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THE LAST AURORA

SPECULATIVE FEMINISM

SF

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Publication Information

Aurora is published by the SF³ Publications Committee which consisted of Bill Bodden, Scott Custis, Jeanne Gomoll, Hope Kiefer, Peter Larsen, Diane Martin, Lucy Nash, Spike Parsons and Carrie Root.

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SF

Vol. 10, No. 2

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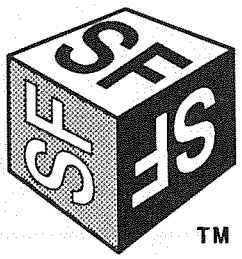


This magazine is being bulk-mailed to our subscribers and to certain other loyal individuals who have supported or traded with us in the past. We have also attempted to contact all of our subscribers so we can settle up our financial obligations to them. If you are a subscriber and have **not** heard from us by a separate first-class mailing, please get in touch with us.

EDITORIAL

Diane Martin

Being a bean-counter by profession, I thought that some figures might help put *Aurora*'s publication schedule in historical perspective. Looking at the timeline below, a couple of facts jump out:

One, we published *Aurora* 25 over three years ago.

Two, *Janus/Aurora* publication activity essentially ended about 1982—the last year we published more than one issue in a calendar year.

So why are we—the editorial we, the SF³ we—just now acknowledging the end of something that actually ended nearly eight years ago? (I'm reminded of those *Saturday Night Live* reports on Franco's health. Remember? His condition was always reported as "stable.")

Some of us, like Jeanne Gomoll, faced reality some time ago. She's been trying for years to convince me it's time to declare *Aurora* finished.

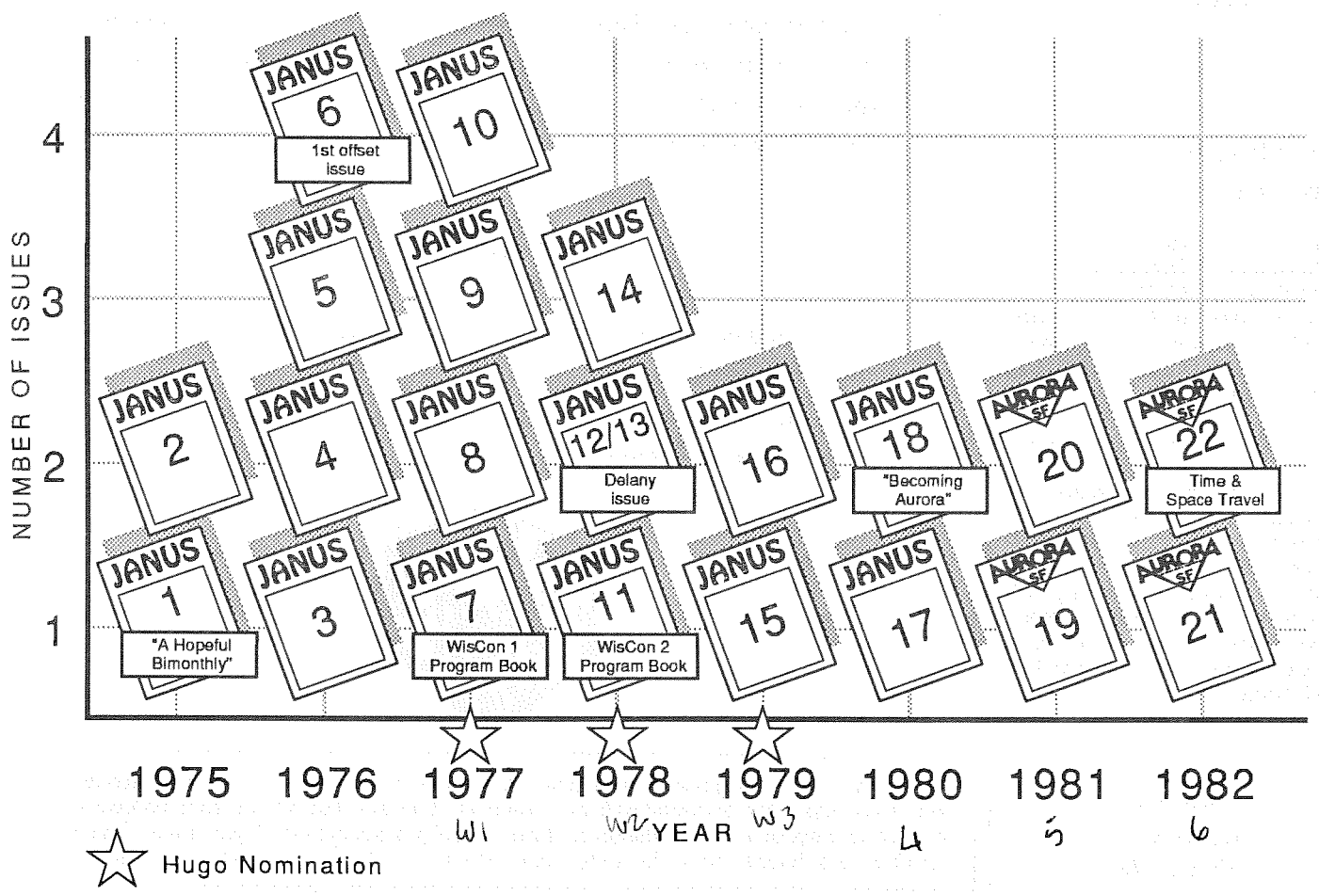
I'm a saver. Jeanne's not. Jeanne eagerly throws away things that have served their purpose and feels *good* about it. I pick paper clips out of the wastebasket. (I bet Jeanne throws them away.) Maybe I unnecessarily clutter up my life. Maybe I let too much of my identity attach to "things." Maybe Jeanne's toilet training was better than mine.

I hate to give up on anything. As long as the dream of *Aurora* was alive in my mind, I could perpetuate that illusion within the SF³ organization. Publication always seemed just around the corner—but somehow just out of reach.

A Step Back in Time

We started planning this issue in the Spring of 1987. What's happened since then? Personally, I rode a tidal wave of domestic disasters that I thought was going to crest a lot lower and a lot sooner than it actually did. I survived the lingering illness and death of a parent, the end of two long-term relationships, financial reverses and readjustments, and somewhere along the line found that my "job" had become a "career." In short, I had to change directions abruptly in several areas of my life all at once.

Still, I hate to give up on anything. I know I've said this before, but it's a central tenet to my life. Sometimes this trait is to my credit. Other times, I'm more a dog in the manger. As head of the SF³ Publications Committee, nobody dared take *Aurora* away from me. I became my own worst enemy. For a long time



LIANA NASH

*Diane Martin, **Aurora** editor*

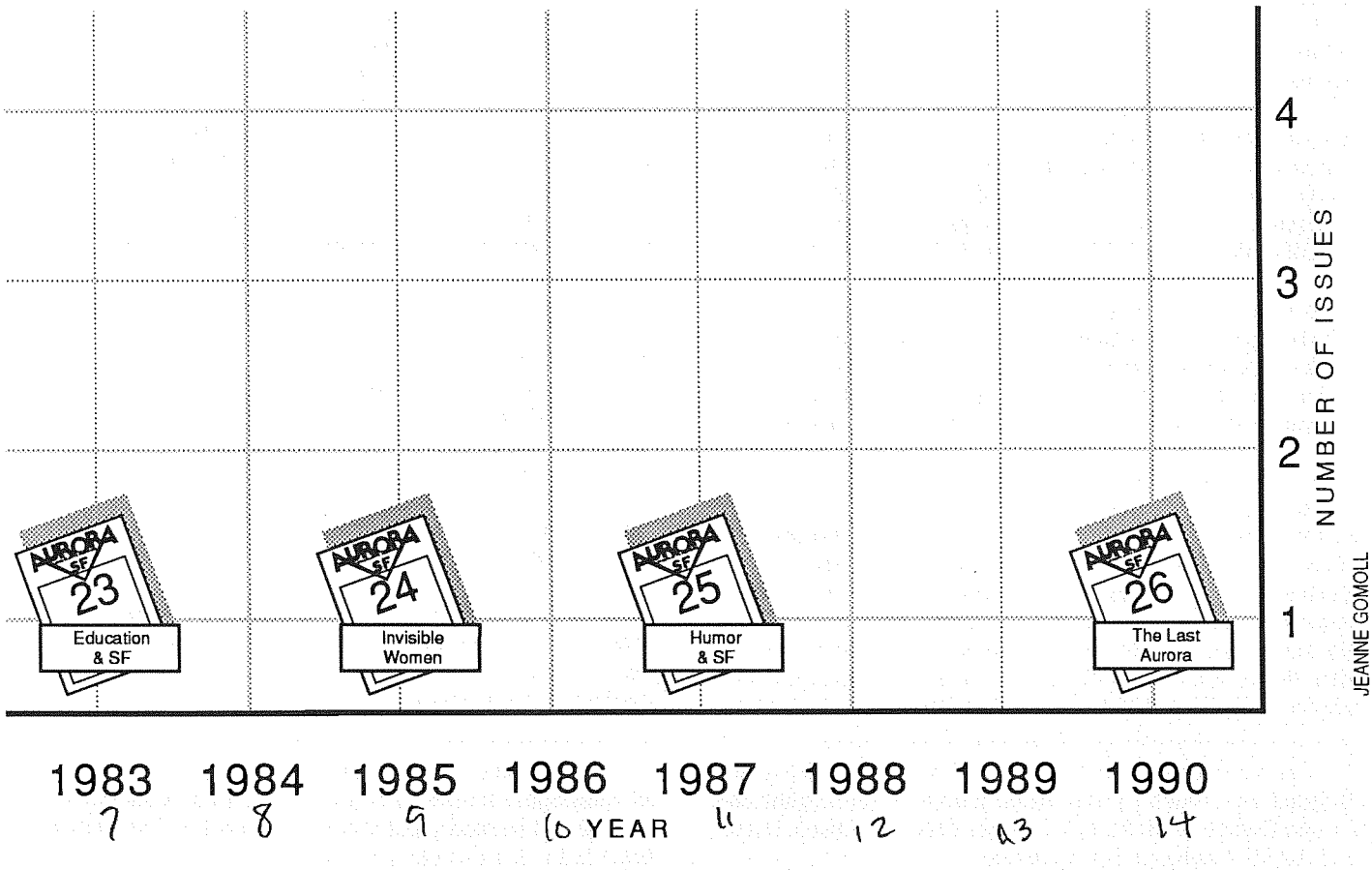
I blamed my leadership skills. My inability to attract and motivate people to work on the magazine. My procrastination. My unwillingness or inability to delegate. My letting the group down.

To some extent, I think *Aurora*'s publication slow-down was inevitable, a function of time—both the length of time our group has been in existence and also the time period in our lives. I think the *Aurora* staff's organizational burn-out was a natural development. We lived in one another's pockets during the early and middle years of *Janus/Aurora*, and I think a group can sustain that type of concentrated energy for just so long.

Looking wistfully back, I see the best times of my life. I was in my mid-20s when I first got involved with *Janus/Aurora*. This year I turned 40. In between have come car payments, mortgages, careers, life insurance, and investments. Social responsibility. Family obligations. A lot of financial stuff that eats up time, but seems—like oat bran—the right thing to do. I spend a lot more time planning for my retirement that I ever imagined myself doing. (And I know a lot more bald men than I used to.) I think there really is a time and a season for everything. Those 10 years, from my mid-20s to mid-30s were a time for learning, for self-expression, for working closely with like-minded people. A time for *Janus/Aurora*.

As we got older, more mature, we all found other outlets for the needs that *Janus/Aurora* filled. The creativity, the communication, the camaraderie.

Maybe I should be writing an article called, "I am not *Aurora*" (apologies to Leonard Nimoy). I'm not sure how my identity got so tied up in my mind with the magazine. I didn't



JEANNE GOMOLL

start *Janus*. Jan Bogstad did. [1] Heck, I didn't even get involved until issue #5—and all I did then was collate. But from the time I read that notice pinned to the bulletin board of the WSA Pharmacy, I was hooked.

A Step Further Back

It was the summer of 1976. Dick Russell and I went to a *Janus* meeting upstairs after hours at the now-defunct Madison Book Coop, where Jan worked. Tom Murn button-holed me and extolled the wonders of *Dhalgren*. Everybody else knew each other; they were all planning to go to some big science-fiction convention in Kansas City. A guy named Hank seemed to be in charge of that trip. He wasn't at the meeting, but he called and talked to several people on the phone.

I was so excited to be in the same room with other people who read science fiction like I did, and actually attended conventions like the ones I'd seen listed in *Analog*. And they were *publishing their own magazine*. From Jan, I bought a copy of every issue—four, in all. I still treasure them. Somehow in the course of the evening I uttered those fateful words, "I can type."

Ancient History

I discovered my need for publishing fairly early in life. I was 12 or 13 and in what's now called "junior high," but we called it "the big room." (I went to a three-room country grade school. The other two rooms were "the middle room" and "the little room.") My Aunt Polly had just given me an old Smith-Corona office typewriter. A couple friends of mine got hold of some ditto masters. I said, "I can type," and we typed up a newspaper called *FOFF—Freak Out For Freedom*. (This was in 1962. Even then, before I'd ever heard of Joanna Russ, I knew girls were missing out on something.)

Bertie's mom worked in the school office and we talked her into running off the ditto masters for us. She got into minor-league trouble over it, but didn't seem to mind. We got into minor-league trouble, too, but we didn't care either. I don't remember what was in that first newspaper. Something mildly critical of the school, I think. We were notorious, and proud of it. I've never gotten over that feeling.

In high school I was junior, and then senior, editor of the school paper—*The Golden Nugget*. For production, we got to work in a real newspaper office after school and evenings. This was a genuine treat. We paged through gigantic clip art books, programmed the headliner machine, and ran our galleys through a big waxer. I loved it.

As long as we stuck to standard high school newspaper topics like class plays, the honor roll, and sports, we stayed out of trouble. But my cousin Kathy (who's now a feature writer for the *Miami Herald*) planted seeds of discontent. Suggested we write about topics that were *socially relevant*. A far cry from radical concept nowadays, but back in 1967 in rural Wisconsin, heresy. Not surprisingly, our advisor, Mrs. Roettger, ix-nayed Kathy's idea. Write about S*x? Dr*gs? R*ck & R*ll? Suggest that maybe the fighting in Vietnam was Not Right? Absolutely Not.

I think we knew what reaction we'd get. We were just testing reality. Pushing on the walls a little. We'd never heard of a glass ceiling.

Naturally, when I got to college (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1968-72), I was immediately attracted to the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society, for you youngsters who aren't political history buffs, an organization both more and less innocuous than the name would suggest). I never became an actual card-carrying member, but many of my friends were. Through these friends, I found myself on the staff of a self-proclaimed "underground newspaper" called *The Alternative*. (I think I was at some party or meeting and said, "I can type.")

We published articles on sex, drugs, and rock & roll. We criticized the political establishment. We printed whatever we wanted to print. Nobody censored us—until the cut-rate printer we patronized went out of business and we couldn't get another shop to do our printing. It was great. [2]

After graduating from Eau Claire, I moved to Madison and endured the purgatory of graduate school in English for a couple years before becoming frustrated and disgusted at the repressive, patriarchal brand of "scholarship" I had to conform to. (This was a few years before Women's Studies came into being.)

Return to the Present

This was my background going into that fateful meeting at the Book Coop. I suspect it explains more than I realize of my feelings about *Aurora*.

Jan and Jeanne typed *Janus* #1 with manual typewriters, directly onto mimeo stencils. Headlines were hand-lettered with felt-tip pens and electro-stenciled with the art, which was then tipped into the stencils. Hank Luttrell printed the issue on twil-tone paper, using his Roneo duplicator.

By issue #5 we had begun to use IBM Selectric typewriters, but it wasn't until issue #6, when Dick talked us into going offset, that we felt technologically advanced. No more blue corflu. Lots of white Liquid Paper instead. We found a blind printer who worked cheap, and we were off and running.

The step up to *correcting* IBM Selectrics was pretty exciting, too. Of course Dick had to special-order a mutant (Dvôrak) keyboard for his machine. I think the only two keys that are in the "normal" place are the "A" and the "M." If it hadn't been for that correction key—which I called the "Oh, Shit" key—I might never have stuck it out.

Pretty soon Jeanne bought a correcting Selectic. So did Phil Kaveny and Jan. By then we thought our production setup was pretty hot stuff. We switched from rubber cement to more forgiving wax. We learned to use Zip-A-Tone and chart tape. We sent out our headlines to be professionally typeset, and our photos screened. A lot of our art was sized using the miracle of photo-reducing copiers. Our editing was done with scissors and tape.

Those correcting Selectrics cost roughly $1,000 ten or twelve years ago. Now you can't hardly give them away. And you can buy a serviceable PC-based desktop publishing system for roughly the same amount.

[1] For the record, Janus #1 through #3 were edited by Janice Bogstad. #4 through 17 were edited jointly by Jan Bogstad and Jeanne Gomoll. #18 through 26 were edited by Diane Martin and the SF[3] Publications Committee.

[2] In the middle of all this, I narrowly missed getting involved in Minneapolis fandom. I took a year off from school to work in The Cities. I learned about MinnSTF just before I moved back to Eau Claire. Somewhere in an alternative universe...

Considering we were science fiction readers, it's ironic that none of us imagined the extent to which desktop publishing would be available to the average person. While few people today own real fancy computer equipment, quite a few have some form of computer at home. And many more have access to state-of-the-art equipment through their places of employment.

Aurora 25 was *not* typed on Selectrics. Text was produced on wordprocessors. The material for this issue, #26, was entered on various Macintosh and DOS-based computers, then electronically massaged and laid out using software and hardware only Jeanne knows the name of. (Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.)[3]

Why you got this issue

Mainly, I think, because of Spike Parsons. While I whined these past three years about how hard it was to publish *Aurora*, she turned out issue after issue of *Cube*, the club newsletter. As current head of the SF[3] Publications Committee, she called a meeting this spring to discuss the future of *Aurora*. I showed up, and I think I said, "I can type."

So here I am typing.

Fortunately, I'm not alone in this project. Spike got the ball rolling. Vice President Scott Custis started taking notes and pretty soon we'd divided the work into manageable chunks, with a realistic timetable. Peter Larsen volunteered to edit the letter column. Bill Bodden and Spike researched the somewhat neglected mailing list data base. Georgie Schnobrich offered to illustrate the short stories, and I think Lucy Nash said she could type.

Now—*finally*, you're probably thinking—I want to talk a bit about the contents of this issue—the last *Aurora*.

Originally, the theme was to be "Religion and the Para-Normal," but early discussions changed the focus to "Women and Spirituality." We have two wonderful short stories that show different aspects of this focus.

But there's so much more I wish we'd had time to explore...a feminist I-Ching and Tarot, Scientology and Dianetics, the Illuminati and the Church of the Sub-Genius, MZB's Free Amazons, Tolkien, Charles Fort, C. S. Lewis, the Masons, Lovingkindness, Rev. Ted Wagner and astrology. Wicca. *Out on a Limb. Communion. Lincoln's Dreams.* Roscoe. From both a feminist and science fiction viewpoint, the topic continues to fascinate me.

It's time for me to stop. Part of my purpose in writing this editorial was to work through my guilt over not having done more. I've managed to overcome most of the guilt, but regret is harder to deal with. *Janus/Aurora* has so much history, personally and fannishly, it's really hard for me to put it to sleep.

To all the people who have written, typed, proofread, drawn, collated, stapled, subscribed, or otherwise contributed to *Janus/Aurora* over the years:

Thanks for letting me be a part of it. I had a good time. ❖

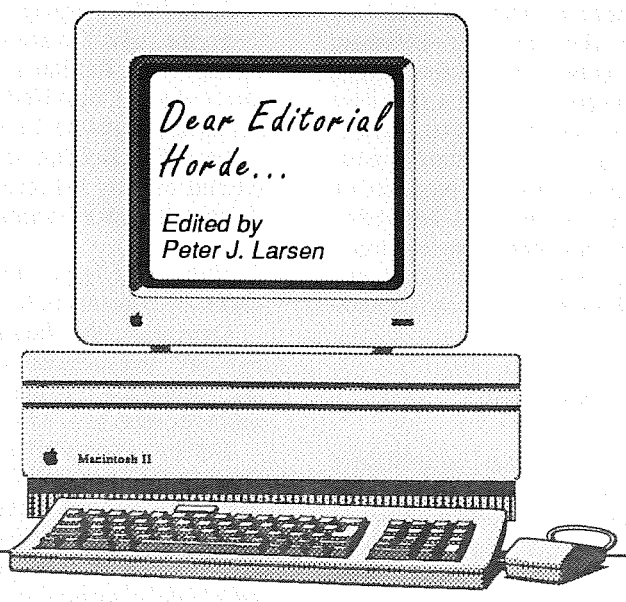
Diane Martin
Madison, Wisconsin
June 1990

[3] All text was translated into Macintosh-readable data, manipulated in Microsoft Word™, poured into and laid out in an Aldus Pagemaker™ document. The covers, and much of the interior artwork were created on a Mac IIX, mostly with Adobe Illustrator™ and Aldus Freehand™. (No, Georgie Schnobrich's artwork is the exception; she's still working—and very well, thank you—with pens and paper.) Scanning of art and photographs was done on a DataCopy 730GS. The camera-ready covers were then printed by a Compugraphic 980 imagesetter (1200 dpi), and the camera-ready copy for the interior pages was printed by an Apple LasarWriter IINTX. The entire layout of *Aurora* 26 took only a few hours. [J. Gomoll]

According to our records, here is a list of subscribers who should be receiving Aurora #26. Those with asterisks (*) after their name are people whose subscriptions run past issue #26. (The number of *s indicates the number of issues due them.) We are trying to contact everyone by first-class mail, so we can settle up our financial obligations. If you are reading this, and you notice the name of a friend who has moved since 1987, we'd appreciate your urging them to get in touch with us, if they haven't heard from us already.

Thanks very much for your patience, support, and assistance.

Effie Ambler, Effie*
Anderson, Kristine J.**
Anderson, Sharon
Averill, Mary E.*
Blandford, Lindsay
Bliefernich, Carol
Boyser, Barbara*
Charnas, Suzy McKee***
Chatelain, Julianne
Clew, Jane*
Collier, Richard
Davis, Hal
DeBrueil, Paul
Drennan, Kathryn*
Gomoll, Steve & Betsy
Fairchild, Debi
Foley, Wendy A.*
Franklin, Laura*
Gomez, Jewelle*
Goodgame, Shirley*
Goudriaan-Morse, Lynn & Roelof**
Guenett, Loise*
Hansen, Rebecca*
Herd, Angela
Hewitt, Helen-Jo*
Hinkleman, Elizabeth*
Hochstettler, John
Hogan, Joanna T.
Holden, Sandra*
Holms, Jean*
Janes, Elizabeth*
King, Betty
Koester, Martha K.
Leshendok, Maureen P.*
Leveritt, Annie Lee*
Lewis, Joe*
Malcohn, Elissa Hamilton
Manning, Mark**
Mariton, Christine*
Mathews, Pat ****
Matson, Elizabeth A.*
McGarry, Lee*
McTigue, Susan E.
Moon, Jana
Moore, Sondra**
Netzer, Gayle
New York Public Library**
Odense University
Pixler, Penny
Nellie Langford Rowell Library****
Price, Betty Fisher
Schneiber, Robert L.
Sherman, Cordelia
Simon, Douglas R.
Smith, Caroline K.*
Tait, Steven K.*
Tegtmeier, Janet**
Tennison, Barbara
Trawick, Joseph E.
University of Colorado*******
Usack, Kendra**
Vegors, Jo Ann*
Vincent, William*
Weber, Jean*
White, Cheryl*
Women's Ed. Resources Ctr-Toronto
Wood, Susan Gail*
Wurster, Virginia Kay
Yntema, Sharon****
York YWCA Women's



It's been three years since we published my "Open Letter to Joanna Russ" in *Aurora* 25. The article did not die, however, but actually led an active life. Since the first appearance of "Open Letter," it was republished once in *Six Shooter*, a one-shot which I published with English fans Linda Pickersgill and Pam Wells, and again in *Hot Wire* (Vol. 4, No. 3, July 1988) as "The 'Me' Decade and Feminist Science Fiction." I was asked to read it aloud at the 1988 Seattle *Corflu* (the fanzine convention), and worked the ideas into more than a few panel discussions. Sarah Lefanu quoted from the article extensively in the essay introducing her book, *World Machine: Feminism and Science Fiction*, (The Women's Press, 1988), and Samuel Delany cited and agreed with it in an essay in *The Mississippi Quarterly*. I was and am quite pleased that I struck such a sensitive nerve with that essay.

The idea came to me while I was reading Bruce Sterling's introductory essay to *Burning Chrome*, an anthology of Bill Gibson's stories. I carefully stated that my article was not specifically about *Burning Chrome*, Bill Gibson, or Bruce Sterling. As sometimes happens, one of Sterling's phrases simply reminded me of other phrases by other writers and other speakers; I remembered Joanna Russ's incredible theory in *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, and several other amorphous ideas suddenly connected in just the right way, and then I had to write the article. I used the "open letter" format, (which, contrary to Bruce Sterling's assertion, is an old, respected literary device) one that Joanna Russ approved after I'd sent her a copy of the original manuscript.

Basically, I pointed out that the recent crop of new SF writers—the so-called Cyberpunks—had been making noises about how they had "rescued" science fiction from the boring doldrums of the 1970s. Similar comments were being made about the fandom of that period in general. And I connected those judgements with the opinion I'd heard expressed so often, that the 1970s were boring years, characterized by selfishness more than anything else. The best thing to do would be to just forget the whole era. Could it be that these writers and these opinion makers were expressing their real feelings of disinterest with the feminist revolution that took place in that period of time? Joanna Russ pointed out the many ways in which women have been discouraged from writing throughout history, and even when they write, how their work has been treated by contemporaries and literary historians in such a way that invalidated or erased their accomplishments. ("She wrote it but she had help." "She wrote it but she wrote only one of it." "She wrote it but she's an anomaly.")

> *When the memory of one's predecessors is buried, the assumption persists that there were none and each generation of women believes itself to be faced with the burden of doing everything for the first time. And if no one ever did it before, if no woman was ever that socially sacred creature, "a great writer," why do we think we can succeed now?* —Joanna Russ, ***How To Supress Women's Writing***, University of Texas Press, 1983

I would have thought that it was impossible to erase or ignore the astonishing women's renaissance in 1970s science fiction, but Russ's stern warning that the mechanism of sexism still turns strongly in our society turned out to be all too correct. The cyberpunks said in effect, "She (they) wrote it, but it was boring." Fans have said in their fannish retrospectives, "She (they) did it, but it was boring." And a whole new generation that hardly even remembers the feminist revolution of the early '70s but balances precariously on the shoulders of the women who fought battles then, now repeat the cliche, "The '70s—the 'me' decade" or "The '70s were boring."

The very fact that the "Open Letter" has gotten around so much, and that so many long-time fans now make a point of talking about some of the things that changed for women—in fandom, in literature, in life—during that time, makes me feel good about having started the discussion.

Many of the following letters respond to the "Open Letter." Some day I hope also to publish the bulging file of letters we received after the publication of *Six Shooter*. Thank you all for writing. ❖

—Jeanne Gomoll
June 1990

[Please note: addresses included with letters may no longer be correct. Although we have updated as many addresses for which we had current information, it is probable that some or our correspondants moved without sending us a coa.]

Bruce Sterling
4525 Speedway
Austin, Texas 78751

Dear Ms. Gomoll:
Today I received the Winter issue of *Aurora SF*, with a note directing me to your Open Letter on page 7. I don't know if you were responsible for giving me this issue; if so I thank you.

I am sorry to see that my introduction to *Burning Chrome* apparently overloaded your tolerance for a lifetime of chauvinist literary oppression. In fact it seems that practically any straw would have broken a camel's back already aching so grievously, and my particular offense seems to have been chosen almost at random. This is somewhat less than flattering; if I am to be vilified as a suppressor of women's writing, I would prefer to be attacked for the entire corpus of my crimes rather than gutshot out of context.

Suppose I were reply to your letter by mimicking your attack on my introduction. I could say that I felt I had been personally "punched in the stomach"; that I had to slam your fanzine shut with a "mind whirling" and "a muttered curse." I could then attack the entire range of your political, social, and literary convictions by drawing conclusions from a hasty and disgusted reading of a single page of your Open Letter. Were I to do this, I would leave myself open to charges of railroading you; of ignoring your personhood, and using you as a mere faceless crash-dummy for the headlong impetus of my rage.

I plead guilty of "rhapsodizing" about "the quality and promise of the current new wave of SF writers, the so-called cyberpunks." I have an enthusiasm about the work of, say, William Gibson, that seems to parallel your admiration for, say, Joanna Russ.

However, we differ on a crucial point. Were I to read an introduction to a Joanna Russ collection, I would not grow hot under the collar were it to make little or no mention of "cyberpunk." I would not feel that my own favorite writing was being "suppressed," shoved under the carpet by a female conspiracy, or somehow criminally neglected from feelings of nervousness, boredom or threat. I would assume that I was reading about Joanna Russ, and would not expect any ritual genuflections in my own literary direction. In fact I would make no such demand, for I would naively suppose it to be impertinent to the issue at hand.

My tastes in science fiction—as yours appear to me to be—are somewhat narrow. I found most science fiction in the 1970s to be unreadably dull. And I imagine you must share this opinion, as the vast majority of published science fiction, then and now, is hollow pop entertainment making little or no mention of feminist ideology. When you proclaim that my tepid enthusiasm for '70s SF is necessarily an attack on speculative feminism, you re-write SF's literary history—the very crime of which you accuse me.

I have written you this letter directly, rather than addressing it to a prominent figure in science fiction, as I don't care to entangle you in a potential imbroglio with third parties. To do so would be discourteous, and might imply that I hope to provoke a literary brawl for which I have no stomach myself. However, if you feel that my letter may help you obtain the "widest possible circulation" that Ms. Russ recommends for your grievances, please feel free to submit it to *Aurora*, or wherever you please. I must ask that you submit the letter in its entirety—I make the rash assumption that you can finish reading it.

Cy Chauvin
14248 Wilfred
Detroit, MI 48213

Jeanne Gomoll's "Open Letter to Joanna Russ" is important but diffuse. I admit that I thought that the problems feminism made us aware of were "solved," its basic ideas accepted. In SF, for example, John Crowley's *Engine Summer* accepts many feminist concepts as small details of its background, while the main point of the novel is focussed elsewhere. But now I see that I didn't read too widely and many of the ideas haven't changed. It's far more disappointing to see many of the young women at work accepting many conventional ideas about themselves. (Of course, who am I to judge?) I think a "Cyberpunk" such as Bruce Sterling may have called the women writers of the 1970s a "fad" simply because "Cyberpunk" is itself so artificially a fad that those connected with it have a hard time understanding what a real change in attitude (one with substance and meaning, which they mostly lack) is in science fiction.

The fannish retrospective panels that Jeanne complains about are something else again (which is why I call her letter "diffuse"). These panels are so notoriously unorganized and unserious that I don't think much of substance can be made of what they skip over. Consider, Jeanne, what is remembered—Terry Carr's pseudonyms, Bob Tucker yelling 'Smmoooooth' and 'Rosebud', and a giant party in Room 770 during which the bathtub overflowed and ran down the hallway. What Jeanne says of her decade (and mine) is true—but not that much of serious importance happened before then, I believe. Nothing that the standard histories explain, at least. Convention panels have usually adopted the attitude that it is better to be funny and lighthearted than dull, and I enjoy these kind of panels. What Jeanne wants, I think, is an entirely different kind of panel actually (and I think I would enjoy and be intellectually stimulated by it, too!). But these are often parallel worlds.

On "academic" writing: sometimes current, new fans think that just because a serious article from long ago does not reprint well that it could never have been enjoyed or valued by the fans of the time because the issues seem far away now. That's how fan history gets distorted (if what happened five years ago or ten years ago is history). Bruce Gillespie corrects your readers about what happened 15 years ago in *SF Commentary*, probably the best sercon fanzine of the time. Well, as Bruce only implies, SF was more important to us back then, somehow the writing of good SF seemed to be a way to improve the future, just as feminism did after it. Were we all so wrong? It still seems better to me that we were interested in the past and future, rather than just content to be engrossed in the present on our little island of fandom, but I could be wrong.

Lisa Tuttle
1 Ortygia House
6 Lower Road
Harrow, Middlesex
HA2 0DA England

Aurora arrived today, and while reading your "Open Letter to Joanna Russ" I was reminded of a recent experience of my own when, for the first time I had the sensation that I was being written out of history. This will probably sound very trivial; my own awareness of how petty and trivial my complaint might seem is what has kept me quiet about it. Until now. Feeling myself safe in sympathetic company, I'm going to open my big mouth.

In an article published in the August 1986 issue of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* called "A User's Guide to the Post-Moderns," Michael Swanwick offered his assessment of the current state of SF, and how it got that way. He mentions a group of writers living in Texas in the early '70s, whom he calls "the outlaw fantasists" (a term I'd never encountered before), who started up a series of informal workshops and get-togethers known as Turkey City. According to him, this group originally consisted of Howard Waldrop, Steven Utley, Jake Saunders, Tom Reamy and "a few others."

Now, Swanwick wasn't in Texas at the time, so he's obviously dependent on what others have told him. I happen to be intimately acquainted with Turkey City because I was one of the founding turkeys. Along with Waldrop, Utley, Saunders, Reamy, Joe Pumilia, Bill Wallace and George Proctor, I was at the very first Turkey City Workshop and Neo-Pro Rodeo held in 1973 in Grand Prairie, Texas, and I continued to attend them (and host them) quite regularly until I left Texas in 1980. Now, I can understand why Bill Wallace and George Proctor might not be mentioned, as they were not actively involved in subsequent Turkey Cities; and Joe Pumilia, who was, never really hit the big time as far as SF readers are concerned; but what about me? Not only was I an integral part of TC from the very beginning, but, at least during the '70s, I was certainly as well-known as any of the other Turkey Citizens (with the possible exception of the late Tom Reamy)—my stories appeared in the magazines and anthologies of the day, I received Nebula nominations, I even won the John W. Campbell award for best new writer in 1974. Nor have I dropped out of sight (I moved to England—*not* the same thing!) since the 1970s: I still write, I still get published.

I don't for a moment imagine that Michael Swanwick meant anything by the omission, or that he was even aware of it. Suppressing women's writing? What an idea! Why am I making such a big deal out of this? It's such a tiny, unimportant thing, isn't it? An accidental, unintentional oversight. My name left off a list that never pretended to be complete: "a few others." I'm excluded, but included. Somehow that makes it all the more depressing. And it's all over the place. Do women write SF? Sure they do. Look in the index under "women writers" or "feminist science fiction" and find the two pages which list them all. They haven't been left out. It doesn't mean anything that the names listed under "women" are not also listed under "New Wave" or "Old Wave" or "Cyberpunk" or any other movement... they haven't been left out... they're really there, look, see? "And a few others."

She didn't write it. (But if it's clear she did the deed . . .) *She wrote it, but she shouldn't have.* (It's political, sexual, masculine, feminist.) *She wrote it, but look what she wrote about.* (The bedroom, the kitchen, her family. Other women!) *She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it.* ("Jane Eyre. Poor dear, that's all she ever . . .") *She wrote it, but she isn't really an artist, and it isn't really art.* (It's a thriller, a romance, a children's book. It's sci fi!) *She wrote it, but she had help.* (Robert Browning. Branwell Brontë. Her own "masculine side.") *She wrote it, but she's an anomaly.* (Woolf. With Leonard's help . . .)

She wrote it BUT . . .

How to Suppress Women's Writing by Joanna Russ

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I naively thought that women were finally getting the recognition they deserved as writers and as strong, capable characters in the books now being written. I mistakenly thought that the people involved in the creative arts were different, not like the other areas of life that I am familiar with. But, after reading Jeanne Gomoll's "An Open Letter to Joanna Russ" and, of course, Joanna Russ's letter of comment on Jeanne Gomoll's essay, I realized that I must have been living in a cave. And, evidently, I am not the only one. I read Janice Bogstad's review of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (sounds like a good book, I will track it down and read it), her last two sentences show that Bogstad needs to read Russ's *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. Women are not just taken seriously in ANYTHING they do (including writing, as I now have discovered). Scenario: "Daddy look, I got straight A's in math!" "That's nice, daughter, but how did you do in cooking and sewing? You'll need that more when you get married." That wasn't so long ago, I believe it was just yesterday.

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Jeanne's "Open Letter" was very stimulating and provocative, and takes me back (a pity, that "back" is distinctly the direction here) to those very days of ferment and exuberance that make up the scorned '70s for many of us; scorned *now*, that is, and not by all by any means. My own view of the matter was and is that in the '60s SF was a dying or at least moribund genre (the New Wave was an effort, not very successful in my opinion, to remedy this by importing some technical stunts from the mainstream), and feminism came along in the '70s and *rescued* it. Now Cyberpunk comes along as a manifestation (certainly so far) of Backlash, an attempt to stuff SF back into Boys' Own Techland where women are notoriously hesitant to follow, mainly because there aren't any people there which makes it damn boring. This will change—one way or another—but meanwhile it's all pretty dreary.

Part of the problem is that feminism was a revolution, or at least a glimpse of one, in the beginnings of that stage of it: the particular excitement of crashing the barriers and making our presence felt in numbers is no longer available, and this is felt by all, I think, as a loss of momentum; a let-down. The boredom isn't actually located in the '70s at all but *now*, in a period of slackening, falling back, regrouping, etc. Nobody wants to feel herself to be living through a backwash time, so that sensation of nothing-of-great-interest-going-on is projected backward instead. On the other hand, where now do you find that sense of excitement in the field? I've come across it only spottily, referring to an author here, an author there, nothing concerted except for the very weak pulse of Cyberpunkery: Lucius Shephard, yeah; Lisa Goldstein; Clive Barker; Sherri Tepper; they come along one by one, united by nothing except shares in something called talent, which is exactly how it *should* be at a time like this.

But there's this other thing going on, too. It goes like this: I get on a panel that happens to be all women (since few panels are structured as "women in SF" any more), and the first one of us to start her opening statement with the declaration, "*I'm* not a feminist," is echoed by all the others (except me, but let me come back to that). The statement is, of course, nonsense, in that if I were to ask any of these people how she felt about, say, the idea of getting paid less for her work than some male colleague is paid merely on the basis of being a woman, she would go up in flames right before my eyes. But the broad, basic meanings of the word have been swamped in conflicting definitions by the extremes both Left and Right so the term has, for the moment, been conquered by the opposition, taken over and removed from the discourse of the vast non-extreme wodge of folks, which just manages to include most (not all, of course) writers and certainly includes the majority of readers.

I think what happens is that writers (especially newer or younger ones) now feel that accepting the label "feminist" means putting oneself into a box (and being put into the box labeled "Sci Fi" is bad enough). The box constrains what you may or may not write about and how you may or may not write about it. (The people who insist "*I'm* not a feminist" usually add something like, "I don't write only about women or women's issues, I write about whatever I feel like."

This isn't at all surprising. The Right says, "If you write about this and this, in this way, you are a dirty feminist (castrating, bra-burning, frigid, boring, polemical, man-hating, etc.) and nobody is interested in *that* but other feminists of whom there are about three, so bug off and play with your dildo." The Left says (and I here mean the feminist Left), "You are not a feminist *unless* you write about our definition of women's issues and it comes out exactly *here*, and we are watching you, and if you make one teeny slip into our idea of political error we will trash you to bits so that not only won't the culture-at-large read you, but none of us will either." Combined message: NOBODY WILL READ YOU. DROP DEAD.

Nobody wants to deal with all this; it's hard enough just to tell a story. And it doesn't help when on top of all of the above, you get a third message: the whole question is a dead one anyway, so taking a heroic stand leaves you exactly no place as far as the readership-at-large is concerned. Ergo, "*I'm* not a feminist," they say; now let's talk about something really interesting like—uh—ah—got it! How bad editors are, or cover artists are, or whatever, thrashing around frantically trying to locate whatever it is that's exciting now that feminism has been dealt with, phew, thank God.

My own "solution," if it is one, is to say, "Well, I *am* a feminist, by my own lights. What I write is informed by my version of feminist consciousness—take it or leave it for what it's worth to you," and if anybody wants to go on from there I'm happy to. If not, not, suits me.

Now it should be noted that this is not risky for me in a professional sense (at least not yet) as it might be for others. As a married woman, white and very middle class, I'm about as protected as you can get. If nobody reads me, or worse yet if nobody wants to publish me, that's tough: my feelings would be badly hurt, but I wouldn't starve. So I'm not recommending this route for everybody. Wish I could: it works for me to my satisfaction and it might work for others (or not) if they cared to try it.

Frankly, I would far rather see the dilution of meaning for the word "feminist" entailed in having as many definitions of it as there are women authors than leave things as they are now, with a few very rigid definitions of such character as to repulse almost everybody, one way or another. It would also be a lot more interesting than the process of squabbling over which sub-box

labeled "feminist" to stuff a given writer into. Incidentally, my own working definition is this: "a feminist is some one who believes that women are unconditionally and fully human beings, with all the capacities, rights, and responsibilities pertaining thereto, and that this basic reality is modified more or less restrictively and destructively by all cultures in which 'human' is defined as 'male.'" Broad? You bet; broad enough to leave lots of room for discussion, investigation, argument, the works. Too broad to be useful? Some people will feel that it is. But it suits me, and I'll stick with it until something that suits me better comes along.

But it does distress me to hear other women writers giving up on the whole question by saying, "Well, *I'm* not a feminist," although it also needs to be said that indeed some women authors most definitely are *not* feminists in any sense of the word (for example, one whom I heard claim in public that all women are biologically air-heads, so the reason *she* can actually write and think etc. is that she has higher levels of testosterone in her body chemistry than normal levels; she has swallowed the bad science of sociobiology whole and it has poisoned her. Or a woman whose book about a barbarian invasion of America has just been reissued and shows painful signs of pre-feminist assumptions that she apparently still holds, such as that given a situation in which a young man and a young woman are raped publicly by the invading general, the story following is that of the young *man*—rape being such a terrible problem for *men*, you see, but merely making a woman that much more of a woman, as the general remarks later on—without challenge). So it behooves us to know just what we're lining ourselves up with if we choose to declare, "*I'm* not a feminist!"

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Of course, I have been bridling for years when I heard the nonsense about how fandom in the '70s was boring—usually from people who didn't happen to be very involved with fandom during that period and are in no position to speak on it. I recall very well that exciting, energetic period which, if you ask me, was a lot more interesting than anything we can say about the fabulous back-on-track '80s. Serious exercise for the brain cells coupled with genuine wit—no, I really don't think the endless licking of one's own asshole that characterizes much of the fandom in the '80s is necessarily an improvement. Fannish humor isn't necessarily any funnier than feminist humor, either.

Sterling's rubbish is easily dismissed if one simply remembers how thought-provoking and fun all that "boring" SF in the '70s really was and then compares it to what some of the boys have been doing in the '80s. Gosh, the rise of Jerry Pournelle, what an improvement. You betcha. And cyberpunks and their wild ideas, this is so *new*—as Patrick [Nielsen Hayden] pointed out, it's certainly no more recent than, say, Tiptree's "The Girl Who Was Plugged In." I get the impression Bruce must have spent the '70s ignoring Tiptree, Russ, and numerous others and reading Niven and Pournelle instead, which would explain why he was so bored. The '70s, eh? That would be the *Dangerous Visions/Again Dangerous Visions* period—yes, pretty dull stuff, and a pretty dull time, wasn't it?

What the '70s *really* were, I think, were a respite from the Me Millennia. 3000 years of white men lording it over the rest of us—they thought of themselves, and we were supposed to think of them, too. For white men, then, the '70s were the "Not Me Decade," and that didn't sit too well with them, I guess. But, hey, these guys are a minority—there are more women, more old people and children, and less white men in the world, so who cares if this one little boring minority is hurt because they don't *always* get to be first in line? Why should the rest of us be bored for their sakes? Maybe it's time they learned what it means to have to take a back seat, what it means to be *truly* in the minority. White males don't exactly embrace the entire catalogue of human experience. They write in tiny little circles. What feminist/female writers have been doing is broadening the range of fiction, discourse, and understanding. If it's over the heads of the white boys, well, I suppose they'll just have to go back to playing with their train sets.

But of course, that is exactly what they've done. The desperate need to return to more Me Millennia has given us, for one thing, a President so self-involved, lazy and irresponsible that for the past six years the US has been run by an entirely unelected government. A generation of men so terrified of *any* real responsibility that they elected as their symbol a man who has taken leaving the real work in the hands of others to previously unknown levels, making it more than an artform, but a science. He took his oath vowing not to serve, but to leave the office at 5:00 and never stay late. His most famous activity is the extended-sleep holiday. Ronald Reagan, truly, is a Man for the '80s.

If no one believed male irresponsibility was back in vogue, they only needed the AIDS scare to remind them. Men have expected women to risk their health, life, and peace of mind for years for the sake of birth control (the pill: stroke, heart disease, certain types of cancer; the IUD: life-threatening infection, serious pain, extended and painfully heavy menstrual bleeding, perforation of the uterus) because it was just such a *hassle* to use condoms. Now, faced with the possibility that sex without condoms could mean their deaths, numerous heterosexual men are loudly proclaiming that celibacy would be preferable. Celibacy was not even thinkable back when the primary risk was to women and fetuses (guess what happens to a herpes baby)—then it was just everyone else's problem. But if condoms are the *only* safe choice—for men—well, that would entail the truly unthinkable: men having to take some responsibility in their relations with women. Easier not to relate to women at all, isn't it?

Men taking responsibility is, to me, a significant part of what feminism has always been about. Men taking responsibility in the home. Men taking responsibility in birth control. Men taking responsibility in sex. Men taking responsibility for their own fantasies. Men *not* expecting women to take responsibility for the things that *men* do. If a man rapes a women, for example, it can't be blamed on what she was wearing, where she happened to be at the time, or his failure to clarify what certain words and phrases she said may have meant (e.g. "Would you like to come in for coffee?" does not necessarily translate as an invitation to fuck, and "No" might very well *mean* "No"), even if she is the world's biggest slut and makes her living as a (A) business woman, (B) fashion model, or (C) whore. He committed the rape, it was his own decision, he is responsible. If a man has sex with a woman, it is impossible that she "got herself pregnant," and he can hardly blame her alone for irresponsibility. He, too, has to consider the consequences. If a man takes a fancy to a woman and she isn't interested in him, it's not her responsibility to deal with his obsessions or satisfy his whims. If a man decides

to get involved with a woman, he should pay some attention to what she needs and wants. And if a man decides he wants to be a "father," he should bloody well expect to do some actual fathering instead of pretending someone else can take care of all the care, feeding, clothing &etc and that he can still pretend to *be* a father.

That's what the '80s man can't stand. Be responsible for one's own home, children and relationships with lover and spouse? Why it's absolutely anti-family, isn't it?! So they elect a President whose demonstration of his much avowed "family values" is to ignore his family and the needs of everyone else's family as well. A President who's "work ethic" is to let other people do his job while he sleeps and to promote that philosophy on both the micro- and macrocosmic level (all the while insisting that it's *blacks*, and *welfare moms* who are lazy!).

Maybe the "Hammer of God" that AIDS is said to represent by certain right-wing religious loons is a warning against something more dangerous than mere homosexuality or "promiscuity." Maybe it's a warning that if men don't learn to be more responsible, we're going to lose all of our lives.

And anyway, even the most casual sexual encounter always required a bit more time and attention than simply rolling on a condom does. If a guy can't make the minimal effort that prophylaxis entails, he sure ain't got what it takes to carry off an actual relationship.

But then, he ain't got what it takes to get through an exciting time like the '70s without being bored to death, so what can we expect?

The '80s man has been—literally, in some cases—getting away with murder, and yes, Jeanne, it was very *boring* for him to have to watch his ass and try to behave himself (in public, at least) for all those long, tedious years when women just refused to take it for granted that having his needs anticipated and provided for while having his responsibilities tended to by someone else was simply his due. And what a relief it is to get back to normal, the way things were before all those crazy women made everything so tedious. How much easier it is to just make things tedious for those crazy women, just like before.

I mean, get serious. Reagan is president, the ERA is in limbo, Jerry Pournelle is doing very well, the two major sellers of books in the US are refusing to carry books by some of the best SF writers we've ever had because their writings aren't acceptable to the moron majority ("Delany is writing gay content now"), L. Ron Hubbard gets his books on the best seller list, and everything is really peachy now? All of that is counter-balanced just by a small handful of thin-young-men-with-mirror-shades? This is a joke, right?

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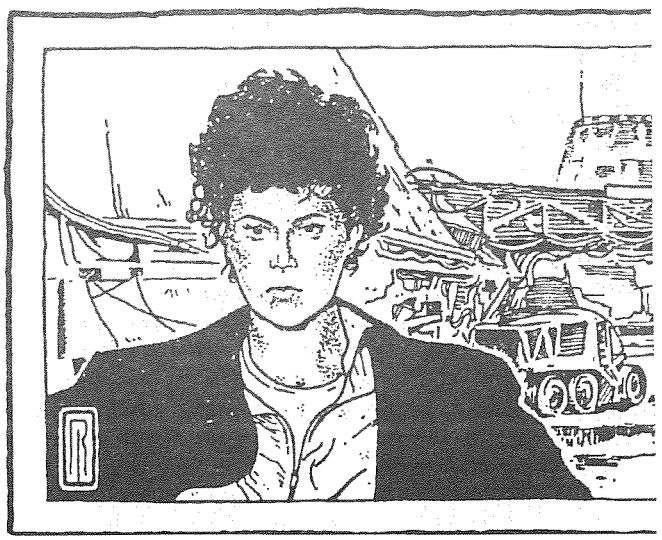
First of all, Jeanne Gomoll's "Open Letter" might be absolutely right in that there is a tendency to disparage the female writers of the 1970s, but at the same time I have to admit that the writers who emerged in that decade whom I found exciting and encouraging have largely stopped writing, or became much less interesting in the 1980s. I'm not sure what the reason or reasons may be, and it includes both male and female writers.

Vonda McIntyre, for example, writes first rate *Star Trek* novels, but they cannot compare with her earlier work. Pamela Sargent struck me as one of the most promising of the newer writers, but her work has been uneven since. Michael Bishop continues to be excellent, but has not kept up the output. Same for George R.R. Martin. John Varley's production is way down. So is Tiptree's. And the 1980s don't seem to be giving birth to a wave to replace them. Connie Willis and Lucius Shepard are the only names that leap to mind. Perhaps Kim Stanley Robinson and Michael Swanwick and Karen Joy Fowler; I haven't made up my mind about them yet. I suppose it's possible that I'm becoming jaded, but I don't care for the cyberpunk movement (if that's the right way to describe it), even though I always enjoyed David Bunch, and I really think that the average quality of published SF declined during the past ten years. Which only makes the few outstanding writers stand out even more.

I'm sorry Janice, but I find your comments about Sigourney Weaver's near nude scene silly. For one thing, I cannot imagine anyone finding that sequence from *Alien* sexy. Having her strip to her underwear was designed to emphasize her defenselessness against the alien being. If it had been a single male survivor, the exact same gimmick might well have been done and no one would have though it to be a sexual device. You cannot assume that every nude or near nude female scene is sexist. Most of the time you are absolutely right, no question, but there are legitimate scenes of *dishabille*. I also think it's unfair to imply that heroism and motherhood are mutually exclusive, as you seem to do. Both parents have strong feelings about children, and I don't see where motherhood or fatherhood are any less worthwhile reasons for heroic action than friendship, patriotism, idealism, or whatever. I watched an interview with the producer and director of the film, and one of the things the producer pointed out was that they wanted Ripley to appear more than a two dimensional character, not just a female version of the typical male tough hero. I don't consider that an unadmirable thing to do. And note that the producer was female as well, one of the few females to succeed as producers in Hollywood. One thing feminists (among others) have rightfully criticized is the stereotypical male hero in books and films—and now you seem to be criticizing a movie for NOT casting women in that same light. Ripley is, to me, far more heroic and real than Rocky, Luke Skywalker, or Dirty Harry.



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My experience with the *Aliens* movies was so different from Janice Bogstad's that I have been compelled to write. Both movies filled me with such rapture I was "high" for days after, and even now get a distinct thrill of pleasure when I recall the cheers and joy and even HOPE for the human race I felt then.

Excessive? Probably. But to me, I had at last lived to see a GREAT portrayal of a female in a science-fiction film. I had at last been able to sit through an entire movie without wincing ONCE, at some noticeable element of sexism; indeed, without even questioning some aspect of the film regarding women and men. To me, Sigourney Weaver had portrayed a REAL female hero. She was courageous without being ridiculously foolhardy. She was strong, intelligent—and glory be! even WISE. (Who had the sense to suggest that the first crew LEAVE before the disaster? And she continued to give the wisest advice despite being overruled and forced into involvement with others' idiocies.)

For me, Weaver's portrayal of Ripley was something stunningly special in heroes. She demonstrated, I thought, what is so lacking in the genre's male brand: a truly feminine strength. I frequently have trouble remembering, despite conscious effort, that the masculine is not necessarily the ideal—and perhaps other feminists must also struggle against the pitfall. Bogstad seemed to be saying that a female hero that is not presented exactly as a male hero cannot be as good, much less a better one. She was disappointed that Ripley did not measure up in "stature" to the "larger-than-life, fierce male heroes whose personal quests result in the salvation of the myriad little people." (I wish she had given an example of one of these she thought the best in sci-fi films, so that I might have compared the differences.)

I find myself disappointed in the growing number of films that are attempting to "progress" toward the female carbon-copy equivalent of male heroes. Having female Conan-the-Barbarians is better than nothing, I suppose—but the novelty soon wears thin. They are so alike that I can't even remember the name of one I recently saw where a female hero did indeed save some "myriad little people." Worse yet, I find them sickening as well as disappointing, for their sole purpose seems to be the "heroism" of humans endlessly slaughtering each other and the quest for ever more surpassing gore. If I could change anything in the *Alien* films, it would have been the excess of violence and ALL the gore. But at least it didn't extoll humans slaughtering each other, and that's a start.

There was a female carbon-copy of the masculine hero in *Alien II*, a woman Marine. And it was well-done, though not a large part of the film (thank goodness). Since we haven't much choice, I noted with appreciation that the filmmakers had her at least *lead* the group of Marines, and fight as bravely. And though this film may not have been the ideal I long for, I was ecstatic to see what a fine, and serious attempt was made to do so. And appreciative of the effort. If only for the sake of relief, I prefer the macho woman to the rescued princess—or NO woman at all.

For me, Ripley was both "larger-than-life" in some scenes, certainly fierce enough for me, and demonstrated much more profound heroism in the salvation of one child. Just think about it: there IS no "human race" to save, without the young. Whatever the "purpose" of life is, life must have continuance for any meaning whatsoever. A dear friend once gave me this gift: we save the world, he said, by saving one person at a time. Ripley was not in fact a mother, the child was not her own. We are leaving the facts of the film and entering the realm of symbolic interpretations, when we conclude she represented motherhood. It was a splendid analogy, but I could as easily have concluded that Ripley was representing a strong portrait of Sisterhood (was not the child another female?). In fact, even though I am a mother, it did not occur to me that Ripley represented a mother-figure. Prompted by Bogstad's analogy, however, I did recall a twinge of sympathy for the alien mother (doubtless empathy), when I realized she was fighting for the survival of her own children, and would be destroyed for it.

But in Ripley, I saw a WOMAN representing the greatest strengths of all women, everywhere. "Larger-than-life" because it was a composite of us all, a distillation of each of us at our best moments in the daily struggles of our lives as women. And, to the extent allowed us, even our best as human beings. Ripley was not "gung-ho" to fight, to get into dangerous and foolish situations. She struck me as a person who would have laughed at the idea of "glory" in violent action. She didn't seek fame, or medals, or other foolishness designed to dupe children (still mostly males), into becoming warriors. She was not enamored with death. She was only trying to survive as herself—with the awesome dignity of a person who is integrated, whole. She fought when it had meaning for HER, not others. Her reasons were her own. If we see her as symbolizing motherhood, we might as easily conclude the child represented the human race. This salvation was demonstrated in perhaps the most intensely real way it could have been demonstrated: Newt had a name, was a REAL child, and represented the human race as an individual of flesh-and-blood.

Look at the history of the masculine culture's Holy Fathers, and you'll see this is what they lacked, where they failed to attain the stature they aimed for in their spiritual quests: they could love "God," they could love the abstract IDEA of "the myriad little people," the "masses" into which they lumped the rest of us—but they could not comprehend the value of a single, real child. And they frequently neglected or were cruel to those individuals who were closest to them, who loved them and did the most for them: they were seduced by the fanfare and glory, and by their interpretation of Superiority. Feminists are well cautioned to remember that the "personal is political," but lately I think we are in more danger of forgetting that the political is also *personal*. Must we accept the warrior value of heroism as "big is better?" That one's character or spirituality is judged in numbers alone?

Why don't we rethink what is really courageous and heroic? Sigourney Weaver's portrayal of a woman made me feel intensely proud of the real heroism I have seen in perfectly "ordinary" women all my life, but took for granted. Even in women I have considered (judgmentally, alas) to be the "worst" of us, and with whom I intensely disagreed ("pro-lifers," for example)—I have still glimpsed that awesome, peculiarly feminine power and courage. Do we have to adopt, whole, the ideals and values of the masculine view of "heroism?" Don't we well know the results of it (for example, a planet wired up to self destruct)? And the childishness, foolishness, insanity of a masculine warrior "heroism?" What if it is indeed *less* heroic to "risk one's life for one's 'country'" than to risk one's life for ONE child? And if the most heroic of all is not to DIE for the human race, but to LIVE for it? To have the courage to live for only a few others we can really touch in the tedious, daily, unglamorous, unacknowledged and unrewarded struggle of it?

I would like to save the human race; it's always been a fantasy

of mine. Who wouldn't? I've been brought up to think this quest is the ideal, but sometimes the megalomania of that common messianic fantasy quite rightly embarrasses me. Certainly I believe the human race is worth saving—but are we so sure that men have the right answer? Don't you think Reagan fanaticizes along the same lines? And though it may be insane, I suspect those who stockpile more and more bombs surely have the same fantasy of "keeping the peace" in the world and saving the human race. (If they were each responsible for "keeping the peace" and saving ONE child, they might not have the time for such mischief).

For months I stood on one side of the picket line, facing those people who call themselves pro-life, and I will probably continue to do so when needed. But I was filled with sadness, each day, to see women warring with women. Especially when I began to see how much alike the women on both sides were—more alike than women who did *not* stand on either side of that line: feminists and anti-choice women alike were intensely pro-life. We were all ignorant (as humans are), but we were also duped and gulled: and thus pitted against each other. We have fallen into so many traps, because we try to do things the way men do them—rather than valuing the things we, as women, have learned living in a different world from men. I don't think male and female are born differently, but since most of the world's resources have been directed into MAKING us their "opposite," it would seem very odd if we hadn't developed valuable strengths and powers and understandings that men lack. I am not speaking of the qualities that men have projected upon us, but certainly some they have been most assiduous to denigrate for thousands of years. And one of these most maligned is the mother-scapegoat, from Genesis to Freud. Motherhood.

Aren't mothers also women? If we don't begin respecting—and crediting—our mothers, rather than denigrating them, we are making a disastrous mistake. To say that the analogy of motherhood MITIGATES Ripley's heroism is falling into an age-old trap well laid by the Fathers: Eve was inferior to Adam. One does not have to be a mother to possess the life-oriented values and qualities and strengths that mothers DO demonstrate (and have, since time out of mind). Ripley was not a mother, yet was clearly oriented toward life. She was a stunningly rare portrayal of a woman in my experience: no marriage, no prior husband, no children, not even a hint of a relationship in her life came to my notice in the film. As if to say this is not the most important thing in the life of EVERY female. That an individual, even a female individual, can be a valuable member of the human race without reproduction, apart from traditional family or relationships: that there are other ways to demonstrate heroism, and love.

But to denigrate mothers and to deny that they do demonstrate these strengths and qualities is to throw away a precious feminine value. For mothers are also women who deserve a great deal more credit than we have ever given them. Not a footnote, as men sometimes do—but real credit and praise, and thanks. If we don't do it, men certainly won't—they'll continue being to busy extolling their "Fathers." And naturally all too willing to go on giving mothers more than their share of the blame—for don't we join them on that bandwagon? We are the ones who must begin to turn the tide of scapegoating and defiling mothers, motherhood, because we can do it from the realization of the unequal obstacles and hardships of these woman's lives—a bond we deeply share in common.

Because the political is personal, I give my mother respect and praise and thanks at every opportunity. After years of blindly following the teachings of animosity and scapegoatism, I broke free and began to realize how much I owed her, and loved her. I began to understand her life as a woman, like me—and yet mine has been better, because of her. Neither of us are the greatest of mothers, but we did our best, and as I began to see the heroic in her life, I began to understand how large the obstacles are. Worse yet, how we are taught to cheat OURSELVES out of one of the most precious relationships we might have in life: that between mother and daughter. Both of us have had to survive on a planet permeated by an alien belief system that pits us against one another. Earth is dominated by this warrior culture, a belief antithetical to life. And yet each one of us had not only to survive, but to attempt without power or resources, to insure the lives of others. To try and minimize the damage the warrior culture inevitably wreaks upon all humans, even children. Yes, I could draw the analogy of motherhood, now, that Bogstad saw. But it enhances, not mitigates, the stature of Ripley. Whatever we do for children, any children, we do for the human race.

Whatever we do for each other, with love, we do for the human race. My mother and I are not so unlike Ripley, because we are women. And all things considered, none of us have done such a bad job after all—because on Earth WE are the designated Alien. James Tiptree's story "The Women Men Don't See" was another rare portrayal of women: a remarkable commitment between mother and daughter. While women remain aliens, we would do well to remember we are also daughters of women very much like ourselves. Different viewpoints weigh very little in this similarity we all share, unless we allow them to blind us; then we destroy the unity that may be the only real hope of saving the human race. I think we have far more to offer the human race than being "as good" as men are, or even better at their own game. And one of these things IS motherhood—not reproduction, but what motherhood represents and teaches: life-oriented values. That the political is also very, very personal.

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I do have a book for your attention, though—and it's both feminism and humor, which fits 2/3 of Diane's title ["Feminism, Science Fiction, and Humor," *Aurora* 25]. It's *Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady*, by Florence King (St. Martin's, 1985). As I recall, Bev DeWeese gave me my copy. It's autobiographical in style. I tend to think that most autobiographies are designed more to promote an image than to present facts, particularly when the facts get in the way of a good story. (That's how I'd write mine, anyway, if I ever did.) However, this is a particularly marvelous story. King's childhood episodes are hilarious, and the later college and lesbian episodes are interesting, if not quite as funny. (At least, not to me....though of course, a few of them are just as good as the earlier ones.)

Whether *Janus* was the second feminist zine ever published depends on how you define feminism. *Femzine* (US) and *Femzine* (UK), were both intended to cater to the interests of women fans of the day, and they came out in the 1950s. (Or maybe early 1960s; I won't say for sure about *Femzine* without checking, and as yet our fanzines are in no order.) For those who think that feminism itself didn't start until the 1970s, presumably Jeanne is right. *Femzine* was the OE of a women-only fan club; as I

recall, the officers were Noreen Falasca and Honey Wood, and editors were Juanita Coulson and Lee Lavell. It didn't last too long, due to the usual fan problems of moving, other business, and unwillingness of the rank and file to take over a position left vacant. Kept going for a year or two, I suppose. When *Femzine* folded, its subscriptions were filled by *Yandro*; it paid off its obligations.

Incidentally, King offers a word to define the sort of woman admired by feminists; virago. (In the original—"archaic" in Am. Heritage Dict.—definition; "A large, strong, or courageous woman; an Amazon.") So if I use the term, that's where it came from.

Pat Mathews
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Megan Lindholm does not have a character named "Kiand Vandien." Her name is "Ki" and she rides with a man named Vandien. She is not, as far as I could tell from reading Lindholm's books, oppressed; hers is a very equalitarian world. But *Wizard of the Pigeons* is, as you said, delightful.

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I was, unfortunately, revolted and appalled by Philip Kaveny's review of Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*. (*Aurora* 25, Vol. 10, No. 1). That's not very fair of me, and I don't mean to blame Mr. Kaveny for merely trying to provide an unusual introduction to his comments. But are they his comments? Is Mr. Kaveny the very large man?

Whoever he is, he seems to have forgotten that the ability to push around flunkies has been a sign of power for men for centuries. Women are blamed for trying to create a new way for humanity to relate to one another, and for trying to fit into the existing system. Of course, Mrs. Robinson is not a woman, she is, as Russ described Mata Hari in *The Female Man*, a fuckeress.

In the next to last paragraph of the fat man's comments, he speaks of power expressing itself in economics. It seems to me that Russ has made that very point in *The Female Man*, as well as in other works. In her "Open Letter" to Russ, Jeanne Gomoll discusses the title subject of Russ's *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. It seems safe to assume that Russ understands how "our power is determined by the perceptions of the possibilities in a situation," to quote Mr. Kaveny's quote. In "When It Changed," the tragedy is that men will be present on Whileaway, with all their enraging assumptions about the necessity of their presence. Whether or not they will "take over" is not the question. What will happen is that they will insinuate themselves into a society that was succeeding because of their absence, destroying something that I find very beautiful. Whileaway is the only world I have ever encountered in my readings that has the ability to move me to tears, and "When It Changed" is, to me, a very moving tragedy. Perhaps that explains my anger at Kaveny's review.

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Much of the material in the bibliographies had been covered in the articles on Dorman, Killough, etc. How about trying this: Listing addresses for the small presses cited (I've been trying to track the *Umbral Anthology* down for months), and marking out of print material as such.

Now to the core of *Aurora*, the articles. Every one dealt with important writers or issues. Every one drew out the important hidden threads that tie the writers to the key themes we've got to deal with today.

First rate. Yep. *Aurora* could run on mimeo, use art provided by first graders, even feature fiction and poetry by fifth rate Larry Niven imitators. But with articles like yours, I'd still subscribe.

Not that I suggest you try it!

I don't know what other themes you've featured before #24, but I'm very interested in the discussion of feminist goals as reflected in SF. Hm, that's a fuzzy sentence. I mean, different feminist writers propose different goals: Finding a nitch or refuge in unchangeably sexist society, Lesbian separatism, women adopting more-or-less male attitudes to "merit" equality (I think Cherryh falls into this), etc., etc. So if you've ever put together issues on this theme, a roundtable SFnal discussion of where-will-women-go-from-here, please let me know.

We Also Heard From:

Leland Sapiro (complaining about our lack of response to his offer for a free ad in Riverside Quarterly), Kristine Larson (whining about how our mean editors don't take the time to send pages of comments along with our rejections), and Ethel Lindsay (who sent along some comments on Native Tongue). Editing this column was very difficult. Due to space considerations, I was forced to trim more closely than I liked and skipped commenting entirely. On behalf of the various letter editors over the years, I'd like to thank everyone who sent mail; it's been interesting.—Peter J. Larsen ❖

Please watch out for each other and love and forgive everybody. It's a good life, enjoy it.

—Jim Henson

PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Barbara Rodman

GEORGIE SCHNOBRICH

"Listen to this one," Chuck said. "'Whimsical Lady...' Whimsical! Of all things! 'Whimsical lady, slender, creative. Would like to meet self-directed, energetic man with smiling eyes.' Smiling eyes—what's that supposed to mean?"

Julie lifted grey, unsmiling eyes across the cluttered breakfast table and studied her husband. He didn't look back at her though, and she returned her attention to the book she was reading.

"Here's just the man for the Whimsical Lady," Chuck exclaimed. Julie put down her book with a sigh. "'Male, 34, experienced in Arica...' What the hell's Arica? 'Experienced in Arica, Seth, est, and psychic phenomena wants to meet intelligent, spirited, sensitive yet strong woman.'" He looked up at Julie, who shrugged. "I don't know why an intelligent, sensitive woman would even read an ad like that," he said.

"What about a self-directed, energetic man?" Julie asked.

"No one reads these things but nuts," he asserted.

"You read them," she observed.

He folded the paper and slapped it down on the table. "I read them for amusement, Julie. I'm not trying to find a date."

"I should think not," she said, picking up her book again.

He moved around the room, gathering his briefcase, gloves, and car keys. "Well, I'm leaving now," he said from the doorway. "I don't know when I'll be home tonight."

Julie didn't answer.

He walked out, letting the door slam behind him.

When she heard the car pull away from the curb, Julie put down her book and stretched languorously. Waiting for the tea kettle to re-heat, she opened the newspaper Chuck had left on the table, and with her finger, she followed the column down the page to the "personals," re-reading the ads Chuck had found.

She cleared the table of the breakfast dishes and made a pot of tea, using fresh tea and the blue china pot which had been her grandmother's. While it steeped, she brought out a large box of odds and ends of stationery and selected two sheets. On a page of pastel pink edged in tiny lilacs, she composed the first note.

"To the unknown man (Box 89-B) who wishes to meet a woman who is...so many things—I think I see my own reflection in your ad. I've been disappointed before. Are you willing to give as much as you take? Think about your motives. If you want to meet me, I'll be at Poor Richard's coffeehouse (on Tejon St.) at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday. Carry an umbrella and order tea and muffins for two."

Then, on a piece of rough-textured tan paper striped boldly across the top with bands of red and black, she printed in tidy block letters:

"Whimsical Lady—something in your ad touched a chord with me. Could I be the one you've been hoping to meet? I will be at a downtown coffeeshop called Poor Richard's on Saturday morning at 11:00. Can you meet me? I'll carry an umbrella—whatever the weather—and order tea and muffins for both of us. Please take a chance on me. I'll be waiting for you."

She addressed each letter to its box number at the Gazette-Telegraph office and put them out for the mailman; an hour later, they were gone, replaced by a handful of bills and a long, complaining letter from Chuck's mother.

On Saturday morning, Julie suggested to Chuck that they go out for breakfast.

"Any where special you want to go?" he asked.

"I noticed an interesting little place downtown the other day, sort of a coffeehouse. It looked like it might be good for breakfast—lots of baked things and fancy omelets, I think. Some odd name...Poor Richard's? Shall we try it?"

"I've seen that place—I think it's just a hangout for college kids and hippies," Chuck said.

"Oh, let's try it," Julie said. Chuck made a face which she ignored, and they left the house together at ten-thirty. At ten-forty they were seated in Poor Richard's. Julie ordered fruit salad, tea, and a raisin bagel and Chuck asked for a Mexican omelet and coffee.

"Extra hot sauce, if you've it," he added. As they stepped away from the counter he said,"I can't believe these restaurants that don't have real meat. Soy sausage!"

Julie chose a table near the front and Chuck handed part of the newspaper he'd brought from home to her, spreading the rest on the table in front of him. Balancing her section against the edge of the table, she was able to pretend to read it while watching the people who entered.

At five to eleven, two women entered separately. One stood near the doorway reading the notices on a large bulletin board with severe concentration. She was large-boned, but pretty, with thick, dark hair curling across her shoulders. The other woman was slight, her hair an indiscriminate blonde-brown; her face was dominated by large green eyes. She ordered a glass of orange juice and carried it to a corner table. Julie watched her, thinking that her unsmiling expression was more assertive than whimsical.

By eleven-fifteen there was no sign of a man with an umbrella, self-directed or not. The woman at the bulletin board had left without sitting down, and the green-eyed woman sipped her juice with an unfocussed stare. Julie ate as slowly as possible, ordering a second pot of tea despite Chuck's annoyed expression.

At eleven-twenty, the green-eyed woman looked at her watch, jumped up as if suddenly remembering a forgotten engagement, and rushed out of the restaurant. Julie's eyes followed her with interest. Chuck put down his paper and turned to see what his wife was looking at, but she bent to pick up her purse and sweater from the floor. "Ready to go?" she asked.

"Did you see someone you know?" he responded.

"I thought so at first," she said, "but it wasn't. I'm sorry I took so long, but it's so seldom you get a really good pot of fresh tea away from home."

As they walked to their car, they met a tall, well-dressed man hurrying toward them. Was he carrying an umbrella? Julie turned to get a better look, but Chuck had taken her arm as they crossed the street and he felt her pulling away.

"Forget something?" he asked, starting to turn back. She shook her head and let him lead her to the car.

She didn't want Chuck to see her studying the personals, so it was Monday before Julie discovered that the Whimsical Lady still appeared, but that the Arica Man was gone. The two ad-writers had no other way to meet each other—she was their medium. She considered the alternatives.

With a smile, she pulled out the stationery box and wrote on the dainty, flower-bordered pastel, "Did we miss each other on Saturday? I waited for some time, but my nerve finally failed. If you're still interested, perhaps you could post a note on the bulletin board at Poor Richard's. Address it to the Whimsical Lady." She mailed the note to the box number in the paper.

Julie began to drop by Poor Richard's daily, eating a bagel or frozen yogurt at a table near the entrance where she could read the notices on the bulletin board without drawing attention to herself. On Thursday, a lined card addressed to the Whimsical Lady in a neat handwriting appeared. "Please accept my apologies—an unexpected phone call delayed me at home. Are you willing to try again? Same time, same place."

Julie removed the card from the board as she left, hurrying away from the coffeeshop. She went home and put it in an envelope which she addressed to the Whimsical Lady's newspaper office box, but she was afraid it wouldn't arrive in time if she mailed it. She drove to the newspaper office and was directed to the want ad department.

"May I leave something here for a box number in a personal ad?" she asked.

The clerk barely glanced up from her typewriter. "Sure," she said disinterestedly. Julie left the envelope on the counter.

The next Saturday, Chuck left early to meet a client at the golf course. "Sorry to run off, honey," he said, "but this is the only time I could get together with Casey. I'll be home early this afternoon."

At ten-thirty, Julie scribbled a note to him. "Gone shopping. See you after lunch." When she entered Poor Richard's, she saw at once a rather conspicuously uncomfortable man with what appeared to be a brand-new umbrella propped by his chair. On the table in front of him sat two cups of tea and two plates of muffins. He looked up at Julie expectantly, but she avoided his eyes and went directly to the counter. "Whole wheat toast and decaf coffee," she ordered loudly.

Julie sat at a table behind the Umbrella Man and pulled a mystery novel out of her bag, opening it at random.

The Umbrella Man picked distrustfully at his muffin, jumping each time the front door opened. He was quite attractive, Julie thought. Dark and slender, dressed in well-pressed slacks and an expensive wool shirt, he conveyed an image of tasteful frugality, more an investment banker on holiday than a student of Arica and psychic phenomena, he was hardly the kind of man Chuck would have expected to be advertising in the personals for romance.

The Umbrella Man was quite agitated by the time the green-

eyed woman of the previous week arrived. She seemed relaxed and comfortable in white cotton slacks and a loose-fitting jade shirt which reflected her exotic eyes. Without hesitation, the woman walked to the Umbrella Man. Leaning forward across the table toward him, she said, "I'm Sonia, the 'whimsical lady.' Are you waiting for me?"

He nodded.

Either this type of exchange was common in the coffeehouse, or no one but Julie heard it. The Whimsical Lady sat down with the Umbrella Man, facing Julie. Julie turned a page in her book without reading it.

"My name is Kenneth," the Umbrella Man said. "Would you like a cup of tea? I think it's still warm." He pushed one of the cups toward her.

The Lady tilted her head to one side, her eyes widening. Julie thought she seemed much like a Siamese cat thoughtfully observing a bird on the lawn. The Umbrella Man was a nervous robin. He watched the woman stir sugar into her cup.

"I'm sorry I was late last week," he said. "My mother called just as I was leaving, and I had a difficult time getting away." He spoke with a sort of awkward intensity which carried his voice clearly to Julie, who turned another unread page in her book.

The lady's laugh was low and compelling. "Your mother? Oh dear, I do understand. You couldn't very well tell her you were on the way to meet a strange woman you'd contacted through a newspaper ad, could you?" She lowered her voice to a conspiratorial whisper which Julie could barely hear. "I haven't told anyone about the ad myself," she said. "I wasn't even sure I would go through with it until I saw you here."

The Umbrella Man smiled for the first time, relaxing a little. "Look," he said, "I think we could talk more comfortably someplace else. Would you like to go outside? It's a nice day—we can walk over to Acacia Park."

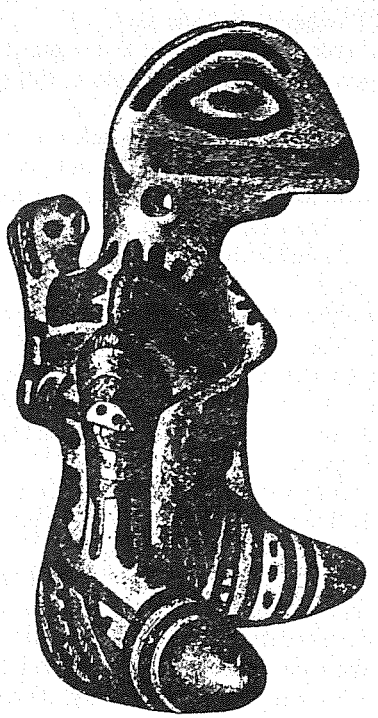
"Sounds great to me," the Lady said. "I'd much rather be out of doors on a beautiful day like this."

Julie watched them go; they stopped to unlock a bike the woman had apparently ridden to the cafe. They pushed it along between them as they walked away. The encounter seemed incomplete somehow; leaving the coffeeshop, she felt disappointed.

Julie avoided Poor Richard's for awhile, but one afternoon on her way home from an errand downtown, she stopped in for a cup of tea and found the Umbrella Man sitting alone.

As she watched him, Julie noticed that even when his mouth smiled, his eyes did not; they were lusterless and solemn. He had a mannikin-like composure, perfectly poised, as if he were being photographed for a gentleman's magazine. He would get flustered if challenged, she thought, but not angry. Fastidiously, he picked crumbs off the table and dropped them to the floor.

He glanced around the room, his eyes fixing on Julie. She looked away, realizing with a shiver how seldom anyone looked at her. Chuck did, of course, but most of the time she felt as unseen as a table or chair which is so familiar that it becomes invisible. He continued to look at her, and she wondered if he felt any connection to her, if his supposed knowledge of psychic phenomena gave him the power to perceive her role in his meeting with the Whimsical Lady. He finally left the coffeehouse, leaving her shaken.



Chiriquian statuette

When women had tails
left tracks like snails
ate plants
and believed it

we had nite eyes
fur and claws
fangs in our jaws
and loved it

Carol Porter
July 1986

After he was gone, Julie looked around the coffeeshop, noticing the people in it for the first time. She wondered if any of them noticed her, knew that she had been there before. Someone pushed against her chair as he walked by, and she felt crowded, overpowered by the strong aroma of exotic coffee and the noise of the voices chattering around her. Outside, the light seemed harsh, the colors too bright, the shadows hard and unyielding. She didn't go back to the car, but allowed herself to be pushed along by the pedestrian traffic.

She wanted a cool place to sit and rest, and remembered the library a few blocks away. Once inside, she felt relieved, aware now of a slight nausea, an anxious feeling in the pit of her stomach. She fell into a soft, cushiony chair in a sort of nook at the end of a row of books and leaned forward, her head resting in her hands. She took several deep breaths, holding each one in her lungs before expelling it.

"Are you all right?" Julie felt a hand gently placed on her shoulder and looked up into the green eyes of the woman she knew as the Whimsical Lady.

"I'm fine," Julie answered, wondering if she were. Her voice sounded dry and unfamiliar to her own ears. The Lady moved her hand from Julie's shoulder, leaving a spot of warmth where it had lain. Julie pulled herself upright in the chair, noting that her body seemed only to be empty, not hurting.

The Lady stayed close beside her. "Are you sure?"

"I really am all right," Julie said. She bit her lower lip. "Thank you for your concern." She stood up, but felt dizzy and grabbed at the back of chair for support. The Lady quickly put her own arm out for support, and the two women's eyes met in an unexpected and ironic intimacy.

"Do you live nearby?" the Lady asked.

"No...no, but my car isn't far. I'll be fine once I get outside, I'm sure," Julie said. "I just need fresh air."

"Let me walk with you," the Lady said. "I'm on my way to lunch anyway." Julie noticed her name tag for the first time. Research Assistant. Sonia Vishnesky.

"You really don't need to," Julie began.

The assertiveness which Julie had noted the first time she'd seen the woman waiting for the Umbrella Man in Poor Richard's was in the green eyes again. "It's quite all right. Where are you parked?"

At her car, Julie thanked the woman again. "You've been very kind," she said.

"Are you sure you can drive? I could call someone to come get you. Your husband perhaps?"

Julie looked at the rings on her left hand. Disconcerted, she realized that she couldn't remember what Chuck looked like, although she could hear his voice distinctly—sulky, aggressive, self-confident. "No, no...I can drive."

Sonia started to leave, but Julie didn't want her to go yet. "You know, I feel as if I already know you," she said.

Sonia stopped uncertainly.

"I mean, I've seen you before. I remember you."

Sonia frowned, trying to remember. "Me? When?"

"It...it was a couple of months ago. You were with a man, in a coffee shop—that one down the street—Poor Richards's. He was carrying an umbrella. That's why I noticed, I suppose. There wasn't a cloud in sight that day." The green eyes narrowed to slits, and Julia wished she hadn't said so much. "And then, you didn't seem to fit with him either," Julie added, this truthful observation making her feel better.

"I remember that day," Sonia said. "But I've never seen that man again. I met him through an ad I'd placed in the paper. It was all very odd." She took another step back, as if just remembering that she was talking to a stranger in a public sidewalk.

Julie felt as if her body had become transparent and Sonia's green eyes could see right through her, discerning her role in the meeting. "I didn't like his eyes," Julie said.

"That's strange," Sonia said. "I didn't either. In my ad, I said I wanted to meet a man with...with smiling eyes. I've always liked men who smiled with their whole faces, not just their mouths. Do you know what I mean?" She shook her head regretfully. "We were both disappointed in each other, I think. We didn't exchange phone numbers or last names, and we never met again."

A car horn honked, and both women were startled. Sonia glanced at her watch and said, "I must get going now. I still need to get something to eat and then back to work."

"Can I give you a ride?" Julie asked.

"I need the exercise," Sonia said. She hesitated, then said, "Take care of yourself—."

"It's Julie, Julie Hardin." She offered Sonia her hand.

"Well, take care of yourself, Julie Hardin."

Julie sat in the car and watched Sonia cross the street, and disappear into a shop. She felt someone's eyes on her and looked up. A man on the sidewalk was watching her; when she looked up at him he smiled at her with hazel eyes. She smiled back and pulled the car away from the curb.

She drove home filled with a curious satisfaction. She sang to herself, a wordless tune which comforted her as she opened the door to her home.

"Where have you been?" Chuck greeted her. "It's after two."

She closed the door behind her, thinking of the green-eyed woman. "I've been out," she said.

Chuck turned away, tossing a newspaper onto the couch. "I suppose you didn't stop at the store, did you? We're out of bread."

She sat down on the sofa and picked up the newspaper he'd dropped, turning to the want ads, not yet thinking why. She began to hum the little song which had come to her in the car.

"Julie?" Chuck called again.

"There's bread in the freezer," she called back. "I'll be there in just a minute."

Her thoughts were still with Sonia, the wordless tune filling her mind. She imagined meeting Sonia for lunch, talking, becoming friends. She imagined inviting Sonia to her house to dinner, and she frowned, looking down at the place where her finger had stopped in the want ads. "One bedroom, sunny, pets allowed. Close to downtown."

She carefully tore the ad out and put it in her pocket, not sure why, but believing, for the first time, in psychic phenomena.

"Julie," Chuck said from the kitchen. "I'm waiting. Are you coming? I haven't had anything to eat all day."

"I'm coming," she answered. "I'm on the way." In her pocket, her hand caressed the ragged edge of the newspaper ad, and she hummed the melody which had been with her since she'd left Sonia, not knowing that miles away, alone in her office, the Whimsical Lady was singing the same tune to herself.

She walked to the phone and dialed the number in the ad. ❖

SPARROWS FLY

Palmar Hardy

GEORGIE SCHNOBRICH

Mabel Grammer pulled herself from the cold, silver hands of sleep. She rubbed her eyes and looked around her one room apartment. On the other side of the room, still asleep on his cot, her son had curled into a ball. Only his head peeked out from the covers. A tiny spit bubble had formed at the corner of his mouth. She lay silently in the gray dawn, waiting for Tommy to stir.

An unexpected fear gripped her as it sometimes did when her mind had not focused yet on the waking world. She sat up, trying to understand the premonition. Her first thought was of the welfare worker who stole in and out of the slums like a snake on wet grass.

Her gaze fell on her tarot cards, a corner-frayed Waite deck that sat in the center of her eating table. A fat, brown roach appeared from the other side of the deck and lingered on the top card.

Grabbing a worn, satin bedroom slipper from the floor, she jumped up and ran to the table. She flicked the roach off and crushed it under the heel of her slipper. "Now who's been feeding you?" She spat at the remains and sat down on one of her two wobbly kitchen chairs.

Outside the apartment window, the sounds of the awakening city screamed up from the streets.

"Get up, son. Welfare coming today, lazy bones." Her son stretched and yawned.

She pushed a strand of stringy black hair off her forehead and pulled the remnants of a faded negligee tighter around her thin shoulders.

Tommy rose and clumped past her, eyes still swollen with sleep. He searched the windowsill where they kept the cold food.

"There's no damn milk."

"Don't swear. Ain't right for a kid to swear." She wanted to hug him, squeeze the unhappiness and the hunger right out of him, but she knew he would shrug her off. He looked pale and tired, an old man at eight.

She ran her fingers across the top of the tarot deck in a gesture of reverence.

"Freezing in here," Tommy said, taking a piece of stale bread from the wrapper on the table.

She stared at the dirty window pane where the wind whistled through a crack in the glass. "I'll see if I can scrounge a newspaper today to stuff in that hole. You hurry now. Get to school."

The boy sniffed his irritation. "Today's Saturday, Mom. Don't you remember?"

She looked surprised for an instant, then laughed. "Of course, son, of course. I do now. I just forgot for awhile. You don't blame your old momma for a little forgetting now and then, do you?"

Tommy chewed his bread slowly, making it last. "Think Dad might come today?"

Mabel frowned. "I hope not. Welfare lady coming today and I don't want trouble."

"Mom, she ain't coming today. Today's Saturday. You know this one never comes on Saturday."

"You can't say for sure. I had a bad feeling this morning," she said. "You know I always get that when she comes by. If the bad feeling ain't for that, what is it for?"

"If you got that feeling, read the cards, find out for sure."

She drew back as if slapped. "You know I can't do that. You know how I feel."

"Duck Lady says you should. Duck Lady says you're good enough to make money at it, and Duck Lady knows everything. She's magic."

"Stop it. Stop that talk. Don't ever speak of that awful old woman to me again." Mabel expressed her hatred by sucking her front teeth. "What can she know? I don't even think she can talk," she said, holding back her tears. "I think you're making stuff up to get me to do what I don't want to do. Sometimes I think you hate me." She put her head down on the table and surrendered to jealous sobs.

Mabel feared her son would leave her some day. She trembled at the thought that she might end up wandering through alleys like Duck Lady. An alley was the last stop on poverty's road.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I know you don't want to, but you could make money on the street. We wouldn't have to live on welfare. We wouldn't have to be hungry. You could maybe open a storefront. There's lots of suckers out there looking for someone to tell them how to run their lives. Dad says the world needs more dimestore prophets."

She sat up, fire burning in her eyes. "Don't you ever say that again. What I see in them cards is true. Them cards have more power than a smartass boy like you will ever know. You think I don't know you beg money off strangers. I saw you downtown, making up stories about how you lost your money for the bus. I want you to stop that. I want you to stay away from that crazy old woman with the duck."

"And what should we do now that you're too old to turn tricks? We sure can't live on what the welfare pays us."

"Stop it, stop it." She swiped at him with one thin arm, but he sidestepped her and ran out the door. "Come back," she yelled, willing him to return. But he ran the length of the hall, and she heard his steps pound down the stairway.

She crossed to the window and watched for him, gasping a little as she spied the Duck Lady waiting for him. The crazy woman held two dirty saltines in her hands. When the boy came up beside her, she wiped them on her army coat and gave one to him and one to the duck that perched on her shoulder.

Mabel wiped her nose on the sleeve of her robe as she watched them walk down the street and disappear around the corner.

She picked up her deck of cards and hugged them tightly to her chest. She moaned softly and cried, whimpering like a child with no home. "I'm lost," she said. "Oh, my Tarot, I am lost."

The pain of not knowing grew within her. She sat down at the table and shuffled the cards. She laid them before her in the Celtic cross method that her grandmother had taught her. When she saw the turmoil and sadness they predicted, she groaned.

They were more than paper to her. They lived, they breathed. And today they spoke the message which she had always expected them to say: Death.

She sighed low and long. Tarot had the power. She had always known that. She did not like to read because once the tarot spoke, there was no way to change the vision. And now she had done it. Now she had conjured Death. But as often happened when she read for herself, the identity of the sufferer still lay shrouded behind a veil which she could not penetrate. Only time could do that.

She lay down on her couch, too tired to face going outside. "It's not fair," she said. She could spread out the problems of strangers before her like so much painted cardboard, and she could turn off their troubles with the snap of her wrist. But she could not stop the nightmares that tormented her afterwards. Reading tarot opened some dark and loathsome part of her, some ancient power no longer needed in the world of cities and big business. Once she woke tarot, she woke the second sight within herself, and the things she saw frightened her.

Tarot had shown her in her youth that she would deal with poverty by selling her body to men. Tarot had told her when Tommy would enter her life, and she had always feared that it would show her Tommy's death. She had vowed that if it happened, she would cut off her hands.

"You can't mean to take my boy from me," she said.

She fell into a fitful sleep. She dreamed of Tommy, slain and mutilated, his blood coloring the drab walls. She tried to pick up the pieces of his body, but they slipped through her fingers onto the floor.

She woke, and tears wet her face. When she realized that she still clutched her cards, she flung them across the room.

Her door opened. Tommy's father, John, stood in the open doorway, searching the room for the men he expected to find. She could not convince him that men no longer wanted her.

His face was flushed with the wild-eyed look of drink. She jumped up to confront him. "The cards," she said. "The cards told me of death and violence. They told me of blood and terror in the night. I want you out of here now."

He laughed and pushed her aside. "Mabel, you're crazier than ever. Got any money around?"

She watched his every move, feeling the helplessness and the anger clashing inside her. "No. Can't you see there's nothing here you want. Get out before someone sees you here and I lose the AFDC."

"I think we should get married, Mabel. I want to claim the boy as my own."

Her laugh was long and shrill. "Now you want him, now that you know what a fine boy he is. Now that you know he's big enough and smart enough to make money on his own. Was it you who taught him to beg off strangers? I'll kill you, you crab infested drunk." She lunged at him strong enough to throw him off balance.

He caught her by the hair and swung her against the wall, knocking the fight out of her. As she crumpled to the floor, she cursed herself for being so weak.

Behind them, a small voice said, "Hello."

Her puzzled son stood in the doorway. He held a large fishbowl. It was filled with water, but there was no fish.

"Run, Tommy, run. Get out of here as fast as you can."

"No, Mom," he said. He crossed to the table and sat the bowl

down. Then he came to her and offered her his hand. "Get up, Mom."

She let him pull her off the floor. John scowled at the two of them, not understanding yet that there was a subtle change in the boy whom he had always regarded as a baby.

Tommy guided Mabel to the door. The Duck Lady waited in the hall, her duck dropping watery recycled crackers down the back of her coat. Mabel approached the old woman. Duck Lady gave Mabel a wide, toothless grin and said, "Quack."

"Please get help," Mabel said. "You like my little boy, and I'm afraid his father will kill him."

Duck Lady winked and nodded her head. "Quack," she said again.

"Please, help me, don't just stand there." Mabel turned back to her room. Tommy and his father faced each other, staring each other down with hatred.

John plunged around the table lightning fast and grabbed the boy's arm. Tommy yelled in surprise as if he suddenly realized how dangerous his father could be.

Duck Lady stepped into the room, giggling a little, clearly enjoying the fight. "Wheeee," she said and threw her duck at John.

The bird screeched and flew at John's face. It scratched at his lips with webbed feet and waved its wings at his eyes.

Mabel grabbed Tommy and pulled him back. Duck Lady waved an arm, sending minute pieces of Ritz crackers and duck feces all over the room.

A stab of light flashed in the air. Mabel sat down flat on the floor. Tommy whirled where he stood and clapped his hands with delight.

"See, Mom, I told you so," he said. "See, she's magic."

John was no longer in the room. Duck Lady smiled her gaping-hole grin once more and stooped to pick up the tarot cards with her liver spotted hands.

Mabel glanced from the cards to the woman's eyes. She had never seen eyes so blue, so calm, and she felt relief flood over her.

"Where's John," Mabel asked.

The wrinkled one brought her hand up to shoulder level where it stopped, aimed at the fishbowl. Mabel jumped and a chill rushed over her.

In the bowl, a fat goldfish spun from side to mirrored side, hitting itself on the glass as if it were trying to escape. Underneath its muddy gold body, it trailed a string of excrement.

Duck Lady mumbled something at the bowl and crooned a strange song. The fish calmed and swam to rest on the bottom of the bowl.

Mabel stood up, not yet ready to accept what Duck Lady had implied. "What now," Mabel asked and wondered if she could be jailed for John's disappearance.

Duck Lady cleared her throat. "Cluck, cluck. Well, now, let me see. I can turn you into a sparrow or a dove if that's what you want. I take good care of my birds, yes, I do. But, my little wren, you have a certain magic yourself." She motioned toward the chunky fish. "Sometimes when demons die, sparrows fly. Course, there's all kinds of dying." She held out the tarot deck. "And there's all kinds of living."

Mabel took the cards. She felt them twist in her hand. A new warmth radiated from them. "They've changed," she said with surprise.

Duck Lady whistled for her pet. It returned to her shoulder from Tommy's cot. "Could it be that you have also changed? I hope that you have faced your dark side and found it laughable."

Mabel took Tommy in her arms. He hugged her tight. She put her hand under his chin and lifted his face. "You look young again, kid."

"Oh, Mom," he said, but he laughed.

"Just give me a second and I'll sit right down." She bustled toward the bag of stale bread. "I'll give you a free reading, Duck Lady. Right after I feed some crumbs to Tommy's father." ❖

GEORGIE SCHNOBRICH

What is SF³?

SF³ (or more formally, the Society for the Furtherance and Study of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Inc.) is a not-for-profit Wisconsin corporation with IRS tax-exempt status. SF³ is the umbrella corporation that sponsors activities like Wiscon, *Aurora*, and other SF-and fantasy-related events that are guaranteed to lose money. Your dues go toward providing a post office box, bulk mailing permit, posters, scholarships, and other financial support for these activities.

Please consider joining SF³. It's a Good Cause. It's Tax Deductible. And it includes a free subscription to *Cube*, our bi-monthly newsletter.

Membership categories

Associate (non-voting)	$4.50
Student/Economy	6.00
Basic	9.00
Contributing	15.00
Supporting	24.00
Sustaining	36.00
Patron	48.00
Lifetime (first installment)	100.00
Lifetime (total payment)	250.00

Blue Skies & Red Tape

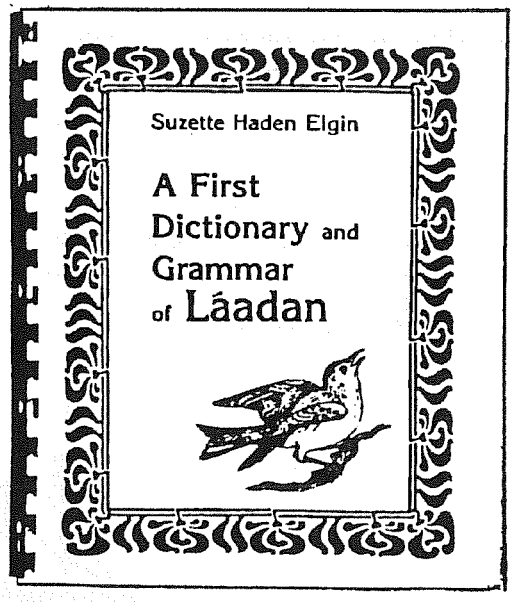
The Internal Revenue Service, sky-rocketing postal costs, potential libel suits, and love of bureaucracy, are only a few of the reasons your SF club might decide to incorporate itself. SF³ did it; find out how your group can with their common sense, how-to essay by the bureaucrat of bureaucrats himself, Richard S. Russell.

A First Dictionary and Grammar of Láadan, 2nd edition

by Suzette Haden Elgin
A Real Women's Language

Láadan is a real language created by Elgin for her science fiction novel, *Native Tongue* (DAW books, 1984). In Elgin's words, "Láadan is a language invented by a woman, for women, to express the perceptions of women."

Currently director of the Ozark Center for Language Studies in Huntsville, Arkansas, Elgin is widely published in both linguistics and science fiction. Her books include *The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense* (and several sequels), a number of linguistics texts, and several science fiction novels. A sequel, *Native Tongue 2: The Judas Rose* was published by DAW in 1987.



Wednesday Night Meetings

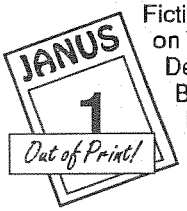
At the "Brat und Brau"

The Madison Science Fiction Group meets every Wednesday night (except the last Wednesday of the month) at 7:30 pm for conversation and refreshments at the local bar/restaurant, **Brat und Brau** on 1421 Regent Street.

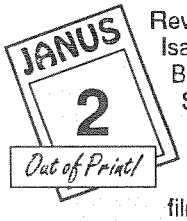
The last Wednesday of the month meeting is held at the same time, but at **Union South**, on the University of Wisconsin campus, at 227 N. Randall Street. That meeting features a special program, to be announced.

Janus/Aurora Back Issues

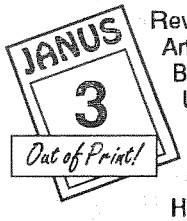
Janus Back Issues



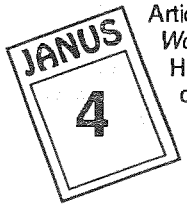
Fiction, poetry and reviews on Tanith Lee, Samuel R. Delany, and John Brunner, "The City as Idea" by Jeanne Gomoll.



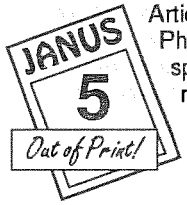
Reviews of Philip K. Dick, Isaac Asimov, Reginald Bretnor, Gail Kimberly, Samuel Delany, John Brunner, Harlan Ellison's *A Boy and His Dog* (book and film), and *The Stepford Wives* (film) fiction and poetry.



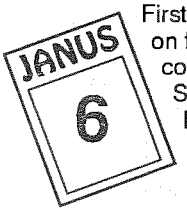
Reviews of Alfred Bester, Arthur C. Clarke, J.G. Ballard, Vonda McIntyre, Ursula LeGuin, Pamela Sargent, and *Solaris* (film); articles on Ray Bradbury, Robert Heinlein, and Cape Kennedy; fanzine reviews, fiction and humor.



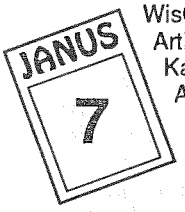
Articles of Evelyn Reed's *Women's Evolution*, Harlan Ellison, and SF in contemporary music; reviews on Jack Stuart, Tanith Lee, Michael Moorcock, *Alphaville* (film), and fanzines; interview with Clifford Simak; fiction and poetry.



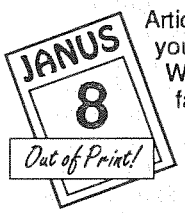
Articles on future histories, Philip Jose Farmer, and speculative fiction; reviews on John Brunner, *Aurora: Beyond Equality*, Kate Wilhelm, David Duncan, *Logan's Run, Dark Star, Embryo,* and *The Omen* (films), and fanzines; and fiction.



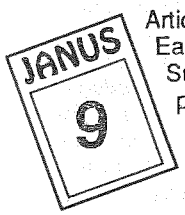
First offset issue. Articles on feminism and SF, and contemporary music and SF; reviews on Tanith Lee, Reginald Bretnor, Pamela Sargent, Celia Holland, *The Man Who Fell to Earth, Futureworld, Infra-Man* (films), and fanzines; MidAmericCon and WindyCon reports; interview with Suzy McKee Charnas and Amanda Bankier; fiction and poetry.



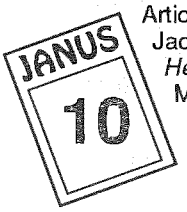
WisCon 1 program book. Articles on SF, GoHs Katherine MacLean, Amanda Bankier, SF radio shows,and Philip K. Dick; WisCon panel descriptions; reviews on Katherine MacLean, fanzines, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show, King Kong, The Land that Time Forgot,* and *Carrie* (films); and fiction.



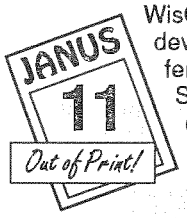
Articles about the first time you encountered SF, and WisCon 1; reviews of fanzines, Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines*, D.J. Lake, William Morris, Roger Zelazny, *King Kong, The Cassandra Crossing, Twilight's Last Gleaming, Network, Demon Seed, Wizards, The Sentinel, Demon,* and *Demon Pack*(films); fiction by Jessica Amanda Salmonson, and poetry.



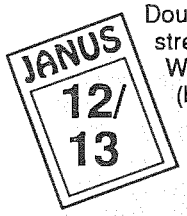
Articles on themes of Eastern philosophy in SF, SunCon, Isaac Asimov, parthenogenesis and overpopulation, reviews of *The Best SF of the Year* (1976, Carr), *The American Tricentennial,* Ian Watson, John Varley, Robert Ardrey, *Star Wars, Exorcist 2, Fantastic Animation Festival, Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger, Empire of the Ants,* and *Ruby* (films), and fanzines; poetry and fiction.



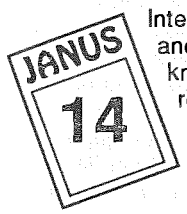
Articles on SF and fandom, Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, "If All Men Were Mothers"; film reviews of *The Island of Dr. Moreau, Damnation Alley, Allegro Non Troppo,* and *Oh God!;* fiction and poetry.



WisCon 2 program book, devoted to theme of feminist programming in SF conventions. Articles on feminist programming (by Susan Wood), Guests of Honor Susan Wood and Vonda N. McIntyre, WisCon programming, publication technology, and John Varley; reviews on Vonda McIntyre, Cherry Wilder, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (film); fiction by Jessica Amanda Salmonson; Harlan Ellison's ERA letter; and poetry.

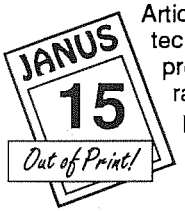


Double issue on "Mainstream SF". Article "The Word is Not the Thing" (by Samuel R. Delany); articles on Thomas Pynchon, Robert Coover, SF/mainstream interface fiction, Ralph Ellison, SF art, SF as surrealism, Samuel Delany, genetic technology, and bad science in films; responses to Harlan Ellison's ERA letter, reviews on *Coma, The Fury, Damien: Omen 2* (films), SF on TV, and fanzines; WisCon 2, WindyCon, MiniCon and DubuQon reports; and poetry.

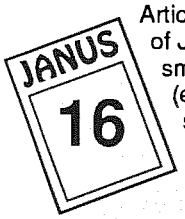


Interviews with Joan Vinge and Octavia Butler, little-known female writers, reviews of Marion Zimmer Bradley, Stephen R. Donaldson, Jeanne and Spider Robinson, *The Swarm, The Cat from Outer Space, Eyes of Laura Mars, Here Comes Mr. Jordan,* and *Heaven Can Wait* (films); interviews with Joan Vinge and Octavia Butler; IguanaCon reports, poetry, and fiction.

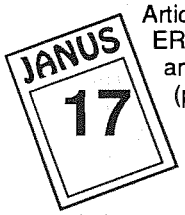
Janus/Aurora Back Issues



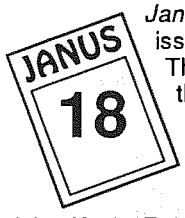
Articles on publishing technology, feminist small press, SF group incorporation, and WisCon programming; interviews with Elizabeth A. Lynn, John Varley, Joan Vinge, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Superman the Movie, Buck Rogers, Watership Down, The Lord of the Rings, The China Syndrome, The Boys from Brazil,* and *Quintet* (films); WisCon 3 reports, and poetry.



Articles on the publication of Janus, the feminist small press, *Amazons!* (edited by J.A. Salmonson), "Celluloid Fantasia" by Stu Shiffman, and incorporation of SF groups; reviews on Jo Clayton, Janet E. Morris; and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro; X-Con and Archon reports; interviews with Jo Clayton and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, and poetry.

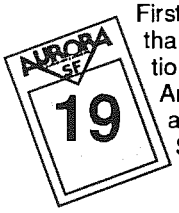


Articles on time travel, the ERA boycott and ChiCon, and "Celluloid Fantasia" (part 2) by Stu Shiffman; reviews on R.L. Turtill, Norman Spinrad, Phyllis Eisenstein, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, fanzines, SF on television, *Alien, Star Trek-The Motion Picture, The Black Hole,* and *The Empire Strikes Back* (films); and poetry.

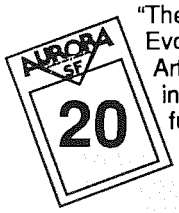


Janus becoming *Aurora* issue, "Post-Holocaust Themes in Feminist SF" theme issue. Articles on NoreasCon 2, post-holocaust themes in feminist SF; reviews on Doris Lessing, Walter Tevis, Robert C. O'Brien, Mary Vigliante, Shelford Bidwell, and feminist small presses; fiction and poetry.

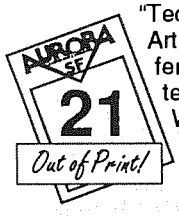
Aurora Back Issues



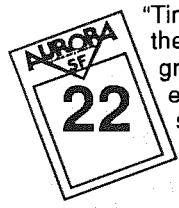
First issue of *Aurora*, "More than Words", communication in SF theme issue. Articles on WisCon 5, alien languages (by Suzette Haden Elgin), video games, feminist SF/F poetry, non-human communication, and women's small presses; reviews on Ian Watson, John Varley, and Suzette Haden Elgin; poetry.



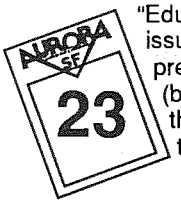
"The Future of Human Evolution" theme issue. Articles on evolution theme in SF, androgynous futures, human evolution and sexism, pessimism and SF dreams, reviews on Jean M. Auel and fanzines; fiction and poetry.



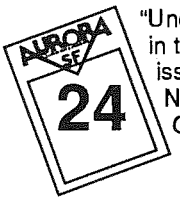
"Technology" theme issue. Articles on WisCon 6, feminist small press, technology, and "Why a Woman is Not like a Physicist" (WisCon 6 GoH speech by Suzette Haden Elgin); reviews on Nancy Kress, Doris Lessing, Ted Mooney, A.A. Attanasio, Keith Cohen, John Crowley, Russell Hoban, *Woman Space*, Sally Miller Gearhart, Ruth Adams & Susan Cullen, Nigel Calder, Suzette Haden Elgin, Fred Alan Wolf, Gary Zukav,and 1981 SF/F films; fiction and poetry.



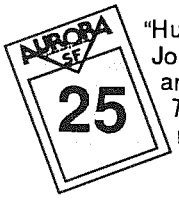
"Time and Space Travel" theme issue. Articles on grim prospects for space exploration, modes of space travel, and the biological hazards of time travel; reviews on Julian May, films of 1982, and fanzines; fiction and poetry.



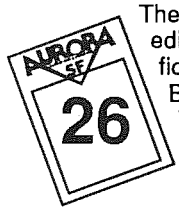
"Education and SF" theme issue. Articles on small press, WisCon 7, Láadan (by Suzette Haden Elgin), the generic pronoun, teaching SF, women's studies programs and SF, heroic fantasy in films, and the future of education; interview with Janice Bogstad and UW professor Fannie LeMoine; fiction and poetry.



"Under-appreciated Women in the SF/F Field" theme issue. Articles on Andre Norton, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Katherine MacLean, Lee Killough, Miriam Allen deFord, Sonya Dorman, Evangline Walton, 19th century fiction by women, and mediocre SF/F by women; bibliographies, fiction and poetry.



"Humor and SF" issue: Joanna Russ reviews and articles, articles on *Star Trek*, women in comics; reviews of Attic Press books, books by Sarah Dreher, Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, Caroline Forbes, Cynthia Felice, Joan Slonczewski, Linda Steele, Vonda N. McIntyre, David Hartwell, Frederick Pohl, James P. Hogan, Brian Stableford, Suzy McKee Charnas, Margaret Atwood, and Megan Lindholm; review of *Aliens* (films), fiction, and poetry.



The last *Aurora* with an editorial by Diane Martin, fiction by Carol Porter and Barbara Rodman, poetry by Palmar hardy, and letters, many of them responding to Joanna Russ material in *Aurora* 25.

WisCon 15

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March 1-3, 1991

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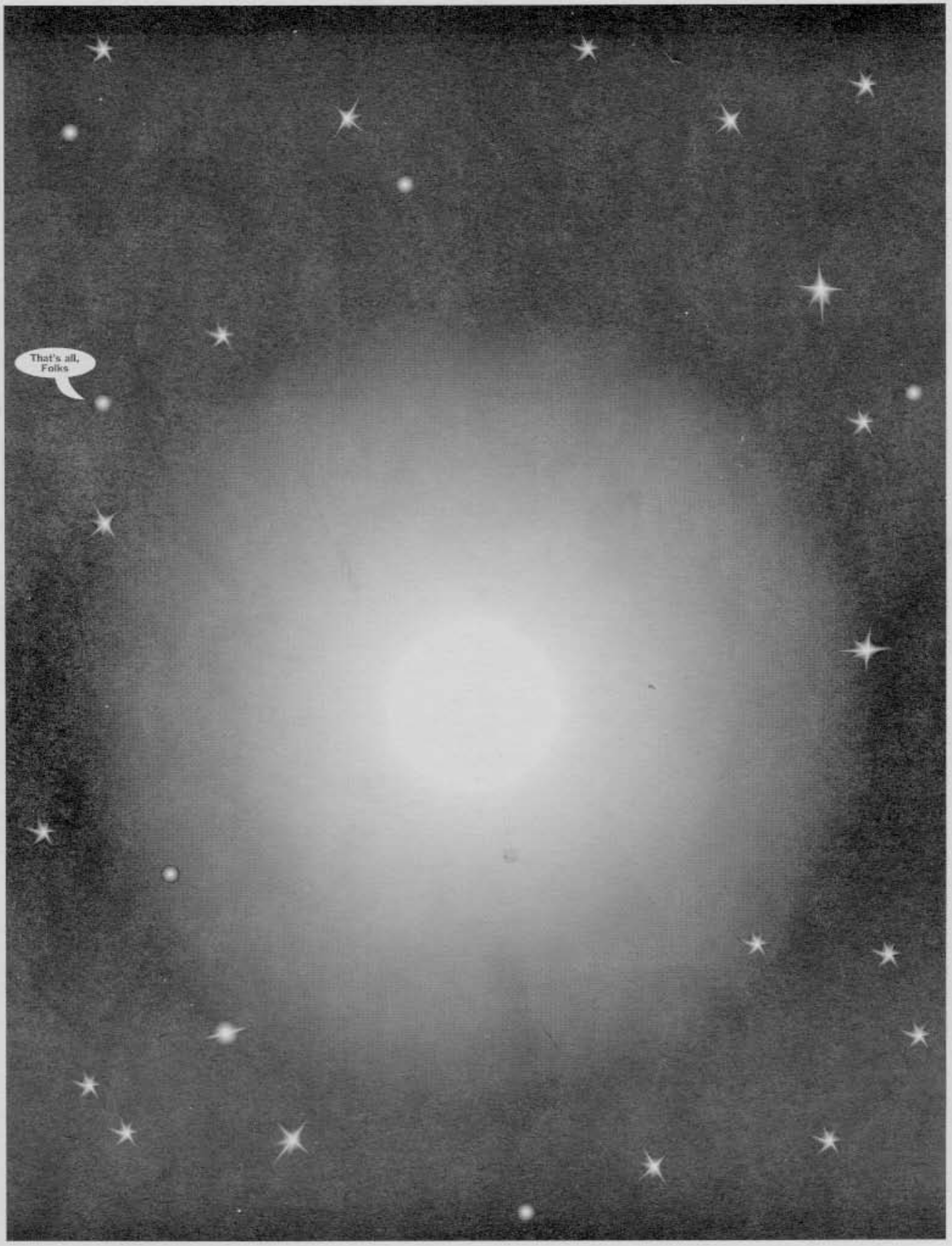
That's all, Folks