

Weber Woman's Wrevenge

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WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE THIRTEEN

(Volume 3, Number 1, July 1983)

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Please note that I am now resident again in my own homestead, though mail to any of my other addresses should eventually find me. (Those of you who never got organized enough to change my address on your lists--I hope you don't now do so. I'm back where I started from.)

Weberwoman's Wrevenge is available for trade, contribution, letter of comment, artwork, editorial whim, or \$A1.00, US\$1.50, or equivalent per issue. I accept uncanceled postage stamps from Canada, UK or USA in payment, as well as money. I prefer personal response however.

Electrostencils by Ron L. Clarke, Faulconbridge. Cover printed offset by Ron L Clarke; other pages printed on Isopress, my aging Gestetner (I hope).

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THE COVER

Thanks to Kerrie Hanlon for the cover this time, which appears to be a woman defending her home and family. Somehow the brevity of her clothing clashes with the obviously warm togs on the child, but then maybe she was roused out of a warm hut in some hurry (fairly likely if a robber or harmful beastie had tried to surprise the family). I like Kerrie's work; those of you who see media zines or Ron Clarke's The Mentor will be familiar with it already. I hope those of you (especially overseas) to whom Kerrie is not known will like her style, too. I sure hope Ron doesn't have any difficulties offset printing this.

Late Breaking Fan Fund News

I have decided to stand for GUFF 1984. I think GUFF stands for "Gone Under Fan Fund", but whatever it's called, it promotes the exchange of fannish visitors between Europe and Australia. John Foyster went to the UK several years ago, and Joseph Nicholas visited us in 1980. GUFF was unable to find candidates for an Australia-to-Europe race for 1983, but it looks like a good field will line up for 1984. I hope you will support me, though I must admit my opponents would be excellent choices, too.

W³

THE RUBBISH BIN

An Editorial by Jean Weber

As you'll read later in this issue, I had a major operation in late April. I've been on sick leave for a total of 5 weeks. Eric Lindsay really deserves a medal for his understanding and patience in taking care of me and putting up with me during this time. Fortunately, I wasn't bed-ridden, so he didn't have to do everything, but it was certainly more than his share. One good side-effect of this enforced togetherness, however, was that it answered the question we'd both been wondering, whether we could manage to live together full time. The answer is yes. Whether we'll be able to arrange to do so (given the realities of our respective employment situations) is another matter. You may have noticed on the inside front cover, that I'm back in Canberra--or will be by the time you read this.

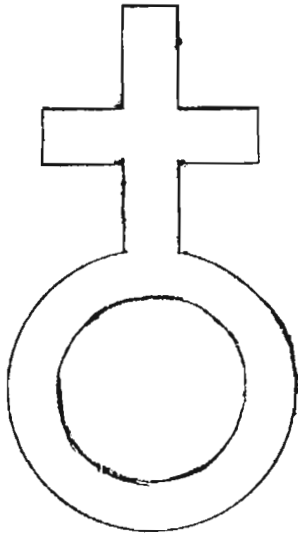
This issue of Wrevenge has a lot more material than usual by me in it. Although much of the gory (or putrid) details on my operation and recovery have been offered for publication elsewhere, there are plenty of associated stories to be told. One of them's here, along with a companion piece by Eric.

Two other items in this issue are ones that have been in my files for some time. LynC's article on personal experiences with discrimination has been excerpted (with her permission) from a letter she wrote me last November. I found it interesting because she touches on several topics we've been discussing in this fanzine for the past year or so: role stereotyping, power in relationships, discrimination by others.

Debi Kean's musings on SF's status quo, written on New Year's Day 1983, remind me of an argument I had with someone at work last year. The other person maintained that there was no reason to believe that sex roles and attitudes would change in the future (or that they had changed much in the past), so 50's or 60's attitudes were just as valid as any others in SF. I said that might well be so, but I considered that it was often a matter of laziness on the part of the writer, who couldn't be bothered to hypothesize possible variations (or even use those variations that already exist). Debi, like me, would like to read of possible alternate behaviours in the future, rather than merely the same old attitudes.

Kim Huett's item was also excerpted from a letter, written in response to the rape issue of Wrevenge (ghads, has it been a whole year?). It's exactly the sort of very personal reaction to what I print, that I most appreciate receiving. Of course, no one is required to bare their soul quite so much if they don't feel comfortable doing so, and I will always respect a request not to print something that's been written to me. As this was so very personal, I checked with Kim before printing it, just to make sure he didn't mind.

The rest of the issue is the usual book reviews and lettercolumn. As usual, I don't have room for as much as I'd like to include. I've been receiving some letters on the 'power in relationships' theme, and am saving them for a special issue later, when I find time to write my own article.



DISCRIMINATION - PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

-- by LynC

(Editor's note: this article was extracted, with the author's permission, from a letter written to me in November 1982. I hope I've retained the flavour, as well as the substance, of the original. --JHW))

As a child, either role differences weren't presented to me or I was particularly dense. I can remember climbing trees with one of my brothers while the other two children (a brother and sister) stood on the ground or hid inside because they were too scared; and I can remember playing cars and trains with the brother who didn't climb, while the other two learnt to knit. And our mother never said to any of us that this was abnormal.

When one of my brothers received a toy carpenter's set, it was me who played with it, not him. I think I swapped it for some wool; I can't really remember. Anyway, he wasn't really interested in it at the time, and I was. He's now quite a good creative carpenter; I'm lousy (doesn't stop me trying though).

And later, when I started learning the piano, that same brother hopped up and down and demanded to learn too, so he was told to go down and enroll himself, as I'd done (i. e. if you want to, go ahead do it. We'll find the money somehow). Same with ballet; we all did it at some stage for some length of time, me for only a term, the youngest brother (Tony) for a year and a half; my sister (Estelle) now teaches ballet part-time, and the other brother (Robbie) is a ballet dancer.

Robbie is good at any creative talent, including dancing, carpentry, pottery, knitting, photography, sewing and cooking. Tony tends to fulfill more 'masculine' type role, although he played the clarinet in the school band. He's good with cars and electronic gadgets. But if I'm around and he wants an assistant, I'm roped in, not Estelle or any male he knews. Estelle, having had exactly the same upbringing, is the only one of us who could be said to fill the stereotype role of female, and it's not through lack of opportunity, or indeed pressure, to be otherwise. Some people are just naturally that way.

Then there's me, and I can't even work out what qualities of mine could be classified as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. I prefer to think of myself as a radical left-wing Christian, than as anything that has to do with eex roles.

Growing up, we weren't totally free of the propaganda of such nursery rhymes as 'What are little boys made of?', but these were presented to us in much the same way as 'The Night Before Christmas' was. That is, something to be enjoyed but not to be believed in, because it wasn't true!

Of the more important... [The rest of the text is illegible due to extreme blurriness]

There were other things about stereotyping which I discovered with him -- such as nagging. It's only necessary when one person's desires are not respected by the other, so persistence becomes necessary if it concerns something the person is incapable of doing because of other restrictions placed on them, such as 'the tools are mine, leave them alone', etc. Brute force, and lack of funds, are very effective arguments for conforming (I was a student trying to exist on \$25 a week).

Don't get me wrong. This person was originally attractive to me because he was the kindest, gentlest person around. I wasn't happy and he cared enough to help. These beliefs of his only extended to his girlfriends (plural intended).

All that's behind, and while it did alert me to the fact that these things happen, it hasn't affected my basic outlook that in the things which matter, the sex of a person doesn't. I know which things are traditionally classed as feminine or masculine, so some of the propaganda has rubbed off; but I certainly don't and can't recall ever having considered it as an important criterion.

At work, which is a fairly labour-intensive job (I'm a night postie), I am on the whole as capable as the men. There are only two women doing my job. In sheer brute strength I can't compete, but being a lot smaller I often don't have to bend down to pick up the bags (mail bags when they are full come up to my waist), so the danger to my back is less than it is to theirs. I'm also a lot more flexible (and younger) than most of them, so I can use my whole body to throw the bags around, where they can only use arms. I have trouble with the trolleys because I don't have the weight behind me that they have, but I've found if I'm quick and throw myself against one side and then the other in quick succession, I can stop a trolley. They just have to stand there. And if I need help I can usually get it; just as, if they need help I'd give it to them. That's only fair.

There are chauvinists there of course. I ignore them when I can, and let them know I don't appreciate their view when I can't. And it's rare to find people who don't respect that. While I was a day postie I had one on either side of me. They had their moments, both for being aggravating and for being kind. All people do. Going by the premise that they were just people same as I was, I treated them the same way I treat all people. They're both convinced I'm their friend, and I certainly don't dislike either of them.

I encounter far more discrimination and prejudging and assumptions as to my personality because I wear a cross than because I'm a woman. I bring it on myself, of course, by wearing the cross openly. But just because I'm a Christian doesn't mean I hold this, this and this belief. It doesn't mean I will act this or that way in a given situation. It doesn't mean I'm this or that sort of person. I'm still human, for Christ's sake!

I'm still capable of getting hurt and wanting to get rid of or away from the thing that's hurting, even if it is a person, and it almost invariably is.

Just because I'm a Christian does not mean I'm into navel gazing and praising the Lord. In fact, precisely because I am a Christian, I'm into writing letters, signing petitions, going on rallies and keeping up with the political and economic situation both here and abroad. I'm nowhere near as well informed as I'd like to be about the myriads of issues of social injustices. But precisely because I am a Christian, it worries me that

whole villages can be relocated or wiped out by the military in El Salvador, it worries me that speech is not free in some countries, it worries me that a person can be imprisoned simply for helping the poor.

Yet other 'Christians' say to me, 'religion and politics can't be mixed'; left-wingers say, 'how can you believe in a God? Look at how much wrong there is in the world.' (Their question is far more valid than the Christians' statement.)

How can one possibly help these people without becoming involved in politics? So Christians label us (there's a group of us called the Student Christian Movement, with world wide links) heretics, and the leftwingers are wary of us because of the image the other Christians present. Discrimination on both sides. Non-Christians and non-leftwingers also discriminate against us. It's amazing the number of people who will say 'I hate Christians' and believe it. It's also amazing the number of people who won't have anything to do with a person who's been on a rally -- and the abuse you get when you try to get a petition signed!

Discrimination on all sides. Sexual discrimination becomes irrelevant by comparison, although because of the pain it causes, it is still important.

((LynC wrote that this article "is sort of an answer to 'One Man's View of Liberation' ((by Sam Wagar, Wrevenge #9, Nov. 82)). Having gone through that experience with that person ((described in her article)), I am interested in other people's struggles to throw off the shackles of sexual discrimination, but I thought it was time for a little balance and the news that it's not 100% universal." Having read her article, I think she means what I would call "internalization of sex-role stereotyping". Certainly the discrimination she describes would seem to me to support the contention that it is universal--and not just against women! -- JHW))



SF'S STATUS QUO

by Debi Kean

Within SF, there are many sub-genres, some of theme, others of style. In the last year, I have discovered one, to be found mostly within the covers of ANALOG. Whimsically, I call this sub-genre, zine schmalz.

Take one super-intelligent, handsome, white American male. The Greatest American Hero, hereinafter referred to as the GAH. Add one woman. Beautiful, not too bright, or too demanding. In need of care and protection. Mix with a menace, preferably alien -- either extra-terrestrial, or Russian. Loads of high technology. One sticky situation.

Optional extra: one cute kid. If male, and white, a lesser hero. If minority male, in need of guidance. If female, sassy, but delicate.

Cook well, for oh, about 2500-4000 words.

Hero, with use of hi-tech and intelligence, defeats menace, solves sticky situation and rescues woman and kid -- if female. Counsels, guides

and boosts ego of kid, if minority male. Thanks kid for help, if white male.

Prime perpetrator of this kind of story: Timothy Zahn and Michael Shea. The setting may be Earth, in the 1980's or '90s. If off-planet, of course, the time is more advanced. But the thinking is mid-sixties.

And so, innovative SF helps to reinforce the status quo. Women are there, as in movies of 20-30 years ago, to scream, faint or make silly suggestions. They don't even get to fall in love all that much.

So, America is Big Brother, once more guiding the third world into human status. Parable, allegory. Analog makes them for the Right. Might is therefore an important ingredient.

To be fair to Zahn et al, such stories are often very good to read. The underlying message may take awhile to penetrate. Zahn himself is developing, to presenting a semi-pacifist story, in F & SF of September 1982, "The Peaceful Man".

The Sam stories, by F M Busby, are another case in point. Sam, the narrator's friend, can 'edit' the past--to the extent that no one but Sam, and Pete, his narrator friend, know what happened originally. They are very good stories.

The world of Pete and Sam is a peaceful one. Sam edited out the Russian Revolution. No Cold War. The Russian people starve and go into exile and slave camps under happy eccentric Czars. Sam runs the world. As a true GAH, he saves it countless times. Without raising a sweat. Pete admires, and Carla, his wife, cooks dinner.

The problem is, they're such excellent stories!

SF has its reactionaries. More than I ever realised when I entered the wonderful world of ... Heinlein, Pournelle, Bretnor, Schmidt.

For balance, Joanna Russ, Joe Haldeman, Jayge Carr.

The danger of zine schmalz is, that the message is so well-hidden in the tear-jerker. Conform, you got to conform to be in... (to quote a song never heard enough to be popular).

The coming generation is conservative. University students and workers alike. Can this kind of literature be helping their orientation? Will mine become the last generation (for awhile at least) to preach such dangerous radicalism as justice and peace?

Obviously, the remedy to the problem in SF is in our hands. We must write the kind of story we like to read -- one with a new slant on relations between nations. And people within them.

Tear jerkers, if we like. But make them in-no-va-tive!

And as an afterthought-- FM Busby (is s/he man or woman?) wrote a characteristically good read of a story, called "For a Daughter". Feminism to the fore!

Write as you would wish to read! (Motto for the New Year.)

((Thank you, Debi. I'll save my comments till the readers have had an opportunity to have their say. Except to point out that Debi is not claiming that all SF, or even all SF in Analog, is of this zine schmalz variety. So don't waste your time telling me the obvious. But what do you think about this sort of story? Positive, negative, or neutral? If the 'message' is as well hidden as Debi says, is it a 'message' at all? And if so, do you think the author is doing it deliberately? ~~The /ch/ /st/ /ph/ /h/ /w/ /k/ /t/ /40% /ch/ /the /th/ /d/ /x/ /t/.~~ -- JHW))



A VANDALIZED SPIRIT

by Kim Huett

I can feel empathy for anyone whose control of a situation is threatened by another person(s). Ever since ((my room was vandalized by friends of my flatmate)), I have become very sensitive to being caught in situations where I am powerless to control what is happening to me... The trouble is that I now find myself feeling uncomfortable reading the material you have published on rape. The violation of my room--which was my inner sanctum, my hiding place from the universe, the one place that I never felt threatened by anyone or anything--was in many respects a much milder version of the violation of rape. Now I can, to some small degree, understand and empathise with those women who have been raped.

Like rape, it was a demonstration of power, of dominance; they wanted to prove to me that they were in control and that I had no say in anything. Like rape in many cases, it came from people that I knew and not some anonymous stranger whom at least I could have lived in the hopes of never seeing again. If I had stayed, I knew it could easily have happened again, and in fact it all but did.

As I was leaving to take a taxi to ((the place I was staying)) that night, the brother of the hanger-on with whom I had had a fight, arrived and promptly tried to beat me up. Luckily, one of ((my flatmate))'s friends (who had nothing to do with this group) restrained him. However, he couldn't do anything about the rest of the group hurling plastic bags full of water at me and chasing me down the street. All I could do at this point was run. What made all this worse was that it wasn't an impersonal robbery or some such. I could have easily accepted that. Instead, it was a very personal and vicious attack made by people I had known and lived with for over six months. The whole incident hit very deeply at that well of equilibrium we all have at the centre of our beings.

What made it worse was that while I could have gone to the police, due to the nature of the situation it would have needed a lot of time, energy and money to win the case. I couldn't see that going through so much trouble and upset was worth it, as the culprits would get off very lightly. After all, they had done very little physical damage, rather it was nearly all emotional.

Having suffered through this degradation (basically it had all been designed to degrade and humiliate me), it is easy for me to believe that rape is a game of dominance rather than sexual frustration...

After writing the above, I was a little stunned to discover how much telling you about this incident has affected me. I never realised just how deep the wounds were till I began describing how I was affected by it all. In telling you everything I feel a little better about it. I just hope you don't mind being the shoulder I decided to cry on.

((Not at all, Kim. Thank you for allowing me to publish this. --JHW))

VIEW FROM A HOSPITAL BED

by Jean Weber

First, the short summary of what happened, preceded by a bit of background information...

Some of you may recall that in January 1980 I had two operations to remove a tumour from the tear sac of my right eye. At that time the tumour was considered 'suspicious' (possibly malignant), and the second operation was performed to attempt to ensure that they'd got it all. Once my nose healed up and I was able to wear my glasses again without discomfort, it didn't make much difference to everyday life. That operation had been done in Melbourne, while I was living in Canberra.

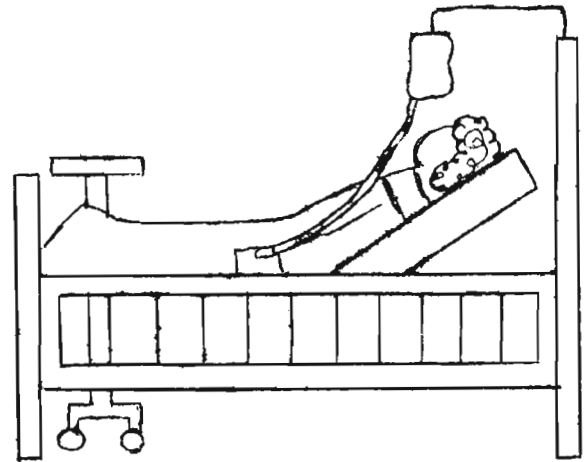
Obviously they didn't get all the tumour out that time. After suffering various vague, undefined symptoms for some months, becoming a bit more defined since about Christmas 1982, I finally got a referral to a nose specialist and had some tests done just after Easter. Diagnosis: malignant tumour. Operation to remove not only tumour, but quite a bit of bone in and around my nose, was scheduled for 28th April. It seems the critter was growing in something called the lacrimal duct, which leads from the tear sac (removed previously) through some bone to the lower part of the nose.

The nose specialist believes that the operation (which took three hours) was a success, and so far no complications have arisen. I can see fine, but my nose is not happy with glasses. The operation cut many of the nerves to the right side of my nose, so I don't feel any pain directly (although one of my two pairs of glasses rests directly on the scar), but the pressure translates to a nasty ache in forehead and cheek. I dug out my old contact lenses and wore them for awhile, but my eyes don't tolerate them very well. No matter how I do it (and I've tried numerous tricks to keep glasses before eyes without frames actually touching face), it's a bummer. For someone who reads as much as I do, and who can hardly find her way to the toilet without specs, this is a Major Nuisance.

Still, it seems to be improving slowly as the weeks pass (this is being typed 5½ weeks after the operation), so may yet sort itself out. Otherwise, I'll either need to get new contact lenses, or investigate a completely different style of glasses frames, or both. But no point doing that for awhile.

Otherwise, I don't look much different. Part of the scar's a bit noticeable now, but that will fade; the shape of my nose has hardly changed at all. The boney bits removed are all inside, or in such a location that they don't show... anyway, I never was vain about my looks. Fortunately.

I go back to work tomorrow. After 5 weeks off, it will be hard to get used to again, I suspect. I had brought home a remote terminal, and tried it out using the phone, to call up some files (such as my mailing list, as I couldn't find a hard copy).



But I didn't do any actual work, even though I'd been looking for an excuse to test the possibility of working from home. (As an excuse, this sounds a bit extreme.)

That's the short version. As I mentioned in the editorial, the long and putrid version of the hospital experience and my recovery, will probably be published elsewhere. Here I'll simply treat you to a few of the things that went on around me during my 5 days in the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney.

My first introduction to the ward was a loud brassy voice asking, "Are you broad-minded?"

Taken a bit off guard, I wasn't quite as fast on the comeback as I might have been, but I did manage to say, "Depends on what you had in mind, love."

There were six beds in this bay of the ward. It was the end bay, the furthest from the nurses' station and nearest to the toilets and showers. My bed was on the left at one end.

At the time I arrived (late on Wednesday afternoon), the other five beds were filled; in the five days of my stay, all but one underwent a change of occupant.

The loud-mouthed woman, Clare, was in the bed next to mine; she appeared to be the focal point of a group of three, all of whom had been there all week. They provided a great deal of comic relief in what otherwise might have been a tedious stay, though I did eventually wish they'd shut up a bit more.

Clare had collapsed the previous Saturday night while going to dinner with friends, and they'd brought her in to Emergency. She'd had various tests during the week to determine what was wrong with her (an X-ray had shown something in the lung). She was convinced she had lung cancer, and talked about it a lot.

The doctors came around at least once a day to talk to her. The senior doctor gave her brief lectures on her smoking habits. My favourite was: "I'm not going to tell you to stop smoking, because it's people like you that keep me in business. Besides, I know you won't listen."

On Saturday a group of doctors came in and pulled the curtains around Clare's bed. The rest of us listened avidly. "Well doc, have you figured out what's wrong with me?" she asked. "How long to I have to live?"

"Lung cancer and six months." Dead silence. "No, that's not true, but it's what you expected to hear, wasn't it?" It turned out she had pleurisy.

The end bed on my side, near the window, was occupied by Liz. She had come in two weeks previously for tests. She'd had an operation several years ago for a brain tumour and still was subject to fits, fainting, and other inconvenient and unpleasant symptoms. She could no longer drive and in fact wouldn't go anywhere by herself, lest she pass out unexpectedly. She went home on Friday evenings and came back in on Monday

mornings, because no tests were done on weekends, except for emergencies. She was not happy with the failure of the medical profession to find out what was wrong with her, much less how to cure it. When I left, she was still there, but she expected to be released the next day if nothing came of the latest tests. She was told she'd just have to wait till something else developed, that they could track down. Not a very encouraging situation, and one which reminded me of the problems I'd had in getting my initial problem diagnosed 4 years ago.

Liz and Clare were both about my age (40-ish) and talked a lot to each other and to Marea, in the centre bed on the other side. Marea, aged mid-40's, had had a minor nose operation a few days previously and went home on Friday. No one took her place until Sunday afternoon.

These three kept up a running commentary about their past and present family lives, and how frustrated they were having to spend a week or more in hospital without any "nooky". They discussed the anatomies and personalities of all the doctors, even in their presence. Clare, it turned out, works in a pub--and did she ever have some tales to tell about the patrons.

She had asked me if I minded rough language and a lot of sex talk. Not at all, I assured her. Good thing, too, as it turned out.

The three of them were also notable for ducking out of the ward at every opportunity for a smoke. Smoking, fortunately, was not allowed in the wards. So the tobacco addicts sat in the stairwells-- a rather chilly location that week. They'd come back complaining about their cold bums, and laughing about the men from the next ward whom they'd met on the stairs.

The end bed on the opposite side held an older woman who didn't say much and went home that evening. She was replaced on Thursday by a young woman, Sue, in for an ear operation of some sort. (More about her later.) The final inmate was Nancy, across from me; she was about 21 and very quiet, though she seemed vastly amused as the antics of the rest of us.

Wednesday evening I had a parade of visitors: a staff member to admit me and have me sign many forms; the hospital registrar for my surgeon; the anaesthetist; nurses to take blood, weigh me, etc. It's probably just as well no one came to visit.

Thursday was the day I had my operation. It was scheduled for the afternoon, which meant I got tea and toast at 6 am, and nothing to eat after that. The morning dragged, so I was pleased to have Clare, Liz and Marea for entertainment. I was too nervous to read very much.

But at least I wasn't worried about one aspect of the operation: the three times in my adult life that I've had general anaesthesia, I did not suffer any of the after-effects (such as vomiting) that make it such an unpleasant experience for some people. On the contrary, I quite enjoy the sensation of "going under", a heartbeat or two of bliss that's quite unlike any other experience I can recall. This time was no exception. (Waking up isn't too unpleasant, either, despite a bit of dizziness.)

I went off about 1:30 to the operating theatre and the next thing I knew it was about 6 pm. I can vividly recall my first coherent words on the last 3 occasions, so I used them again: "I'm hungry." This delights the nurses. They are further delighted when I drink something (and eat, when allowed), and not only don't throw it all up again, but ask for more! (This time I didn't get anything to eat until the next morning.)

I didn't sleep much all night, because nurses kept taking my blood pressure every hour, and the drip in my arm (hand, actually) was uncomfortable. (I had a crick in my arm but couldn't rearrange my-

self to get rid of it.) I was also thirsty, but fortunately allowed to drink as much water as I wanted.

Friday morning I cleaned up my breakfast in short order, despite being able to use only one arm (the other being tied down by the drip) and not being able to wear my glasses. A bit later, though, a senior nurse came around and ordered the drip removed, since I was eating and drinking so well.

That day I mostly lay around in bed listening to what was going on around me. Although I didn't have a large bandage on my head, as I'd expected, and therefore could wear my glasses if I wanted to try -- I didn't, because they rested directly on the suture line. Various medical personnel, including my surgeon, came to talk with me, tell me how well things were going, and so on. I'm both amazed and amused how much they expect a patient to recall when she's either under the influence of a sedative (pre-op, for example), or half asleep the day after. Maybe they do it deliberately, but from my last hospital stay, I recall that it eventually lead to some major misunderstandings. So far, this time, no problems, but I did insist on having things explained 2 or 3 times, to make sure I had a better chance of getting it right.

Sue went down for her operation and was back in a few hours; apparently it hadn't taken very long. She spent most of the afternoon throwing up. Various members of her family stayed with her in shifts.

Nancy was treated to a long, condescending lecture on her general lifestyle, the gist of it being that she'd probably collapsed due to a combination of lack of sleep and improper diet. She'd been in most of the week for observation and tests; I suspect they'd thought she might have been a drug overdose case. (Maybe she was, for all I know.) She went home on Friday, along with Liz (for the weekend) and Marea. The area was then rather quiet, just Clare and I, and Sue throwing up in the corner. I wasn't up to walking around, so Clare wandered off. No new patients were expected in.

Saturday was another quiet day. Clare went home, and Sue eventually stopped throwing up. Eric visited me, and talked about computers. I got up and walked around a bit. Three other fans came to visit too.

On Saturday evening, a young woman came in from Emergency. She'd nearly sliced three fingers off on a sharp knife, and they'd been sewn back on again. She was accompanied by about a dozen friends, none older than about 25, most of them dressed in a sort of punk style. Later her surgeon came in, dressed in faded jeans and a ski parka. This guy I liked immediately. Evidently he's (one of?) Sydney's experts on the sewing together of severed nerves, and I was able to overhear quite a bit of discussion about the anticipated progress of the young woman's recovery and learning to use her fingers again. Fascinating.

I was also interested in the number of male nurses, one of whom held a long conversation with Sue about his reasons for choosing to study nursing rather than to be a doctor (he didn't want to spend the number of years necessary to qualify, and didn't think he had the mental discipline to do so successfully anyway). He also remarked about the negative aspects of nursing, such as being treated as a servant, having to work shifts, and being poorly paid.

Sunday was again quiet. Lots of visitors for other people, but only Eric for me. The woman with the severed fingers watched TV. In the afternoon some new patients came in, for operations on Monday. Without Clare as a focus, we never became of "group" like the others had been: just 5 individuals sharing a room

One of the nurses, on the night shift, was quite a joker. Coming to check on us before breakfast, she had a long collection of silly things to say to cheer us up. To me she said, "C'mon, smile, It can't be that bad."

"I can't smile," I said. "It pulls the stitches and hurts." After that, each time she passed by, she'd scowl and say, "Don't smile. Whatever you do, don't smile."



A NIGHT AT THE PHARMACY

by Eric Lindsay

My instructions were fairly clear, and the task not too difficult for an agent of my undoubted capabilities. Take a prescription to the pharmacy, and have it filled... the prescription, not the pharmacy.

The night was windswept, and rain was sleeting through the unsealed gaps about the windshield of my car, so it was no surprise to find the pharmacy occupied only by the duty pharmacist and his assistant.

"Fill this prescription," I said, handing over the doctor's note. "I hope it isn't too difficult to read."

The pharmacist scrutinised it with an intent scrute. "Can't read a word it sex!"

He consulted with the assistant. They both consulted the note, but it wasn't about to talk. Finally they decided that it said exactly what I thought it said. "Sol Alkaline Mix."

"I wonder what that is," said the pharmacist.

"You blow it out your nose....I think," I offered.

The pharmacist was busily consulting an enormous book of pills and potions. "Not in the index... maybe the spelling..." He looked in several other parts of the index. He took out an older, much less reputable volume, and consulted this at length. Not being entirely satisfied with what he found... nothing... he consulted a thinner book.

"Ah, so that's what it is." He threw the other books back under the counter.

"It's not in the Bible," he accused, as if it were my fault.

"Blame the surgeon, it was his idea."

* * * * *

LOVE SONG by Dorothy Parker

My own dear love, he is strog and bold
And he cares not what comes after.
His words ring sweet as a chime of gold,
And his eyes are lit with laughter.
He is jubilant as a flag unfurled -
Oh, a girl, she'd not forget him.
My own dear love, he is all my world -
And I wish I'd never met him.

He took out an enormous bottle of alcohol, and looked at it carefully, as if wondering whether to use it or drink it. He cleared the desk top, and cleaned it with alcohol. He cleaned a stainless steel dish. He cleaned spatulas. There was so much alcohol in the air I thought I was at a convention.

"The boss is the worst person for putting these bottles back," he complained, as he pulled old fashioned bottles full of unknown powders from a cupboard. Finally he found the three he wanted.

With enormous care and effort he ladled out equal quantities of the three powders into the dish, weighing them with a beautiful laboratory scale. I could only admire the professionalism of the performance. He did spoil the image a bit by sifting the powder through a flour sieve, but he explained that it worked fine.

Finally, after a performance lasting almost an hour, he decanted the resultant powder into a plastic container, upon which he placed a laboriously typed label bearing the mysterious words, "Alkaline Nasal Douche", and charged me the standard fee of \$4.

I bore (but you already know that) the magic potion to Jean, who looked at the inscription and asked how you used it.

"Two grams in half a cup of water, and blow it out your nose," I said, producing a rubber syringe, and recounting my experiences.

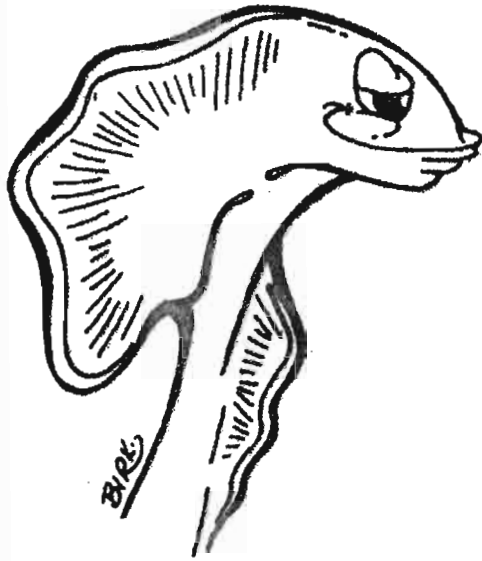
"By the way, the mixture is equal quantities of bicarbonate of soda, salt, and borax."

* * * * *

My love, he's mad, and my love, he's fleet,
And a wild young wood-thing bore him!
The ways are fair to his roaming feet,
And the skies are sunlit for him.
As sharply sweet to my heart he seems
As the fragrance of acacia,
My own dear love, he is all my dreams -
And I wish he were in Asia.

My love runs by like a day in June,
And he makes no friends or sorrows.
He'll tread his galloping rigadoon
In the pathway of the morrows.
He'll live his days where the sunbeams start,
Nor could storm or wind uproot him.
My own dear love, he is all my heart -
And I wish somebody'd shoot him.

((Readers are urged not to search for the symbolic meaning in (a) my printing this poem in the first place; and (b) printing it on the same page as Eric's article. Unless, of course, you enjoy this sort of idle speculation, in which case -- go for your lives, and have fun! -- JHW))



NATTER & ANTI-NATTER

"emotionally charged subjects such as rape" distasteful. Rape must be discussed publically. It increases every day and is an effective way of keeping women frightened and in their homes. But then, we're not safe even there. In Britain there have been numerous women raped and molested in their homes.

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17 April 83

I do think that Annemarie van Ewyck makes a valid point in the letter you quote in your editorial. 'Statistics' on topics like rape and castration are

indeed widely available... But even when limiting ourselves to the serious sources, much statistical material is dubiously collected and processed by standard textbook recipes. The most useful thing I learned as a statistician is how little you can do with statistics, and why. I suspect that much of your dislike to use statistical material is rooted in similar reasons. ((You're correct.--JHW))

But while it's fatal to reject opinions, feelings, case studies and simple common sense in favour of a statistical recipe, it's also dangerous to ignore the statistical method. I've often found statistics to be indispensable to check how reasonable I'd been after I'd formulated an idea and its direct implications. I notice Annemarie talks about "feedback", a choice of words I can only bow to. Statistics can be highly useful as a middle step (and, in that context, not at all "dry and boring"); don't be too rash to incorporate a worthwhile idea into the greater whole.

Which is all quite a different kettle of fish from relying on statements of 'authorities', whoever they may be, which was also brought into the discussion. But I'm getting too clinical, I'd better shift to other parts of the zine...

"Adult Education, Anyone?", a beautifully rampant collection, allows some additions like "100 easy religions for weekdays" in the self-improvement category, "Transcendental TV watching in the health and fitness section, "The window-cleaner's photography manual" for the business and career classes, and "The pig in the happy family" in the home economics province.

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6 May 83

There's nothing wrong with being serious. I often feel that that fandom is a wee bit too frivolous. I mean, when that infamous nuclear debate (with Ian Watson and John Brunner) occurred at Yorcon II, there was so much anger

that they actually spoke out about it. Why? Is there a law against fans being serious? Joe Nicholas is very wrong in his statement in your editorial in Vol2, No3. I can assure you, many British fans do not find

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17 March 83

I was assaulted when I was 15, I damn near killed the bloke who did it; he obviously thought women shouldn't fight back. Since then, I've several times floored men who've touched me unexpectedly: it happens when

I'm not thinking. If a man tried seriously to assault or rape me again, I think I'd kill him. Not that I'd necessarily want to have killed him afterwards, just that my reactions are fast, I know what to do, and I'm absolutely wholehearted about doing it. He'd be dead before I'd had time to think about what I was doing.

The castration debate: I find it easier to talk about such issues in person. I joined my first women's group at 15: I sincerely believe that without the women's movement I wouldn't have survived being 15-18. Or at least, I wouldn't have stayed (fairly) sane. But I've moved away from the organised movement: I no longer subscribe to Spare Rib, Britain's feminist magazine. Perhaps I'm too comfortable, too complacent, not hurting enough to be very active. These days, I'm getting quite a lot of the things I want from life. I'm mostly happy, and that's good. I approve of people being happy, and a lot of women in the movement seem to spend so much time being oppressed and miserable that I find their company hard to cope with. And a lot of the really active, sharp-end groups in Britain at present have totally rejected the kind of woman I am, I'm white. I'm well-educated. Though my parents definitely both come from working-class backgrounds, I equally definitely don't. I'm training for a 'professional' job (librarianship). In fact, I'm a member of an elite, privileged, and therefore oppressing minority. The final straw is that having grown up (very painfully) lesbian, for the last 6 years I've been living with a man. I'm not in love with him, I'm not particularly sexually attracted to him, he's simply the best companion I've ever known. Few people share my honest opinion that romantic love and sexual passion are rotten factors to build a lifetime relationship on. You need to like each other first. So, to a lot of feminists, I'm a traitor to my kind, consorting with the enemy, worse than a man because I should know better. That hurts like hell, but there's not a lot I can do about it. I don't feel comfortable talking to a lot of feminists any more: I'm an outsider. I've done the wrong things.

I'm still puzzling over a comment in another fanzine: a man wrote "I take it as axiomatic that people hardly ever speak or write about the things of most importance to them." Perhaps you will feel that's a typically British sentiment. But I think I do try to communicate what's important to me, I think it's important to do so, but I am selective in whom I address my communications to! ((Your comments on being treated as an outsider by some feminists sums up much of my own experience. I, too, am a member of the 'elite' and, even worse, don't profess to being a socialist--a great sin amongst most of my acquaintances in the women's movement. But I still feel it serves some very important functions.--JHW))

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9 March 1983

...the small filler items
at the bottom of pages
in #11... These epithetical
paradoxes go a long
way towards convincing
the reader that our atti-

tudes towards women in the workforce are at best
screwy and at worst quite unfair and reprehensible.
However, I must point out that on many occasions
these quips are more oxymoron than paradox, since
they can be logically supported with a little thought.

The first that galled me was: "HE/SHE is getting
married - HE'll get more settled/SHE'll get pregnant
and leave." This is usually the case. Bt no fault of
man (meaning mankind, and hence not being a sexist
label), it is the female who does the getting pregnant
and associated drags... For this and traditional reasons
and their implications, the man or now father becomes
more closely tied to his financial input and hence
becomes "reliable" from the personnel point of view.

((The fact that this observation is usually the case
does not make such as umptions any less unfair to the
women who may not adhere to the traditional pattern.
These days, women in positions a bit better than the
traditional lowly ones held by women are far less
likely to leave upon getting pregnant -- even if they
get pregnant in the first place. But those in lowly
positions may very well leave, largely because they
perceive no particular career future for themselves.
I see it as a vicious circle: expectations (on the part
of both men and women) contribute to behaviour
which re-fuels the expectations. It is when these
expectations -- these stereotypes -- are used against
women who would not have fulfilled them, that they
become "sexist" and "discriminatory". -- JHW))

Talking with co-workers: Females, especially in the
traditional stereotyped concept of the office, are
usually employed as lower level personnel. In any
case there are fewer of them in situations with which
I am familiar, and hence fewer of the key employees
are female. The lower the level of the job, the more
chance that talk is gossip. At least the less chance it
is task-crucial.

((No arguments there. The comparison, of course,
was between men and women in the same level of
job. One can observe males in traditionally low-level
jobs (mail "boy", store "man", gossiping too. But is
a woman middle-manager any more likely to "gossip"
than a male middle-manager? The males talk about
sports rather than babies, perhaps, but to me it's all
the same as gossip, that is, not task-crucial. -- JHW))

Not being at one's desk or being out is as likely to
put the man in the toilet or at the shops as it is a
woman. He will be shopping for underwear or nails
or car parts, but he shops too. ((My point exactly.
He shops too. But the stereotype pretends he doesn't.))

ADRIENNE FEIN
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March 1983

I think Joseph Nicholas made a
comment not so very long ago
about there being no problem
with sexism in Great Britain,
and so no reason for shrill or
overly-personal discussions

about them... Sure, what they had was battered wom-
en, who couldn't discuss the subject enough to find
out things aren't supposed to be that way. "Scream
quietly so the neighbors won't hear." I think there
are good reasons for discussing the 'undiscussable'.
Alistair Crowley (a writer I am not normally fond of)
did make one good point in his novel "The Moon Child"
--an awful lot of babies used to be born blind, because
people couldn't bring themselves to discuss venereal
disease--even to the extent of discovering that there
are drops that can be given to newborns to prevent
blindness.

With regard to Sam Wagar's article--it is a shame
when a valid source of strength is confused with
oppression. And that can happen. But it happens
because there's been so much oppression and confu-
sion that everyone is fearful, and no one can think
quite clearly...

Peter Toluzzi's comments about rape being a serious
charge and difficult to prove... well, that's true. But
I have sat on two grand juries now, and those factors
are not unique to rape. There are assault and fraud
cases in which it is even more difficult to tell what
happened. Yet I don't think there is the same kind of
police skepticism-to-disbelief about charges such as
these. At least, if there is, it is based on some parti-
cular circumstances, something specific--not just the
fact that it is a matter of a woman bringing a complaint
against a man... My impression is that in a majority
of assault trials there aren't any direct eyewitnesses
either, nor are there in a lot of robbery and burglary
trials. In plenty of other kinds of cases it is essentially
the word of the accused vs the word of the alleged
victim.

It seems to me one could argue that promiscuity makes
it more likely that a woman was raped, if she says so
--after all, if previously she has consented to sex and
not brought charges, why would she be doing so this
time unless the situation was actually different, like
this time she hadn't consented.

GLEN CRAWFORD
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May 1983

...I have a close friend who
has been raped twice in the
last year, and the effect on
her gentle personality has
been terrifying. I am not a
violent person by any means,

but if someone touched my wife or my daughter I'm
afraid I could become a brutal assailant, and they'd
wish they were dead if I caught them before the police
did.

I loved Marc's article on castration, and would
add a joke or two to your collection. This is a "house"
joke that went around the menswear retailing game a
few years back. It concerns a man who went to his
doctor complaining about dreadful pains in his groin
and up his side. The doctor tried every test imaginable,
and of course the only cure was total castration. The
poor patient underwent the operation to be rid of the
unbearable agony, and feeling much better afterward,
despite the loss of his manhood, went to his local store
for some new clothes. He decided to buy new under-
wear while he was there, and asked for a size 32. The
salesman replied, "Oh, no, sir, you'd be a 34." To
which the irate customer said, "But I've always worn
size 32!" And of course the salesman answered back,
"But, sir, if you wore size 32, you'd get this awful
pain..."

Personally, I'd be horrified at the thought of
losing my penis, even though I already have my family.
From what I've read so far on the people in fandom,
I seem to be one of very few who are married with
children. ((You've been reading a small subset, then,
Glen. But the marrieds-with-children often drop out of
publishing for some years, because of time and/or
money considerations. Visible Australian fandom may
not have children, even if married, but I get a lot of
fanzines from overseas fans with families. Some of
these have adult children, of course. -- JHW))

Lauraine Tutihasi's LoC frightened me to say the least!
What sort of mindless pap have they been feeding that
girl (sic)? My God, if pregnancy really affected women
that badly, the human race would have died out in the
stone age. ((Sorry, Glen, but a lot of women do have
serious problems, though I'll agree that some of it's
due to their own expectations of problems. -- JHW)) Her
ideas about bringing up a child "herself" if she did
happen to have one are disgusting. Nurse? Governess?
Boarding school? Why not just tie a brick around its

neck and throw it into the nearest river? It's solve her problem, and probably save the child a life of loneliness as well! Maybe she's got the right attitude about childbearing after all; if nothing else, her fears may stop her from unloading another unloved child upon society.

((Yes, that's why I get really annoyed at people who try to tell me 'it'll be different when you have your own children'. Maybe it will, but for people like Lauraine and I, who simply aren't interested, whether our reasons seem sensible or not to anyone else, my response generally is: those who don't want 'em, shouldn't have 'em. It's not fair to the child! --JHW))

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6 June 1983

I can't say I ever loved any children. Some children I rather like; our son Bruce was one of them (fortunately). Matter of fact, now that he's married and on his own I still

like him, and, as far as I know, vice versa. I restrict my love to a very few people. Am I afraid of loving? I don't think so; I just don't find many people very lovable. Of course, I believe in a strict division between liking and loving, as between a friendly acquaintance and a friend. Actually, child-raising didn't involve a frightening amount of responsibility anyway, as far as I was concerned. There were things I suddenly had to do differently, but so what? That's happened all my life; raising a kid was just one more time. (Of course, Juanita might have a different opinion.)

Fascinating how people react to symbols instead of reality. Joan Dick spots it in her comment that "relationships change with marriage." They shouldn't; essentially the two people involved should continue to regard each other the same way. But they start reacting to the idea of marriage instead of the fact.

"Given a choice between an arm or a penis..." That's a choice I'd rather not make, actually. I might have to flip a coin. But then, I'm somewhat older than Marc. (Or I might lose both; diabetes causes loss of limbs and impotence, though so far it hasn't done either to me.)

You can argue over women being less critical, but they do develop crushes. Spock is a prime example; how many fanzine stories had nothing going for them but getting it on with Spock? There were so many they even had a name within ST fandom itself: the "Lt. Mary Sue" stories. As for getting into media fandom via a crush on female characters--there aren't that many female characters in the programs that draw media fans. ("Star Trek", "Man From U.N.C.L.E.", "Starsky and Hutch", "Dr Who") The Avengers is the only entry in the media of fandom which had a strong female character (and it did have male fans with what amounted to crushes on Mrs. Peel.) There are other strong female characters on tv, but they don't draw media fans. What does draw media fans is a program with two male characters who are buddies; psychologists can and probably I have had a ball with this one.

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5 June 83

Very romantic, Presford. "All the powers that be cannot fight the power of love." Read 1984 sometime. It depends what you mean by "children". To my mind the word "love" is redundant when speaking of babies,

as obviously you "love" them, as you love all small helpless things. I feel that to love someone you must have some idea what they are. Pete Presford also ignores the reasonable belief that the best thing you can do for children is not to have any--if you are not

suitable parent material, or feel that you might not be under the wrong circumstances. It's probably different for Presford anyway, going by his usual attitudes --he probably didn't have anything to do with his children until they were old enough to be civilized.

Statistics are most useful and effective in conjunction with some more personal information about them. For example, if you listen to someone saying something unpleasant has happened to her, and then point out the statistics that a similar thing also happened to x number of other people this year.

Sam Wagar doesn't seem the type to stop caring about other people's oppression when he stops being "tentative", which is one of the nice things about the rare man like him... If I were a man, and thought in the way that Sam does, I would be very unhappy about the shortage of people who think the same way that I could be friends with, and I would be very annoyed about the attitude of people like Mary who are saying in effect, "why complain? You've got the best of the situation." Sam and I write to each other often, and in conjunction with the remark about the shortage of like-minded people, I don't think it's co-incidence that he seems to have few heterosexual women friends. I suppose what Mary means about Sam not having to think ((as a feminist)) is that since he isn't oppressed for reasons of gender, ...there is no reason to be unhappy about the way women and men are brought up. I disagree with this.

Leanne's letter--if everyone thought rape was a bad thing, men wouldn't do it and people would treat victims more considerately. Most people think castration is a bad idea, true, but if people agreed that sterilization should be left up to the individual, doctors wouldn't keep telling me I'm too young. Particularly about female sterilization, there is a feeling that if you want to be sterilized, then you're too young to decide. If I had decided to start a family, no one would have suggested that I wait a few years till I'm sure I know my own mind!

JOAN DICK
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4 May 1983

Regarding mental illness/mentally handicapped people. It's a very difficult subject. Emotions can make people say and do things they would never normally do. A person's point

of view is affected by their closeness to the problem. I tend to take a long term view of the subject because of seeing how it has affected one branch of our family. One child--a boy--is the handicapped. His sister's whole life and marriage has been utterly ruined. Her own children have moved far away where they can't be involved. Her husband has left and she can't do anything, because now she must care for her elderly widowed mother and her brother. The handicapped child has long term problems. In this case it has been four generations and in the next 10 years it could be a 5th generation.

On the subject of death. In 1960 I was extremely ill. There was no hope at all. If by some chance I recovered, I would be a hopeless invalid for what remained of my life. Well it's 1983. I'm still here. On tablets twice a day and really loving every minute of life. I flew to Europe last year and we are planning an 18 days tour of China later this year. I rather fancy a walk along the Great Wall. DEATH is a very difficult subject to discuss. The position changes all the time. However, I do feel that after a certain age, there should not be any unnecessary steps taken to prolong a life unless the prognosis is good.

((Some of the writers above, and others, sent suggestions of books to expand my list in "So What's It Got to Do With SF?" I'm saving those for an article in another issue. --JHW))

story. This book was less appropriate for reading in hospital; I kept losing track of what was going on if I got interrupted a lot. Enjoyable, though.

Phyllis Ann Karr, Frostflower and Thorn (1980), Idylls of the Queen (1982)

Phyllis Ann Karr wins both the "most enjoyable" and "most boring" books-of-the-month award from me, for Frostflower and Thorn, and The Idylls of the Queen, respectively. The cover of the latter proclaims, "An Arthurian fantasy of magic and murder", and I probably should have paid more attention (though I rarely do, since jacket blurbs so often have little to do with the actual contents). Idylls is primarily a murder mystery, and those bore me, no matter how well done they may be. There were some delightful moments of descriptions and insight in the book, but they were well hidden in the speculations on "who done it". I'm not at all sure why I bothered to finish reading the book, instead of just putting it aside. Those whose tastes run to murder mysteries may well find it fascinating.

Frostflower, on the other hand, delighted me from the first page to the last. She is a sorceress; Thorn is a swordswoman. The world they inhabit is different from our own in numerous amusing little details: the warriors are all women, who portray the traits typical of those who live by brawn rather than brain -- including an interest in sex, leading them to accost men whenever they get the chance. Apparently, however, casual sex is an accepted part of the culture, because the men rarely are distressed by this, but they understand that women take the initiative. (It may well be a satire on the James-Bond-type of male hero to whom women defer, within a type of story in which male initiative and female deference is taken for granted; if so, Karr's done a good job with it.) All the usual swearwords and phrases have an inverted counterpart here: "mother-fucker" is replaced by "fathermilker", for example. But lest the world seem merely an inversion of the sex roles of our own, we still find that men have a lot of control over people's lives; at least, the small number of farmer-priests, the local land barons, have life and-death legal authority over just about everyone else.

Sorcerers (of either sex) are feared and reviled, yet the farmer-priests and their wives practice their own magickal rites as part of the acceptable religious observances. The story begins with Thorn's discovery that she's pregnant. She most definitely does not want the child, nor does she want to be inconvenienced by a pregnancy. As she contemplates the dangerous and unpleasant alternative, an abortion, she meets Frostflower, who does want a child and talks Thorn into giving her the one she carries (the sorceress is able to bring the child to term in one afternoon). I liked Thorn's pragmatic attitude toward her problem. There was no question of ethics, merely of practicality; one assumes that if Thorn's world had sterilization facilities, she would have taken advantage of them. Actually, her attitude is probably quite similar to that of lower-class women through the ages, to whom many children are a burden and for whom the practice of infanticide was (and still is) common. The difference is that here it's stated more blatantly.

Unfortunately for Frostflower, a sorceress with a child is assumed to have stolen it (everyone knows that a witch loses her powers if she has sexual intercourse). So she's in real strife as she tries to make her way back to her mountain home. After she's captured by a farmer-priest and raped, she refuses to even try to use her powers, because she knows she's lost them,

and it's a blasphemy to think otherwise. Since tapping the Power is largely a matter of believing you can, this is a good case for the self-fulfilling prophecy. However, under extreme duress near the end of the book, when the baby's life as well as her own is endangered, she seeks to summon the power again. Will she succeed? And if so, what will this do to her whole value system? I won't tell you the ending, but I certainly do look forward to the sequel.

I found this book delightful primarily because of the twists in the roles of men and women, which were clearly presented but not harped upon. They were part of the background, the scenery; the author did not point out the obvious differences with our world. No one was a "hero", though a few "heroic" deeds got done, usually when someone was trying to help someone else. No matters of great politics or intrigue were involved, just two women trying to get on with their lives but clashing with those in power around them. It's mainly a study of personalities, though one comes away with a pretty complete picture of the social system. Both swords and sorcery play a relatively minor role--important when needed, but not leaping off every page. It's a mix I greatly enjoy, and I suspect that a lot of you will, too.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson,
The Swordswoman, Tor Books, 1982.

I found this book far more satisfying than the two Tomoe Gozen books, though they have much in common. Erin Wyler is a martial arts student; one day, during a contest with students from another school, she kills her opponent. Her version is that, for a few minutes, he and she were both armed with real blades, and it was self-defence. She's considered insane, and put in an asylum. Everyone conveniently overlooks the totally unexplainable fact that the other student had been killed cleanly by a glass or steel blade, not a bamboo one. With one exception. Erin is visited in hospital by the paramedic who treated her in the ambulance; he saw the wounds on both parties and knows her story isn't completely insane. He brings her a gift, a small artifact that allows her to return to the world in which she had battled briefly.

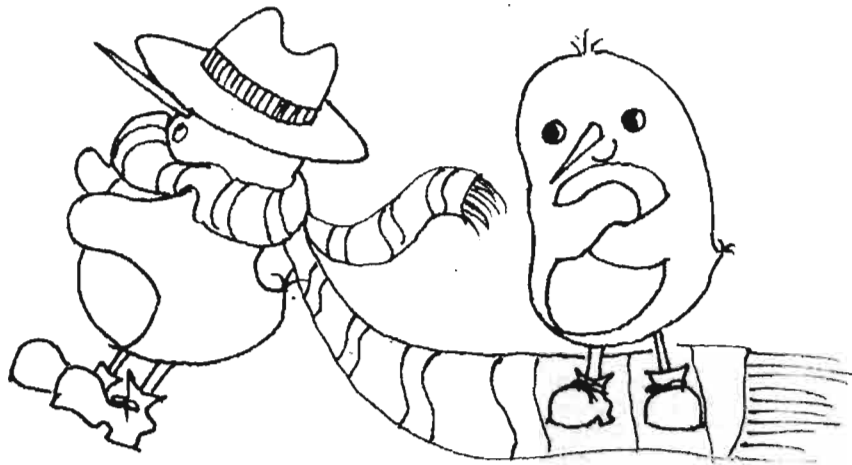
In that world, she meets a priest who tells her a bit of the history of the place, and suggests what her destiny is, to save the world from a tyrant. She journeys to a distant mountain to seek training, and has various adventures along the way. She also meets the insect-people who hold the humans in a form of slavery. For awhile she tries to avoid her destiny, but eventually meets the centaur on the mountain, who teaches her further martial skills. And at last she goes to meet her destiny, and the tyrant.

I liked this book because the series of events seemed less an excuse for telling a lot of swashbuckling adventures, and more related to personal development as Erin progresses towards her goals (or shrinks from facing them). She learns a lot about herself (and the author makes some very pointed statements about the North American society from which Erin comes and to which she isn't interested in returning). By the end, she's learned a lot about acceptance, and sorting out the really important things from the merely annoying trivial things that seem important at the time. When her adventures are over and she returns to our world, she's prepared, physically and psychologically, to survive.

((It's quite obvious that I won't come anywhere near finishing all the book reviews I've written for this issue, as I've only one more page available. Will try to catch up next time.--JHW))

BOOK REVIEWS

All reviews by
Jean Weber
unless otherwise
noted.



Janet Morris, Dream Dancer (1980),
Cruiser Dreams (1981), Earth
Dreams (1982), Berkley & Fontana.

These books chronicle one of those sweeping stories of political intrigue, dynastic families, space empires, and so on, that seem very popular these days. The unique element in these books is the 'cruiser', a sentient spacecraft that can travel in the dimensionless 'space' known as sponge--a device allowing, in effect, faster-than-light travel. But the cruisers need to be linked to the mind of a human pilot in order to be able to successfully travel through sponge and exit where they should. Human pilots seem to be affected by the non-space of sponge, and have a reputation for madness.

The main character of these books is Shebat, a human female from an Earth which has regressed into primitivism and magic, being populated by the descendants of those who chose not to go to the stars. (I am reminded of the button popular at SF conventions: "The meek shall inherit the earth. The rest of us are going to the stars.")

In the first book, Shebat leaves Earth in the company of Marada Kerrion, the heir to the Kerrion dynasty, and learns that she has a natural talent for both sponge-piloting and dream dancing. The latter is a sort of telepathic link with another person, allowing the 'dancer' to shape the dreams of the dreamer, which have great realism and can be used to influence the dreamer. Dream dancing is banned in most of human space for this reason, but flourishes nevertheless. Shebat also has a residue of the 'magic' practiced on Earth; all these appear to be related.

In the second book, Shebat, now the heir to Kerrion space herself, and married to the second son of the now-deceased leader, becomes heavily involved in the development of a new breed of cruiser, one which is able to function, and make decisions, without a human pilot. She had been given an experimental cruiser, and her own unique talents made quite a combination with it.

The final book finds Shebat back on Earth, which she and her husband Chaeron are trying to lift from its backwardness and make its people full citizens of the Kerrion Empire. The main focus is still on the cruisers, and the power games of the Kerrions. These books are exciting to read, but one must definitely overlook some rather dubious 'science' to fully appreciate them. I certainly enjoyed them, though I found Shebat a bit lacking as a main character. She has a lot of talent and ability, and is presented as a

girl/woman who insists upon doing things her own way (and often does), but is generally manipulated by the men around her. Often, in a pinch, she seems to collapse completely and let the men make the decisions. When she was 15, that may have been fair enough; as an older woman, it's annoying. Though it's balanced to some extent by the men collapsing at important moments too, at times, I suppose it's fairly 'realistic', but in a book like this -- that's a good deal 'larger than life' in most respects--that sort of realism tends to intrude.

Joy Chant, Red Moon & Black Mountain (1982 reprint of 1970 book); The Grey Mane of Morning (1982/1977)

These two books are set in the same world, but with very different styles to them. Though written later, The Grey Mane of Morning takes place far earlier in the world's history, and has a very pastoral quality to it. The point of view is that of a group of nomads who wander the Great Plain with their Horned Horses (who choose their riders, rather than the other way around) and give tribute to the Golden Ones, who live in rather squalid towns around the edges of the Plains. When Nair is taken by the Golden Ones, her brother Mor'anh begins to question the Way Things Are Done. As he has status both as priest and chieftain in his tribe, he is able to get away with a lot of little changes to their lifestyle. His own quest leads him eventually out of the Plain to the Cities, remnants (apparently) of an earlier great civilization. There's little overt 'magic' in this book, more the magic of people making leaps of understanding about themselves and the world they live in, then using his new knowledge to manipulate their situation. I enjoyed it, and in fact found it an ideal book to read after an operation, when one wishes to be transported to a fantasy world, but doesn't want to get too excited and upset.

Red Moon and Black Mountain deals far more with mysterious, unexplained events and the dramatic calling upon of strong magical forces by sorceri. Three children are plucked from our own world into another; the oldest is separated from the others and is adopted into a nomadic tribe (the descendants of those in Grey Mane) where he becomes an important warrior recognized for his magical connections. The younger children (a boy and a girl) are found by the sorceri and have various adventures while assisting them against the Forces of Darkness. The reader very much feels the confusion of all the children, having no idea what's going on until rather late in the book, when it's explained to them by one of the other major characters. I'm not sure I like this technique, but it certainly did contribute to the mood of the

JOHN ALDERSON
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16 May 1983

Now despite Marc Ortlieb's taking my name in vain throughout his article, I refuse to comment on it on the grounds of his chauvinism.

Item. His interpretation of that piece of doggeral, "No Balls at All", the automatic assumption that "the poor little bastard" was a mutilated boy is deplorable. After all, about 49% of babies, bastards or otherwise, are girls with no balls at all. It is bad enough that some misguided people think that all men are bastards, but it cannot follow, this being a matter of chance, that all bastards are men.

I deeply sympathise with Lauraine Tutihasi about the side effects of pregnancy; nausea, retention of water (though it's usually the opposite, wanting to pee every few minutes), and backache. But I did think that this sort of thing went out with the Victorian era and most, if not all the women I know who have had children have not so suffered, and certainly have not suffered "nine months of agony." Indeed, they usually look and claim that they are very healthy indeed.

LINDA S BLANCHARD
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23 May 1983

You didn't say in this zine that castration leaves sexual function intact, but implied it, and I've already suggested that to friends and their reaction

has been jaw-hanging-open disbelief. Did I get the right implication? and if so, where do the facts come from so I can make someone believe me!?!)

((This is a good example of a case where the "facts" seem contradictory. When I first mentioned something about castration -- in the belief that castrated men were impotent -- quite a few readers wrote in to assure me that men who are castrated after puberty are still able to have erections (assuming that they are not convinced they'll be impotent, in which case they probably will be). But I don't recall anyone actually citing a source for this fact, other than old tales about harems and eunuchs. Then Annemarie van Ewyck wrote to say that, according to the sex clinic in the Netherlands, castrated men are, indeed, impotent. It's not clear from her source whether it's actually physiological impotence or psychological, though. I am still not convinced either way.))

LEE HOFFMAN
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2 June 1983

I myself am a heterosexual female who chose not to have children. I'm fifty now, and as far back as I can remember, I did not want children. I agree with

you very much that "anyone who is not 'afraid' of the responsibility of raising children is simply unaware of how much responsibility it really is." Of course I didn't realise that at an early age. I just felt I did not want them. (It's been suggested that this attitude in some women is one of nature's answers to overpopulation.) Now, looking back, I realize how lucky my potential children are that I never gave them life. I would have made a terrible mother. My ignorance and psychological hang-ups would have imposed an appalling burden on young forming minds. I'd have produced extremely neurotic, maybe psychotic, children. (Look how my cat turned out!)

In response to Marc Ortlieb's comments about women in media fandom, may I suggest that females (at least in our culture) tend to relate to the opposite sex primarily in terms of character, with looks secondary, while males tend to relate to looks first and character second. Therefore a male is more prone to see a film as a passing event, and to relate to it in terms of the action, sex and appearance

more than in terms of living human beings, whereas females may be most concerned with the characters as simulacra of living human beings and relate to them as characters with human relationships, therefore feeling a deeper more prolonged relationship to the film. (Or is this what Marc was trying to say?)

((I dunno. Marc? Anyway, I like that theory.--JHW))

In your reply to Marc you suggest that females may be drawn into media fandom by "a sense of identification with a female character". For several decades I'd heard and read about readers "identifying" with characters. For awhile there was a lot of talk about making characters in fiction "ordinary people that ordinary people could identify with" and like that. This never made sense to me because I was never very interested in reading about people who were like me. I wanted to read about people different from me, in situations different from my own. I am interested in characters that I like and characters that I envy, and even characters that I might aspire to emulate, but not in characters "like me". Do other readers feel differently in this? How do readers who do identify with characters feel in this identification?

((I "identify" with female characters who are quite unlike me, or are like a fantasy "me"- as you put it, whom I'd like to emulate, perhaps, or whom I envy - usually for their abilities. That's what I meant; I don't know about other readers.--JHW))

Some men argue against women in politics on the grounds that a woman is under the influence of her hormones one week out of four. Foosh! According to all the most reliable sources, a man is liable to come under the control of his hormones any time he's in the presence of certain pheromones. Who wants a president who's liable to turn horny any moment of the day? ((Is that why men over 60 are the most popular Presidential candidates? Are they considered "past the age" (rightly or wrongly)?--JHW))

Leanne Frahm's question "Why are you so interested in irrational feelings... of your correspondents?" reminds me of the line about logic and reason being the ways in which we justify our always-irrational feelings to ourselves.

I also heard from: Kim Huett, who's only about a year behind in his LoCs; Joni Stopa; Keith Smith; Peter Lempert; Mary Gentle; Leslie David (who says about my operation, "You are a lot braver about the whole thing than I would be in your place." It's not a matter of bravery, but of trying to think of ways things could be worse; ask Eric sometime about how upset I was before the fact, and quite a bit after the fact, and about the nightmares, etc); Andy Andruschak; Julie Vaux (several times); Eve Harvey; Debi Kean (twice); and probably some whose letters I've misplaced. Several of these people commented on Joy's trip report, and I hope to present a selection of those comments in a later issue.

A WOMAN WITHOUT A
MAN IS LIKE A BEAR
WITHOUT A
STUBBAKER!



Kate Wilhelm, A Sense of Shadow, Timescape, 1981.

Kate Wilhelm writes magnificent psychological fiction, and this one is no exception. Four adult children (and the wife of one of them) gather at the deathbed of an old man. The terms of his will require them to stay overnight for a week in the big house they grew up in. They know he's been interested in the possibility of 'possession' by another mind after its body has died, and they all reject this idea -- at least outwardly. Each of the children has some horror in his or her mind, connected with the old man, who is believed to have murdered several of his former wives, but was never caught. As the week progresses, various bizarre and unexplained things occur, and several of the children (and the young wife) suspect the old man is indeed getting to them.

It's a very well-told story, and had me quite convinced of the events depicted. The resolution is a triumph of popular psychology, but well handled. It reminded me a bit of 'Ordinary People', in which the son and the mother in particular are haunted (but in a different manner) by memories of their past. Someone who, like Joseph Nicholas, find California-style self-analytical psychoanalysis tedious, might not like this book. But I felt Kate Wilhelm melded the style of a 'haunting' story-- without, I might add, any bloody destruction of human bodies (the destruction is limited to plants) -- with psychology, wery well. Things happen, and the characters are moved to rethink their relationships (with themselves as well as with each other and the dead father); each changes in some way through the experience. It's rather like a large exercise in confrontation therapy. Even the outsiders, such as the psychologist whose paper got the old man thinking about the idea of possession in the first place, are not unaffected by the week's events.

Marion Zimmer Bradley, Web of Light, Timescape, 1983.

This is not a Darkover book, but it has many of the elements which I've enjoyed in the last few of that series. The focus is more on the characters than on the events, although the characters are pivotal in a grand political scheme which is played offstage. It's obviously to be followed by further books, as this one ends with the birth of a child who is heir to -- what?

The main focus character is Domaris, a young woman disciple of the Temple of Light. She becomes the lover of Micon, an Atlantean prince, who is ill and blinded from an encounter with his enemies (one feels there should have been a book in the series before this one; I read somewhere that "Web of Light" is a sequel to "Web of Darkness", though my memory may be faulty). Deoris, Domaris' young sister, is jealous of Domaris' new relationships; this jealousy leaves her open to use by Micon's enemies. Bradley explores the feelings of the young women in some depth, and the men's less (there are other, lesser, male characters who do figure strongly in the plot). This provided a reasonable excuse for the reader still not being sure what's going on by the end of the book. We, like Deoris and Domaris, know what's happened, but not why, or who's behind the events, or how they fit into the grander scheme of things. In this respect it's a disappointment as a book because it's not complete in itself. Bradley fans will probably enjoy it (I did), but others may be disappointed.

C J Cherryh, Port Eternity, Daw, 1982.

This is quite a departure from Cherryh's earlier books; it focusses almost entirely on character development, and has very little 'action'. Eric and I had a long discussion about this: whether Cherryh had succeeded or failed in her endeavour -- a somewhat speculative argument, to say the least, since neither of us knew what she had set out to do. Eric felt she'd failed, but I think Cherryh's recent words have been slowly moving from studies of societies (through a focus on individuals), to a focus on one or a few characters as people, but with the 'plot' or action still being foremost, to this book -- which is almost entirely about the people. Whether this is a desirable or successful transition is largely a matter of personal preference, I think. I like this sort of story, though I'll agree that a bit more 'action' might have helped. I don't think it suffered overmuch from the lack, however. I will also agree that the end of the book was most frustrating. It ends just as the characters are about to embark on a life in a totally new, and apparently inescapable, environment. But I don't consider that frustration to be a failure on the part of the author; in contrast, I consider it a success. I like a story that leaves a lot to my imagination after it's ended. The people seem more real to me when I think of their lives continuing after the book has ended-- especially when the possibilities are so varied.

The story is about a very rich woman and her human servants on a spacecraft which is sucked out of realspace into--what? They don't know, and neither do we, but they can't get back. What shall they do? As they dither around this problem, a greater one occurs: something is trying to break into the ship. They assume it's hostile, after some debate, and make preparations to defend themselves. But why, if they can't get back to the 'real' universe as they know it? This book is all about the meaning of life, and the importance of living...lots of heavy philosophy hiding in these pages. The servants are 'made people'; their 'mind-set' of emotions is programmed into them as they grow up. But they're human, and is the programming inescapable? Good stuff.

Elizabeth A Lynn, The Woman Who Loved The Moon, Berkley, 1981.

A collection of short fiction, including the story that won the 1980 World Fantasy Award (the title story). Mostly told from a woman's point of view, these are delightful stories, well told. I shan't try to summarize them, as there are too many. Each is prefaced by a note from the author on the story's birth or its publishing history; some were delayed for years because no one would buy them, or because the purchaser went out of business, or other problems. Read and enjoy.

Anne McCaffrey, Crystal Singer, Ballentine/Del Rey, 1982.

Killashandra Ree has failed in her desire to become a top-rated singer; she decides to try to become a Crystal Singer instead--one of those who mine the Black Crystal used in much modern technology. Many are the horror tales of what happens to people who join the guild, but no one will tell her what it really is, until she's been initiated. Or they tell her cryptic things, which she brushes off in her desire to join. Once she's in, slowly she learns the frightening truth, of the agony and the ecstasy of being a Crystal Singer. Originally 4 stories, there are melded into a well-told novel which really got this reader, at least, involved.

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I have just finished printing the rest of this fanzine and discovered that I mixed up pages 14 and 16. They're numbered correctly but printed out of order. *sigh* It's not been a really terrific month for fanzine production.

ART CREDITS

Sheryl Birkhead, 1, 11
Terry Frost, 14
Kerrie Hanlon, cover

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Jean Weber, 2, 8

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JEAN WEBER

FOR

GUFF ?!

