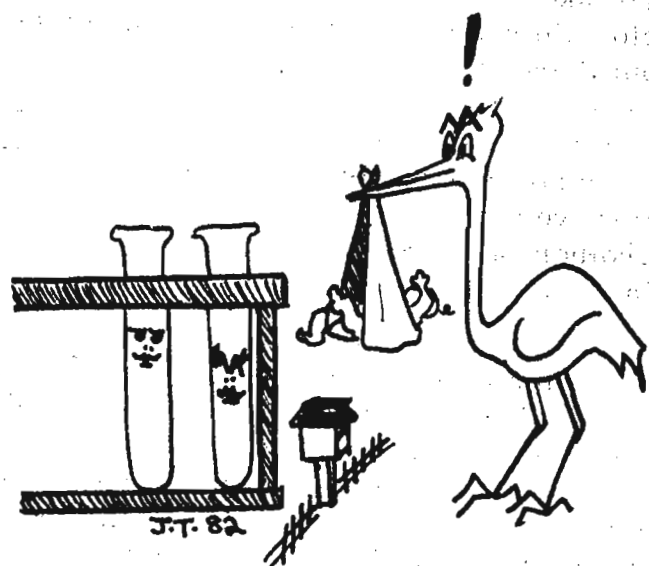
them. The tone was often "shock-horror" -- to be deprived of the "right" to have children was seen as absolutely the most ghastly thing that could possibly happen to a person. For many people, this may well be a true summation of their feelings. But for me, voluntarily childfree and sterilized, these gut reactions were a bit foreign. So I welcomed some books of the later '70s, such as those by John Varley, wherein people had accepted the need for population control and did limit their offspring; the social "controls" were more of the economic and peer-pressure variety (though permits might be involved) than direct force. The main differences were in the assumptions behind the story: whether enough people would voluntarily accept restrictions, or whether restrictions would have to be imposed upon them. These assumptions were, of course, in the context of the wider issues of society. Those who were extrapolating from crime-ridden crowded cities, where those who can afford it are already fortifying their homes, foresaw the "stick" as the way of the future. Others chose to depict a future in which the "carrot" prevailed. I'm not interested here in debating which is more probable; I merely welcome the opportunity which science fiction offers, to explore alternative possibilities.

Other authors have seen reproductive rights from different points of view. I'll only mention a few here. Marge Piercy, in Woman on the Edge of Time, suggests a society in which the one essential biological difference between the sexes is negated by removing the childbearing function from women. All fetuses are "grown" in artificial wombs. The people of this society accept this as a positive step; no external force needs to be applied to ensure that individuals comply. But the woman from the "past" (our present) is horrified, and we see the future through her reactions as well as those of the future people.

In Janet Morris' "Saga of the Kerrion Empire" (Dream Dancer, Cruiser Dreams, Earth Dreams), reproduction is allowed by permit. Sterilization (and exile) are used as punishments for a variety of crimes, including the crime of illegal reproduction. In the latter case, the offspring is also sterilized. Understandably, the recipients of this treatment were bitter about it.

Some authors (including Morris) assume a radiation danger to spacefaring individuals, and postulate deposits of sperm or eggs in a bank, to be used if/when the person wishes to produce a child. (This may be accompanied by mandatory sterilization.)

So-called "test-tube" fertilization produces the embryo, which may then be implanted in in the genetic mother's womb, in a surrogate mother, or developed in an artificial womb. Stories vary about the choices involved, and the reactions of people to these choices. A repressive society, for example, might not allow individuals to choose to become pregnant, but might produce all children centrally (e.g. Huxley's Brave New World).



I could dig out a lot of other examples (if I had the ambition), but instead I'll move on to the complex topic of handicapped/damaged/ill people and the possible choices that science fiction depicts for them.

Again, there are positive and negative views. Several authors postulate societies in which the "imperfect" are simply disposed of. Others use medical technology to "repair" the person, using either biological or artificial parts, or both. Some of the resulting "cyborgs" may not be accepted by other people as "human", or may be exploited by a sector of society upon which they may be dependent, either financially or for maintenance. Some of the horrific possibilities I've read are chilling indeed, but unfortunately I cannot come up with a specific example just at the moment.

Of course once one talks about organ transplants (one of the possibilities above), there is the question of where the organs come from. Larry Niven (e.g. A Gift from Earth, The Long ARM of Gil Hamilton) and others explore some of the possibilities. Killing people for their parts is one. Keeping the mentally handicapped around as "donors" is another. A third is growing a clone of yourself, possibly with a damaged brain so it never develops personal awareness and is therefore not considered "human". This latter is especially attractive as the problem of the body's rejection of "foreign" parts would be minimised if not eliminated. But does the clone have human rights? (There is also the possibility of cloning isolated organs, thus circumventing the ethical issues of cloning an entire body.) There are further side-issues: who gets spare parts? Everybody (on the National Health, as it were)? Those who can afford them? What if there's not enough to go around? How do donors feel (assuming they have any awareness? How do recipients feel? Guilty? Science fiction authors may or may not approach these personal aspects of the issues.

Anne McCaffrey presents (in The Ship Who Sang) a very moving account of a highly intelligent young woman with a severely handicapped body (since birth). She is trained to be the "brain" of a spacecraft. Anne is clearly sympathetic to the woman, and depicts her situation positively, but one could ask whether the conditioning she received was in violation of her human or civil rights. Had the society been depicted as one which manipulated its members for purposes which the reader might consider undesirable, the reader's reaction might be quite different. Wynne Whiteford, in Sapphire Road, shows in passing a whole series of cyborgs and genetically-altered people. Again, there's a severely physically-handicapped young woman, who stays out of sight and has a series of robots through which she can see, hear, talk, and generally interact with other people.

John Varley turns the whole situation around in The Persistence of Vision, where the "handicapped" (deaf and/or blind) have created their own society, in which the "normal" are left out. There's another story, of a similar nature, by either Vonda McIntyre or Joan D Vinge, with a similar idea as a theme, but I can't find it to give you the reference. I'm sure there are others.

The mentally handicapped and mentally ill don't seem to fare so well in sf. Perhaps our bias towards the intelligent and clever, allows us to accept physical handicaps, which are increasingly meaningless in modern society, but leaves us less than fully sympathetic with mental handicaps. The most negative stories on these themes show overt exploitation of the retarded: they're treated well physically (perhaps) but kept as slaves for parts or as

brood mares (to be implanted with other women's embryos). I recall one story (title and author forgotten) in which women were literally bred as cattle, with overdeveloped breasts for milking purposes, and underdeveloped brains (stud "bulls" were similarly bred for lack of intelligence). If a society's technology allows, the retarded may be "cured" (in which case it's usually a non-issue). Or they may simply be disposed of. The various utopias and semi-utopias, not surprisingly, tend to find niches for the retarded in which they can contribute to society in whatever way they're capable; and the society tolerates their differences. But even in utopias, sometimes, the subnormal may simply be killed, especially if diagnosed at birth.

Mental illness, in the sense of whatever the society may define as madness, insanity, etc, is a different matter. Firstly there's the issue of definition; one way of dealing with malcontents, rebels, and those with "anti-social" behaviour (again, as defined by that society) may be called "mentally ill", and subject to being "cured", which may simply be a way to make them conform. Those who are viewed as insane but not necessarily rebels, are less likely to be deliberately punished, but may be locked up somewhere and treated as less than a full member of society (see again Marge Piercy).

Death as an acceptable choice is another issue that's covered in sf. In overpopulated societies, people may be allowed to suicide or even encouraged to do so (they may also be forced or coerced, but that's hardly a matter of choice, in my opinion). Some recent books have discussed the problem of choice for severely-injured persons, who may not be capable at the time of making their wishes known. SF may explore the ethics of someone else making that choice; it may also explore alternatives that aren't part of 1983 reality. A well-written story explores how people feel about their choices, as well as looking at the technicalities. Some of John Varley's or Orson Scott Card's characters, for example, are able to switch to a cloned body, using recorded memories to maintain their personality structures. Charles Sheffield (My Brother's Keeper) shows us a case where one brother survives an accident by receiving parts of his twin's brain when his own was being repaired. He also got some of his twin's memories and has some adjusting to do.

All of these issues must be examined as part of the depicted society's overall view of human development and relationships. Is the emphasis on the individual or on the group? Is there a high or low level of personal freedom as opposed to government (or other) control? Are resources scarce or abundant? All of these things, and more, contribute to the way an individual fits in, and how he or she is treated. One of the joys of SF, to me, is that given the same set of parameters but making only a few changes in the assumptions, extremely different views of the possibilities may be written.

I'd welcome comments from readers on any of the preceding, including additions to my sketchy set of examples. And how did you react to the implicit or explicit value judgements in the stories you cite? Did you find it "realistic"? Were you offended? Delighted? Saddened? Etc? Looking forward to hearing from you.

#

The comments at the bottom of many of the pages this issue are from "Paths to Power" by Natasha Josefowitz, 1980, Addison-Wesley Publ. Co. Theme: "He Works - She Works; but what different impressions they make"



ONCE AROUND THE

WORLD

by Joy Window

PART TWO: IRELAND

The main motivation for my overseas trip was to join Reclaiming's "Megalith to Metaphor" magical tour of Ireland. I was initially attracted to this tour because it offered a magical training course with folk whose basic attitudes are closer to mine than any I'd met in Australia. The combination of feminist/gay, non-hierarchical (in fact, anti-hierarchical), political paganism attracted, and still attracts, me very much.

Starhawk, author of The Spiral Dance, which I loved, and Dreaming the Dark, which is the most important pagan book I have yet read, was one of the "leaders". I wanted to meet her and come in contact with like-minded people. The tour was very much a mixture of modern political history, ancient archaeology, and Celtic mythology. I had never explored any of these before. We learned basic magical techniques, and the skills of teaching them to others -- part of the circular, non-hierarchical structure of the trip was that the leaders tried, and succeeded, not to be leaders, and encouraged us all to lead and be led at various times.

Being in a group of 14 people created obstacles and challenges all the time, but we had the tools and the will to overcome any problems.

I don't want to go into details about what happened at each of the sites we visited. I would rather talk about them, so if anyone wants the details, feel free to get in touch with me, and have a chat. Briefly, when we went to a site (an old fort, grave, ruin, natural wonder), we "cast around" for what felt right to do, and then did it. This may have involved group trance, or

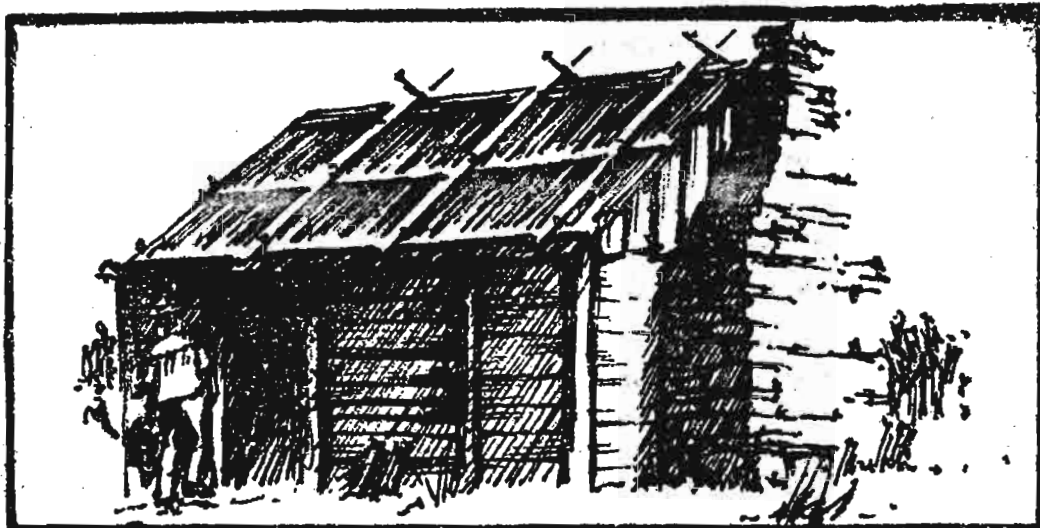
individual wanderings, or story telling, or just sight seeing. After the fourth day, several of us were getting rather burnt out with the intensity of it all, and had a couple of rest days -- three rituals a day for 18 days was not our idea of fun! But we were not there for fun, at least not all the time.

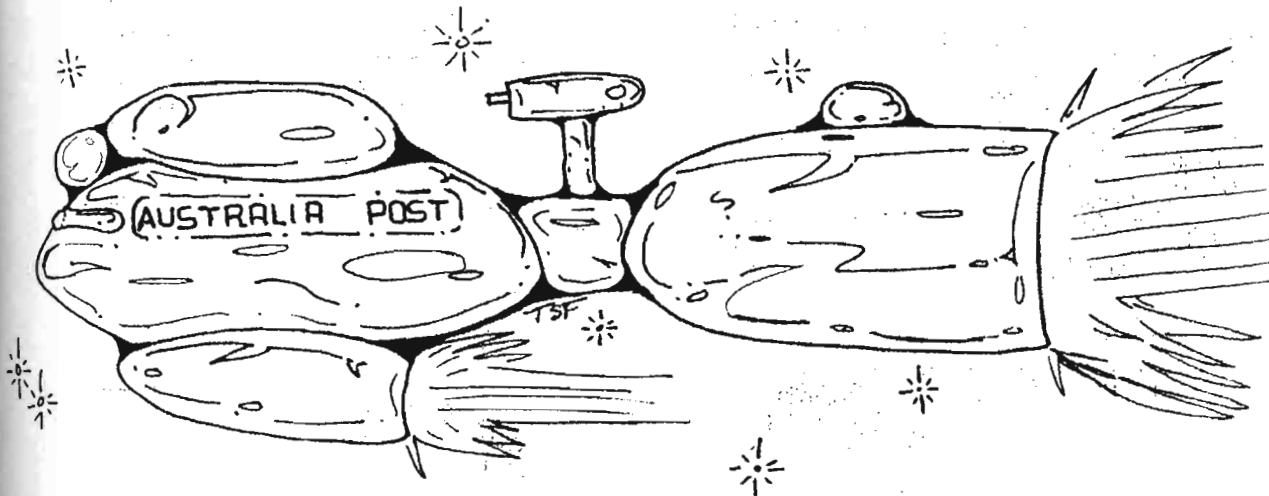


We hired two vans, and travelled south from Dublin along the coast. In Dublin itself, we saw the Book of Kells, an eighth century illuminated manuscript, with colours so fresh it was hard to believe the book was 1200 years old. Some of us also saw the collection of sheila-na-gigs in the Dublin Museum. They are not actually on display; one has to arrange especially with the Director, who was not terribly impressed, and couldn't figure out why so many American archaeology students always wanted to see these "obscene" little figures. Obviously, we were not the first group of "anthropologists" in the area to see them. From reports, they were very powerful figures. I saw one later over the door of a church, the usual place for them, surprisingly, as they are definitely pre-Christian in atmosphere as well as design.

The first place to be visited out of Dublin was Glendalough, an extremely beautiful and powerful place. We also visited the Baltinglass passage graves; the Fellowship of Isis, at Huntington Castle (beautiful grounds); a forest which is supposed to be the traditional home of the Sidhe (the fairies); many standing stones and stone circles, some planner, other accidentally come across; the Beehive Huts; the Cliffs of Moher, about which at least one folk tune has been written; a dolmen or two on the Burrens; a Robin Williamson (ex Incredible String Band) concert in a small pub in Sligo; Yeat's grave; Ben Bulbin and Maeve's Cairn; Tara Hill; and New Grange. At this end of the trip, we met Jan and Stewart Farrar, and had a rip-snorting party at their place.

The most important aspects of the trip for me were: opening myself up to the land and people I was travelling with; learning to give and take with both; learning that the neo-pagan "path", especially the Reclaiming branch, was one which ideally suited my approach to life and magic; and that I really could co-ordinate the two; and that "magic" and "ritual" were not some strange unrelated phenomena, but something I had been doing all my life without realising it, and that I want to continue doing.





CHRIS CALLAHAN
6101 Seminole St
Berwyn Heights
MD 20740, USA
17 Jan. 1983

While I agree with you that the zine should have more on sf and fantasy, I also agree that public discussion of certain issues is

important. SF is in part about change and dealing with change on various levels, after all, and these discussions are about change in very important aspects of our lives. It's fascinating sometimes to see how some fen can be (presumably) very open-minded about what happens in fiction but so very closed-minded when the change affects them personally.

Avedon Carol says she wonders how George Gilder expects to convince women to be attracted to the nerds he says men are. How's this sound? Gilder also says that women are supposed to be mothers and caretakers of men, just as his ilk have bleated for who knows how many generations. Women have been so socialized to the idea of taking care of men, picking up after them, thinking of them as overgrown little boys, thinking that all a man needs to make him go right is the love of a good woman, etc ad nauseum. And of course there are the virtues of women such as selflessness, maternal instinct, the ease with which they can be guilt-tripped, you name it. Oh, Gilder knows exactly what he's talking about! And there are plenty of sexist women who write the same thing from 'the woman's point of view' to provide more support for his idiocy. On a slight tangent, Mr G has been touted as one of the favorite economists of our beloved Great Communicator, the man who publicly says that women in the work force are partly to blame for male unemployment, who says women don't need the ERA, and at over 70 calls his wife 'Mommy'. Yep, that man knows Gilder knows what he's talking about.

((Chris' letter came in an envelope bearing the sticker: "Reality is frequently inaccurate" -- JHW))

PETE PRESFORD
"Ty-Gwyn"
Maxwell Close
Buckley, Clwyd.
U.K.

23 Jan. 1983

In all the discussions (most of them very valid) within WWW the word 'love' seems to be a very forlorn figure. Yet it is a word so abused that I often wonder why it hasn't curled up and died many years ago. All the arguments, all the valid reasons, all the powers that be can not fight the power of love. It knows no boundaries and breaks down the hardest of walls. Yet it seems to frighten most people to death. You say in your answer to my letter in #9 that you don't enjoy children. Could it be that you are really 'frightened' of loving them, and all the traumas it may bring. Because love is the hardest taskmaster that ever was. -- Yet it is tucked away as though it was some sort of vile sexual practice, not to be shown in public.

((I think that anyone who's not "afraid" of the responsibility of raising children is simply unaware of how much responsibility it really is. I don't think that's quite the same thing as being afraid to "love" children; if so, then I'll agree I'm "afraid". Many people, of course, consider the alleged "benefits" of child-raising to be worth the added responsibility; I do not. That was my point. To each their own. --JHW))

JOAN DICK
20 Ryeburne Ave
Hawthorn, Vic 3123
Australia

23 Jan. 1983

Annemarie van Ewyck seems to be very concerned about the lack of 'avvalid fact', and that no statistics are quoted. People are not statistics, they are feelings, and anyone who bares their opinions on numbers immediately gets ignored by me. It shows a hardness and coldness towards human misery that most likely is a cause of the unfeeling attitude of governments.

Statistics, by their very nature, can never give the true picture. They only count the tip of the iceberg. The very nature of the

HE's having lunch with the boss.
He's on his way up in the firm.

SHE's having lunch with the boss.
They must be having an affair.

subjects under discussion, rape--euthanasia--castration and sterilization, means that a vast number of women still will not talk about such things. These things are the skeleton in the family cupboard... Therefore there is no way statistics can give the true picture.

But you are doing your best to get people to talk about such things and it's only by getting women to talk openly about these subjects that a true picture will emerge and they will realize that they are not alone and that even the woman next door can have problems also.

((Let's not forget the men; I'm trying just as much to get men to talk about their feelings as I am to get women to talk. Also, in defence of statistics -- there are times when a survey, for example, can be extremely helpful by indicating that lots more people do, or believe, or accept something than is commonly thought. Any reader can then say, "Wow, I'm not alone!" This happened a lot in the early 70's (as well as with Kinsey). Whether these surveys are "statistically valid" is, of course, sometimes in question.--JHW))

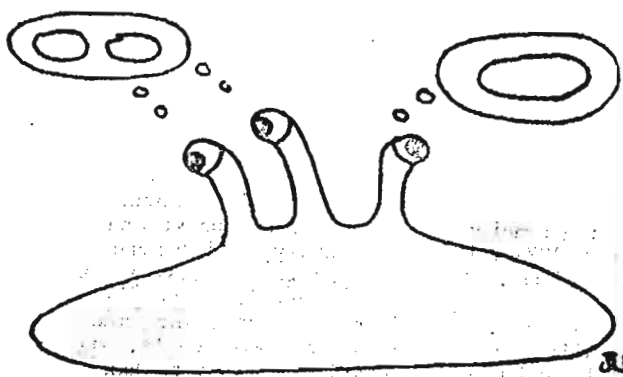
((Last year Joan flew to Helsinki via London, to attend an International Alliance of Women Conference, about which she says:)) We think we have problems. We have no problems at all when you hear what women in Asian, African and South American countries have to endure. But I was interested to hear one African lady say that "we watch very closely what women in the developed countries are achieving and also the mistakes they make. We want to be sure that we in our turn do not make the same mistakes." Perhaps a sign of women's awakening is the fact that all countries represented there reported that domestic violence, including child abuse, is a big problem. The fact that the subject, which obviously has existed for many long years, has now been brought out into the open, is a big step in the right direction.

I feel that the answer is education. I would like to see men being asked what they think a woman's role in life and marriage is. What does a man think a woman should get out of marriage? This may seem a silly question, but I think a man's answer to this question is behind many women being quite happy to live with a man but not willing to take the final step of marriage. I have seen so many relationships change with marriage.

The great castration debate. Well it wasn't until I read it all that I realised I also have been 'castrated'. But Sue Pagiam had better start talking to a larger number of women. To some women a hysterectomy is a great release. It's the only thing and they wonder why it wasn't done years ago. I'm still having a sense of wonder at how great my life has been since mine last June. The misery and physical discomfort I have endured for years is ended. I'm free now to plan ahead. I don't

have to consult the calendar before deciding where and what I can do on certain days. I also condemn certain country doctors for letting me suffer so for such a long time. Believe me, a hysterectomy can be the most wonderful thing to happen to a woman, in certain circumstances.

((My mother expresses similar sentiments.--JHW))



DENEBIAN SLIME MOULD
HEAVILY INTO ZEN.

MARC ORTLIEB
PO Box 46
Marden, SA 5070
Australia

28 Jan. 1983

Given the choice between running factual material and running emotive material in a fanzine, emotive stuff wins hands down. Sure, I could no doubt get

some arguments were I to run a piece in Q36 asserting that the sun rises in the east, but once the definitions of "rises", "east" and "sun" were established, there wouldn't be much room for further statement, if one ignores the fact that the sun doesn't actually rise, and the obligatory letter from John Alderson which would prove that, even if the sun did rise in the east it would all be a part of a female plot to do men out of their genitals.

Speaking as one of your male types, I must admit that the reason I wouldn't like to lose my penis is that I'm rather fond of orgasms. Power, reproductive potential and the presence of a deep masculine voice are irrelevant. I enjoy pleasure, and would hate to lose on potential source of pleasure. In response to Avedon, the point about the penis is that most men only have one, whereas they have two legs, two arms, and two ears, with the exception of Vincent Van Gogh. Indeed, the fact that Vincent sent a lady his ear rather than his prick is, I feel, some indication of the relative value of the appendages. Given the choice between an arm and a penis, I know which one I'd lose. (I only really use one hand for typing stencils after all...) But enough of this. Sex is, after all, merely sublimated fanac, and really not worth this much attention.

HE's leaving for a better job:
He recognizes a good opportunity.

SHE's leaving for a better job:
Women are undependable.

With regards to your stirring comments on Chris Callahan's letter, could it not rather be that women are so active in media fandom because they are, in general, less critical than men, and are more likely to adopt deep crushes on imaginary characters, finding them preferable to real men? (Men, on the other hand, tend to develop deep lusts for screen characters, thus not getting drawn into the created world, as lust is a far more shallow emotion than is infatuation.)

((I'm not at all sure what the difference is in the two, and your first two remarks strike me as a non-sequitur -- what does being "less critical" have to do with developing an infatuation? Also, you seem to assume that a "crush" or "infatuation" with a character draws one into media fandom; why not a sense of identification with a female character -- or even a male one, for that matter? That would seem to me a more lasting incentive to remain in the fandom: developing a "persona", whether based on an actual character in a series or film, or inventing a character who would fit into that setting. The same would hold for some fans of, say, the Darkover series or the McCaffrey dragon books, and is similar to the SCA.--JHW))

MI KE GLICKSOHN
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24 Jan. 1983

publish what you want to write about and talk about. Those who aren't interested won't respond (or will respond politely with a request for ending the association) and you'll soon have your own readership of like-minded individuals along with a few oddballs who are willing to go along for the ride. That's what fanzine fandom is supposed to be all about.

BUCK COULSON
Route 3
Hartford City
IN 47348, USA
7 Jan. 1983

ference that you went to?

((Two main differences: I try to encourage personal rather than theoretical or political discussions in the fanzine; a WE L conference concentrates on political action and related topics. This is of less interest to me, though it wasn't in the past. Secondly, if at any time I don't feel like reading/thinking about "serious" topics, I can always put a fanzine aside, and no one's offended. I'll either read it later or not, but who's to know?--JHW))

I feel rather sorry for Wagar's upbringing, but otherwise nothing in his article seems to apply to me. I spend almost no time thinking about traditional roles, I wasn't taught to distrust pleasure or poetry, I'm not only content with myself but convinced I'm superior, and I'm neither proud nor worried about my sexuality. I must say the article is a convincing demonstration of the evils of a "normal" upbringing, however. (Or maybe I always had too big an ego for the sort of teaching he's talking about to have any effect.)

Much of the article seems overly emotional, however. "A fully uninhibited person can't be given orders." Nonsense; even I don't believe that I know everything and I'm quite willing to take orders if there is a good reason for doing so. (I suppose he meant in the text of "dominant relationship" orders, but he didn't specify just what he did mean.) Maybe once his tentativeness goes away -- if it ever does -- he won't feel the need to be radical, either.

I'm sure it's not the solution for everyone -- and it's too late to apply it to anyone old enough to read your fanzine anyway -- but since I grew up believing that I was superior to everyone, I never even considered the idea that women in general were inferior to men. They were all inferior to me, and that's all that mattered, when I was a child. So I have no problems in making friends with women on the same basis that I make friends with men; if they're interesting, fine; and if they aren't, forget it. (I do have problems in recognizing either men or women as my intellectual superiors, but I've met enough of them in fandom that I can do it.) Some of my women friends are sexually attractive and some aren't, and it doesn't really make a lot of difference; sex isn't involved in the friendship.

That's probably why the women's movement is so fascinating to me; I never realised that other men -- and women -- actually thought some of the things they do. Also why some of the letter column comments seem so damned silly, I suppose. I regard the entire problem intellectually instead of emotionally.

Skel has a marvelous letter; I agree with every single point in it (except when he gets into personalities, and that's because I don't know the people).

SUE THOMAS ON
9 Friars Lane
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1 Feb. 1983

I liked your editorial (in #9). Sensible. I like people who just get on and say what they think is worth saying; it's often very interesting (unlike the rest of us who spend hours polishing elaborate and gaudy word-assemblages because they sound good, but who don't actually have much to say).

On San Wagar's piece...I can't imagine anybody saying, 'I am powerful and I am clean, sexy and

HE's getting married:
He'll get more settled.

SHE's getting married:
She'll get pregnant and leave.

strong, integrated on many levels and not afraid' seriously in any British accent. It sounds like the sort of thing Captain James T Kirk might write on his curriculum vitae. ...Oh well, poor chap, I suppose he's at least trying.

I like lettercols. It's really better to see more than one issue's worth, though, so that answers and answer-answers accumulate, reinforce each other, throw out pseudopods in strange new directions. You end up with what one of my tutors calls a semantic map of an area of knowledge/concern/interest.

ARTHUR HLAVATY
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USA
23 Jan. 1983

On #9: If it weren't absurd to take pride in something as trivial as the geographical location of one's birth, Joseph Nicholas' loc

would make me proud to be an American. To hear him tell it, Americans are open, honest, and concerned with important matters, but the British are a squeamish lot, fearful of any public discussion of emotionally charged topics. If you ask me, he's being unfair to the Brits.

MARY GENTLE
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Westbourne,
Bournemouth, England
4 Feb. 1983

...the Samuel Wagar essay. I have always thought (probably mistakenly) that any thinking woman is liable

to end up as a feminist, if only because the current of society runs counter to most of her own instincts and desires. That is to underestimate the force of social conditioning, but nevertheless there is some truth in it: one is far more likely to be stimulated into consideration of a social role if violently uncomfortable in it. I tend to twitch when people remark (as someone does in WWW) that men are equally the victims of social stereotyping. Well, so they are, but there is nothing 'equal' about it; that stereotype is supported by the whole social structure. I'm not wholly certain whether this makes men better or worse off than women in the long run, but it's much more comfortable for them to live their roles than for us to live ours. And judging by the phrasing of that last sentence, it also enforces a dichotomy I don't basically believe in...ah well.

But to get back to Wagar: here is someone who does feel uncomfortable with his role; and it's good to find someone who feels that this is worth discussing. But the reaction I have (and I grant you it's fairly Pavlovian) is not to trust him. Because it's not necessary for him to think this way. Now if I analyse that, I think that it may well be as necessary for him to question his conditioning as for you to question yours, or me to question mine. And I'll go further and say that, if all control of power is a political issue, then the male/female thing is part

of a much wider debate. Revolution is the core. And likewise feminism and tolerance of other people's politics and sexuality goes together. But conditioning always runs deeper than one thinks.

((Mary has more to say, but I'll leave it till next time, or possibly later if I find I have room. I'm not sure I agree with all she's said here, but I want to think it over for awhile. Still, I think a good topic for future debate in Wrevenge would be this issue of "power" -- starting with some definitions! I use the term a lot, and so do others, but judging from some of my mail, I suspect that what I mean by the term is a bit different than what others mean, thus leading to a lot of confusion. Till next time, then...--JHW))

LEANNE FRAHM
272 Slade Point Rd
Slade Point, Qld 4741
Australia
2 February 1983

I always look on the arrival of a copy of WWW with a mixture of annoyance and resignation, and I've often wondered why.

The editorial of #10, in which you quoted from Annemarie van Wyck, helped me to crystallise these feelings. I feel exactly as she does, and my total reaction is "why"? Why are you so interested in the "irrational feelings" (as you put it) of your correspondents?

((Because I can read the statistical, "factual", "rational" stuff in books and learned journals. Joan Dick's earlier letter in this column sums up a lot of my views, though as I stated in my reply to her, I don't go quite as far as she does.--JHW))

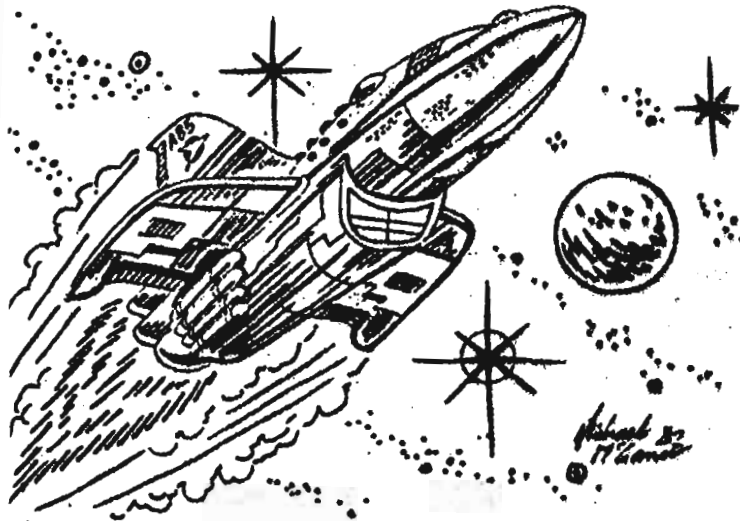
...Everyone agrees that rape is a bad thing, nobody likes castration, sterilization should be left up to the individual...we know these things....So what?

((But, Leanne, that's not what we were discussing. The topics really were: the feelings that contribute to rape's occurrence and the reactions to people who've been raped (and the reactions of people who've been raped -- why do they blame themselves?), the distress that some people feel towards someone else's choice to be sterilised, and so on. These feelings are very real, often illogical, and often run counter to the same person's intellectual views on the same topic. I think these things are worth discussing, if for no other reason than that all readers get a wider view of the diversities of people's opinions and feelings, and they may find that others hold the same views they do, which can often be a very important source of relief. Or they may modify their opinions when exposed to a point of view they've never considered before-- or never taken seriously.--JHW))

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Adrienne Losin, Frank Macskasy Jr, E B Klassen, D Carol Roberts, Maureen James, Debi Kean, Julie Vaux, Mr Mapson, Sam Wagar, Jonathan Scott, LynC.

HE's going on a business trip:
It's good for his career.

SHE's going on a business trip:
What does her husband say?



IT'S ALL
 IT'S AND
 O'S

(Computer jokes
 from Micro
 magazine)

NEW PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENT: 7903 MPU WITH ENHANCED INSTRUCTION SET

The new 7903 MPU provides a plug-in upgrade for systems currently using the 6502 microprocessor. The 7903 is fully pin-compatible and software upward-compatible with the 6502. Additionally, many of the

formerly unused opcodes are used to provide an enhanced instruction set providing features normally found only on much larger systems. The new instructions are listed below.

BBI	Branch on Blinking Indicator	ME T	Misread and Eat Tape
BCBF	Branch on Chip Box Full	PTAB	Position Tape Ass-Backwards
BFO	Branch on Power Off	STT	Stretch and Tangle Tape
BSO	Branch on Sleepy Operator	ST	Scratch Tape
IIB	Ignore Inquiry and Branch	SRSD	Seek Record and Scar Disc
RFB	Reverse Parity and Branch	RD	Rewind Disk
BCH	Branch on CPU Halted	BD	Backspace Disk
BTAD	Branch to Auto-Destruct	ED	Eject Disk
JRL	Jump to Random Location	TD	Throw Disk
FAG	Fold and Go	LCD	Launch Cartridge Disk
AI	Add Improper	FD	Flip Disk
DO	Divide and Overflow	DF	Disk Feed
DC	Divide and Conquer	UER	Update and Erase Record
SRZ	Subtract and Reset to Zero	CVU	Convert to Unary
ARZ	Add and Reset to Zero	CVS	Convert to Sesquinary
KM	Exclusive Maybe	CRN	Convert to Roman Numerals
PAH	Prevent all Interrupts and Interrupt	WRTC	Wind Real-Time Clock
PI	Punch Invalid	WWTC	Wind Wrong-Time Clock
RI	Read Invalid	PCB	Pause for Coffee Break
RCSD	Read Card and Scramble Data	SPD	Start and Power Down
RCR	Rewind Card Reader	LCC	Load and Clear Core
RASC	Read and Shred Card	EROS	Erase Read-Only Store
BCR	Backspace Card Reader	RWOM	Read Write-Only Memory
BCP	Backspace Card Punch	WROM	Write Read-Only Memory
RCI	Read Card and Ignore	FCE	Fill Core with Epoxy
SSJ	Select Stacker and Jam	DMP K	Destroy Memory Protect Key
FSRA	Forms Skip and Run Away	BPP	Blob Plotter Pen
BSP	Backspace Printer	MPS	Move Pen Somewhere
PBC	Print and Break Chain	DFMD	Drop Pen and Mangle Drum
TDB	Transfer and Drop Bits	APX	Apply Power and Explode
MCB	Move and Drop Bits	HCF	Halt and Catch Fire
MLR	Move and Lose Record	CCP	Clear Core and Proceed
MWC	Move and Wrap Core	EIOC	Execute Invalid Op Code
MC	Move Continuous	EPI	Execute Programmer Immediate
CM	Circulate Memory	SPSW	Scramble Program Status Word
WWLR	Write Wrong Length Record	ERAF	Execute Relocatable Address Field
RNR	Read Noise Record	EM	Emulate 407
RIRG	Read Inter-Record Gap	EPSW	Execute Program Status Word
REOF	Read End-Of-File	UC	Unwind Core
RBT	Rewind and Break Tape	EBQR	Enable Bi-Quinary Arithmetic
PMT	Punch Magnetic Tape	PDN	Power Down and Normalize
PDT	Punch and Delete Tape	PSP	Push Stack Pointer

BOOK

REVIEWS

All reviews by the editor unless otherwise noted.



Tanith Lee, Night's Master, Death's Master, Delusion's Master, Daw, 1979-1981.

Three self-contained novels on a similar theme, set in the same universe. The demon-lords are male but the main characters often female (in *Death's Master*, Simmu changes sex often). High fantasy focussing on human weaknesses and greed, presented allegorically. Very well written, Magnificent imagery. Occasionally confusing, especially if one must set the book aside for any length of time. Complex plotting. All Lee's human characters, of either (or both) sexes, are both strong and weak, or are a stereotype of some weakness that is offset by another character with strengths. Thus a balance. The first time I tried to read these, I couldn't. Too detailed and my taste for fantasy comes and goes. When in the mood, I read all three straight through and thought them excellent. Definitely not for everyone.

Tanith Lee, Silver Metal Lover, Daw, 1981.

A rather bizarre story (some what reminiscent of "Don't Bite the Sun/Drinking Sapphire Wine") of a young woman's search for identity and independence. Jane "has everything", including a mother who tries to manipulate her, none too subtly. When Jane falls in love with a robot and runs away from home to live in a slum flat, her mother simply cuts off Jane's money and waits for her to slink home defeated. Instead, Jane learns to survive -- she and Silver (the robot) bask for their living. Meanwhile, the reader is treated to some philosophy on what it means to be human, as the robot questions the "feelings" it has -- but isn't supposed to. Jane's friends provide some amusing diversions as they go about their exotic lives, suffer exotic torments of the soul, and generally behave like overblown versions of the characters in a Woddy Allen film. A very enjoyable book.

Cherry Wilder, The Nearest Fire, Timescape/Pocket, 1980.

Sequel to "The Luck of Brin's Five", this novel is told from the point of view of Yolo Harn, a young woman miner. I enjoy these stories immensely. They have a certain charming simplicity, yet are well told and internally consistent. The Morulians are marsupial humanoids with a very non-sexist culture, who form marriage groups of 5 adults (plus resulting children). Scott Gale, the central character of *Brin's Five*, is the (mostly off stage) focus of this book also. The first portion of the book tells of Yolo's sentence for wounding an overseer, and her choice to go to a prison camp rather than be a vassal.

Determined to escape from the camp, she takes a political prisoner, Tsori, with her. He wants to locate the companions of the human, Scott, and believes he knows where to find them. Once located, the humans are drawn into local politics and find it very difficult to believe some of Yolo's tales. They are suspicious of her (not unreasonable under the circumstances) but naively trusting of the "officials". Each species finds the other a bit hard to understand. I especially enjoy a well-written book (like this one) where the differences are shown from the non-humans' point of view. Wilder generally manages to explain things without dropping chunks of "lectures" into the story, even on the pretext of explaining something to the humans. Recommended.

C J Cherryh, Merchanter's Luck, Daw, 1982.

Sandor Kreja is the last survivor of a merchant family, keeping his ship going with small-time cargos and a bit of smuggling. Allison Reilly is an ambitious member of a large powerful clan, who has no hope of a command before she's nearly too old to enjoy

HE's talking with co-workers:
He must be discussing the latest deal.

SHE's talking with co-workers:
She must be gossiping.

it -- if then. They meet in a bar, sleep together, meet again later (as Sandor absurdly pursues the unattainable). Allison bails him out of a tight spot by buying her way (and several of her cousins') onto his crew -- against his desire (but the alternatives are worse). The "ghosts" of Sandor's past haunt him through the ship -- he's very embarrassed by them and tries to keep them hidden. But who's using whom? Or is someone else using both of them? Big political maneuvers swirl about them -- Sandor has always been too preoccupied with survival to really notice. Allyson is aware but not as well informed as she might be.

Lots of action, and very good portrayals of the two main characters. Especially Sandor, who does a lot of growing in the course of the story. Allyson both uses him and grows to care for him as she sees (and helps draw out) his good (caring) side. Recommended.

Octavia E Butler, Kindred, Pocket Books, 1979.

Dana is a black woman, married to a white man, living in 20th-century California. She is psychically summoned several times to the pre-Civil War South, each time by a white boy/man, Rufus, whenever he's in danger of death. The visits vary in length but are only terminated by her life being in danger -- whereupon she returns to the 20th century. Time passes at different rates -- a few days in the 20th century become months in the 18th. Realizing that Rufus is apparently one of her own ancestors, she feels a necessity to help him (the old time paradox again), but curbing her modern ideas to fit in as a "nigger" slave isn't easy. Dana gets into strife frequently, yet continues to try to modify Rufus' behaviour to be a bit more humane.

The daily reality of slavery under a harsh master (Rufus' father) is chillingly portrayed, as are the petty habits of Rufus (refusing to post a letter for Dana, while assuring her that he's done so). Dana is a strong woman, and the plantation slaves of both sexes are shown as strong people, helping each other, with a sense of community, while the whites (of both sexes) are whining, petty, greedy, sadistic people who enjoy exercising their power in tyrannical ways.



HE's not as his desk:
He must be at a meeting.

((The following books have been reviewed for Merv Binns and will appear in Australian Science Fiction News, so I won't repeat myself too much here.))

Marion Zimmer Bradley, Hawkmistress, Daw, 1982.

For those fans of MZB who've wanted to know more about the "Sisterhood of the Sword" (also known as the "Free Amazons"), here's the book. Romilly grows up in a family with a father who's got a rather rigid set of ideas about what's appropriate for his sons and daughters to do (ideas shared by most of his peers). His eldest son has defied him and left home; his younger son hasn't yet developed the strength of character to do so. The father refuses to accept his children's laran (ESP). Romilly has the laran that gives her rapport with animals, and is an especially gifted hawk trainer. This is not a suitable occupation for a young woman. When forbidden to continue, she runs away and joins the sisterhood, getting caught up in a major rebellion at the same time. The usual (in recent MZB books) heavy emphasis on personal internal development, self-doubts, and so on. Darkover fans probably won't mind, but readers who prefer a faster-paced story might mind this a bit tedious. I found it very absorbing and hard to put down.

Marion Zimmer Bradley and the "Friends of Darkover", Sword of Chaos, Daw, 1982.

Short stories by various members of the Darkover fan group, mostly women. Generally high quality. There is a feminist touch to most of the stories, but it's not preachy or didactic. The women are generally strong and capable, or become so under pressure. Even the story (Di Catenas, by Adrienne Martine-Barnes) where a woman feels trapped, bound, frightened by her new husband (her dead sister's widower), isn't "anti-men". The marriage bracelet seems a symbol of oppression. This turns out to be more than an illusion! Another good story ("Camilla" by Patricia Mathews) shows a man (who doesn't like taking instructions from a woman, especially on matters he considers the province of men) learning a valuable lesson, and a Renunciate woman who bends her determination not to serve Terrans, and learns to accept another side of herself. I found this quite a delightful book, and even better than the first "Friends of Darkover" volume.

David Yallop, The Day the Laughter Stopped, St Martin's Press, 1975.

--reviewed by Harry Andruschak
Whenever the topic of rape comes up in feminist circles, somebody brings up the fact that the trials are unfair to the women involved. Why should her past be allowed into the record? Why is the jury warned that rape is an easy charge to bring, and a hard one to disprove?

SHE's not at her desk:
She must be in the ladies' room.

Can it really happen that an innocent man could have his life ruined this way? Alas, this book is a sad record of one such incident, the trial of Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle for rape and murder. And yes although he was found innocent, his career was smashed... by a prostitute who brought the charge but did not appear. There was no law that the woman's past sexual activities were evidence. Not then,

After 50 years it may seem just a trivial miscarriage of justice, but books like this do remind us that... well, rape is an easy charge to bring and it is hard to disprove. It brings up the nagging question of the innocent man caught in the mill... and the old fear that one day it could happen to you.

Sandi Hall, The Godmothers, 1982?, publication details not provided.

--reviewed by Peter Graham

As one of my prized dreams is that all minority groups, Maoritanga radicals/militant feminists/Vietnam boat-folk/all the world's dispossessed might write out their own visions of their ideal futures and then these be collected to stand side by side to reveal the potential variety open to us (and how jointly compatible they are!), I looked forward to reading this feminist sf novel. Here one such vision might, I hoped, be found. It is, too, but overshadowed by other elements.

How can one complain that a book that starts with a witch burning gets off to a lethargic beginning? Yet it does, really -- and that live cremation is one source of my discontent. It is implied that it occurs at Salem although not so stated. What is stated is that feminists in the novel say such things as "as one witch at Salem said to another, 'you can trust me, sister, they're the ones doing the burning' "-- and, since I happen to be aware that all but one Salem victim were not burned but hanged (the exception was pressed to death), I'm tempted to conclude her future feminists are basing their culture on historical myths (it is true many European witch-hunters especially loathed women; it is false that no men were persecuted too). Only Ms Hall takes this very seriously, the context indicates.

Then there is the 'artist's scalpel' taped to the inside thigh of the jeans of one of the novel's protagonists; it cuts her other thigh through her jeans when she moves later on. Of 2 female artists I queried, both said, 'An artist's what?' and thought a palette knife might be meant -- such knives are rather blunt and whether they could havethrough jeans and felsh... It sounds less than credible and in sf presently possible events ought to be very credible to lend their verisimilitude to the other details...

((If I may break in, I'd like to say that all the graphics artists I know use a 'scalpel' in

their work, and I often use one too, for fine trimming of material (typeset text, bits of press-on lettering and shading, etc) before laying down on the artwork. Perhaps that's what is meant.--JHW))

Then there is the affair of the parted Moebius strip of energy that is an analog of death parting twins -- only cut such a strip down its middle and you get one large strip, cut it across and you have one no longer looped strip. Either Ms Hall is very cleverly saying the parting is only apparent (as I want to believe) or she does not understand the M-strip properties. Take your pick -- be kind.

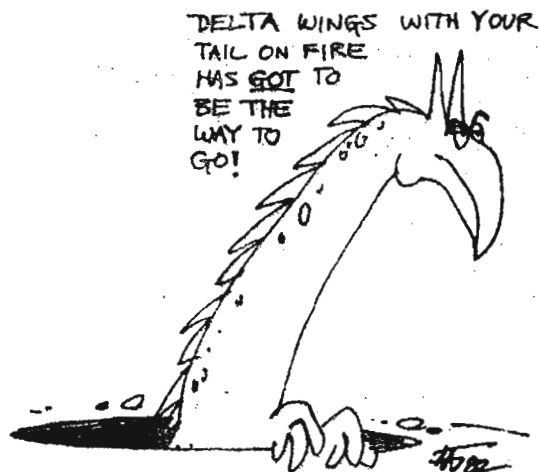
Oh, the novel is said to be a blend of thriller and sf -- and as it has future (?) and ghosts of the dead females wandering through time tracking the growth of femi nine domination in the world-to-be and the world-that-was, sharing the experience in the minds of the living (and even intervening in person at crisis points), it is a fantasy at core -- the sense of sisterhood objectified, perhaps. (Query, is it a thesis that no males have souls? If such wandering is possible, why are no mentalities doing it: male?...) The phases by which women come to power seem a trifle ideal to me, but not impossible -- I find her Big Business folk sadly like mafioso (there are much neater ways to deal with relatively powerless feminists than bombing, knee-capping, and maiming in person), but with all that 'laundered' money about, maybe it could be so.

Space travel is not an issue in this novel (most utopian visions I've read skirt it -- static societies of that sort shy off anything but nostalgic futures as worlds-that-are-golden-ages-again -- so that is not surprising, really). DNA gene tampering ditto. The emphasis is on violence to a level I found appalling, but your average night's TV viewing has as much, I guess. And, with 'godmother' intervention to resolve the more interesting plotline; (she invents a novel new futuristic cult but it seems to me that the deductions following from its Revealed credo would not produce the same fanaticism as she depicts here -- established religions are as capable of it and using one should have added impact but her restraint was probably wise. Religion and Big Business are villains here.)--she has a deus-ex-machina finale and a mere footnote resolution of one major plotline as well. The Magic solution; as a thriller ending it is a copout, and the psi solution out of nix is not my ideal of windup -- one forgives it only where other elements are truly impressive, mostly.

So, I like parts of this novel -- it has obviously been the by-product of lots of thought, for the future structure of her society sounds fascinating, although Cocaine is not the sort of nose-rot I have any desire to see in everyday use -- yet in the end I found it short on compassion, the actions of presumably intelligent beings seemed inferior choices for them in some cases, and I can't say it's a wonderful work. It isn't.

HE's not in the office:
He's meeting customers.

SHE's not in the office:
She must be out shopping.



SHIFT/CLEAR

A column in which the editor clears her ~~mind~~ desk of accumulated odd bits of information, some of it more related to what's been under discussion in this fanzine, than others.

RAPE, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, ETC

Issue #7 of this fanzine contained an article by me on "The Politics of Rape", and this was followed up by a discussion of the legal and emotional distress that often plagues rape victims, presented in #8. Letters and comments on these articles were published in issues #7-8-9-10.

One aspect that wasn't covered in these articles, was monetary compensation for rape victims, whether or not the attacker was convicted. Also money can hardly make up for the trauma a rape victim experiences, at least the award of money is a recognition of the seriousness of the injury, just as compensation for any other injury, is recognition. This helps in some way to overcome the feeling that many rape victims have that they are the ones on trial, or that no one takes them seriously or believes them. In our society, money means a lot, psychologically.

A few excerpts from the clippings in my files: A young woman in Sydney was granted \$3500 compensation for criminal injuries, even though a man charged with two offences against her was acquitted. The alleged offender was acquitted on a charge that he had made false representation to the woman, then aged 17, that he was a police officer "to induce her to have illicit carnal connection with him." The judge, who had directed the jury to acquit the man, said that the compensation legislation was "undoubtedly designed to be beneficial and to afford some measure of justice to the victim of a crime, not withstanding that no person has been convicted of it."

In Western Australia, a woman (raped 4 years ago by 3 youths, when she was 14), was awarded \$2500 for "emotional damage" caused by her experience. The judge said he had had difficulty assessing damages because there was no evidence on how long her emotional trouble might last. The maximum award

is \$7500, and social workers, doctors, lawyers and others believe this is inadequate and out of touch with the reality of the victim's suffering. (This seems to be a case of using compensation money to in effect tell the victim that she isn't being taken seriously --especially when viewed alongside some of the awards for victims of automobile crashes. But there is no third-party insurance against rape.)

From Illinois, in the USA, comes a different story: For the first time in that state's legal history, a rape victim has sued her assailant for damages, and won. The woman, a 21-year-old nursing student, had sought \$1 million, but the jury, deliberating only 15 minutes, awarded her \$5 million in punitive damages and \$100,000 in actual damages. (One does wonder if she'll actually be able to collect.)

And from New York we learn of a 41-year-old secretary, battered and raped in the elevator of her office building, who was assisted by a "rehabilitation team", and all claims for help to her and her family were paid for by the insurance company that covers employees of the firm she worked for. The news item said that "all rapes at the workplace are covered by workers' compensation, though it's not clear from the article whether this applies only in New York or also in other states. According to the US Justice Department, 9 per cent of all rapes and attempted rapes occur at the workplace, so although workers' compensation is an important step in the right direction, it obviously would only cover some rapes.

I've also got a whole stack of clippings, giving some incredibly biased statements made by judges hearing rape trials, in the UK, USA & here in Australia -- but they're too depressing to repeat. And here's a case from Britain where a confessed rapist was fined and released. This sort of incident has led to increased fear in many British women, who see it as a signal to men that they can rape without fear of a jail sentence.

HIS desk is cluttered:
He's a hard worker and a busy man.

HER desk is cluttered:
She's a disorganized scatterbrain.

I'd particularly like to hear from British readers on that one.

A partial answer to rape and harassment in London is the possibility of banning men from whole carriages on the Underground, and from certain buses. In 1980, the Metropolitan Police dealt with more than 12,500 reported cases of assault on women in London -- an increase of 12% over the previous year. And since most such incidents go unreported, the real figure may be closer to 50,000. The Safe Women's Transport Group, set up in October 1981 by a group of women, carried out a survey of women in their area, and took their case to the Greater London Council, which eventually put up funds for a subsidised minibus service, to be staffed by women, 7 days a week, from early evening until dawn. There's also a feminist cab company in London, which operates a fleet of more than 50 cars around-the-clock, 7 days a week. All of its drivers are women, as are its customers.

Though those sorts of responses won't "solve" the problem, I am delighted to see women taking matters into their own hands (without violence) -- as others have done with battered women's refuges and the like. Unfortunately, most such ventures need public funds to survive, as the women they assist are often disadvantaged (poor).

On a related issue: although crime by women has risen dramatically in the last ten years, the most common factor among women criminals is that they have either been battered by a husband or a boyfriend, or raped. The average woman inmate is young, poor, single or divorced, a high school dropout, and often a mother. (These are USA statistics.) Except for "mother", that description I believe would fit most male inmates, too. I wonder how many of them are similarly bashed by fathers or other relatives? This little tidbit wasn't put in here to "prove" anything; it just struck me as interesting.

MEDICAL ADVANCES AND HEALTH CARE

((The following is part of a letter I received from SKEL -- Paul Skelton -- several months ago.))

Frank Mac kasy's comment about medical advances reducing the number of badly malformed babies that die raises an interesting point. I always understood that it wasn't really any change in medical technology or knowledge that had achieved this, but rather a social change, that is the move towards giving birth in hospital, in a supervised and regulated environment, rather than having the baby at home with just a lone doctor or midwife in attendance. In a hospital there are others present at the birth and they are watching. In earlier times the child would be 'born dead', and if it wasn't quite dead the pragmatic doctor or midwife would see that it never drew breath.

One point they understood, in their wisdom, which all the right-to-life supporters don't necessarily appreciate, is that it is not only quantity of life, but quality of life that matters. If a couple want a single child they will probably have a single child, so that if you spend all your efforts enabling a badly deformed child to grow up and 'enjoy' a limited existence, you are probably denying a perfectly normal child the chance to be born and enjoy a normal life. That is to say, if the first child was 'born dead', the parents would almost certainly try again at a later date and probably have a normal, healthy child.

Obviously these few brief remarks are not going to cover all the eventualities ("What about the parents who were only going to have a single child but who had another after the malformed one because they still didn't have what they wanted?" -- which I suspect is counterbalanced by the instances where couples were planning on large families but changed their minds after the continuing trauma of living with their first -- no way am I going to be able to touch all the bases in these remarks). It seems terrible callous, even to me as I write this, but in the case where the first child, the badly malformed one, is 'born dead', both the parents and the subsequent child will have a richer, fuller life. Boy, but there's a moral minefield in those three paragraphs!

Without really changing the subject, but climbing down from the rarified heights of moral or philosophical debate, back to the messy and unavoidable realities of everyday life, let's look at another aspect of the situation. Even more callous-seeming and harsher is the economic argument. Society has only so much money, so many resources to allocate, and a relatively high commitment on a small number of people which results in, at best, a marginal lifestyle means that those resources are not available to other cases. Like it or not, in our society sick people are in competition with each other for funds (one heart-swap operation probably means that several people will die because there aren't enough dialysis machines for kidney patients). Sick people are also in competition with other areas of the Welfare State for vital funds. Money spent on health services is money that can't be spent on social services and old-age pensions and the like. There is only so much money. There definitely still seems to be a glitch in this best of all possible worlds.

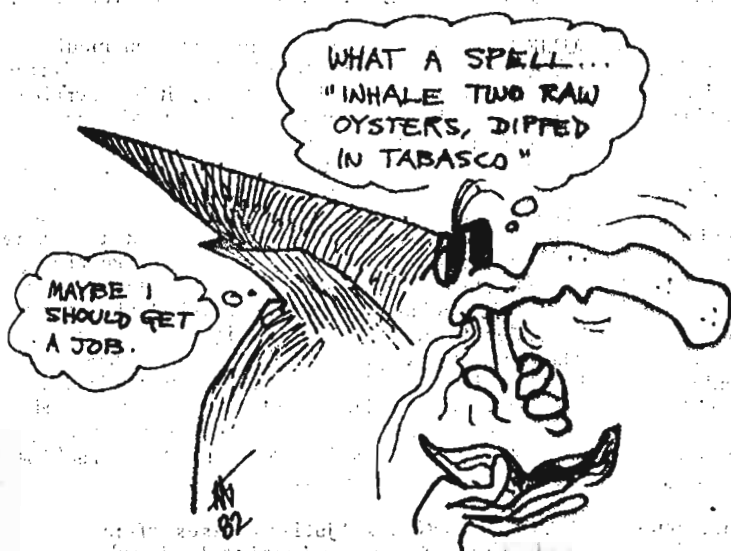
So how do you get out of that? Do you bring in graduated health-care premiums which bring carefully scaled benefits? ("I'm sorry, sir, but you only paid scale 3 which only goes up to 'Tonsilectomy'. Kidney transplants are only covered on scales 5 and upwards. Tough luck, buddy, but it's your own fault for opting for the lower payments. You can't get life on the cheap. When are you people going to realise this? Jeez, you guys make me sick!") Do you make the more 'exotic' types of treatment only available through 'private' medicine? Again, you have exactly the same problem.

The family picture is on HIS desk:
Ah, a solid, responsible family
man.

The family picture is on HER desk:
Hm, her family will come before
her career.

People will only get the medical treatment that they can afford. Poorer people will get more shoddy treatment. The problem is of course that people only get what they can afford, of anything. In trying to flout this basic fact of a free society, by telling people that they can have things even if they can't afford them, that Society will pay, is that Society can't afford them either. We all die. Generally in stages. We all start falling apart, and when you've gone through the stages where you could patch it up with some string and a bit of sticky-tape, or the medical equivalent, you get to the stage where repairs get more expensive. With machines, you send them back to the manufacturer, which is an option you unfortunately don't get with people. With any piece of equipment, there comes a time when maintaining it is far more expensive than getting a new one. To be brutally honest, this also applies to people, but it is not something about which we are capable of brutal honesty, simply because people are unique. But the problem remains. Fixing people gets more and more expensive as they deteriorate. It is open-ended and Society just can't cope, can't afford, without unlimited funds, to tackle such an on-going situation.

I am minded that the option of sending broken people back to the manufacturer is in fact what we have been doing for years. Isn't this just another way of describing our funeral ceremonies? "Dear God, my wife is broken, Please mend her and save her for me until I come through too." We take it for granted that we don't come with a clause about unauthorised tinkering voiding the guarantee. It seems to me that all we've done with our medical programs is set up an equivalent of a corner "Joe's Fix-It" and put back the time when we have to send the body back to the manufacturer... because, even if he does fix it, he never sends it back. Maybe the problem is that we don't include the right kind of return postage?



DON'T VOTE -- IT ONLY ENCOURAGES THEM

An election has been called in Australia, to occur on March 5th, for the entire Senate & House of Representatives. Voting is compulsory -- or, more accurately, turning up at a voting place, accepting a ballot, and placing said ballot in the ballot box, is compulsory. A couple of years ago, the humorist columnist at the Canberra Times newspaper refused to go through even the facade of voting, and thus made himself liable to a fine. The Chief Judge of the ACT Supreme Court eventually fined him \$2 on an appeal following an earlier acquittal. The Judge found that "not being able to form preference for any candidate over another" -- because the citizen had been overseas until a few days before the election -- "was not a valid reason for failing to vote."

HORMONE FACTOR GIVES ADVANTAGE TO BUSINESSWOMEN

Male sex hormones can be hazardous to men's health and estrogen (a female hormone) is a fine credential for the working world, according to a Georgetown University Medical School (USA) professor, Dr Estelle Ramey. She was delivering a serious, but comically put, address to the National Association of Women Business Owners. Testosterone, a male steroid at one time dubbed the 'take-charge hormone', was mocked. ("If it's testosterone the public wants in a president, as an endocrinologist I can't recommend a 70-year-old man; they should get a 16-year-old boy instead.") Some of the evidence in her argument: women live longer than men. Women have a double chance for immunity to diseases because of their two X chromosomes (roughly 70 percent of congenital anomalies are seen in boys). The high ratio of testosterone to estrogen is a disadvantage in terms of the male's cardiovascular system. She wonders, "Why don't scientists study the biologic strengths of women rather than the biochemical weaknesses of men? If you wanted to set up a successful business, you'd study business success stories, right?" Ironically, to work towards solutions to the high incidence of male heart attacks, the National Institutes of Health chose to study 600 men (and later added 7 women).

((The above was clipped for me from the Washington Post newspaper, by whom I'm no longer sure; probably Chris Callahan. I enjoy getting clippings, if anyone else feels like sending them in addition to -- or in place of -- a "proper" loc.-- JHW))

HE's having a baby:
He'll need a raise.

SHE's having a baby:
She'll cost the company money in
maternity benefits.

SNEPPITS

ALEXIS GILLILAND writes: 'I have my doubts that any self-respecting dragon would let itself be ridden on. It's too much like a rabbit riding a dingo. Sooner or later the dingo thinks: "Why am I taking this nonsense from my lunch?" and then he has to find another rabbit. Nice cover anyway.'

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK declares 'One man's view of liberation...not to have to count each calorie, to fiddle with my urine for testing, or prick my finger for a drop of blood. To be able to eat whenever I want, whatever I want. Not to exercise, not to live to a schedule...above all, a diet with lots of fat and sugar in it. And lots of beer and other alcohol.'

BEN INDICK reports 'my wife put your "Position: Housewife" up in the kitchen permanently and has me constantly making copies to give away. She has not threatened divorce yet, but every time she needs a few dollars for something, and asks me, I note a furtive shift of her eyes to the article. So, congratulations, I guess!'

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON sends a poem:

Jean, Jean, on the beam
best fanzine I've ever seen
well-selected shade of green
all the printing sharp and clean
pages number seventeen
lean and mean, it's quite the scene
e'en Elizabeth the Queen
keeps hers by the royal latrine
We hope it doesn't trouble you
to pub your triple 'W'.

She also notes that 'Ace/Berkley Books has an editorial office run exclusively by young women (Susan Allison, Terri Windling, Beth Meechum, Melissa Ann Singer) and is publishing a lot of first novels by young women writers: Janny Wurts, Patrician Wrede and Megan Lindholm. Ardath Mayhar has three novels from this publisher, Phyllis Ann Karr four. Most tend toward the feminist side of the scale, and a couple might even qualify as radical. They are also, like Jessica, really fantasy writers, not sf; there are still not many women writing hard sf.'

CHRIS CALLAHAN asks whether my question whether 'the female domination of media fandom is related to the low esteem in which it's held by many mainstream sf fans?' was meant as ambiguous wording. ((Yes)) 'The sentence could mean that media sf is held in low esteem, therefore men don't get involved, or that the female interest in media fandom is the reason for the low esteem, sexism being a taint in fandom as well as outside. Interesting, either way. Some media fan have speculated that men don't get involved (in writing, illing, publishing) because they're more interested in the hardware, while the women are more interested in relationships, sociology, etc, which make for the majority of the media publishing I've seen. Others think it's because women don't feel confident enough to try writing professionally, so they use the zines as an outlet.'



EILEEN DAVIS writes: 'I'm still very active in the Unitarian Church and we have a large contingent of singles there. We have a lot of fun together. Last night I went out dancing with a group of them to a lounge where we know the band members. Had a great time. I'm a manic dancer and I love it. I never lack for partners. Even after they get out of the hospital, they come back and ask for more. I always ask unattracted women to dance with me too because men are generally such losers. One man won't dance with me anymore because I won't let him lead (I don't have the patience for that crap). But most men ask me again to dance. What I love is when I'm asked to dance a slow dance after dancing several fast ones and the man grimaces as he puts his hand on my sweaty back. I don't think I'm very nice.'

JULIE VAUX sends a few comments on media fans, and also says, 'Christine Ashby's letter I found strong and stimulating. It is a horrid (and I would hope obvious to most of your readers) fact of life that some handicaps are more socially acceptable than others. There are plenty of charming, lovely, so-called nice normal people out there who would quite happily have handicapped people sent to a home and forgotten about, rather than make the slight effort of breaking out of their 'normal' viewpoint and really making the effort to understand other people in the slightest. The sort of people who walk over guide dogs in bus aisles and nearly tread on their tails or who ignore blind people at bus stops and don't bother to ask if they want the bus signalled.' (She goes on to tell of an incident during the recent train strike.)

KEVIN DILLON says 'Julie's cases of male inadequacy of communication by insult is a perfect example of deterioration of real Australian strength of character. It perpetuates itself in plague fashion in our small nightshift where once we had a sane, working team of individuals, all alive, different, real & sane. For last few years...newcomers have been corrupted by symptoms of behaviour destructive to coherent, continual society.'