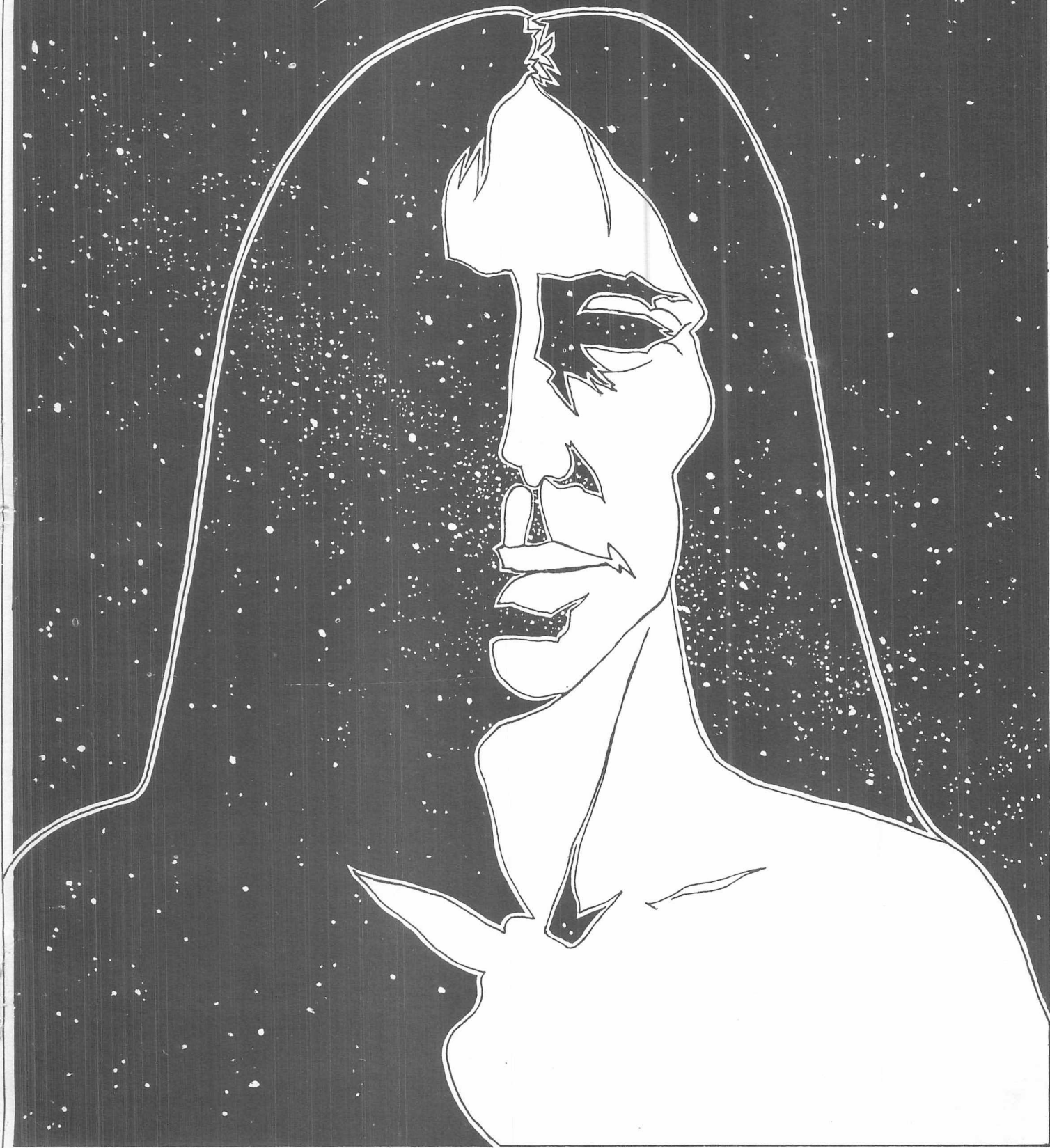
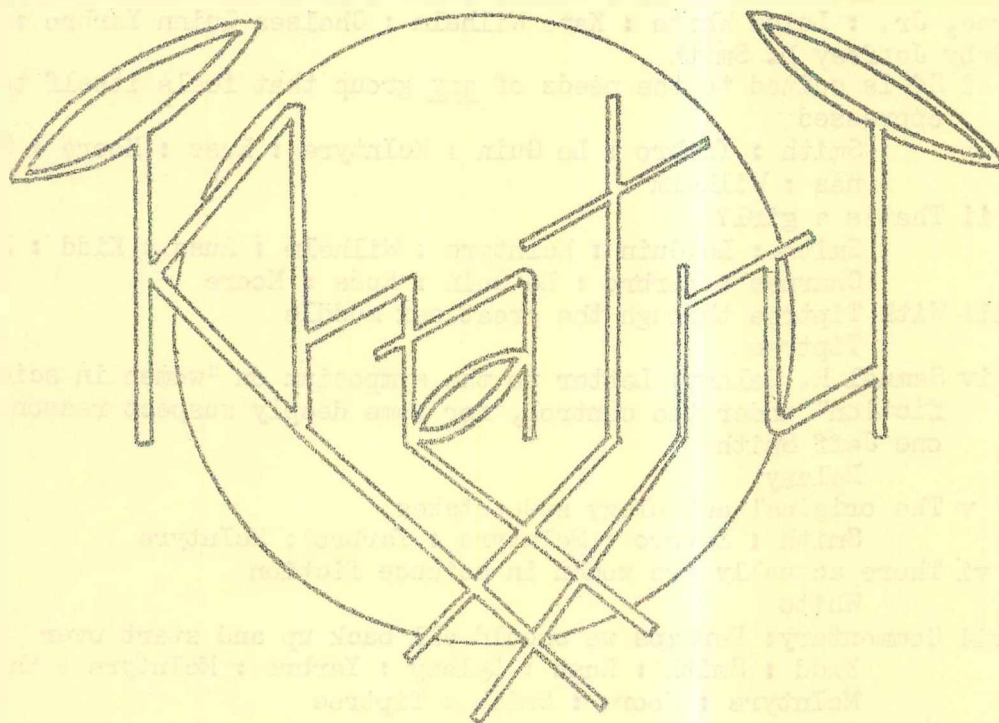


Khatru 3 & 4.





Issues 3&4

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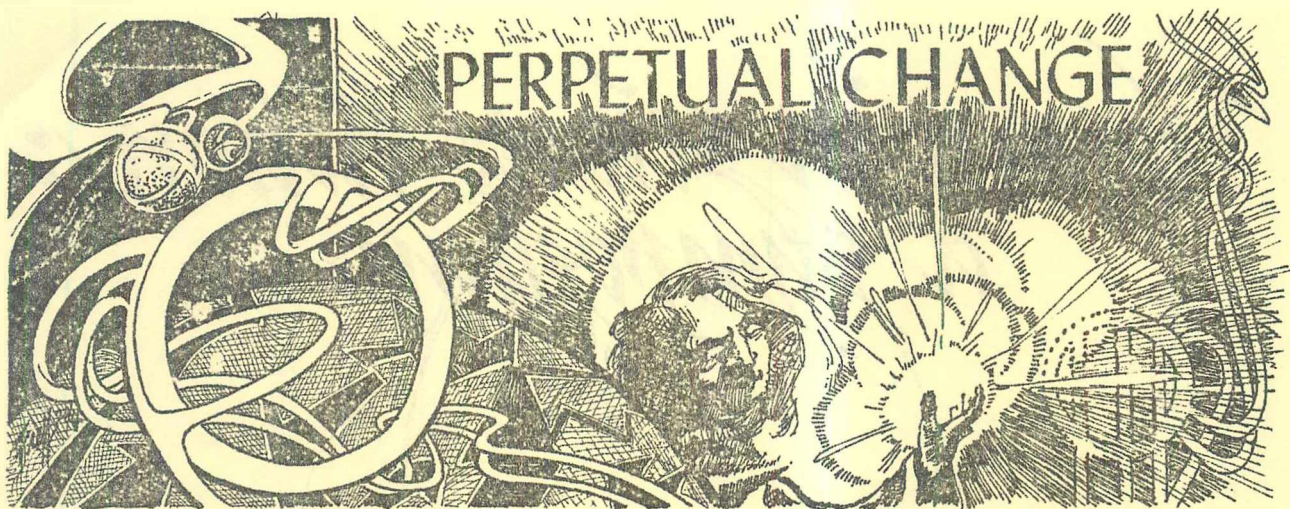
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ERRATA

This will be of sub-minimal interest to you, but I wanted to clear up some discrepancies from last issue. (I don't trust myself to remember, so I want it on paper.) So, quickly: The second section of my editorial was indeed "We Are Presented as Fools," although on the contents page I used the original heading, "We Are Made Fools Of." On the other hand, the contents page was correct in calling my piece of "Nous Sommes du Soleil" "Lost in Trance of Dances." I managed to blow the quote in the actual body of the magazine, and call it "Lost in Chants of Dances." (Well, it sounded right.) The "Michael Bishop Bibliography" should have been credited to "Jeff Smith, Virginia Kidd and Michael Bishop." And many thanks to Douglas Barbour for showing me how to spell ~~Toronto~~ "occasionally."

INTRODUCTION

This is an issue of letters. And it is an issue that should draw letters. I'd like to give a little background here.

I first thought of a symposium on Women in Science Fiction in May of 1974. I drew up a prospectus in early August--a good prospectus--and with a lot of help from Virginia Kidd I had my panel by late September. Unfortunately, after the Worldcon I had gone into a considerable creative slump, and the Symposium suffered for it. I kept putting it off until I figured that if I didn't move soon I would lose my contributors, and on October 9th I forced out a letter. It began "Dear People--" (remember that) and ended with some questions that only vaguely resembled what I wanted to ask. I can't really offer any excuse for that. Perhaps, though, the bad questions initiated a better final product than good ones would have....

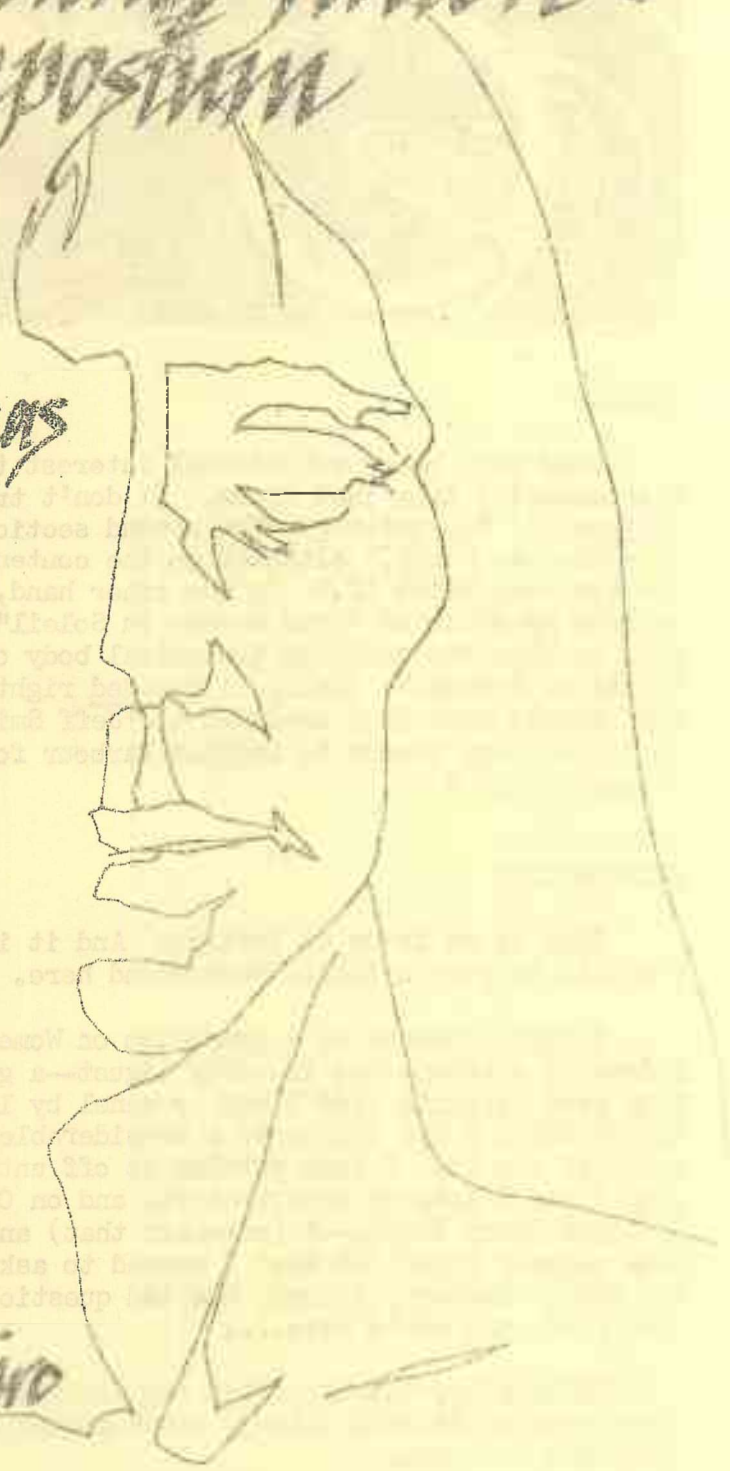
Officially, the Symposium ran from 10/9/74 to 5/8/75 (though minor revisions carried on well after), seven months and 168 pages of letters. Most of those 168 are here.

I can guarantee that there will be something herein that you will disagree with. (It's impossible to agree with everything on each of the 168 pages.) Much of it is pure speculation, grasping for ideas, for connections heretofore undiscovered or ignored. I would much prefer letters of similar qualities, rather than personal attacks on persons whose views do not coincide with yours. (I admit the temptation will be great.) And read it all before you write--if you don't you may just repeat someone else's remark. But I don't want to scare you off: strap yourself in (or let yourself go), and forge ahead:

Women in science fiction: a symposium

Suzanne McKee Charnas
Samuel R. Delany
Virginia Kidd
Ursula K. Le Guin
Vonda N. McIntyre
Raylyn Moore
Joanna Russ
James Tiptree, Jr.
Luise White
Kate Wilhelm
Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

edited by Jeffrey D. Smith



*It is suited to the needs of any group
that feels itself to be oppressed*

SMITH:

The "Golden Age" of science fiction was predominantly a man's field. Today...well, many of the best sf writers are the women on this panel. Why the change? What attracted women writers to sf? What attracted you?

YARBRO:

First, have you ever noticed how so many Golden Ages are only appreciated after the fact? This is true in opera as well as in sf, and the trouble is that there is no realistic way to compare the Golden past with the present because it is the present. For example, one of my voice students wanted to know if any bad operas were written in the bel canto period. The answer is sure there were, only the bad ones aren't performed any more. By the same token, much of the real shit of the Golden Age of sf has mercifully been forgotten by all but the most determined collectors, and that very culling process lends an air of perfection that does not necessarily reflect the truth of the matter.

IE GUIN:

"Golden Age" writers were not writing a fiction of character or of passion; they were writing in an impersonalized genre of ideas-technology-adventure; and so all their characters were necessarily two-dimensional. Male characters were more frequent than female, but just as wooden, vapid, and stereotyped. Sf now has vastly enlarged its artistic range, and so has room for people in it. Both sexes.

McINTYRE:

The best way to answer this question is backwards. I was attracted to sf for the same reasons most other sf fans were attracted to it--it provided an escape from a generally boring and intermittently unpleasant reality. That's a typical sf-fan answer. The reason I was attracted to the same stuff ten or twenty years ago that sets my teeth on edge today is that--to use the cliché--my consciousness was at a very low level, along with almost everyone else's. I didn't think that stories portraying women as idiots (or, worse, starting them out as competent people only to have them collapse into blither and stereotype when A Man or A Dangerous Situation came along) were discriminating against me. Until about 1970 it never occurred to me that perhaps all those writers who were so proud of their speculative abilities might try any sociological speculations (beyond the usual "This is why the way we do it is the Only Right Way"): I'm sorry to say that 1950's middle-class social systems seemed just as ok to me as they obviously did to the writers. As it happens, I started writing sf before I realized what sf was doing to me and other young women; afterwards, I realized its potentials for exploring the kinds of changes that our society is going through and will continue to go through, sociological, technological, etc. That's what attracts me to sf now, though it isn't what I was thinking of when I started writing sf. (The changes in my own personal philosophy and ambitions are due to the women's movement in general and to Joanna Russ in particular.)

As to why many of the best sf writers are women, out of proportion to their representation in the field, the selection process works at a different level for women. Many women who might make good or adequate writers have too little self-confidence even to submit stories to potential markets. Of stories of equal quality, those with male-sounding bylines are more likely to be thought "good" than those with female-sounding bylines (studies have been done that prove this). One rather expects that the same thing happens in a professional magazine slushpile. The fact that the mediocre stories filling most sf magazines and anthologies are almost all written by men, that the bad stories are virtually all written by men, is good for the egos of women writers who have succeeded...but it doesn't do much for women who might make perfectly competent if somewhat uninspired writers (let's face it, that's what most stories published these days are, competent (usually) and uninspired) but can't share in the rather freer and more self-deterministic life of a writer because women have to be twice as good as men at what they do to get half as far.

We'll know the millennium has arrived when a woman can be only competent at her job, just like most men, without having to endure disparaging remarks. (Or in fact when an only competent woman can get a job at anything but the most menial level.)

RUSS:

I was attracted to reading sf because it was wondrous, free of the dullness and limitations of what I was taught was Littrachoor (in high school) and somehow much more about real life. I began to write it partly because I felt that I knew nothing about "real life" as defined in college writing courses (whaling voyages, fist fights, war, bar-room battles, bull-fighting, &c.) and if I wrote about Mars nobody could tell me it was (1) trivial, or (2) inaccurate. Nobody knew about Mars. I think the change is due to whatever it is that's causing women to turn up in all sorts of activities hitherto considered men's territory. (One forgets that the 19th century--pre "Golden Age"--was full of Utopian writing and sf and that the supposed ancestress of the field is Mary Shelley.)

MOORE:

I don't really feel I can make a coherent or helpful observation on why no (or few) women were writing in the "Golden Age." (In my view, by the way, that should more properly be the "gilded age," the "Golden Age" of sf being now, or soon.) It would be easy to speculate that hardcore adventure, where evil is externalized or invested in one or a few characters, and those characters subsequently demolished, has traditionally been a male preoccupation. And the overlay of science imposed on this formula came at a time when very few women were being accepted in the sciences. Being made to feel "out of it" for these reasons would certainly have given some women writers pause.

But this has all been said before, and better, and I am not any kind of a specialist on the evolution of sf (though not for lack of interest; I much enjoyed Brian Aldiss's recapitulation in BILLION YEAR SPREE).

But if I can't do very well wrestling with why women writers generally have since been attracted to sf, at least I can say how I happened to be attracted--though here again it's probably not the kind of answer that would be insightful for someone else.

For the truth is that I have great difficulty thinking of myself as a sf writer. I write--and have always written--what I have to, about the way the world seems to me. I'm always pleased and grateful when something I've done happens to tip over the brim and fall into the vat where some sf editor or an-

thologist is putting together a brew. It's downright comforting for a writer to be classified as something, to belong. But along with this pleasure and gratitude I always feel a little surprise, too. Probably always will.

This is not to say that I just fell into the field when I wasn't watching where I was going. Except perhaps originally. My first published story (in ESQUIRE in 1954) was a quasi-fantasy, but I somehow didn't think of it as fantasy until later, on a double-take. Since I've always viewed human behavior as fantastic, my not recognizing the story for what it was was a natural oversight on my part.

I notice I've begun using the term "fantasy" here, which is, properly, an arm of science fiction, but then so is the term "improbabilia," and that is more apt applied to what I do, I think. That which is not impossible but beyond the rational, the scientific, beyond linear reasoning. Remember Charles Fort?

We are in a hole in time, Cavern of Conventional Science--
walls that are dogmas, from which drips ancient wisdom in a
patter of slimy opinions--but we have heard a storm of data
outside--

Baroquely fortian prose or not, I do agree.

CHARNAS:

When I was a kid, I had a best-friend with whom I used to have "sleep-over dates" as often as I was able to. We had shared a toy dump-truck in the sandbox on the first day of nursery school, and grew up to find that we also shared tastes in books and films, and a love of horses totally inappropriate to two poorish New York City girls. Daytimes after school, we played horses on the roof of the brownstone she lived in. At night, we spoke the instantaneously-invented lines of a cast of thousands for hours on end.



We lifted our characters from books and movies, our plots likewise, and altered everything to suit our whims (and our ignorance). Essentially, we were doing improvised radio-plays (this was the age of radio) of extensive and even serial length. We wrote down detailed accounts of the action so that stories could be carried over not only from Friday night to Saturday night, but from weekend to weekend.

Nothing bound us but the limits of our imaginations and what they fed on, and some rough feeling for the integrity of our simple-souled and crudely-defined characters. When we got tired of someone, that person would die, to be resurrected at will none the worse for wear, bar a scar or two. Having worn out one locale or situation, we would walk somebody through a door or around a corner and be somewhere else in another time, often with a whole new cast of people to deal with. Anachronism, ESP of all kinds, even weird (but not very detailed) inventions abounded, in addition to our uncomplicated forms of time and space travel.

It was science fiction of a sort, though more influenced by E.C. comics' "Weird Tales," I think, than it was by sf books. We wanted imaginative adventure, and we found more of that in Richard Harding Davis and James Street than in most sf, which tended to be weighted down with ballistics information and theoretical lectures. Our radio epics were also what helped to keep me relatively sane during the more trying patches of a rather rocky childhood. (I can't speak for my friend on this, but I suspect the same was more or less true for her.) A lot of frustration and fury got burned off in the course of those fast, violent, highly-colored scripts of ours.

I did eventually begin to read sf seriously, haunting the corner-store (and consuming far too many malted milks) so that I could devour issues of F&SF and others as they came in without paying for them, for they were a good deal more expensive even then than E.C. comics, and my means were limited.

But I grew up, and most of sf did not. My reading habits changed, and when I got around to trying to write books (at college and after) my first efforts were a "political" novel and a Western, both unfinished and fortunately so. Eventually, around my thirtieth year, I realized that what the set of characters in my head needed was the scope (moderated by the disciplines of consistency, of course) of the old radio plays. The closest form to that, short of outright surrealism (which was too formless for my taste), was sf. So I wrote WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD (twice, as it turned out; the first version was written in private code, and incomprehensible).

So, with the benefit of hindsight, it now seems to me that I was drawn to sf not only by the personal factors cited above, or even by the freedom of the form, but by the condition of the genre itself, which I believe has also attracted other women, and for similar reasons. Those of us who loved sf in spite of the fact that we never found ourselves in it loved not the achievement of the field, but its potentiality. I think we were all waiting for male writers to dig into the expanses that we sensed waited for their attentions. I mean the areas of human feeling, human sexuality, and patterns of power among people that varied from the feudal or mixed-capitalist paradigms sf tended to borrow from past or present history. With a few notable exceptions, sf writers ignored all this; or, worse, they responded to the challenge with flippant or savage misogynistic paranoia.

So I think that a lot of women came independently and even subconsciously to the decision to write the sf books that they wanted so badly to read, because the men were, for the most part, clearly not capable of doing it for them. I myself had been put off by the necessity to go acquire hard scientific background. Once I got started, it turned out to be a lot easier than I

thought: simply requiring a lot of time in the library. It also turned out that once holding as much of the scientific ground as I needed to (and as firmly as I could, given my humanities bias and background), it was not difficult at all to give my characters free-rein to occupy the forefront of the whole structure--something that reading most male-written sf would lead one to believe was impossible. So I was and am hooked: the next book is in train, and when people say is that going to be sf too, I answer with pleasure, yes it is.

A word (or a couple hundred) now on sf as a genre that is particularly suited to the transitional state of women today in our culture: actually, I think sf is suited to the needs of any group that feels itself to be oppressed. It offers a form unencumbered by the necessity to trot out the same old dreary details again in order to make one's points. The brainless boredom of life in the nursery, life in the laundromat, life in the dating-game, life in the typing-pool, is true, crushing, impossible. But it has also been handled along with a hundred other such themes in books like MEMOIRS OF AN EX-PROM QUEEN, and (if you prefer laughing to crying) SHEILA LEVINE IS DEAD AND LIVING IN NEW YORK. There are only so many times I can bring myself to read, let alone write, such books. It's too depressing, and frankly it's very hard to write interestingly about boredom, or rewardingly about unrewarding lives. To those who can do it, more power; but I'm not one of them.

Through science fiction, I can see the same drab realities illuminated with the brilliance of the strange; everything becomes transmuted, fresh, newly-meaningful, full of writing-possibilities. Besides, distance helps in dealing with matters too painful, huge and paralyzing to handle close up.

Better yet, instead of having to twist "reality" in order to create "realistic" free female characters in today's unfree society, the sf writer can create the societies that would produce those characters, not as exceptions of limited meaning and impact, but as the healthy, solid norm--for example, Takver in THE DISPOSSESSED. Sf lets women write their dreams as well as their nightmares.

WILHELM:

Now my impatience starts to show, with the first question! Asking what attracts women to science fiction is perpetuating the myth that it is a man's field, and that reinforces the myth that any intellectual area is a man's area. Science fiction, for me, has always been the place where art and intellect come together, where literature and ideas are compatible. I've always had an abundance of ideas, and when I decided to try writing, it never occurred to me to abandon ideas for something else.

Possibly if writing were something being done in public, like figure skating, I might have considered reactions of others to my using things like spaceships and robots and grim futures, but I did it alone, out of sight, and no one I knew when I began to write ever read anything of mine. There was no reaction. I didn't talk about my writing, they didn't read it, there was no reason for me to believe I was encroaching upon a man's field. I think writers who don't follow deliberately in the directions already set by others--Star Trek imitators, for example--almost create their own audience. There is the fourteen-year-old-boy audience, and they want and maybe even need adventure fiction, and there are other audiences who want and need more adult fiction. When I started to read sf I realized rather quickly that there were very few writers who were writing material for this other audience who had outgrown the space adventure phase. I was part of that audience. When I started to write a few years later, it seemed quite natural for me to do those kinds of things I wanted to read, not the kinds of things others were doing that I didn't want to read any longer. I never thought of it as male-female oriented, but rather

immature-mature. I still do. Space wars, space travel adventures, supermen doing supermen things, these bore me and I don't want to read them or write them. There is a good audience that also wants to read other kinds of speculative fiction, not as large as the wide-eyed-fourteen-year-old boy audience, probably, but it's there. There are practically no sources of short fiction that satisfy this audience--the slicks are filled with pap, the experimental, avant guard often filled with junk, the literary magazines are given to mundane, idea-less stories, and that leaves science fiction.

That's a girl?

SMITH:

Since sf was written by men, for an audience of men, it was generally about men. And when men (Asimov, Heinlein, Panshin) used female protagonists, they were often met by critical cries of "That's a girl?" What problems are there in presenting an accurate picture of a member of the opposite sex? When you write about men, do you ever wonder if you will be called down for "unrealistic male characters"? (Have you?) (For instance, Ursula: Did you have to think twice before having Shevek in THE DISPOSSESSED say: "Often I have wished I was as tough as a woman"?)

LE GUIN:

I didn't have to "think twice," in the sense you mean, about anything Shevek said, because I am Shevek. Just as I am Takver. And everybody else I ever wrote about.

McINTYRE:

Women are trained to pay attention to and anticipate what men feel, want, need, etc. Men are trained to pay attention to what men feel, need, want, etc. I leave it to you to decide why it is that men have difficulties portraying opposite-sex characters that women do not have, and why, in fact, many women are better at portraying men than women in their fiction.

WILHELM:

Male writers often do have more trouble writing believable women than women writers have writing men. Part of it stems from the conventions of fiction that have existed for a long time. Most fiction has dealt with men, has been done by men and anyone who has read widely has picked up, by osmosis, the conventions of dealing with men in stories. This doesn't lead to good writing, or good characters, but it does lead to characters that are accepted by readers trained to expect them. When you get to women characters, you usually have an extreme: the bitch, the goody-goody, the step-mother, the whore, the grandmother, etc. Men have fewer examples of real women in fiction to draw upon, and when they copy the models, they come up with terrible characters. They take the same shortcuts women writers can take and get away with, and come up losers. Tut.

A good deal of this stems from the climate, the culture itself. A few years ago a test was given in which subjects were asked to list the characteristics that came to mind within a short period of time, first of women, then of men. The list of characteristics attributed to men more than doubled that for the women. We have had more male models to draw on, more diversified models, more fiction dealing with males, more everything. And women were depicted in fewer roles, as if it were a given that women were able to do or be only those

dozen things.

If you don't like these answers you could settle for 1. Women have an innate, intuitive ability to grasp character, 2. Women have more secrets, more mysteries about them, 3. Men are open and willing to share themselves whereas women are not, 4. Women are smarter basically.

All this is changing, by the way. There are men in this field who can write decent women, and there are women who can write decent men. But there are few in both camps. We all need to talk to each other more, and to listen to what is being said.

RUSS:

Women have a great advantage in inventing male characters (that men do not have with women characters): there exists an enormous body of literature written by men, about men, and primarily for men, or at least for people who take the masculine point of view for granted. There are all sorts of publicly-available ways of presenting male characters. Not only can female writers fake male characters (from other books, movies, &c.) but I suspect in general women's knowledge of men--in its limited field of vision--is sharper than men's knowledge of women (through necessity). There are also two other points: (1) science fiction often employs characters whose personal identity and/or sexuality is minimal--e.g., it's not a field that usually presents characters in depth, even when the subject of the sf is social extrapolation; (2) there's a difference between characterization-from-the-outside and characterization-from-the-inside. Many famous heroines of fiction, like Emma Bovary or Anna Karenina, are presented with a surprising reliance on outside characterization, i.e. they are rendered through some kind of objective correlative. (One need only compare them with George Eliot's heroines, for example.)

I've never wondered about being called down for unrealistic portrayal of male characters. The longer I live the less I know about men in general--I think because one gets away from the literary givens and really tries to be original. So maybe it will happen in future.

The real problem is in training, values, and social roles; I think that part of the trouble you cite with "That's a girl?" (though I wouldn't include Panshin's RITE OF PASSAGE at all) comes from using women's societal roles as the-whole-woman. Let alone blatant wishful thinking, e.g. the sf heroine with the candied grey hair and the fire-colored eyes is first cousin to the Gothic romance hero with the craggy profile and the smouldering tenderness. Or whatever. Heinlein's ladies are a Dreadful Example of both combined. As Panshin points out, when his heroines are pre-pubescent or over 80 (Paewee Reisfeld or Grandma Stone) they're fine; in between he goes head-over-heels into sheer projections of wishes or fears.

KIDD:

Doesn't Joanna mean to have said "I've wondered about never being called down" instead of "I've never wondered"? Perhaps not. I fell desperately in love with her Machine, in PICNIC ON PARADISE; god, he was real! Her evocation of him elicited from me the persona he would want in (any) female: i.e., the woman (the Mother?) who wants to see him become real again. That is the creation of a character in the round, it seems to me.

RUSS:

No, I meant "I have never wondered about being called down" for my male characters; in part they are what I call my "male head" (i.e., my training in

stereotypy) talking and in part projections of myself. I think Machine is partly me and partly wishful thinking and partly my own experiences with certain kinds of men (who did not open up and become human the way Machine does). He is also seen from the outside, while Iris (it seems to me) isn't. Why I do not wonder (or did not wonder) is that I shared the stereotypes with so many readers AND the real experiences which were part of the characters, too. I think now that I've begun to write feminist fiction, I will indeed be called down. In fact, I expect howls of rage from here to Timbaktu. An ironic recent experience: one young man praising me several years ago for "The View from This Window" saying that the sexual scene in it was absolutely true and my own private wonder (because, in fact, I knew that the scene was not true to life, having subsequent to writing the story found out how much I didn't know!) plus the fact that nobody's ever praised me for the erotic realism of "The Precious Object" (possibly because readers have neglected it in droves). But it's my impression that a vividly-realized stereotype (and an untrue one) has so much psychic charge for readers that they assent enthusiastically, while the truth often strikes them as shocking, implausible, or silly. I know I do this myself when I read. It's called "sentimentality."

CHARNAS:

The problem is not presenting accurate pictures of the opposite sex but accurate pictures of my own. I was raised (like most women) to regard other females as rivals for the security that only a man could provide, or as models for strategies of obtaining that security, not as complex human beings with valid existences outside of the sphere of relationships to men and men's real and imagined powers. This interfered first of all with my noticing women at all when they weren't acting as rivals (i.e., "threats" to be met or examples of allure to be followed because they were better at it than I was and could only be imitated); and secondly, from seeing them very well when I did look at women for something approaching their own sakes. It was no help at all to know that most other women were busy non-regarding me in the same non-illuminating light.

Of course there were times when we were all able to just relax with each other; but let a male come on the scene, and our true priorities and frames of reference came to the fore. We wiped each other's individuality out in our own eyes.

Please note, when I say trained, I am not blaming my mother for all of this. She taught me what she had been taught, and unknown to us both at the time she sent me conflicting signals in what she did, rather than what she said. If I am capable of understanding anything at all about the true position of women in our culture, it is due to her (in spite of herself), for there was precious little in that culture itself to let me know that there were non-stereotyping, non-degrading ways of looking at women at all.

As for fear of creating falsely-drawn male characters, I have no special fears beyond general doubts about my ability to make up real, compelling beings of any kind. In this area, I have the advantage over my male counterparts.

The slave knows her master through and through: she has to, for her survival and her comfort if her men are in a position to provide any. The master, however, is never forced by the realities of power to so much as notice the slave. What he sees if he does choose to look need never be corrected by reality, since part of the slave's survival technique is to play the roles that the masters have invented for them. The slave who allows jarring notes into her performance risks punishment for challenging the master's prejudices. In any event, most masters have no desire to see beyond the role-playing camouflage. If he perceives his slave as a real person instead of a cartoon-stereotype, his



position as master (which depends for its justification on reducing the slave to cartoon proportions) becomes untenable.

(To those who find this terminology offensive, I can only reply that I am convinced that for most women in most parts of the world throughout most of history up to and including the present day, the term "slavery"--overt or covert, to male masters and female overseers--is applicable.)

This is why most male writers not only can't delineate accurate female characters, but don't really wish to. In the case of science fiction specifically, the fact that it has for so long been written by men about men for men has only exaggerated this tendency. The result has been a stunted genre, and it's no wonder to me that so many people read it in their teens but drop it later on. It is easily outgrown. Not long ago, when the ways of cultural infatuation with the idea of technological progress began to recede a little, I think most male sf writers were a) left behind and b) revealed as perennial adolescents happily playing with their equipment. This frozen-immaturity kit includes, along with a lot of lifeless but easily manipulable gadgetry, a lot of lifeless and easily manipulable paper dolls representing those necessary nuisances, other human beings. For many men, the male figures are eventually replaced by more complicated ones or even something resembling real perceptions; but the female figures are retained throughout life, as stand-ins for real female people, because women have little real power with which to force alterations in favor of a broader reality. Most sf writers seem to have kept the whole kit.

Those who came to realize the sterility of this situation, or who fretted at its limitations because they were getting bored with childhood but still loved sf, began to strike out in all directions (or what seemed by comparison to be all directions). They tried stylistic experiments borrowed from the Mainstream; or they attempted to include elements of sexuality, usually in Playboy fashion. Some of them succeeded in injecting interest into an atrophying genre; others didn't. That, at any rate, is my own interpretation of the New Wave in sf.

It has not been enough. The men writing sf (and the few women, most of whom merely aped male forms in order to be acceptable to the sf audience of men) were and are the victims of their own ghettoization. Yet without writers who can deal comfortably and honestly and effectively with characters of both sexes complex enough (including all kinds of sexual and social complexity) to interest readers past adolescence, sf cannot mature.

This is not to say that men are all and will all forever be incapable of writing good sf for adults. There are some who can and there will be more, as more men see the advantages of growing up and break down their own ghetto walls to obtain them. There once was (and may still be) a British writer who even found a way to get around the conditioning of his own mind: praised for the realism of his female characters, he revealed that he wrote his story first and assigned sexual identities to his people afterward. It sounds bizarre, but it was his way of forcing himself to start from the assumption that one human being is more like other human beings than unlike, and that his or her quality is much less determined by sex than it is by larger, more pervasive factors shared by us all--for instance, the consciousness of unavoidable death. Most men are still too corsetted-up in privilege and its obverse, fear, to accept such an assumption.

So women writers are stepping into the breach. We are telling what we know about men, and finding out what we know about women; consequently, sf is beginning to grow up, by including and speaking to the larger portion of the human race--female people. Bringing up a broader perspective, we are reinvent-

ing sf as a grown-up pursuit; I hope that more men catch on soon to the fact that they have as much to gain from this opening-out as we do. Adult male writers are needed as much as adult female writers, if sf is to achieve its full majority. I have no more wish to see the genre turned into a women's ghetto than to see it remain a men's ghetto. After generations of anti-communication, we have a lot to say to each other: women to women, men to men, and women and men to each other.

YARBRO:

Much of this male audience nonsense can be traced to school librarians who put the "boys" books in one place and the "girls" books in another. When I was in grammar school the librarian would not allow me to read books on paleontology because that wasn't for girls. So I had to content myself with the encyclopedia at home. (Speaking of paleontology, did you know that they have recently discovered that the stegosaur walked upright, like the tyrannosaur and that crowd? I had always thought that with its short front legs and massive hind legs that it ought to, but my high school biology teacher did not agree. Ah, well.) So for a large part the audience for juvenile sf was preselected for the male market. Then, as I am sure you are aware, both society and its officers (the schools, again) tend to push girls into the traditional supportive, fluffy-brained female place and boys into the John Wayne male image. Ick. This makes it very difficult for the girl who wants to do what the boys do--and woe unto her if she does it better--even if it is only a matter of reading material. This whole pressure system warps a lot of people. Men as well as women.

So there were the guys writing for the guys because it was Well Known that women aren't interested in science, unless there's Something Wrong.

And, naturally enough, the male writers did the standard and male-ego-reassuring portrait of females, making them fluffy things who stood in awe of the all-knowing and almost all-powerful male. Now while this might make the male reader feel great, it's a damn insult to competent females. For two reasons: it presents a model of the female which is unrealistic and reinforces some very unpleasant cultural traps, and it limits the ways a story can be told, a thing any writer in her or his right mind would want to avoid.

It was not exactly surprising that these supposedly female characters bore about as much resemblance to real females as the rhino bears to its semantic offspring, the unicorn. Heinlein's "women" drive me absolutely nuts. They are boy scouts with boobs. All they want to do is get married. The main male bullies them and they lap it up and beg for more. They let this prick use them and they roll over for more, and mind you, with never a single psychological or psychic scar. Not one of them ever suggests that this treatment is unfair or demeaning. They smile mistily at the hero and say, "Oh, you big lug," and they go to bed again. Bullshit.

I've once or twice been accused of writing unrealistic (read unflattering) male characters, and even more often of creating unreal female characters, because a large number of males don't like to give up that dearly-held image of the admiring baby-doll. I find that "False Dawn" has got the biggest reaction, mainly because it suggests that rape is no fun. The general belief is that if a woman gets raped that she a) asked for it, b) really wanted to get raped anyway and c) is probably a man-hater so her cry of rape doesn't "count," whatever that means. Several male fans have objected strongly to that story, more for the woman's reaction than the man's. In fact, some of them were in sympathy with the rapist, if you can believe that, and find that the woman's attitude isn't "normal." Again, bullshit. I get very tired of these guys who think with their crotches where women are concerned.

LE GUIN:

In order even to ask whether men can write well about women one must have abstained strictly from novel-reading. It's plain silly. What about Flaubert's Emma, Tolstoy's Anna or Natasha, James's Isobel, etc. etc.? Equally, can anybody who's read PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, WUTHERING HEIGHTS, JANE EYRE, JACOB'S ROOM or THE NEEDLE'S EYE seriously ask if women can write about men?

We can't discuss a large general question about art while limiting our examples to science fiction as written between 1926 and 1946. And if we enlarge our example-range, this particular question simply vanishes.

OK, from here on Jung is my guide, since I must look inward. Jung suggests that the psyche comes in several sexes, at least two, whatever the individual's physiological sex and conscious theories concerning it.

Male artists have been aware enough of the essential role in their work of their anima (female element of man's psyche) that they have recognized and honored it as the Muse, the Creator Spirit in the feminine gender.

The animus (male element of woman's psyche) is an obscurer figure (Jung shows it all too often as a dogmatic authoritarian, Logos with a pince-nez, though he knew there was more to it than that). This obscurity is an advantage; there are no sentimental stereotypes ("The Eternal Masculine"? -- "Behind every great woman there stands a brave little man"?) to degrade our perception of it. But because anything said of the animus is new, it tends to sound strange and awkward, and to be tentative.

In my own experience the Creator Spirit is more masculine than feminine, but on the deeper levels, is both at once.

I have of course wondered why I write about men more often than about women; possibly because my animus seeks expression?--an expression it finds limited in the non-writing part of my life, which is seen by my society as "feminine." Possibly my psyche is trying to redress the masculine-feminine balance which, ideally, one's whole life would strike (the ideal of the women's movement as I see it, an ideal which our society makes unattainable despite the best efforts of any individual or partnership). Similarly a single woman or one without children working in the male-oriented job-market and so forced into a "male role" might feel animus-dominated, and so reach balance by writing mostly about women. All this is just guesswork. All I know is that when anybody, male chauvinist or feminist, tells me that I should write about women, I just want to say Piss off. Don't go sticking any labels on my soul.

RUSS:

Ursula: Yes, yes, yes. That's exactly it. The ghastliness of the sexist mess is that one is told what to think, what to write, who to write about, and what to be. And there is much less room for me than for you.

MOORE:

Yes, I damn well worry a lot that I may not be presenting an accurate picture of a "member of the opposite sex," as you so elegantly put it, but for a reason that is quite conventional: I simply hold the traditional view that any good writer must be androgynous, or at least must assume an androgynous mental-set. Else how could she/he possibly invent characters of more than one sex? I would guess that roughly half of my stories have male protagonists, and while I fondly hope I haven't been guilty of producing any of those ball-less heroes that once were p-r for genteel lady writers (of both sexes), on the

other hand a critic once objected about a novel of mine that the woman in the story was "more convincing" than either of the two males presented. While I don't as a rule brood much over the complaints of critics, I did worry somewhat over this, probably because I suspected its accuracy. I have tried to do better since.

With Tiptree through the great sex middle

TIPTREE:

First, to hell with talking about "women in sf."

What we think and feel about "women in sf" is only a by-product of what we think and feel about women and men in the whole bitter chuckle of life. I think we can take it for granted that women are human beings who have been drastically oppressed, deprived, and warped out of shape by our male-dominated and largely lunatic culture. So are men, to a lesser and less personally destructive degree. But that said, I don't feel I personally understand much. This spring I pounded my brains to make a story for Vonda's anthology, I mean: I sweated deep. Maybe not deep for others, but deep for me. I want to talk about some of the thoughts that began to jell in me then, thoughts of who and what are they, these alternative forms of humanity? Are they so different and if so how? Are we the same animal? Can we coexist on the same planet? What the hell are "sexes" and how many and which are there?

As a starter, let's clear away one dire fallacy. DOWN WITH YIN-AND-YANG THINKING!

Our view of men and women is infested with the vicious mental habit of seeing any pair of differing things as somehow symmetrical mirror-images of each other. I, man, am hot--therefore they, women, are cold. I am active--therefore they are passive. I think--therefore they emote. My id grunts, "Me good;" therefore they are bad. Perhaps more perniciously, my superego whispers, I have selfish and destructive drives--therefore THEY are altruistic, compassionate and nurturant. (They better be.)

Put this way it's clearly silly, but the tendency is very deep in the nature of thinking. Literature and philosophy is smarmed over by the belief that men and women exist at opposite ends of an infinite number of bipolar dimensions. That they in some way mystically reflect and complement each other--on no greater evidence than that occasional men and women do get on well and that the race as a whole hasn't yet died out.

Now anyone can see certain traces of local, situational complementariness between the human sexes; it is to be found in any ecosystem. But to seize upon these hints to build something like the Yin and Yang system is to depart radically from reality. The Yin/Yang is a lovely system, subtle, elaborate, full of interweavings, dialectical interpenetrations, many pretty mental toys. As an aid to understanding real men and women, it is a monstrous exercise in fluff.

Consider how a Martian would see us. No matter what trait is measured, he/she/it would find a generally bell-shaped distribution; some of the curves would be a bit skewed, no more. Women and men share 45 or our 46 chromosomes. This is about as far from a bi-polar situation as you can get.

With this blast I hope to abolish from at least my thinking the concept that men and women are in what is called a reflexive relation to each other, that they are in some way mirror images of each other. If I had to pick a

technical relation which might aid understanding, one could try for example a transitive one. (Example, Man is to Woman as Woman is to Child.) But that's just as shallow and useless. The problem is to try to understand real people, and to determine whether a handful of genes on one chromosome has any identifiable effects on their way of being human.

ARE THERE TWO SEXES AND IF SO WHICH?

A funny thing happened a few years back, on the way to the bomb-shelter. Official Washington held an air attack drill, a very elaborate one. The big set-piece was the whisking-away of the whole top of the government to a fantastic shelter--this one was under a mountain--where they had all the war-rooms and red buttons and machinery for Retaliation Unto Cinders.

Well, when the dawn moment came for the senior officials to gulp their orange juice and toddle out to the black limousines, some very odd confrontations took place. They were leaving their wives and families behind to be fried, you see. The silent thought loomed. "Have a nice survival, dear. I'm sure you and General Abrams will be very happy..."

Art Buchwald did some very funny columns. The vision of two hundred post-menopausal males crawling out into the lava-plain to celebrate the "saving" of America...

Now I submit that this is pathology. Pathology of almost inconceivable luxuriance. I call it the pathological hypertrophy of the male sex pattern.

Okay, let's go back. Yes, I think we have two sexes. But I do not--repeat, not--think that they are men and women. I see them as patterns, which may or may not be present singly or together in a given individual at a given time.

Okay, what's a "sex?" Well, for a try, let's call it "a coherent pattern of behavior necessary to the reproduction of the species." We probably can agree also that human sexual behavior has obscure ties to the biological substrate, but that these are not well understood. (I've been reading Money and Ehrhardt's excellent work on the intersexes, MAN & WOMAN, BOY & GIRL.) About all one can be sure of biologically is that androgen often has the effect of evoking the male sexual pattern.

Yes, I see two sex patterns. One of them is relatively well-known, so simple as to be almost trivial, and subject to pathology: that is the male pattern. The other I see as overwhelmingly important to the race, very extensive over time, and almost unknown: that is the maternal pattern, or Mothering.

We can dispense with the male pattern quickly; we see it in any cageful of adolescent male rhesus. The one interesting thing about the male pattern--which may be lethal to humanity--is that it shares the neural pathways of aggression. The male primate pursues, grasps, penetrates with much of the same equipment which serves aggression and predation. This has the dire side effect that the more aggressive males tend by and large to reproduce themselves more effectively and thus intensify the problem. We see considerable sexual dimorphism among our primate relatives; the males are bigger and stronger. Oddly enough, it's not always coupled with greater aggression; gigantic male gorillas are relatively peaceful citizens. Male baboons, however, are not. They go in for male dominance--and so, unfortunately, do human males. We appear to be subject to an androgen-related overgrowth of the aggressive syndrome, with its accompanying male-male dominance-submission conflicts, male

territoriality, and all the dismal rest. We have had phases like the Ottoman Empire, a totally male society where women were kept as breeding animals, and men acted out a complete surrogate fantasy-life based on androgen pathology. We are today ruled by gerontomorphic old men--and their young acolytes--who can commit unrealities on the order of that air attack drill.

A John Foster Dulles, a Stalin, is a biologically irrelevant old animal who has confused his fantasies with life and who ought to be undergoing therapy instead of being in charge of anything. But he has power. And so do young male thugs; it is hard to say which are more dangerous. But leaving aside the terrible importance of their dysfunction, one can draw back and simply characterize the male as the animal with enormous amounts of spare time.

It is also important to note that the male pattern is powered by immediate genital gratification. (Non-orgasmic males leave no descendants.) In our species, the male drive has also ceased to be controlled by biological signals from the female.

Now that's all I want to say about the male pattern, because I want to get on to the next. Of course, we could bow to sf in passing, by remarking how much that air-attack drill resembled certain ANALOG themes. But let's get on.

What is a MOTHER? Well, to begin with, it is the pattern which is 99% responsible for our being here at all. Descriptively, mothering has a brief initial phase of what we might call aggressive vulnerability, which gets the gametes together. It has another physical phase of gestation and birth, which requires a female physique. Those two early phases are all that men in the grip of male hypertrophy even notice; that is what they think Mothers are and that is what they try to reduce women to. I see these phases as merely initiatory, although the physical act of bringing a child into the world must be a very important one to the person. But if Mothering stopped there we'd all be dead.

My try at defining the maternal pattern is deeply influenced by the picture of the female primate endlessly, tirelessly lugging her infant, monitoring its activities at every moment, teaching, training, leading it to the best of her animal abilities. Not for a day or a week, but throughout its whole infancy and into self-sufficiency. The bond created can be very lasting; it is now speculated that the permanent alliance of mothers and daughters and granddaughters may be the true origin of society.

Look at what Motherhood involves. Leadership without aggression. Empathy of a high order--can it be the true root of speech? Great environmental competence. Aggressive defense of the young. Nest and shelter-building. Food-bringing and sharing. A fantastic array of behavior--all of which have been flawlessly carried through by every one of our maternal forebears back to the first mammalian forms, or we would not be here.

It is my belief that Mothers, because of their grasp of development over time, undoubtedly invented agriculture. Animal husbandry, too. The characteristic of the Mother pattern is that it extends over time in a way utterly unknown to the male. And it has relations to space and the environment again foreign to the male.

Most important of all, it is a relation between animals which is totally outside the "male" repertory.

A pause for wonder, for awe.

And now the final speculation--because I really view this sex as unknown. What is mothering powered by? What "goals" has it? What reward drives it?

We don't know.

We can only guess and mutter. I personally know many farmers, and I love to grow things when I have a chance. I think the strange, unspoken rewards of growing things must be a little like the rewards that power maternal behavior. What is the satisfaction--joy, really--of helping things to flourish?

We don't even have a name for it!

I tell you, in our crazy culture we have rendered the major sex invisible. The more I think of it the more extraordinary it seems. And I think it cannot be denied that men have attempted to take it over. They wrest children from the mother, make "men" out of them in lunatic rites. They attempt to kill the mother in themselves....A scene of unspeakable, fascinated, repulsion.

And what they have made human mothers into---! As practiced today, mothering is a martyrdom for a human being. Crazy.

Well, let's wind this up by noting one more interesting thing about the Mothering pattern. (And remember that by Mothering I mean the whole years-long scenario of turning out a viable human being.) Mothering is tied to the rhythms of biological development. It is totally different from "male" enterprises in this respect. If John Campbell or Edward Teller tried to do Mothering, they would have to go to school to the nearest monkey mother gazing into her baby's eyes and untiringly guiding its little hands. They could not have any brilliant technological insights, they could not devise wondrous methods of accelerating or multiplying production; no abstract spasms of genius could shortcut matters. They would just have to do it. One by one by one. Or--no product.

That, as Tome Lehrer would say, is a sobering thought.

Because it is, quite simply, the one most important thing we do.

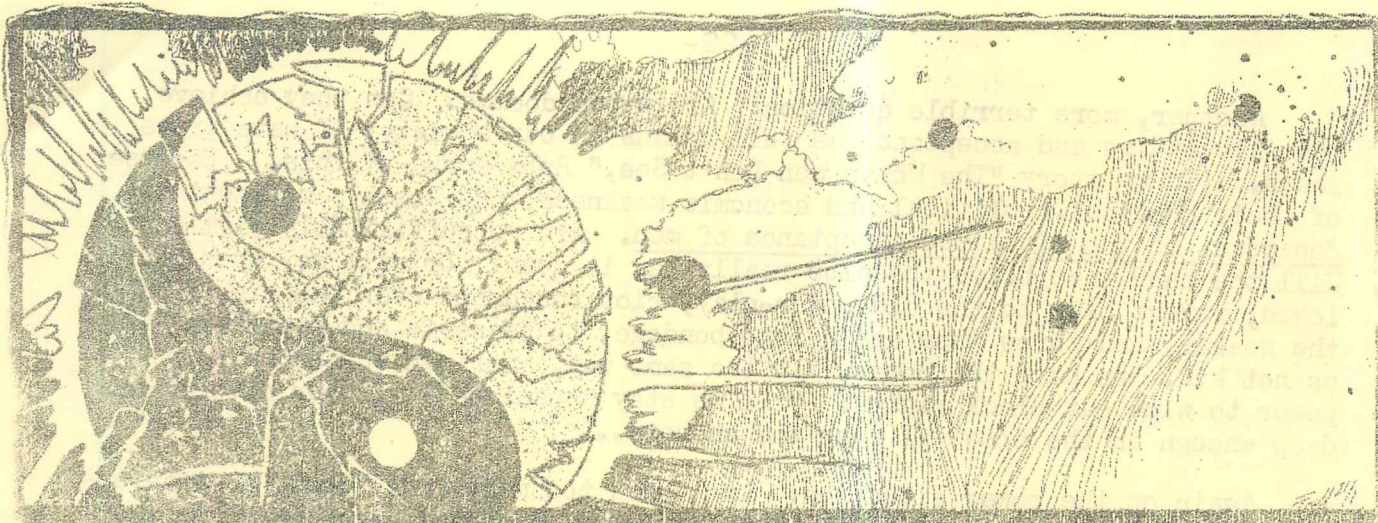
And our failure to develop really good human Mothering--our failure to organize all society around this work, instead of irrelevant "male" activities and goals--may end us even if nothing dramatic gets us first. We must make a world in which every child is mothered to complete socialization, or die of the lack.

Now before I end, one word: Please do not read into what I have said that I see Mothers as all sweet compassion, nurturance, etc.--and hence charge all this onto women. No. All I have described is a pattern of behavior--which you can see operating in any zoo--and which I see as only more or less actualised in individual human beings at specific times. And one which we have disastrously neglected and do not understand.

Well.

So what about those sexes in sf?

But wait--I have also talked about "human beings." By which I mean, the other 45 chromosomes. Now obviously if I could describe a "human being" I would be more than I am--and probably living in the future, because I think of human beings as something to be realized ahead. (If we survive ourselves.) But clearly "human beings" have something to do with the luminous image you see in a bright child's eyes--the exploring, wondering, eagerly-grasping, un-



destructive quest for life. I see that undescribed spirit as central to us all. And in the individual, tinged by one or the other--or both--of the sexual patterns.

And, I guess I must confess, I see "humanity" in its best sense as closer to the maternal pattern than to the male--because of the empty violence which so often infects the male pattern. I would not, god forbid, reduce all life to cosy Mommy-wuv. But I think the inherent power of humanity will always carry it beyond that; in fact, a true Mother does. Actual Mothers are Humans.

So it is easy to say that as men and women who have more of the (partly unknown) Mother patterning come into sf, the goals and fantasies and drives and reality-perception of sf will change. It already has; anthropology, sociology, psychology are sciences which involve concepts of development which are intellectual representations of Mother-reality. As they come into sf we leave rocket-opera behind.

Perhaps we will learn more about Mother--her dreams, her fantasies, her perceptions and excitements and glories and dooms and irascibilities and explicit from bisexual sf.

Now what I have said here implies that individual women can quite easily be, in effect, males. When they are acting on and powered by elements of the male pattern. (And they can be subject to its pathology, too.) I don't see this as a problem. What I do see as a problem and a very urgent one, is:

How soon, O Lord, can men learn to be mothers?

I cannot resist ending with a couple of notes which have struck me.

"What is a woman?" This question haunted me until I moved on to thinking about sex as patternings. But it is probably a valid question, if only to stimulate thought. One of my first answers was that women are really truly aliens. (And hence supremely entitled to write sf, as Craig Strete has pointed out about American Indians.) This tells us a lot about our culture. Another part-answer which continues to amuse me came from looking at our current crop of male transvestites and female impersonators like Holly Woodlawn. Watch them; so like a woman and yet so profoundly lacking something. What is missing? Well, it seems to me that they are totally focussed on what I have called here the initiatory phase, the aggressive or provocative vulnerability that promotes genital contact. And that is all they have. Behind them looms the mocking visage of the Mother which they are not. They are biological Mayflies, triggers to an unloaded gun.

Another, more terrible question: Are women doomed? Can they achieve true liberation and acceptance as full humans in our society? I have grave fears. (In my story "The Women Men Don't See," Ruth spoke of this.) Because of their physical, political and economic weakness, the women's movement is dependent on the civilized acceptance of men. Are we sufficiently civilized? Will the hand that holds the club really lay it down? Or will we, when panicked, revert back to the old power-play, riot roughshod over the rights of the weaker, and throw them again into bondage, to be serfs and property? Let us not kid, men have the power. In the same way, American whites have the power to wipe out black rights. Will we stay unpanicked? Is our civilization deep enough in the bone? I fear the answer...

Again on the power situation: Are there too many men? Would a different ratio be saner, say one man to a hundred women? The ridiculous economic imperatives of our culture teach even women to value male babies more. It is a fearsome thought that if we gain control over the sex of the unborn, we might have a wave of male births, a society preponderantly male. I believe that it is urgent for mothers-to-be to value girls more. And I tend to think that we have far too many men...

Lastly. You may have noticed the word "lunacy" in this. It comes from Rebecca West's marvelous prologue to BLACK LAMB AND GREY FALCON. (A book that tells one more that you wish to know about certain male activities.) May I end with this provocative quote? It is not really a mirror-image concept although it sounds like it at first glance:

The word "idiot" comes from a Greek root meaning private person. Idiocy is the female defect: intent on their private lives, women follow their fate through a darkness deep as that cast by malformed cells in the brain. It is no worse than the male defect, which is lunacy: men are so obsessed by public affairs that they see the world as by moonlight, which shows the outlines of every object but not the details indicative of their nature.

Such as, for example, overlooking a little problem like how you recreate the human race starting with two hundred old men.

*Samuel R. Delany:
Letter to the symposium on "women in
science fiction" under the control, for
some deeply suspect reason, of one
Jeff Smith.*

DELANY:

First, some stony facts:

Last night Marilyn turned in rage from the radio and demanded: "Why is it 'people have abortions,' but medicine is one 'of man's accomplishments'?"

What was coming over the BBC was an educational program in which two men, a doctor and a moderator, were discussing abortions and abortion laws. The general run of their conversation was that, while legal abortions were a Good Thing, abortion laws were too lenient. The doctor explained that, as things stood now "...anyone could get one..." (Like you, Jeff. Or me.) In Rumania, it seems, after the first spate of abortion laws was passed, the population over the next year actually began to go down--so immediately the laws were made more strict (a Good Thing) so that not just everybody (like Harlan Ellison; or Philip K. Dick) could get one. The program ended with some convivial joking about the population explosion: Well, if it was a choice of "...the world's ending in a day from birth control and abortions, or all of us" (who?) "going on happily breeding for the next hundred years or so, even if that's all the time we've got, then we, I'm afraid," (who is that, now...?) "will have to choose the latter." This was not last month, last year, or nineteen forty-two; it was last night! Now who is this "we" that is going to choose, that is all agreed on "our" choice? Tell me, do you think that this "we" is the "people" who--briefly--brought the birth-rate down in Rumania?

And in the last issue or so of F&SF, there is an astonishing story by Philip K. Dick about a Bad Thing: a society where abortions can be performed on children (now wait; whom do abortions usually get performed on? Who is it who goes to the hospital? Who is it who is put under anaesthetic?) up to the age of ten. Now Mother, in this story, supports this (and that's a Bad Thing. After all, "anyone" can be bad) while Fathers and Sons (who are Good Things) try to escape. And I'm sure Dick expects "people" to like his story.

The mankind/humanity/anyone/nobody matrix has been used fifty-four years now (and only fifty-four years; specifically since women took the vote for themselves. Before that, nobody even thought it necessary to make the gesture of inclusion), under the ruse of "including" women, to absorb, ride over, and obliterate them. (Who? Them, Jeff. Not us.)

And this morning, I get a letter, signed with a man's name (Jeffrey Smith; that's your name, isn't it, Jeff) addressed to nine women and two men that begins:

"Dear People--"

Look: There are women. There are men. Men have devised an elaborate and insidious behavioral syndrome by which they can imprison, exploit, and oppress women and feel no guilt about it. We (who? Men, that's who) can do it in such a way that we are unaware that we are doing anything at all, much less a Bad Thing.

There are three women mental patients for every male.

This is an emblem of women's imprisonment.

Last month's SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN in an article on Alienation drops the statistic that the average middle-class American father spends 23.7 seconds a day (!) playing with his less-than-year-old infant.

Since babies will die with only 23.7 seconds a day of attention, this is an emblem of women's imprisonment and exploitation.

Today, as I walked to the restaurant where I am writing this (there are seven men within sight of the table where I am sitting; I can hear one woman's voice and see one other woman--the woman I can see is the waitress: this is an emblem of women's exploitation), I counted the number of men and women I saw on one block: 126 to 114.

And this is an emblem of women's imprisonment.

The male/female ratio on the title page of most sf anthologies (or fan-zines) is an emblem of women's oppression and exploitation.

Men have been treating women appallingly for six thousand years. (And, from the evidence of archaeology and paleontology, not too much longer than that. Out of the three million years of human existence, sexism seems to have only really arisen--despite everyone (who?) who would like to rewrite history --since the Neolithic Revolution.)

Men treat women appallingly and oppressively. The "...but women don't really want..." argument is no appeal. Anyone (and who are we talking about ...?) who had to endure (we're in the subjunctive, which means we're not talking about who does endure, which is women, but "anyone" else; and who's that?) the oppression that women are subjected to, if only to preserve sanity, is not very likely to do much wanting outside pretty proscribed bounds. To preserve sanity you (yes, you) stop wanting what has been made impossible to get or supremely difficult to achieve. And if you know what's good for you, you forget you were ever able to want anything at all.

There are women.

There are men; the men are sexist.

It's impossible for us (you and me, Jeff) to be anything but sexist. Any man who claims not to be sexist is simply avowing his blatant ignorance of what sexism is and how it works: women should trust him substantially less far than they can throw him.

Today, there simply is no happy reconciliation possible. We (who?) can't come on like one big happy family who for our (whose is that again?) purposes have solved it all already and face one another as "people."

Even for this symposium.

We have to agree from the start that the situation is horrendous.

It dwarfs the murder of six million Jews in Germany; more than that, it absorbs a good deal of it: compare the statistics on the deaths of Jewish Women in concentration camps to Jewish Men in concentration camps at the hands of German Men, and you get statistics practically congruent to the statistics for American mental hospitals!

Likewise, it absorbs practically every major Western myth, from the Garden of Eden, to Oedipus, to the Trojan War and the Fall of the House of Atrius (as Robert Graves points out, all of these are shorthand accounts of the historical overthrow of Matriarchal religions by patriarchal religions, written from the point of view of the triumphant patriarchy, whose basic point in their retelling is to show the Matriarchy never existed--though all the traditional Matriarchal symbols, twins, chalice, serpent, and lamed man, have been neatly absorbed into the new, patriarchal myths) to Jack the Ripper, a crime which Scotland Yard solved to its own satisfaction six months after the last murder was committed, but refused to release the file until nineteen seventy-three because the murderer, as his stage-cockney notes to the police and newspapers made patently obvious, was "a middle class male," and the six women he murdered and mutilated--all East End prostitutes--were "nobodies."

On the daisy-embossed pamphlets that once accompanied tampons there used to be a page headed "The History of Menstruation" which cheerfully explained,

for the benefit of young women who had newly reached puberty, that during medieval times menstruating women were locked up during their periods because they were considered unclean. But today, the pamphlet went on, we live in a more enlightened age.

What the pamphlet fails to mention is that "unclean" in medieval times meant specifically "unholy." (Nobody was clean in medieval times; the invention of the bathtub was several hundred years off.) Women were "unholy" during their periods because there was a superstition prevalent, left over from a matriarchal religion that, here and there in Europe, was strong enough to eventually spark off the Inquisition, that a menstruating woman could cause the death of one of two men simply by walking between them; as well, during their periods, women were assumed to have special powers over crops and tides. And that was why fathers locked up their daughters and wives during their (whose? But perhaps we are beginning to see whose) periods: men were terrified that they would be done in for the patriarchal disenfranchisement of their female relatives that was proceeding on apace. "People" are perfectly happy to discuss superstitions about "uncleanness and women" amidst daisies and soft-focus photographs. Why aren't they (and who writes these pamphlets...?) willing to discuss, among the same doves and lilies, the superstitions about power that underlie them?

The situation is appalling, across the whole world, from the various African tribes in which the men circumcise the women ("female circumcision" is a white, male, anthropological euphemism for "clitoridectomy" in which the entire organ is removed, at the root, with a sharp stone) to the anthropologist Edmond Leach, some six months ago, in an honorary lecture presented at London University, pleading that we (who?) reinstitute sexual segregation in Higher Education, and that women be discouraged (by whom...? Well, by "people") from studying certain subjects, that they be restricted (again, by whom...?) to certain others, and that we turn to primitive societies with strict separation of the sexes as a model of how to solve our (whose...? Come on now; whose?) problems.

I am male; I am sexist.

In the current social context the two statements are synonymous.

Any man who doesn't begin by this admission is lying.

Any woman who won't admit this is the all-too-sympathetic victim of some personal strategy devised to live with her own situation by ignoring the larger one that proscribes it.

When I go out with Marilyn to dinner at our local French restaurant (where we have been going practically once a week for over a year) and Marilyn pays the bill by check (from money she has earned at her own business, which brings in eighty percent of our income), I feel a slight moment of discomfort: it is nowhere near as strong now as it was a year ago, but it is there: it is sexism.

When we go to the same restaurant, with our old friend (of some eighteen years standing) Judy, and Judy, who smokes long, thin cigars, offers us both one after dinner, and I refuse and Marilyn accepts (at other times, I have accepted an after-dinner cigar--specifically from (who?) Michael Perkins, at the Mexican Gardens restaurant on Cordelia Street in New York, and enjoyed it very much), and the waiter appears to light them, I feel a moment of embarrassment, mortification, and discomfort: that's sexism (whose? mine?).

Marilyn works in her book business three days a week, switching off with

her partner; on the odd days, she often has to go to various other shops to buy stock; so I take care of our nine month old daughter seventy percent of the time. Marilyn, a writer who is also running a self-owned, full-time business, takes care of her thirty percent of the time. When Marilyn is out and has agreed to be back to take over Alyx by a certain time, she is usually back to the minute or even a few minutes early. When I have made arrangements to go out and be back to take over Alyx at a specific time, nine times out of ten I am twenty to forty minutes late.

That's sexism.

This morning I have had free time to go browsing in London's sf bookstore, Dark They Were and Golden Eyed; and I have stopped into a restaurant for lunch where, between courses, I am jotting the first draft of all this down--with the result I will probably be half an hour late to start my spell with my daughter; even taking the time to write this letter involves my sexism.

As a black American, I would say that once a month on the average I have to endure some situation of overt racism (the racial situation is talked about less and is far worse in England than it is in, say, the North Atlantic States: twice now this year the Indian restaurant on the corner where I live in the middle of London's wealthy and residential half of the West End has had its plate glass window smashed by gangs of blond young men (I watched from the window) and once defaced with aerosol paint cans, declaring "N----s Out!" and on one occasion I have listened to the equally blond police, the next day, hem and haw to the Indian owner about, well, what can you do, and then walk away laughing), of the unsubtle type that makes good conversational fodder for the liberal living-room discussion--the types that even whites can understand because it's all been outlined for them so many times before, that even they know what you're talking about.

As an owner of a radio and an enjoyer of pop music, as a stroller in the streets, as a married male with a daughter, I can not go for an hour without observing some emblem of overt and rampant sexism--mine or someone (whose?) else's.

Sexism is a series of socialized and habitual non-responses to the behavior of women as long as that behavior follows very limited and proscribed paths; and it is equally a set of socialised, habitual, subjective negative responses (that may or may not lead to actions) that men experience whenever women's behavior moves outside this same, confining, oppressive and exploit

Is it deep-seated in the male racial unconscious? Or is it merely a superficial habit that can be changed by thought and exposure to a new social order?

What makes this particular question unanswerable is the hopeless confusion between the topology of "mind" and the topology of "brain." Our "higher thoughts" and our "profound ideas" both take place on the surface of the cerebral cortex--which is, topologically speaking, the deepest part of the brain and evolutionarily speaking, the newest. If one considers the little three square inches of brain where all information both enters and leaves the organ as the "highest" surface, This entrance/exit surface is, evolutionarily speaking, the oldest part of the brain; and the neural matter right "under" it seems to play a large part in the control of all automatic and habitual processes, from the "shadowing" function of language ("shadowing" is the ability to say back what someone is saying to you; with very little practice, most people can shadow another speaker's words continually with an average of a quarter of a second delay, which is about the minimum time for any human response, which, given the relatively long synapse times, means that the signals involved can

not be traveling through more than an inch of brain material) to nail-biting, to heartbeat, to breathing, to digestion, as well as the control of the endocrine glands. Now obviously some of these habits can be programmed from (or through) the "deeper" surface of "conscious thought" and some can't. But the topological confusion as to what "internal responses" and "external behavior" are basically "deep down and ineradicable" (what is it deep down in, and what is it ineradicable from?) and what is "surface and changeable" (which surface, and of the "brain" or the "mind;" and do you have any clear picture of how the two relate?) puts the discussion beyond rational bounds.

Is this topological confusion between mind and brain, then, an example of sexism?

No. Rather, sexism is such a pervasive problem that any piece of human confusion can be appealed to in support of it. ("Sexism is too ingrained, deep down, and basic to people's" (whose...?) "minds to eradicate" and is therefore "...trivial, superficial, and not a deep concern of most mature persons" (who is that again...?) "and the women" (oh, that's who) "who object to it are only latching on to a superficial fad to cover up their" (whose did you say now?) "deep down neuroses...etc. etc.") The rational approach, where people sit down and politely try to show each other where they are mistaken, is only of limited use before such an all-pervasive problem:

It leaves the anti-sexist with the burden of clearing up every piece of human confusion there is (the mind/brain topology confusion in discussions of sexist "instincts"/habits; the showing/telling confusion in sexist fiction; the description/explanation confusion in sexist argument; the action/intention confusion in sexist encounters--and on, and on, and on) while the other side blithely jumps from one to the next (and the forms of human illogic, from teleological fallacies to category-concept mistakes, are numberless as the stars--and all very easy to fall into, no matter what one is arguing about). But because sexism is as socially prevalent as it is, all and more such fallacies, knowingly and unknowingly, are going to become part of the argument; and will, specifically, be brought to bear against anti-sexist women.

Sexism is deadening, painful, vicious, and destructive of health, wealth, mind, and life. (Whose...? Guess!)

When somebody has his foot on your neck, he (or his brother) may be quite ready to explain his position to you or your sister (should you ask) and his reasons for standing there. And he may even try to convince you that it doesn't really hurt you all that much now, does it? But you are a damn fool if you waste too much energy politely explaining to him (or his brother) why it hurts, or what the logical mistakes in his argument, novels, or relationship with language and/or society are.

In the sexist context of Western society, the only rational response (whose response now...? Do we have that, at least, clear?) is to go out and get a gun. There have already been threats on Robin (editor of SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL) Morgan's life, and she has been carrying one on her university speaking engagements.

Rational discourse, in a situation like this, is all gravy.

Therefore, if we (who? Me, Jeff. You. And Tiptree. Because we are the only three that any of us can speak for in this symposium) do not all agree about the seriousness of the situation from the start, then this symposium is not worth the time, expenditure of energy, and frustration that will result.

Okay? Have "we" got that clear? If so, then what are you doing control-

ling this symposium on Women in Sf, in this culture? Keep your hands on the table where I can see them.

This is a deadly serious subject.

I don't want my comments "edited down" for whatever reason. And I certainly don't want any of the women's comments "edited down" either; and certainly not by you.

This is the women's subject; and you (Jeff) are not responsible to edit them down. I know that because I happen to have been born on the same side (male) of the very great cultural divide you were; and I know the temptation/pressures we are under. And I also know about "people" who, in this culture, on this subject, begin letters with "Dear People--"

Last month I was having a conversation with a twelve-year-old, and her father, that began as a discussion about the EARTHSEA trilogy and went on to the lack, in children's books, of strong active, women characters who succeed (like other people, say: Conan the Conqueror, for example; or Tarzan; or Lord Von Ray; or Tom Swift; or Robinson Crusoe; or Huckleberry Finn; or Tolstoy's (or Melville's) Pierre; or David Copperfield; or Tom Jones). I knew from previous conversation that six months back, Livy had devoured all six books of Jean Rhys; she is a pretty bright kid! Extract from the conversation:

Me: What kind of books do you like?

Livy: Oh, well...you know. Books about people.

Me: Can you think of any women characters in the books you read that you particularly like?

Livy: Oh, I never read books about women!

The tragic point is that even a twelve-year-old already knows that women are not people; and even a twelve-year-old has begun the construction of all those tragic strategies one must create if one is a woman, to live with this piece of appalling news, echoed in the lyrics of every popular song, underscored by every advertisement and movie and television program and walk down the street you take.

Livy's father (an Oxford graduate, with one son sixteen and three daughters, fifteen, twelve and twelve), in the discussion of children's books, with the blatant example of its effect that had suddenly confronted him with his own daughter, suddenly became very concerned with sexism. Two months before, I'd watched him reduce his fifteen-year-old daughter to tears: No, she could not unplug the hi-fi and carry it down from the third floor! She must wait till her sixteen-year-old brother (who, incidentally, is two inches shorter than she is) got home to do it for her! She knows nothing about such things and might break it or get a shock...! Now is this sexism? Surely this is just how people who have families have to act from time to time to keep order. And I think I am safe in saying that, despite his concern for sexism in children's literature, within his family order will prevail.

This is a serious subject.

We do it right or we don't do it at all. I feel no compunction to be intelligent, civilized, and rational over all this: I have a daughter to rear and books to write that she can read someday without having to cut her soul in half to enter and enjoy them.

Any shit and I bow out.

I have better things to do.

That settled, I go on to your actual questions:

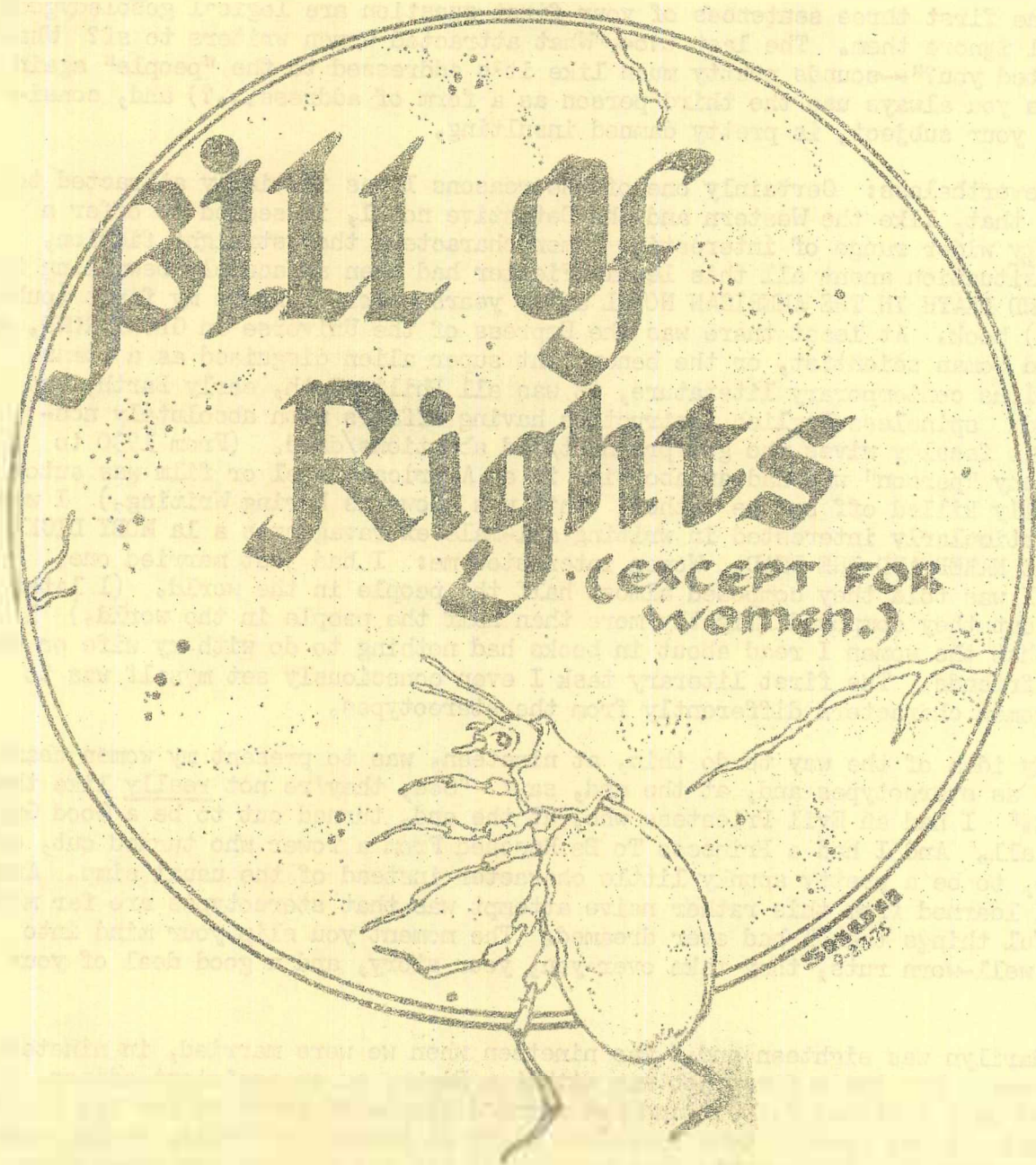
The first three sentences of your first question are logical gobbledygook; so I'll ignore them. The last two--"What attracted women writers to sf? What attracted you?"--sounds pretty much like it's addressed to the "people" again (unless you always use the third person as a form of address...?) and, considering your subject, is pretty damned insulting.

Nevertheless: Certainly one of the reasons I was initially attracted to sf was that, like the Western and the Detective novel, it seemed to offer a slightly wider range of interesting women characters than straight fiction, whose situation anent all this Leslie Fiedler had been so acutely bewailing in LOVE AND DEATH IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL a few years before I wrote my first (published) book. At least there was the Empress of the Universe in GLORY ROAD, or the odd woman scientist, or the benevolent super alien disguised as a woman. In serious contemporary literature, it was all Philip Roth, early Barth, and Malamud: spineless English instructors having affairs with absolutely non-existent faculty wives who got pregnant/had abortions/died. (From 1930 to 1965, any "person" who had an abortion in an American novel or film was automatically killed off by the author. This was known as Daring Writing.) I was not particularly interested in writing all-male extravaganzas a la MOBY DICK cum THE NAKED AND THE DEAD. Women interested me: I had just married one. Also, I was told they composed almost half the people in the world. (I later found out they composed slightly more than half the people in the world.) I knew that the women I read about in books had nothing to do with my wife or our women friends. The first literary task I even consciously set myself was to show women characters differently from the stereotypes.

My idea of the way to do this, at nineteen, was to present my women characters as stereotypes and, at the end, say: "See, they're not really like that at all!" I had an Evil Priestess who, at the end, turned out to be a Good Guy after all. And I had a Princess To Be Rescued From a Tower who turned out, on rescue, to be a pretty spunky little character instead of the usual simp. And what I learned from this rather naive attempt was that stereotypes are far more powerful things than I had ever dreamed. The moment you slip your mind into their well-worn ruts, they take over you, your story, and a good deal of your world!

Marilyn was eighteen and I was nineteen when we were married, in nineteen sixty-one. Marilyn's first job was with Ace Books, as an assistant editor. She had just finished N.Y.U. (and had added a couple of years to her age to get the job). I was working as a bookstore clerk at Barnes and Noble, in the textbook department. Marilyn had been working at Ace for perhaps two weeks when she learned that a young man of twenty-three, named Ed, who had no degree and who shared the office with her and who had been hired the same week she had been, to do the same job, was making twenty dollars a week more than she was. Just out of curiosity, she asked the managing director why. (This was Ed's first publishing job as well. And, on the records, Marilyn and Ed were the same age.) The managing director smilingly explained that it was customary to start men higher.

Shortly a phone was installed in their office, on Ed's desk. Marilyn was doing rights-and-permissions for Ace and had to use the phone in her work. Ed by now was basically reading, selecting, and copy-editing. So Marilyn had to get up from her desk and go use the phone on Ed's, whenever she had to phone the rights department at another publisher. After a couple of weeks, she men-



tioned this to the office manager; and was told, Oh we never give phones to women employees; they make too many personal phonecalls. (In 1961 nobody even thought such a statement insulting--as something that even if you felt, you might at least try to dissemble about it when called on it.) About a week after this, Marilyn came home upset by an encounter she'd had that afternoon with Ed. Marilyn, as I said, needed the phone for her work. Most of the phonecalls that came into the office, however, were (personal) calls for Ed. For the first week, simply because her work required she use the phone to call out so much, she had taken to answering it--putting down what she was doing, getting up from her desk, going over to Ed's, and answering it. Now that it had become clear what the phone pattern was, however, Marilyn had suddenly realized that he still expected her to do the same thing. He was quite prepared to sit there and read, while the phone rang seven or eight times at his elbow, till Marilyn got up, came over, and answered it for him.

That day, Marilyn--who was correcting galleys after lunch--simply decided she wasn't going to answer the phone any more. The next time it rang, she let it ring, till Ed looked up and asked: "Are you going to get that?"

"Nope," Marilyn said, and went on reading.

There was no blow-up. Ed answered the phone--which was for him. Later, however, he asked Marilyn would she at least answer the phone when there were writers or other editors in the office; and went on to explain that he didn't mind answering the phone, since most of the calls were for him, but it would make him uncomfortable if he were to answer a phonecall that did turn out to be for her. In short, he explained, he wanted Marilyn to pretend to be his secretary, but would be made uncomfortable should anyone possibly mistake him for hers. Nor did he see the least contradiction or unfairness in this. At that time, "people" didn't.

On Wednesday mornings there were editorial meetings to which assistant editors were not invited. Marilyn had already realized that the only way to survive in this situation was to move up out of it as fast as possible. She came up with a six-month publishing program for public-domain "classics," that Ace had been dabbling in for the educational market. She showed the program to the editor-in-chief, who showed it to A.A. Wyn, then the publisher, who decided Marilyn must be "a pretty bright girl" (all women in publishing, yea unto fifty-five-year-old senior editors at Harcourt Brace, were "girls" back then). So, the next week, Marilyn and Ed were invited to attend the editorial conference. No, Ed had had nothing to do with the idea, drafting or presentation of the program. But it was just that it was customary (it was explained to Marilyn) to invite the male assistant editors to the editorial conferences after they had been there six months as a matter of course. No, the women assistant editors were not usually asked to the editorial conferences at all. But since an exception had been made in Marilyn's case, it had been decided that they might as well move up his invitation by three months, since Marilyn's program had shown that assistant editors (who? Why, people who were assistant editors, of course) could be pretty bright after all. Besides, it might make Ed feel bad if she were moved up over him. And did she know that she was the first woman editor ever to be asked to the editorial conferences at all at Ace? That was something to be proud of! (Why, when nobody would have thought for one moment about her feelings three months later when Ed would have been automatically asked to the editorial conferences and she would be left in her office?) In short, Marilyn's editorial program had won another battle for "people."

The women friends who dropped by our lower east side apartment during that year seemed to have only one topic of conversation. Most of them were Marilyn's university friends, and they were all moving from the world of the University to the world of work. The most frequent topic of conversation was:

What do you do about jobs that advertise positions as "editors," "travel agents," or "stockbrokers" in the women's classified section of the Times, that close with the phrase: Some typing required. The inclusion of this phrase, all these women had found out, meant that, regardless of the title of the job, you were going to be somebody's secretary.

They didn't want to be secretaries.

They had just completed university.

They wanted to be editors, travel agents, stockbrokers.

I must have sat listening to hundreds of hours of conversation in which these young women tried to figure out strategies for how to deal with this. Some simply had refused to learn to type. Some refused to admit they already knew. One strategy that, to me anyway, looked good at first was to respond to such an ad: "I can type enough for my own correspondence," which seemed to be putting it on the line: You lie to me, I'll lie to you, and we both know what we're talking about. The only problem with that tactic (as I remember a young woman who'd gone to work for a travel agency first explaining) was that we (who?) all know that if you can type enough to type your own letters, you can type enough to type somebody (who-body?) else's.

And the one strategy you could not use was to go into a job interview and say: Do you want me for the job advertised, or are you lying to me and trying to finesse me into a job as a secretary with a college degree at less than the salary you would have to pay a secretary out of secretarial school, the lure of "advancement" supposed to compensate me for the low starting (for secretary) salary?

What did I think of all this?

Well, I figured that these were just some of the various problems that people (who...?) had to face in the world of work. After all, I had real problems too, working at Barnes and Noble: the store was hooked into a kind of muzak where vast, sixteen rpm records played the dullest sop imaginable out over the store all day long. A bunch of us learned that the store manager held a master's degree in music from Columbia University. One of the other clerks had some sixteen rpm recordings of Mozart divertimenti (the original muzak, but Oh-so-much-better done). A deputation of us went to see the store manager and asked him if we wouldn't all be happier if he swapped the Mozart for the muzak.

His response was: "I can't abide Mozart!"

And that was that.

Now that was the kind of problem I had to put up with at work. Didn't that show that everybody (who...?) had to learn to live with problems?

About this time an incident occurred that I think of as a turning point in my own awareness of what was going on. Marilyn was out somewhere that afternoon. It was raining cats and dogs. Suddenly the door burst open and Marilyn, dripping wet, came in and plopped down some shopping bundles. "Here," I handed her a pair of my jeans since they were the nearest things to hand. "Why don't you change into these." And in the middle of the growing puddle on the kitchen floor, Marilyn undressed, towed herself off, and slipped into my pants (we both wore size twenty-eight back then!), zipped them up, turned around while she slid her hands into the pockets--

"What's the matter?" I asked.

She'd suddenly gotten the strangest expression. "The pockets...!" she exclaimed. "They're so big!"

Then she showed me the pockets in the pair of girls' jeans she'd bought a few weeks ago; and the pockets in her overcoat. And in her skirts. None of them was large enough to accomodate a pack of cigarettes without its sticking out the top. (Remember, this was nineteen sixty-one: pre-Kennedy assassination; pre-Beatles; pre-wrap-around-denim-skirts; even people who styled themselves "beatniks" had short hair; peyote was legal; and my father, who had been a jazz musician in his youth, had told me that marijuana lead to death, not because he believed it, but because he thought it was a good idea that I should; trying to explain to an intelligent person that Martha and the Vandellas' "Heat Wave" was an incredibly complex musical structure encountered the same disbelief as trying to explain that Stockhausen's "Cry of the Children" was true music.) The idea that pockets in men's clothes were functional had never occurred to her. The idea that pockets in women's clothing were basically decorative had never occurred to me. We began to talk about this, which led on to other things--and before long we realized that, though we had gone to the same high school, had seen each other other daily for four years, had shared thousands of intimate conversations, somehow without even knowing that the other existed, we had been raised in two totally different cultures.

What defines a culture?

An anthropologist will tell you costume, language, economic organization and relationship to the world, relationship to art (for me, Jeff, most Great Music is written by other men; for a woman, most Great Music is written by Someone Else), and to God/religion. Strictly on a man/woman basis, these were all socially entirely different for Marilyn and me. I had seen the economic side of it already (twenty dollars a week, for starters) and it was perfectly clear that, in terms of opportunities, there was nothing symmetrical about the two cultures in the least. Women's was cramped, limited, and exploited. (It was back in 1960 that I first heard the then-popular joke from a young male stockbroker: "In American business, women do the work; men do the thinking." He thought it was very funny.) Now all this was going on in the months before, the months during, and the months after I decided to write my first science fiction novel. What did I think about it?

I thought it was unfair, frustrating, demeaning, degrading, and totally unpleasant.

It was so unpleasant, I didn't want to have anything to do with it!

As a writer, I still had the vague idea that writing was there to entertain. And how were you supposed to entertain "people" if you told them that the world was like that? So I decided I would write science fiction.

What did I want to write about in science fiction? Well, I thought that science fiction was perfectly capable of dealing with real problems of real people--like muzak vs. Mozart! I was sure there would be no real difficulty in translating this kind of problem into sf terms.

Could I have translated Marilyn's problems into sf terms?

I think I already suspected that it was a subject that even to touch at any point would cause the whole thing to break open and splatter all over everything, like the great, rotten fruit it was.

Yes, sf was preferable.

Marilyn's chronic complaint about her job was the actual material of the fiction she edited: specifically, the women characters. They were completely restricted to two types. There were Vicious Evil Bitches, who were basically man-haters. A man-hater is a woman who is not consciously aware that she hates men, but all her actions, even to her very demeanor (self-assured) and bearing (confident), make it perfectly clear to every man and woman who gets within twenty feet of her what she is. A man-hater who is in business, for instance, doesn't hate men because she is getting twenty dollars a week less than they are for doing the same job, but because she was raped by her uncle as a child and has completely blotted it out of her mind. If she could only remember she was raped, then she'd stop hating men. And if she could only get a lay (which meant violently, against her will, and usually in some particularly physically uncomfortable place, like a sandy beach or a twiggy forest floor--anyone who has ever had sex on a beach or in a forest is aware that there are certain nearly obliterating disadvantages to passion and/or romance), then she would probably leave business forever and become a happy housewife. (This was called Psychological Insight and was frequently combined with Daring Writing.) If she were in publishing, for instance, she wouldn't answer telephones for the men on the other side of her office; she resented having to pretend to be somebody's secretary. And you never found out what salary she made (why, she made the same salary as everyone (who...?) else, didn't she?); and if she proposed an editorial project, she was openly delighted if it netted her some advancement, but if it proved generally beneficial to "people," she was secretly bitter. The real Psych. Ins. writers went so far as to explain that the problem underlying all these sick women's mental disease was frigidity. They were frigid, which was why they had all these awful feelings in the first place. (But, as I said, I'd married a woman, and I knew that wasn't the problem.) Occasionally, the explanation was that they were nymphomaniacs, which meant that, really, they were frigid, which was why they had all these awful feelings in the first place. (But, like I said, I was living with a woman, day in and day out, and that just wasn't it either...) The Vicious Evil Bitch, however, could always be assured of defeat in the end (it was as certain as death-from-abortion); if she wasn't shot, or run over, or didn't slip off a cliff, or get struck by lightning, then some Extremely Masculine Male would Put Her In Her Place, and chuckle about it all the way to the bar to have a drink with the boys. The bitches, however, at least lent some life to the stories they were in.

Much more common than the bitch, however, was the Simp. Usually the simp was around solely to be rescued; invariably she would Watch in Terror the final fight between hero and villain, too paralyzed with fear even to think about throwing a punch or a paperweight or a desk drawer herself. If a simp, even by accident, strayed into business, not only would she happily answer the phone for all (who...?) and sundry, make coffee and stay after work to help out any man who smiled at her, if she got an idea for a publishing program, she terribly tactfully suggested it to the guy across the office in such a way that even he thought it was his own idea, and then just gnawed her nails with worry over whether he got invited to editorial conference or not, and was generally the sort of woman people (who...?) just loved to have around--until she was off stage, at which point somebody (who? Usually one of the Boys at the Bar) would explain: She's really a simp. All she wants to do is get her claws into you (no matter how nice they were, underneath every simp was a bitch; a simp was a "healthy" bitch who demonstrated her health by suppressing all evidence of bitchiness except wanting desperately to be married to You (who?)); and can you really imagine life tied down to a fragile, spineless, terrified little ball of dough like that? Then everybody would laugh and have another drink. (Who-body ...?)

Now Marilyn and I were both writers, as well as book-clerks and editors. Marilyn was working with poetry. I was working with fiction. This "tiny part" of the problem--female characters in fiction--I thought I might be able to

handle without getting my hands dirty. As I said, I didn't want to exclude women from my writing. Coming up with better, more varied, more believable women characters seemed like a safe, and if not easy at least purely literary, task. I had already written one novel that had shown me the traps of trying to fit somebody (who-body was that again?) into the stereotype and then breaking it suddenly. Before I began THE FALL OF THE TOWERS, I did some hard thinking about what was necessary for a template to make good, women characters.

A couple of hours discussion with Marilyn, and we had it pretty well fixed:

First of all, action is the clearest (and most commercial) way to present character. A good character of either sex must be shown performing purposeful actions (that further the plot), habitual actions (that particularly define her or him), and gratuitous actions (actions that imply a life beyond the limit of the fiction). Simply because of the way most books are plotted, the male characters regularly get to indulge in all three types of action. The women characters, however, if evil bitch, are all purpose, but no habit or gratuitous; if simp, she is all gratuitous, but no purpose or habit. So the first task, after finding a plot that just does not require women in either of these two ugly, banal, and boringly cliché grooves, is to make sure you portray your women characters clearly performing all three types of actions. (And, re the purposeful actions, performing them successfully!) (In case you haven't noticed, I am now answering the one answerable sentence in your second question: "How do you create characters of the opposite sex?" I have refrained from asking "Opposite to what?" simply to avoid war.) That's one axis of the problem.

The other, as I conceived it at age twenty, runs more or less like this:

To create strong, believable characters of either sex, the character's economic anchors to the world must be clearly shown. Fiction as we know it is a response to the same elements of the Industrial Revolution as Marxism is: Marx discovered that "The mode of production of material life generally dominates the development of social, political, and intellectual life." Because of this relation (that would have existed whether Marx discovered it or not), fiction works on the premise that the products of production, reflecting back to the mode of production, also reflect (and reflect on) social, political, and intellectual life--which is what we are doing when we describe people's clothes and furniture and cars and what they eat and what they live in, in a piece of fiction that ostensibly is only concerned with "what happens." This is why it is so important, in the maintenance of fictional reality, to keep clear either by implication or direct statement, where the money comes from, how much, and what the relationship is to the money of other people involved. Almost all genre fictions--from the Western to James Bond--become fantasies at the exact point they obfuscate this all-important point. Think of the number of women characters for whom jobs are simply never mentioned. They get their money from their husbands? All right, how do they get it? In a monthly allowance? If so, how much and what is it expected to cover? The following two "supported housewives of wealthy husbands" are socio/politically two very different people, and would have to be clearly differentiated in a piece of fiction in which they both occurred: The woman whose husband makes seventy-five thousand a year, pays all major household expenses himself, and who gives his wife a hundred dollar a week free and clear allowance for herself, in return for which she is to oversee the house, cooking, children and entertaining, transferring all bills to him; and the woman whose husband makes sixty thousand a year and maintains a joint checking account with her in which there is always ten thousand, she paying all bills out of this account. The economic freedom to take part in some romantic huffer-mugger of two such women, their attitudes about it, and what it might mean to the rest of their lives, would be vastly different! (I would have been delighted to have such information, say, about the Faye Dunaway character in Polanski's CHINATOWN.) Whether it is stated or im-

plied, the writer must make this information palpable if the character, female or male, is to be believable in fictional terms.

That's number one; number two is:

Women characters must have central-to-the-plot, strong, developing, positive relations with other women characters. The commercial/art novel would be impossible without such relationships between men: from Ishmael and Queeg-queg, to Fafhrd and Mouser, to Huck and Jim, to Holmes and Watson, to Nick and Gatsby, such friendships are the form, content, propellant and subject of the novel. I would pause here to state, from thirteen years distance, that any novel that does not, in this day and age, have a strong, central, positive relation between women can be dismissed as sexist (no matter the sex of the author) from the start. The reason for this is contained in the third point:

Despite whatever romantic interest there is in the plot, it is necessary that all the central characters, women and men, have some central, non-romantic problem which they must exert their efforts to solve. There has always been a lot of talk about the plot "Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl." To my knowledge, no such novel has ever been written in English or any other language I'm familiar with. (A good number have been written with the plot "Girl meets boy, girl loses boy, girl gets boy" and they are mostly godawful.) The plot that is abbreviated "Boy meets girl, etc." is, in reality, always: "Boy discovers problem to be solved, in the course of which he meets girl; boy tries to solve problem, in the course of which he loses girl; boy solves problem (or occasionally boy discovers problem cannot be solved) as a result of which/reward for which (or in compensation for which) he gets girl." And the problems he discovers/tries to solve/solves are getting a new job, climbing a mountain, writing a novel, solving a murder, moving up in society; the romance is always the sub-plot, never the plot itself.

THE FALL OF THE TOWERS began (as did Gordon Dickson's NAKED TO THE STARS, and several other novels) as a polemical answer to Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS (for polemical point, see pages 323-326 of the Ace Books one-volume edition); in it, I resolved to submit my female characters to the same structural calculus as my male characters. As far as it went, I feel, on that score at any rate, it was successful; and I still believe, twelve years later, that the parameters I set out at twenty are the primary ones needed to overcome the literary problem--if one bears in mind that they are parameters, not analytic definitions of "what every good story must have." They are not parameters that automatically contain excellence within their boundaries and automatically exclude all mediocrity. At any rate, they more or less got me through the FALL, THE BALLAD OF BETA-2, BABEL-17, and EMPIRE STAR--though, here and there, I found myself in spite of what I knew, slipping up on that all-important question of friendships between women.

I still think these parameters are primary.

And they don't go anywhere near far enough!

Anyone who has ever tried to deploy male and female characters into a plot so that they all have non-romantic problems to solve, are firmly economically delineated, and have, beside their romantic interests, firm friendships with members of their own sex, and through the solution of their problems change in some way clearly dramatized by the plot (get a better job, more fame, wealth, prestige--love is a personal reward, not a social one), will have run up against the reason why these parameters are not enough:

Unless you are writing total fantasy--indeed, if you are writing about practically any analogue of our society where the raising of children is pri-

marily apportioned to women, and a significant number of women are out of the work force because they are at home either taking care of children or preparing to take care of them, and by "significant" I mean more women are so occupied than men--you are going to run smack into (and you are going to have to run your female characters dead on through) all those nasty, unpleasant problems Marilyn was having to face day after day in her work: just exactly those problems which I felt were too nasty and ugly to handle in sf.

Science fiction offers the writer a standard solution to the above problem: the "super-woman" solution. You can write about the woman Space Captain (who's already made it to the top), but you never make your main (or one of your sympathetic central) character the woman first lieutenant, who is in competition with men for the position of captain, that is to be decided and granted by men--because then you'll be right back having to write about sexual politics again; and they are hideously ugly, as Marilyn's life at Ace Books had amply demonstrated to me. You make your woman character the head of the Publishing Firm/Intelligence Service/Empress of the Universe; but you will have a very ugly pot to scour if you go at all realistically into how she got there, what she had to put up with, what she had to finesse her way out of; believe me, it will not be "Muzak vs. Mozart." The other thing, of course, is that Super-woman better not have any women friends with whom she can occasionally shoot the breeze (and especially not a subordinate woman that she's taken a liking to and feels like giving some motherly advice to about the Way the World Is; because if she does, "people" are just not going to come off too nicely. And you know who they are, by now, don't you?). If you do, there is no way to avoid those ugly problems. (Say twenty percent of the space-fleet has women captains; and say that twenty percent of the crew is women. That seems fairly egalitarian, doesn't it--considering someone has to bear children and raise them through those first, formative, early years. That means that the majority of women captains--eighty percent--are going to come up through the ranks under male captains. Think of any two cultural encounters at an eighty/twenty proportioning. This is the most abusable deployment. Ace Books, back then, had an editorial staff of five, with one woman: twenty percent!) By and large, I used the super-woman solution in my own work (from Mabel Whyman to Maudline Hinkle); this solution allows the emblems of success to women characters, at the price of those fictional necessities, change and growth.

The necessary parameters for writing sf with good female and male characters are laid out above--with a final, fourth one: Do not shirk, avoid, and lie about the ugly when logical story development runs you into it (and with a problem like sexism, one cannot logically walk three steps in any direction without becoming mired down in it). I knew them when I was twenty as clearly as I do now. And not in one single book I have written have I ever followed the four completely--specifically because I wanted to dodge the ugly and the shoddy; because there were things I could not bring myself to say about "people," people who were not Marilyn, but whom I was born one of; it determined my particular approach to sf writing. And any survey of the evidence of my books--despite any intellectualization I may occasionally indulge to the contrary--shows that it is with "people," with men and against women, my own allegiances have lain.

Do you, Jeff, understand now why I am so distrustful of yours?

The original anthology sweepstakes

SMITH:

Vonda & Quinn: Would you care to initiate some discussion about your

anthologies? What preconceptions did you have when you started? Did the actual working on the anthology change your views?

YARBRO:

No, TWO VIEWS OF WONDER didn't change my mind very much, but it did give me a very strong object lesson in the fact that the times aren't a-changin' as much as we tell ourselves they are. Someday I'll show you my version of the intro to the book. But inevitably when you have a male-female business thing, the tendency is for the male to be the boss and the female to be the secretary, no matter how many assurances go on that this is not the case. And, particularly among male authors, when you have a male-female situation as Tom Scortia and I had, they tend to complain to the female and apologize to the male. And I resent that. I have decided, since that experience, not to collaborate with my friends. As much as I like Tom, I can't deal with that kind of situation. I end up mad at him for being male. And that's crazy.

There are a few men I know who do not do the number as most males do, and who are aware of the kind of pressures women are under. Luckily my husband is one of them. Tiptree is another. Tip listens (or reads, to be more accurate) and really tries to see the trouble from the woman's side, and that, my dears, is rare. I deeply value Tip's friendship, just as I cherish my husband, because neither of them asks me to be less than I am.

That's another thing. I can't think of the number of times my mom told me to be less outspoken, not to let people know I was smart, not to "scare" people so much. I know she meant well. She also tells me that getting mad at men who put me down is "coming down to their level" and "dignifying their insults." Well, dammit, that kind of attitude is what has kept women under men's thumbs

for the last 10,000 years. I have said before, and will say again many times, that the worse male chauvinist pigs are other women, the ones who perpetuate the myth. And that is one reason I do not expect to see true equality for women in my lifetime. Sadly, I figure it's going to be a four-generation fight, and I'm 32 right now. I won't be around 80 years from now.

I realize I've gone on more about women than about writing, but first things first. The women thing has caused the writing thing, not the other way around. By the way, I suggest a book by an H.R. Hayes called THE DANGEROUS SEX. It takes the female problem from a male point of view, but it does show the real ambivalence that affects how men feel about women. I don't always agree with Hayes, but he does say some valuable things. It's in paper, by the way.

Of course, another big stumbling block, not just for writers and their fictional characters, but for all of us living in this culture, is the automatic assumption that men are right and women are wrong. No matter what. This attitude colors almost everything from politics to tv commercials. And it can't help but color fiction, because even in sf, this is our starting point.

McINTYRE:

It's been two years since Susan Anderson and I wrote the prospectus for AURORA and thought about what we expected to get, so it's a little hard to remember. Stories we both liked were "Bye, Bye, Banana Bird," "The Star-Pit," "Driftglass," "Nobody's Home," Joanna's Alyx stories, etc. We knew we would get lots of "exotic means of becoming pregnant" stories--and we did, from people who should have known better. Also a sprinkling of illegal pregnancy stories (a plot that has my vote for stupidist sf cliché of the century). Most people seem to be incapable of thinking of women in any other respect than as baby machines and nurturers. That was rather depressing.

One surprise was that female-participant (or female-only) societies were almost invariably portrayed as more ecologically aware. Virtually all the stories we bought postulated very great changes in the basic structure of society (that was not so much a surprise).

By the way, our reject rate was 95%, and almost no stories were borderline --either we knew we wanted them or we knew we didn't. (There were a very few stories which were excellent but not right for AURORA, because of not having anything even remotely to do with the theme, or because, in one case, the story was rather female-chauvinistic. I really liked it but I couldn't justify buying it for AURORA.) Another interesting fact: Susan and I did not commission any stories, feeling (correctly, as it turned out) that many people would have difficulty dealing with our subject. But every story that we did buy except one came from personal friends (occasionally pestered personal friends) or, in two cases, from friends of one or another writer we had already bought from. Thus, Joanna recommended our book to Marge Piercy, and Tip told Craig Strete to send us "Why Has the Virgin Mary Never Entered the Wigwam of Standing Bear?" In the single aberrant case, one of the writers we had bought from gave a copy of LOCUS to a new writer, without knowing either that she was interested in writing or that our market report was in that issue. The interesting thing about that is that the story we bought as a result is one of the best in the book.

YARBRO:

I wish you'd gone into more detail about some of the stories you had, and what you saw in them (even if it reflects badly on the one of mine you rejected).

McINTYRE:

Some of the stories we got were unbelievable. "My goodness aren't we all equal" lecture stories in which everybody talks about equality and acts like 1955. Joke stories: a man wants to sue the government because the ERA outlaws discrimination and he can't have children. (Translation: hahaha, isn't the very idea of the ERA funny?) One about trading wives, one about how women on welfare should have to serve as prostitutes. I've repressed as many as possible. Your story's flaws were of ambition--perhaps too much for the plot--not of idiocy, and certainly not of the kind of viciousness (literally) that we got from both men and women.

There actually are women in science fiction

WHITE:

What absolutely amazed me, after Chip mentioned women in science fiction, is that there actually are women in science fiction. I am not saying, hey, lookie here gang, there's ladies in them thar space operas; I am saying there is a body of literature in which women appear, sometimes as shittily as in the mainstream, sometimes not, which must be drawn from in an analytical framework. To hold a symposium on women in science fiction starting now, because it is topical, because it is a nice sinecure for whoever calls it, is to be party to a fraud. In other words, there were feminist themes in science fiction long before Joanna Russ scared you all into having this symposium.

Let's go back to the tail end of Forry Ackerman's (not yours, not mine) Golden Age. Take THE SPACE MERCHANTS. Kathy Niven (I wondered, at 2 am, if



Catherine in Delany's *THE TIDES OF LUST* isn't her lineal descendant--the one who does get it on with the midget?--but then I thought, shit, why do we always say that one woman in literature is another's lineal descendant?) even keeps her maiden name. Kathy's speech to Mitch where she yells that "only Mitchell Courtney could marry a surgeon and turn her into a housewife" is a grand and glorious accusation, and as true anything Frederick Barth (the esoteric Levi-Strauss) or Levi-Strauss has to say about the acquisition of women being the acquisition of their skills to supplement the patrilineage. And look a bit closer at Kathy: her secret political life (she's a Consie ringleader, mind you, not just another chain-smoking follower), her career, her ability--all linked up with Mitch, frankly a rather stupid and easily manipulated star-class copymith: she Really Lusts After Him, even though he is a dolt, has him (metaphorically) murdered, but it's clear that she really sexually feels for someone, something I've never seen in any Spinrad or Ellison man or woman. True, at the end of the book I get the feeling that she will retire and become a Venusian housewife, but nevertheless she sets a science fiction standard and not once in the book does anyone say she's as good as a man. Take Pohl and Kornbluth's other women in the book. Hester, the secretary who dies for Mitch (he's her boss)...for all the cliché, she's a well drawn and economically-dependent character: and if she had been John Brunner's she would have been the double-crossing orgasm-faking secret agent bitch for The Stars Are For Man League in *THE LONG RESULT* (it strikes me that the only women Brunner likes are the ones he lets get struck by lightning like Fiona in "All the Devils from Hell" who then apologizes to the lightning), or compare Hester to the passively curious dancing Braxa in "A Rose for Ecclesiastes." But take Taunton's psychotic murderess Hedy: now there is a lady beyond Charles Manson's wildest dreams, the premonition of Sadie Glutz who's been told it's all right to kill, daddy will let you--in fact, daddy would prefer it--and leaps at the chance.

So where are the women in science fiction? They're not all Helen O'Loys, and there weren't very many of that breed. They're in political institutions, that's where. Many are in the military, most are in some kind of government service. They work for states and parties and planets. And when they don't it's because they're richer than those institutions, Olivia in TIGER, TIGER and Ruby Red in NWA. Alyx is salaried by earth. Rydra Wong is salaried by earth. (Rydra Wong = my country, right or wrong, = my cunt; and Mabel Whyman: the puns, Delany, the puns.) Kathy is a Consie. Aimee Burk is a WAC. Capt. Lena has a spaceship. Mabel Whyman is with the Global Power Brigade or whatever. Maudline Hinkle is a cop. Even James Tiptree's lady works for the government. Your own list should be starting now.

These women, then, the real ones (I say real ones because it is a waste of time to hold an intellectual discussion on Spinrad's women and we know it), are in political institutions that give them a context, a reality in which to express themselves, because a woman on her own just doesn't exist. But that's just half of it. The other half is that their identity is political, and there isn't any other kind of identity, even though those identities are allied to something other than feminism. What it means is that these ladies in political employment, they have Power. They have an invisible 00 in front of their names, an unspoken license to kill. It just happens that people in political employment, commanders of concentration camps and spaceships and undergrounds and Gila Monsters, have the legal (unlike Hedy) right to maim, rape, burn, pillage, and kill. Somehow, feminism doesn't deal much with pillaging (although I would love for someone to write "The Last Hurrah of the Golden Whore"), but the right to kill--now there's something that makes you pretty real. And in the same paragraph that Chairman Mao says political power comes out of the barrel of a gun, he says that power frees you to be a human being. There isn't another way.

But there is an alternative. There is the ultimate institutional state-serving government-salaried woman. And she expresses herself, she sings, she wins battles and loses lovers, gets loved again, and survives to see another planetfall. She's the cyborg in Anne McCaffrey's THE SHIP WHO SANG. How does she do it? Well, it was done for her. When she was born, there was something wrong with her (her body) so they cut off two breasts and one vagina and then she was utterly and totally free to express herself however she wanted.

That's your goddam alternative.

The heroine in Joanna Russ's THE FEMALE MAN cried on the heaths of the Bronx that she was Shelley, she was Keats. Joanna, I'm not at all sure you have that choice in science fiction. But the options are very, very clear. You can be a cyborg or you can be Lt. Calley. And I want to see Kid Death enter that bar again...as a ten year old girl.

Let's go back to the 1950s for a bit, because I was never too happy as a cyborg. TIGER, TIGER. Murderesses again. Lady Olivia, without direct orders but the money to indulge her hobbies, is actually out there pillaging: punishing the world(s) for making her blind and beautiful. A lady as dispassionate as Skilliman or Shipansky, as dispassionate even as the real life Nobel Prize winning physicist Louis Alvarez who sat behind the pilot of the Enola Gay over Hiroshima, to see what the bomb would look like. There is also Robin, the black lady telepathist whose exploitation is one for one with the 1950s. (There is something in science fiction that rushes headlong to marry off black professional women as soon as the plot will allow: Bester's one way telepath (to a half-Chinese agent), Blacky's grandmother (to a white social worker), and the half-caste lady lawyer Lalache (who says she doesn't know what color she is --why doesn't she ask the local Klan?) in THE LATHE OF HEAVEN.) There is also the fabulous Jesbella McQueen; meeting Gully Foyle in their dark prison cave

she tells him--an architect's daughter who used her education for crime--she tells Gully how jaunting has totally restricted the freedom of women and reduced them "back" to paternal property, to purdah (meaning, as I hope to articulate elsewhere, that rapid "impacts" on social conditions do not change marriage patterns but alter the context(s) in which the value of women is exchangeable). Later, after a fine bit on the networks of crime, she takes up with a radioactive scientist. In love, she meets Gully again and says of Saul Dagenham, she "respects him. He's the only man who ever showed me the reason for the double standard." (Incidentally, this affair brings her into government service.) Well, score 10 out of 25 for 1954. But, I ask myself, what double standard? Saul Dagenham is so radioactive that he's only allowed $\frac{1}{2}$ hour a day in other people's company, and he's working for the Inner Planets during a war: when the hell does he find the time to cheat on this beautiful, loyal redhead? (Because, as Bester is well aware, the science fiction superman can do a helluva lot in $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour.) But why, why does Bester make her sexual loyalty (her conversion, considering the changeover, is enough) so important? I'm not certain why, but I think it's part of the same process that happens to his Hester, to Mary Noyes in THE DEMOLISHED MAN (don't you get the impression that once Ben Reich becomes a peeper, he and Mary'll get married). The process is called, if you can't use your science fiction women politically, they are of no use, so marry them off. (Especially if they're black.)

Oddly enough, science fiction women don't get married, they don't go back to hearth and home--unless they're in drag in THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS (whom you never see, just hear about), all those kemmering partners--they go back to the "right" (and frequently Right) and proper, institutionalized level of politics and stay there. Note that Rydra Wong can give up spaceships and remain a poet, but Jiz McQueen can't stay a criminal: if she does, she'll die. Like Lady Olivia and Ruby Red remain criminals, and die. If you are a science fiction woman, as I see the options, you are either rich enough to do your own killing (and are paid back in kind) or you must do someone else's killing for them. Those are the choices, and a whole lot of literature backs them up.

I don't really want to sit around and driticize people who don't justify trees being cut down for their writing. I don't want to tear apart this character of Keith Laumer's or Sturgeon's remarkably good fucks (to him they are aliens) or Ellison's acid heads or this story or that story. It tires me out, wastes me, when I/we need clarity, definition, tradition. James Tiptree, in "The Women Men Don't See" isn't writing feminist science fiction (although I think something more would have happened if he'd let his heroine be one of the guerillas, which, if he'd thought seriously about Kathy Niven or Lady Olivia or anybody in the tradition (yes, tradition!) of science fiction, he'd have been more in continuity to do something to that story (I don't know whether to recommend he spend a week with Jane Austen or Pohl & Kornbluth)), he's trying very hard to write topical science fiction, to keep up with the times, and tripping over 1970. Let me put it another way: racism is where every predisposition, even the unconscious ones, are predicated on race; in sexism, it's the same for sex. Now, in a symposium on racism in science fiction, would you discuss that Spinrad story about rich Africans visiting polluted America ("The Lost Continent") and say it's about black power? If we are going to be serious, we'd have to admit it was merely (and only) cute. Spare me the details, I want to look at the parameters of analysis the tradition of modern science fiction has left us with.

Where are the women in science fiction? Where are the feminist women? Some are undercover. There's "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes" (bet you didn't think I'd mention Ellison?), another cyborg, the lady who dies in the machine to become the machine to kill a man. Because that's where the women in science fiction are: they're out killing. It's getting on into the 70s, all of us are tired, the 1960s served to closedown the arenas for our struggle (you could

fire on your own ghetto or campus, remember?), and welfare has provided machines to take care of us all. The new women are the nutty dykes, the crazed lesbians you don't understand, they're Shrimp Hanson on the roof, they're Milly and Lottie and Janet. They either want to be left alone (to the extent that you can have the babies) or to kill you. Listen, now you can be a cyborg on welfare or you can be armed on our campuses: we don't have many other places to go. Maybe these are the ones you couldn't marry off, or perhaps your governments have no more use for our skills. But here we are. In the tradition of science fiction, what does it mean to say that political power (and there ain't no other kind) comes out of the barrel of a gun: it means that for as long as you're holding the the gun/laser beam/atom bomb/space gun turrets at someone, they call you "Sir," whether you're a man or a woman.

(I think it's indicative of the way things really are that in writing the last paragraph, I slipped out of "they" and into "we.")

*Commentary:
Perhaps we should all back up and start over*

KIDD:

The first set of questions either didn't turn me on, most-moods, or in one verbose frame of mind my response began with what happened when I was nine years old and my fourteen-year-old brother read sf (for a few months), as a result of which I acquired a habit (and an allowance to support it)...and so on for 43 more years, all interesting to me but a long way round to disclaim that any period whatever was truly a Golden Age in itself. BROOD OF THE DARK MOON doesn't assay out as true gold, to begin with.

Besides, POSSIBLY RELEVANT, it occurred to me without reliable figures to support the hypothesis, that (a) science fiction was not only predominantly a man's field then...any "then"...but science fiction is still predominantly a man's field. There were women writing pulp science fiction (bad though 99.9% of it all was) then, and I think it may be possible that the proportion of women writing the broader range of science fiction today may be either exactly the same or, just possibly, a little bit larger. Is it possible that the overall number of practitioners has increased without the ratio changing in the slightest?

(b) Figure-doctoring comes in right here, but I eschew the opportunity of doctoring my nonexistent statistics. I am not going to fling 35 out of 40 practicing sf (male) writers out of the equation merely because what they were writing was claptrap; nor am I going to rule Clare Winger Harris out merely because I flatly cannot recall whether A BABY ON NEPTUNE (title approximate) was good, bad or indifferent. It appeared in an sf pulp and a woman bylined it. Neither am I going to differentiate between good and bad sf (in or out of the genre) today. I am not even going to rule out the supersoft-core no-science "science fiction" written by some who claim to be practitioners, because men as well as women adopt sf writing conventions having done no real extrapolation themselves or simply strike attitudes (anti-science, pro-life, dadaist--attitudes which may or may not be interesting in or of themselves but which do not automatically generate science fiction). (And since I am not about to be caught saying women write Bad Science Fiction but men do not I am perfectly willing to leave the claptrap and the hoked-up stuff and the totally derivative and the marginal "science fiction" in among the evidence. There it all is and

it calls itself science fiction.) I submit that the presumptive one or two women writing sf among the reasonable figure of 40 to 80 men writing sf in the Twenties and Thirties (my age of gilded remembrance, because, naturally, I became a completist and haunted backnumber shops, so I had it all) is either no different or very little different from the 20 to 40 women writing sf now among the 400 to --what? 600 at the outside, counting in all the Frenchmen and Swedes and Japanese and so on and on?--men writing sf now.

Jeff, I say the only change is that it is a bigger pond today, and that the range from truly good to truly awful is possibly wider today, but that the predominance has not changed one iota. Or not more than a couple of iotas.

If anybody can produce reliable figures to back me up (or shut me up) I'll be interested. It's only a guess, backed by a lifetime more or less in the field. I won't fight or throw a tantrum if I am proven wrong. But I am inclined to feel that the question sprang from wrong givens.

And the more interesting question to examine might be: in what ways have the women (and the men) writing science fiction changed in their attitudes toward women? Women qua women, women qua characters; and so on, a whole lot of interesting aspects but I'm getting awfully tired of qua. Qua must go.

Detailing the changes in one's attitudes towards sex, specific sex, and the self, can lead into a lot of personal revelations. And I'm not into hanging all that out. (Don't need to, any more. I've found my lifestyle answers, some of them, and am contentedly looking for more.) But I would like to say that I have never suffered in any way discrimination on account of being a girl, a young woman, a woman, or even an old woman, that I was aware of at the time, an infinitesimal bit, in retrospect, but for the most part I have led a charmed life: happy, and lucky. Blessed, even. I have never been able to find enough time to do all the things I was interested in doing (and I inadvertently inflict on others the results of my besetting sin, being late on what I most care about, because I keep trying to get the less-important things out of the way first) (and discovering more and more in recent years that after I've done all the other things I no longer have the strength left to tackle the rest) but the things I haven't done have not been left undone for lack of opportunity. So one of my new answers is reordering my priorities. I think what this works out to is that I never knew I wasn't liberated, so I was. I had virtually no awareness of just how put-upon most women were, and to the extent that I have become a convinced feminist, it has been as a result of having facts and figures (and case-histories) slowly percolate through to me.

It gives me an observer-posture that may be invaluable, if my colleagues will allow it to me, and forgive me that damning fact: I have not suffered what they may have suffered. Neither am I blind and deaf anymore to the condition of women--two adult daughters have seen to that; as has a changing climate of opinion--

All right. To the extent that I can, I have positioned myself within this group.

I agree that sf has been considered predominantly written for boys and (by some considerers) technology-minded men; and for males in general; which I take to be one of your givens, and a lot truer than the proposition that sf is no longer written predominantly by men (a proposition I hope I have demolished, if the facts will bear me out). Overnight (within the last couple of years) a lot of material-buyers--editors, publishers--have become aware of the fact that some women read sf as well. The markets are concentrating on women at the college level as reachable because they have already been reached. They are making damned little effort to reach (everybody stand back, I'm going to say a Bad

Word) the housewife; and for good reason--she has been shaped from the cradle to be what she is, and if she-as-stereotype wants her assumptions questioned, she wants them questioned, destroyed even, replaced, in safe and sane directions. She wants (if she becomes a woman whose consciousness is being raised) to know how it happened and what's to be done about it. She's not likely to get turned on to sf, not bloody likely--though she may drop the women's slicks in favor of MS, or something with a centerfold or she may even enroll for a course in women's studies.

One woman in forty (or one in four hundred) (some dauntingly small figure, probably equivalent to the proportion of professional writers, divided by sex, who turn out to be women, I throw in casually) will be exposed to ORBIT, or ANALOG & GALAXY, or one of the plethora of sf readings now sinking the textbook boat...will become hooked...and will thereafter read sf. It is a tribute to the vitality of the field that the few very good anthologies will be thus kept in print, and (hopefully) the magazines will continue somehow to exist. (Novels? There will always be novels written. It's the short story form that's in trouble for economic reasons.) It is a tribute to the nature of the sf reader, born or made, that he or she homes in on the stuff like iron-filings to the magnet. I say a tribute because it happens to be the set of mind I like best, respect most wherever I find it, and am always seeking for.

I submit that whether one reads or writes science fiction has only secondarily to do with what sex one is (and I will say, and throw it away for the moment, that children raised in a non-sexist society may no longer exhibit that one to forty ratio) but that it has everything to do with whether what one is looking for is the questions or the answers.

People who read sf want new questions. They will submit with joy to having their preconceptions challenged, overthrown. They will, some of them, hare after every new theory--and more power to them, so long as they retain the intellectual freedom to abandon a disproved hypothesis in favor of yet another one. Or several.

I first twigged this difference in ways of looking at the world when I announced my ambition to be the first person to stand on the moon. (All right, I didn't make it, but I wanted to.) My mother said, In heaven's name, why? She (and my father) never interfered with my bent; they aided and abetted me; but they never understood it, either. And therein, for me, lies the answer to your second and third questions. What first attracted women writers to sf and what attracted me and what attracts (as far as I can see) everybody who reads the stuff, is a willingness to consider questions with no answer, open-ended questions, radical assumptions, revolutionary paths. And not just a willingness, but a passion! Those samplers, male and female, who want their preconceptions reinforced reject sf. (What attracts people to read some of the twaddle that is passed off as science fiction I don't know, but it might be a safe guess to say that it is the conviction that they could do that just as well, if not better. One percent of them may be right, and may even wind up--briefly--as "science fiction" authors.)

I do not mean to be overly sarcastic about this, but in my job I get so much pure piddling twaddle dumped on me...from benighted youngsters, on whom I try to be gentle; from writers of film scripts who write from the model of monster films but who have never read a syllable of the real thing--and who spell worse than Chip Delany, with not one scintilla of the talent he has in his up-whose finger--whom I turn away with scant courtesy; from--oh, well...

The next question I could have answered at length, but since I didn't make it on the "every month or thereabouts" schedule until the day the first round robin sprang out of my mailbox, singing, I'll defer to those who pointed out

the obvious (that there are examples of men who have written well about women, abounding in literature in general, and there are examples within the genre as well--but ~~it~~ would take hours to dig them out and document my recollections of well-rounded and credible women, girls, old women in sf...only thumbnail sketches some of them, true, but to the life). And the further obvious, that the writer must be willing and able to imagine characters of either sex, any sex--at least in his or her own mind. This bears further mulling-over. I am having difficulty coming up with examples to back up my thinking, even though I have already excused myself from citing any--but I think that is more the fault of my lousy memory for names than owing to a true paucity of examples.

In any event, I have never felt in myself any inadequacy in imagining a male protagonist, and have attempted the job a number of times without ever feeling that it was audacious of me to do so. One assumes the persona, that's all, to the best of one's ability. It never occurred to me to question my ability to cope with seeing a character in depth, regardless of the character's sex! I believe in my men; I believe in my women. I regret only that it takes me about ten years to write a long story...and a year to write a short one. And--though I love it (with a passion!)--I hardly ever have anything to say worth writing an sf story about. I am avid for questions, but have remarkably few of my own.

Probably I should say, in my own defense, that my xenophobe (the general) in "Kangaroo Court" was virtually one-dimensional by deliberate choice. I had neither the technique nor the desire to make him a well-rounded person; he represented a force, a single state of mind, only. He is, so to speak, the blob of red in the picture, and the novella (with LOM words cut) presents its own limitations, simply as form, as construct.

About the other letters: Tip needs to get past his brilliant but limiting Mother concept. (Man = Nature, Woman = Nurture? Not enough, Tip, not enough.)

SMITH:

I did some figuring from the NESFA short story index for 1973 and came up with the following probable figures among short story writers: 61 female to 315 male. I was very surprised at the low figure; I suppose the fact that I just happen to read a lot of stories by women writers threw me off.

RUSS:

My brief answer was due to lack of time and tiredness. Chip can reply at length partly because he does not have to live the problem all the time and can therefore gather his energies for one great analytic attack. I must defend my self-esteem so constantly and in such petty situations that at times I feel as if I were talking not to people but to phonograph records. It's depressing. Sometimes it's genuinely personally ravaging.

Many of your answers conveyed an unmistakable "Listen, I'd have to talk for a month and I'm busy and anyhow I'm sick to death of the whole ghastly problem"--which I share and understand. I also emphatically endorse the analytic essays: Suzy Charnas's, Luise White's, and Samuel Delany's. The situation is nastier than any of us can imagine.

This does not mean that your reaction (or any man's) to a charge of sexism ought to be personal guilt. The charge is undoubtedly true--how can you help it?--but personal guilt is the most useless emotion there is. It doesn't even have the warning function of fear. A feminist who is angry and tired enough may try to bully you into guilt (and you may be personally guilty, but that's another matter) but the real point is not to make you feel bad, but to make you

stop. Don't respond to accusations of sexism with guilt. You will only get angry afterwards for having been made to feel so bad. THINK. And try to understand that sexism is almost always enforced in petty ways. It is the minutiae of life that teach us all our place in whatever society we are in.

One of the best things (for me) about science fiction is that--at least theoretically--it is a place where the ancient dualities disappear. Day and night, up and down, "masculine" and "feminine" are purely specific, limited phenomena which have been mythologized by people. They are man-made (not woman-made). Excepting up and down, night and day (maybe). Out in space there is no up or down, no day or night, and in the point of view space can give us, I think there is no "opposite" sex--what a word! Opposite what? The Eternal Feminine and The Eternal Masculine become the poetic fancies of a weakly dimorphic species trying to imitate every other species in a vain search for what is "natural." (Lessee, what do tropical fish do? Hmm....) Or, to be historically accurate, the instruments of power-leverage exerted by guess who over guess who. I see the polyverse/monoverse as Onemany and Manyone, and am too much of a mystical monist, I guess, to even attempt to hang on to masculine and feminine as the symbols of other dichotomies, such as Self/Other, Life/Death. I've already rebutted Tiptree for this (oh, Tip, really! Really!) in private; publicly I recommend Naomi Weisstein's essay (included in a reading list which is a continuation of this letter) and Ruth Herschberger's marvelously funny book, ADAM'S RIB, which contains a long essay by a female chimpanzee named Josie, explaining what really happened in Yerkes' primatology lab in Florida. (Wow...!)

The reading list is partial and the comments my own, rather hurried ones.

Partial List: Feminist Reading

(In the order in which they should probably be read
by the semi-knowledgeable)

- Michael Korda, MALE CHAUVINISM! HOW IT WORKS, Random House (probably in paper by now)
- Betty Friedan; THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE, Dell
- Eva Figs, PATRIARCHAL ATTITUDES, Fawcett
- Elizabeth Janeway, MAN'S WORLD, WOMAN'S PLACE, Morrow (probably in paper by now)
- Ruth Herschberger, ADAM'S RIB, Harper Torchbook (nobody paid any attention back in the 1940's when it was written)
- Simone de Beauvoir, THE SECOND SEX, Bantam (the history is doubtful, but the self/other dichotomy and the growing-up very good)
- Shulamith Firestone, THE DIALECTIC OF SEX, Morrow (out in paper now. Don't skip it because it's heavy. Crucial.)
- Gornick and Moran, eds. WOMAN IN SEXIST SOCIETY, Signet (especially Naomi Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female"--about primatology, ethnologists, chimpanzees, Robert Ardrey, &c.)
- Leslie Tanner, ed. VOICES FROM WOMEN'S LIBERATION, Signet (especially Pat Mainardi on "The Politics of Housework")
- Phyllis Chesler, WOMEN AND MADNESS, Doubleday (I'm told the paperback has been out)
- Robin Morgan, ed. SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL, Vintage (anthology)
- Juliet Mitchell, WOMAN'S ESTATE, Penguin (Marxism, economics, and feminism)
- Germaine Greer, THE FEMALE EUNUCH, Bantam (Read esp. chapters on "love" incl. "Romance," "The Object of Male Fantasy," and "The Middle-class Myth of Love and Marriage"--critics liked her thesis that women should be more like men, the possibility of interpreting the book as blaming women, and the thoroughly impractical individualist solution--which Greer has now more or less disclaimed. The same critics did not like Firestone's book at all: its thesis is--among other things--that men should be more like women. Horrors!)

Kate Millett, 'SEXUAL POLITICS, Avon (extensive analysis modern male writers--
much lit. crit.)
Mary Ellmann, THINKING ABOUT WOMEN, Harvest (also lit. crit., lit. stereotypes;
convoluted and ironic, but very funny)
Jill Johnston, LESBIAN NATION, Simon & Schuster (out in paper by now, prob.--
especially sections on growing up absurd, pp. 58-97, 116-117, 136-139,
150-161--these interspersed with autobiographical bits)

P.S. Who is "we" on pp. 18-19? We (who?) do not like it, Tip. Are we
(who?) being ironic? Why don't we (who?) say so? LONE RANGER: Tonto, we're
surrounded by Indians! TONTO: Who do you mean, "we," white man?

DELANY:

Joanna: I fasten on the phrase in your letter about getting "...away from
literary givens and try(ing) to be original." In terms of sf and particularly
in terms of women characters in sf, could you expand, if all the other points
to be taken up allow you time?

Ursula: Good point about bringing in the rest of literature. Though
something to bear in mind even here: Tolstoy's Anna, Flaubert's Emma, and
James' Isobel are "great literary portraits" of essentially immoral (and in
Emma's case, stupid) women (in their authors' frequently stated opinions), how-
ever sympathetic; and whose immorality and/or stupidity causes them to destroy
themselves, Anna and Emma by suicide, Isobel by having to enter into an intol-
erable marriage as punishment/penance. And more than one reader (by that I
mean intelligent readers, male and female) has found Natasha one of the most
intolerable Pollyannas since Pamela--amidst the hysterical, jealous, table-
throwing, dying-in-childbirth, conniving for their sons' advancement, socially
trivial and selfish powder-puffs cum bachantes that compose the gallery of wo-
men who fill the rest of the "peace" two-thirds of WAR AND PEACE.

Personally, when I read the book, at fourteen and again at twenty-six, I
found Natasha charming. What I was quite astonished by, however, on the
twenty-six-year-old reading, was that this thousand-page novel takes its center
of consciousness/sensitivity, the delightful Natasha, from the age of thirteen
to the age of sixteen, marries her off to Pierre after all her lively and pas-
sionate adventures, and when we next see her in the first epilogue, five years
and a handful of children later, she is twenty-three, fat, and mindless! Now,
I would have considered this an incredible loss to the world. Tolstoy seems to
think it a blessing, breathes a sigh of relief, and goes on to close the book
with the second epilogue on history. It is not that male writers can't, from
time to time, write convincingly about women, but that they can write about so
few women, whether well or badly, and can write about them only if they are in
such proscribed and fixed situations (the parallels between the plots of ANNA
KARENINA and MADAME BOVARY have filled volumes!), as well as from such a narrow
point of view. And the great male writers who "write about women well" have
set the pattern, if anything, because they have managed to fix in everybody's
mind that these terribly limited plot/situations are the only plot/situations
concerning women the novel can bear up under and still be recognizable as a
novel.

Yes, I too feel that labels on the soul are an abhorrent thing. But I
find the labels that Jung puts on the various "parts" of it particularly pern-
icious: The anima is good and evil, and is part of the "male" soul; and men
have to come to terms with it to grow up. The animus is wholly evil and is an
unhappily necessary part of your soul--unhappy, because it contains all your
aggression (it is what allows you to scream if raped; without "male" animus,
presumably, you would just submit without a whimper every time). Your creativ-

ity must be in your life. If the animus gets too strong, you may even try to be an artist, or, worse, a suffragette. And "we" all know that feminists are silly and that the works of women artists, like you, are basically weak at the center and generally beneath consideration, because whatever their surface merits, while a man's art can rise out of health or sickness, yours can only rise out of sickness. Therefore you should pay Jung or one of his disciples a lot of money to cure you--at which point you will happily cease writing, and most assuredly give up all feminist concerns. Now that's the anima/animus theory. It is not in the least symmetrical for the sexes. And have you read what Jung has to say about the psychology of the darker races? According to him, I don't have one! Yes, anyone interested in the mythic is probably going to appeal, now and then, to what is an aesthetically interesting construct. But I know I would certainly think twice about accepting any theory whose raison and conclusion is to state that I, specifically, am a socially invalid and sick individual, on no more evidence than the combination of my sex and profession. Much of it is very pretty, but I wouldn't let Jung "guide" me to the bathroom!

Quinn: Most of what you are saying makes a lot of sense. I'd question, however, your saying "The worst male chauvinist pigs are women." The same things said by two different people in two different political contexts often mean different things. And men and women operate from within two different political contexts, legal, economic, and social. A woman aligning herself with men against women is acting out of despair--possibly a lifetime's. A man aligning himself with other men against women is exercising a political privilege.

The biggest crime of sexism is that it encourages women to devalue other women (as well as themselves) at every point. That problem overcome and the rest is fightable. The women you are talking about are precisely the ones who need all your sensitivity, compassion, intelligence, knowledge and pride (even if all they can do is fight it and by doing so come to respect it more); there's where it will do some good. Most of us have a limited supply of patience, so best direct it where it is needed.

Tip: You're trying to have your cake and eat it too. Wonderful as motherhood is and as well-intentioned as your "defense" of it is, who's attacking it? Philip Wylie isn't among our number. You ask "What is MOTHER?" There's a commune here, in Nottingham Gate, which numbers among its members several one-parent families, some mother-and-child, but at least two father-and-child families. Child care rotates equally and communal among all the adults. Across the wall of the kitchen is a big poster that proclaims "MOTHER IS A JOB"--which I can appreciate, as it's a job I do five or six days a week on the average, and with as much love, tenderness, and nurturing as I can.

Yes, "Yin-Yang" thinking is just as pernicious as you say. But you're indulging a reasoning flaw that goes by the name of "hierarchic thinking," which, when applied to evolution is, among other things, the structure of most racist arguments. With hierarchic thinking you don't need Yin-Yang thinking; you can accomplish all that Yin-Yang thinking does and then some.

Your biology, by the way, is, to put it politely, spurious. For openers, human beings have forty-eight, not forty-six, chromosomes. Also, there are many species of rhesus, each with different "dominant" social behavioral patterns, a few of which are downright Amazonian. (A few leader females with harems of males, for example.) There are some species of both rhesus and leaf monkeys (another major monkey group) in which, save for actual nursing, the care of the young babies is almost totally entrusted to the males, who carry them, clean them, and raise them--which, of course, is also the normal behavior of the lion, in which the lioness does ninety percent of the hunting.

I would like to point out the sentences:

...the women's movement is dependent on the civilized acceptance of men. Will the hand that holds the club really lay it down? Or will we, when panicked, revert back to the old power-play, riot roughshod over the rights of the weaker, and throw them again into bondage, to be serfs and property? Let us not kid, men have the power.

Who are you threatening? This is historically, strategically, politically, and realistically as crazed (and Joanna has argued this down once to any logical person's satisfaction in the pages of REGEIS's NUMBERS NEAR ALIEN ENOUGH CRITIC) that such nonsense ensures our (male) total defeat. Though there will be (and have already been) violent encounters (a number of which have gone to the women), that is no more the essence of the situation than it is in the racial question. And to suggest that it is as crazed as the suggestion that whites, all alone, have passed all racially liberalizing legislation through nothing more than a fear of being murdered in their beds by Black Panthers.

Kate: A lot of good points there. And something in me warms to any suggestion that everyone should be prepared to discuss and listen. But there is a practical side of me, with much sad experience from similar discussions in the past, that equally urges me to point out that there is a nonsense level of talk, specifically from men, which women have to be ready to say to, firmly: "Shut up and stop wasting my time. There are people here whose ideas on the subject are more important than yours because they know the subject first hand. And they are not men." How men can relate to women, women who are struggling to equalize the political and social situation--well, that's men's problem, and I hope we men will solve it. The problem seems to me to be: How women can relate to, change, and adjust a world that includes, among other things, men in a position of totally inequitable political and social power.

Men with any sense of political equity will be as sympathetic as the privileged can be when their privileges are threatened, i.e., nowhere near as sympathetic as we would like you to believe. And whether by intelligence or pure filibuster (myself a case in point), we will try to grab the debate for ourselves.

Luise: Can you think of any alternatives (for sf) to putting women, with or without explicit power, into the government? What are the books (unwritten) you'd like to read; can you think of any incidents in them you'd like to see (and I'm holding onto "Kid Death as a ten year old girl" for future use)?

YARBRO:

Joanna: College writing courses are dreadful. I had one from Walter Van Tilberg Clark, and I hated it. He wanted you to write what he thought you ought to write rather than what you did write. This probably undermines the confidence of more beginning writers than outright negative criticism.

You talk about Heinlein's projections in his women. I think almost all male writers do this. Female writers do some of this, of course, particularly I think in the sentimental popular novel. (Gothics, of course, do not count, being wholly unreal.) Someday I hope our culture realizes that the flip side of sentiment is cruelty, and that each feeds on the other.

Suzy: I know what you mean about liking sf more for its potential than its performance. I think that sf's main virtue is that it allows for a different point of view. That particular virtue is not limited to sf, but is generally more obvious in sf than in other forms. But most of the time the change in point of view is really so slight that it annoys me. The whole reason for

another point of view is to show its ramifications, and that is something where most sf, including the supposed "Golden Age" stuff, falls sadly flat,

The business of presenting women believably is really difficult, not only for the reason you site, but because there is so little understanding about women in general, and so little desire on the part of a great many readers (and editors) to expose so sticky a subject. One of the currently popular ways for men to introduce the women they are married to is to say, "This is the wife," rather like saying "This is the washing machine" or some other appliance. And the thing that makes this so hard to bear is that the women accept this with varying degrees of grace. It is very difficult to show the personality of someone who thinks of herself as a washing machine.

Many of the fans I know who read sf read it entirely for the ideas, and they don't like characterization to get in the way. I find this incomprehensible, but I have seen enough of it to know that a significant number of our readers would prefer cardboard cutouts for people so that they don't have to deal with anything more than the idea. This might be immature (I think it is, but that's my opinion), it might be all kinds of unrealistic, but face it, my dears, a good number of those readers give out the Hugos.

Tip: You are so right about the yin-yang thing, and sad to say it works both ways. Many women think that if a man shows feelings that are considered "feminine" (compassion, tenderness, artistic leanings) that he is obviously gay. Now, this attitude is so prevalent that a great many of the gay men I have met insist that being gay gives them these "feminine" attributes and that straight males are by definition incapable of them. As if who you slept with and in what position significantly changes your public behavior. It can, if you let it. But on the other hand, I have seen truly vicious role-playing among gays that drives me up a wall. Your comment about the female impersonator barely scratches the surface. There is also the deep hostility toward women that comes out in a blatant caricature so stereotyped that it makes my flesh crawl. Also, to look a little further--most men have this thing about their penes. Well, I'm glad they like them. But this projection, and to me that's all it is, about penis envy is as absurd as it is insulting. The idea that because men value their three-piece set and are terrified of its loss women must therefore want to have one or take theirs away is fantasy. I know I don't want one. In fact, I know I'd be pretty paranoid, too, if my ovaries and clitoris were dangling off my pubic bone like that.

As an off-shoot to that, the whole male rite thing in primitive cultures and the male group number in our own is, I think, really an intense fear of the power of women to give birth. Most male rites, whether in the long house or the fraternity house, all all a way of cancelling the mother birth and substituting a male birth. It's a way in which men assure themselves that the first time they weren't really born, because all they did was come out of their mothers. No, this initiation is the REAL birth, and, of course, it's given by men only to men only.

I remember in second grade when I was taking human anatomy (I went to quite a strange school for a while) the teacher was doing the endocrine system and remarked as he diagrammed the various glands on the board that no matter what we might hear to the contrary in later life, the two most important endocrine glands were the pituitary and the pancreas. And I think he's probably right. Because when the endocrines are working properly they have very little effect on our "normal" behavior and physiology. But when they are out of order, so to speak, then their effects can be devastating. Just as a person with untreated diabetes or agromagolia is far from well, so a person with gonad trouble is going to be strange. And I think that almost everyone in this culture, one way or the other, has gonad trouble. Certainly the psychosomatic impact of the

stress we give to the mere existence of sex takes a toll on every one of us.

Yes, probably women invented agriculture, and animal wifery (I refuse to say husbandry) because it was easier to have those things close at hand when you've got kids to take care of. And they probably invented fishing and fire and pottery and fine arts, all to keep themselves and the kids entertained and to pass on information. And they probably also invented beginning mathematics because they were weaving all those baskets, and our own art, fiction, again, for entertainment. And don't anybody knock entertainment. Entertainment is the highest calling of our species and it is the ancestor of all religions.

About "The Women Men Don't See." You know I like that, Tip, because I've told you so many times. I think almost any woman in this culture who does not fit the ideal profile has felt that way a good part of her life whether she admits it or not. The ideal profile is, of course, Mr. Heiner's area of expertise. Medium tall, leggy, flat tummy, good thighs, big boobs, long hair, pretty and rather childish face, and passive. That last one is particularly important. Think of all the centerfolds you've ever seen in men's mags. The gals are almost always reclining. Even if they are standing, it is passively, in an attitude of surrender. Even if they are in the crotch of a tree, they are leaning, or lying back, never, never climbing. And that is almost more demeaning than all the other crap of the perfect profile. Because it is the biggest trap.

Chip: Oh, Chip, I wish you weren't so very right. You make me dredge up all those dreadful things out of my memories and know them for what they are.

I remember going to a shrink because I felt demeaned and frustrated with school for some peculiar reason. But this was 1959, when all us females were going to get married and live in the suburbs. Because I didn't expect to (two years on crutches told me a lot about such expectations. You don't get dates on crutches) there was obviously something wrong, and because I was actually planning a career while still in high school (the career I have now), and not willing to wait until college, translated until I met the right man, I needed psychological help. I mean, it's obvious, isn't it? And the shrink told me that I was denying my femininity (I never even thought I was anything but female) and that I was envying the male penis, what I needed to do was get laid and pregnant and I'd be fine. (He didn't put it quite that crudely, and took quite a few sessions to say it, but that's what it came down to.) What the message really was, beyond the barefoot and pregnant, was that I had no right to expect to be a whole person.

Sometimes I despair, and although Don doesn't understand quite why, he is willing to listen, and to admit that some of the things that drive me crazy would drive him crazy, too, if he had to endure them. And I know I am far more fortunate than most of the married women I know because Don will listen, and will actually attempt to understand, and when I point out something he does that is born out of chauvinism, he pays attention and makes an effort to change. He even admits that there ain't no way he's going to be free of sexism, and that does make it easier.

At Discon, shortly after the women's panel, I was talking outside the room about the general pressure to non-success that most of us women must deal with to a fair number of fans, when another science fiction writer, a tad younger than I am, came up to me, pinched my rear (which I hate under any circumstances), kissed me on the forehead and said, "You were cute." I leave you to imagine what I thought he was.

After that, a gentleman came up to me and assured me most aggressively that he was a feminist (he produced a N.O.W. card to prove it) and then pro-

ceeded to instruct me in what I really meant and where I was wrong in my thinking and how he understood the situation far better than I because he was a man and better able to observe the effects of sexism, while I, a woman, was too close to the problem to think about it rationally. In less than two hours I wanted to slug two different males for doing their number.

You're right about the Vicious Evil Bitches in literature and the Simp. In fact, you're depressingly right about most of the problem. I remember a course in college when we were assured (and the grade depended on agreeing with the professor) that NANA revealed the inner heart of all women. Even the good ones, the prof insisted, were really Nana underneath. Things like that are bad for my blood pressure.

You are also right about the lack of real friendship between women in fiction. Unfortunately this tends to be a reflection of real life. Very few women have real friendships, and many times there are women who do vicarious living through their "friends." Also, it is unfortunate that as most friendships are based on trust, women rarely have real friendships. Shafting women is quite culturally acceptable, and is not uncommon, and can be done by males as well as females. Now, it is quite possible to like someone (on a marginal level) whom you don't trust. Most women have a great many social friends who are liked but not trusted. And this makes things very lonely.

Luise: Bonnie and Clyde and Ted and Alice ain't my idea of freedom, and this picture you paint of vendetta appeals as little to me as the oppression we women have to deal with right now. If you want to kill somebody, or think it's a grand thing, count me out. Killing is no way to freedom.

Vonda: You mention discovering in 1970 about how the fictional images were really affecting you, personally, and were discriminatory. Well, I've told you this story in person, but I'm going to add it here, not just because it is appropriate, but because I can't be the only one such things happened to. In third grade, when I was back in public school, we had an arithmetic book with the usual stupid problems in it. But one really got to me, and, to use the current phrase, raised my consciousness all to hell and gone. The problem was a work-time thing, going something like this: There are three boys making a raft, and they are carrying so many nails per so many boards and will use a certain amount of lumber to complete the raft. They LET three girls carry nails for them (they can't carry as many nails, naturally) and they finish the raft in a certain amount of time. Then, the boys are going out on the raft while the girls make cookies for them when they get back. How many cookies, at so many cookies per minute, can the girls make for the boys before they get back from their day on the raft? Now wait just a fucking minute. I knew, even back in the third grade, that if I helped build a raft I was damn well going to sail on it, and not sit around making cookies for the little bastards who wouldn't tolerate girls with them. By the time I read Heinlein in fifth grade, I knew what a nerd he was. And don't kid yourselves, out there. For all his reputation, Heinlein is a nerd.

Your mention about female names creating a less acceptable package for a reader brought this to mind. I also write mysteries. And in MWA, I have more status and respect on the strength of one novelette (which admittedly won an MWA scroll) and one novel which isn't even finished yet, than I do with my science fiction colleagues. On the other hand, women make up about 23% of LWA (whose next president will be Phyllis Whitney, by the way), whereas in SFWA women still account for about 15% of the membership. I have heard certain male writers cast some very sexist aspersions on Ursula's and your work, and get chuckles from their buddies. But this is not tolerated nearly as much in MWA. Because there's a much bigger chance that the buddy you make the remark to might be another woman. While women in sf are so few in number, we're invis-



ble. And we are naturally not as "professional" as the men for some obscure reason. And this is one reason I find myself being drawn away from sf. Not because I don't want to write it, but because I take a lot less shit in other fields. Which is an awfully sad comment on the one genre which ought to be encouraging and supporting those changes which make the future a better place to live in than the present.

McINTYRE:

Hey--you can't dash off a line about sexist aspersions on my and Ursula's work (Aha, what will they think when they discover that my novel is dedicated to her? Ursula, ma chérie, come with me to da casbah...) and let it go at that. What did who say? What did they find so amusing?

YARBRO:

Okay. If you want to know, I will summarize for you. A medium young pro was talking at a party in the not too distant past. It happened he was in conversation with a mystery pro (male) of some repute and the mystery pro happened to mention that he didn't read much sf because of the dearth of interesting characters, but found that women in general wrote better characters than men. The sf pro ruffled his feathers, taking this as an affront, and then asked the mystery pro to explain what he meant. The mystery pro elaborated by saying he had read a fair amount of your work, and found it well-crafted and well-told. "Well, look," said the sf pro, "she's been running all those workshops. She's had a lot of help." The mystery pro, somewhat taken aback at this, then mentioned Ursula and expressed a great deal of admiration for her. "Yeah," the sf pro agreed, "but you know who her father was." Rather sadly there were some fans there to hear this and they seized upon it and the sf pro for more. I didn't hear the rest of this particular dialogue, but I did have a brief conversation with the mystery pro, who was not at all pleased with the attitude he had heard expressed by the sf pro, and was even more unhappy that the sf pro should badmouth another pro to readers. Later on I heard a couple of the fans at another gathering with their own versions of this, and at that time I challenged them, but it is sad to say that it didn't do a lot of good.

McINTYRE:

Joanna: Something you said--that you don't worry about portraying men realistically--made me think about what I said on the same subject. It occurs to me that I probably don't invent realistic male characters. Most of the men I know I'm not the least bit interested in recreating; I have enough of my own psychological problems without trying to deal with theirs unless it's absolutely necessary (which it frequently is since people tend to consider me their goddam big sister). Arevin in the Snake story, Jan Hikaru in my novel, and Radu Dracul in "Aztecs" that I'm working on right now are men who are capable of admiring (and loving) women of accomplishment as human beings and for their competence (not in spite of it). This is not normal behavior in our society, in which men have a limited number of permissible reactions to strong, competent, successful women--most of them require the man to expect the woman to give up some of her competence and/or success in return for "a meaningful relationship." This is the "all she needs is a good fuck" syndrome, and I'm not interested in it, so I don't deal with it in my work. I have little feedback about what men think of my male characters.

I recently got some textbook galleys containing some really astonishingly stupid things about "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand"--such as that Snake is strong and competent yet (good heavens!) feminine, and Arevin is subsidiary but not feminised. (Arrgh.) I pointed out that Arevin is subsidiary because he's the secondary character, but I don't know if they changed the copy. God, I

hope so. It was awful, superficial, and full of the kind of assumptions that I was trying to escape in the story.*

So maybe I do create unrealistic male characters, and maybe if I do, maybe that's the point.

This relates absolutely to what Suzy says about creating free female (or really free male) characters--this is impossible in mainstream fiction. The best you can do is write the kind of unreadable consciousness-raising crap that's in most women's magazines, including (*sigh*) MS. Which recently declined to prepublish a story from AURORA because it was "a bit too heavy-handed." I come to the reluctant conclusion that MS. fiction editors as well as women's magazine and men's magazine editors are incapable of reading anything on more than the most superficial level. (The fiction in MS. this month is a woman's diary about her rape fantasies. This, apparently, is not "heavy-handed.")

I don't disagree with Suzy's slave/master analogy (it's almost too accurate to be an analogy). But I don't think the historical claim holds absolutely. There are too many cultures (even today--Hawaii, the few hunting-and-gathering people left, etc.) with a tradition of participation by women as equal partners or as the bosses for us to assume that our shredding Victorian culture is the Way It's Always Been. This subject could go on for pages so I'll stop. Read Elizabeth Janeway.

Tip: Ah, Tip, you are the last person in the world I would expect to hand me the Baboon Theory of Human Behavior. I cannot tell you how much I despise that argument. (Chip pretty much handles you (but you blew it, Chip, in the first line: human beings do have 46 chromosomes, not 48; honest, I know, that's what I used to do, I've counted them), but doesn't specifically extend his point to people. Look: primates are social creatures and LEARN their social behavior. I tend to think that primate "instinct" stops at about the level of pissing when they need to. You can train people to accept--even to like--practically any social system, as long as you make the penalties for going outside the lines painful enough. My god, witness what we've got now. If we were sane, we'd be crazy....

Anyway, don't do that male aggressiveness number on us any more, huh? We force young males to be aggressive, then say that because they act that way the behavior must be Natural, therefore aggressiveness must be Good. Bullshit.

And the physical/political/economic weakness of women number--as Chip says, it's been gone into in Geis' warmongering fanzine, until King Richard proclaimed himself winner-by-fiat (since, under guise of not discussing the subject any more, he's been making snide remarks about Joanna and me (because I started the whole mess, sort of) not only in TAC but in his column in LF/CAL-AXY). As Chip says, as Joanna said, it's a fake. You may be able to beat up on me, physically. I may be able to shoot you in the head, too. It's gone too far, man, women are not going to let things go back the way they were. Do you want to talk about violence? I don't, much, but it seems to me to be not "the last resort of the incompetent," but the last resort of the powerless.

MOORE:

Though I have been at some points pleased, edified, challenged, surprised

*21 August 1975: Not only did this pair of Scholarly Researchers fail to change the information, but they disappeared my Nebula and gave me Harlan Ellison's Hugo as well. (Despite having been told of their mistake in time to fix it.)

and so on by the symposium so far, I must admit to feeling, in the end, the same kind of brooding, hopeless psychic weariness I feel in the ninth inning of a class which has been discussing literature-and-the-liberated-woman, or sexism-in-the-contemporary-shortstory. (And those of you who teach will have noticed how easy it is for English classes--or perhaps any classes--to fall into the subject these days, and rightly so, since the topic is inevitably a euphemism for sexism-in-real-life.)

Anyway, my students at these times seem able to go only two routes: 1) the adversary approach ("I do not." "You do to") in which some male chauvinist of either sex restates how satisfactory the yin-yang, sado-masochistic, status quo position is, denying all culpability, while some disaffected, usually female and usually articulate victim of the system restates the familiar converse arguments, and 2) the mea culpa route, also appropriate for either sex ("Yes, yes, I admit I've screwed women in every possible way." And, "Yes, I'm guilty-guilty-guilty of letting men treat me like dreck. I've even loved it").

Sadly, however, except for maybe-therapeutic value for the participants, both scenarios always seem to end in deadlock, and I usually react by chucking the whole subject in favor of a cozy discussion of archetypes in Borges. Which probably shows my cowardice as a teacher, but dammitall, what can you do with a deadlock but bypass it? At least till you can figure out a way to bust it.

Now comes the packet from Jeff Smith on (roughly) this same prickly topic and I am full of hope that here at last will be Real Answers. And sure enough, there are. In a way. The Le Guin reminder of Jung's animus/anima theory was immensely helpful though hardly novel (nor was it meant to be, I realize), and so was the Tiptree demolition of the either/or theory of sex. Yet behind it all, it still seemed that no one, least of all I, who chickened out at the starting gate, had managed to push that part of the discussion any further than have the familiar adversary and mea culpa approaches, which did in fact appear in some of the letters. And that the sanest and most potentially productive of all the comments was the Wilhelm suggestion that "We all need to talk...and to listen..."

Since I began my own working life as a newspaper reporter (guess who got more salary for covering the same stories; guess who got promoted to city editor and editorial writer while I stayed on rewrite), I could no doubt match experience for experience with poet Marilyn Hacker, for whom I have the utmost empathy, and toward whose employers of a few years ago I feel the same disgust and outrage I felt toward my own at the time. Unlike her, however, I didn't try to challenge the system, even for myself. Knowing I didn't want to be stuck forever on a city desk, I changed my life instead. So that now I can honestly say--no dissembling, no self-delusion--that sexism doesn't really touch, much less rule, my private life or my working life.

As I've often enough remarked (even complained, though not seriously), I live in a household run exactly like an anarchist commune. Everyone contributes what he/she jolly well pleases. I can't cook, never learned, and I loathe shopping, especially for groceries, so I just don't ever tangle with either of those chores. I do rather like the therapy (a break from the type-writer) of putting laundry in and out of the machine and the occasional neatening of rooms (makes me feel virtuous), and I like baking bread. So I do these things. When I feel like it. (Of course, no anarchist likes to do dishes, so there is that problem. Ah well. No system is perfect--yet.) Child care has always been divided, but, I have to admit, not equally. Since I go out to earn extra money (as an editor when we were in New York, as a parttime instructor at the local college in California), the father of my youngest child has probably done far more actual "mothering" than I, especially through the very early years of our daughter's life, and has seemed to excel at it. (I don't know how

this fits into the discussion of mothering skills among the other primates, but perhaps there are some analogies that are better not pressed too far.)

A curious bit of fallout from our way of life that I've noticed recurs quite often when I'm absently shoving the dustmop around the floor and Ward complains: "What are you doing housework for? Why aren't you at your type-writer?" Now to me that's real role-reversal. Almost as heart-warming as the story of how Dr. Stowe used loyally to cry great spates of tears when HBS read him sections of her work in progress.

But to come to the point, perhaps it is true that because I no longer feel personally baset by the more conventional troubles of women in this social structure, this in itself may take some of the cutting edge off what I am about to declare as my position as a woman writer. (Also true, though, is something else I don't want to leave out: I have three daughters altogether, which gives me some kind of stake in the future of feminism right there. I don't ever want them exposed to the humiliations of my own past, nor do I think they will allow themselves to be, given what we all know now.)

First off, the obvious. Writing as employment has for a long time been at least partly open to women, mostly, I suspect, because the hardnosed male employer class can't make the usual tiresome objections stick. There's no heavy lifting, no going home on the bus after dark, no hassle over separate restrooms.

Okay. Another generalization. I simply cannot believe that any conscious person expressing herself or himself in public in our time, especially someone involved in the arts, which implies a certain degree of consciousness, is going to be guilty of trying to perpetuate the old standards for women. (Many people in government, of course, are not conscious, but that needs no saying.)

So, although I would object to any writer downgrading women in fiction, and would hope that I might never be guilty of it myself, neither would I want to become anything like a "feminist writer," a writer with a single theme that colors all. That would be to me the most false position of all possible positions, and I reject it as angrily as any literary male chauvinist (how I do dislike that term, though it does have value as shorthand), if for different reasons.

Not only do I not want to be categorized in this way, I see it as a threat to literature and ultimately to the women's movement as well. Like the Marxist novelists who limited themselves to looking at life through a single lens, female writers too caught up in their own cause will inevitably walk the thin edge between literature of real aesthetic and moral value, and polemics, doing damage all around. The only valuable, sensible and honest position for a writer of whatever sex, it seems to me, is to be a humanist first, a feminist second. Unless we can already agree, at this early stage, that to be a humanist is to be a feminist, and eliminate the second category.

And most depressing of all to me, in my already depressed state over all this, would be the concept of a sf anthology or magazine on the woman theme, restricted to women sf writers. I don't believe there really is any such plan on the horizon, is there? But the way things seem to be drifting, I expect any day to hear of one. That would be rank segregation, guaranteed to exacerbate all our differences, worse even than segregating speculative fiction from "mainline," with the resulting absurdities and lunacies that has presented through recent decades in classification and acceptance. (Let's face it. In the end there are really only two kinds of writing, good and bad.) But that's a whole 'nother bag, which can't be opened here. (And a good thing, too, I suppose.)

I don't mean by this to be rejecting sf as a genre. I've already said how much I have appreciated my occasional acceptance by and appearance in the field. Rather, having deplored our apparent deadlock and the roads that lead to it, I am rejecting the trend which seems to call for solving the problems of a humanity divided along sexist lines with still more efforts toward segregation, and in smaller and smaller ghettos (more accurately ghetti, I believe). To wit: sf writers as distinguished from mainline writers, female sf writers versus male sf writers, women sf writers who support women's rights as opposed to women sf writers who are indifferent. Coming soon: indifferent, left-handed, myopic women sf writers as distinguished from indifferent, right-handed, hypermetropic...

Perhaps I should back up and start over. Perhaps we should all back up and start over? And as a first step reject utterly the use of the title "Ms." (who needs it? who needs any title anyhow?), which is blatantly sexist, as many have observed, calling arbitrary and unnecessary attention to the fact that the addressee is female.

SMITH:

Raylyn: Ironically, I guess it was a couple days after you wrote your letter that you got the new T&SF with the ad in it for Pamela Sargent's anthology, WOMEN OF WONDER. I'm sure you were pleased.

TIPTREE:

Charnas' point, also touched on by Russ and McIntyre--that women have to know men more fully than men know women--of course, of course, yes I see it. Isn't it the phenomenon that R. Osbourne described in his study of communication in organizations: The people on the bottom of any power structure know the people on top--their intimate habits, motives, secrets, everything. While the people on top are ignorant of, and wildly misinterpret, the people on the bottom. Moreover, the people on top see all the actions of the people below as related to them, the Bosses, and to their interests.

Did any of you read those unearthly interviews with whites eulogizing their black cooks at the time of Selma? Fantastic, pitiable if it weren't so vicious....By the way, Osbourne's old book is worth glancing at, the title was IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

I think we have accounted for the greater verisimilitude of male characters drawn by women, without dragging in intuition. (Aside to UKLEG: Some day let's argue about the life-likeness of Flaubert's Emma--frankly I've always seen her as a "man's woman" in every sense. Much better to me was Proust's Mme. Verdurin--and by god she conforms to Delany's, or Delany and Hackett's--command to get the economic base in. Just thought of that. Maybe a male author writing about a woman's sex-relations with men almost has to fall victim to the my-cook-loves-me fallacy.)

Charnas' point about women being taught to view each other as threats or models interested me a lot. That's what happens in what used to be called a situation of unstable rewards. In a UR situation, like say, a fire in a theater, everybody has to cooperate or everybody loses. If a few people start to panic and grab, everybody dies. Only by cooperation can all, or the maximum number, get out safely. Men seem to have created a total UR situation for women. Which, of course, is very much to men's advantage.

Now to the excitement. There I was ponderously calling for men to learn to be mothers, and here is Delany actually doing it. Stupendous. Lord, the questions I'd like to ask: What does it feel like? Is it rewarding in itself,

or only a duty? Do you do it differently from the way Hackett does it? Do you gaze into the child's eyes? Do you feel it is entirely learned behavior, or do you feel a latent pattern which has been "trained out of you?" Are you late taking your turn because you are late in life generally (many female mothers are)? Would you be late if the baby was alone, if the female mother had to leave on time? Have you developed that famous acuity, the power of being able to hear your infant's voice through a din?

And so on. But, always, deepest, what is the motive, what is the reward for this behavior? Why is a baby cared for and raised? WHY?

Well, from this you can see that I am far from repentant about asking that attention be directed to the sex called "mother." Of course I do repent the way I did it; I should never have tried an abstraction from behavior and people, without warning and explanation. The abstraction is difficult, too, not entirely possible. Like W. Sheldon's attempt to separate somatotype and personality type, while everybody knows that an extreme eudomorph is not going to be a high somatonic. Similarly, we all "know" that men tend to be males and mothers are apt to be women.

And above all, I should never have advanced a view of sex which violates the great sacred totem of our time: the all-importance of copulation. My view of sex looks at the reproduction of the race, and really trivializes intercourse. How blasphemous can you get?

Anyone silly enough to put down the central industry of our day, the PLAY-BOY scene, the D.H. Lawrence gospel--has to start with an hour of propitiatory dances and ritual purification.

And of course I should NEVER have used the word "mother." (Maybe not "male," either.) "Mother" seems to be the last dirty word. In trying ruminations on other people, I've had reactions of--believe it--fear and rage. As if we were afraid to look at a behavior which accounts for our existence. Fear of stereotypes, maybe; and maybe justified, if blindness is ever justified. But the STOP signals somehow do not stop me; I think there is something hidden there.

Consider: If men alone had always raised infants, how monumental, how privileged a task it would be! We would have tons of conceptual literature on infant-father interaction, technical journals, research establishments devoted to it, a huge esoteric vocabulary. It would be as sacred as the Stock Exchange or football, and we would spend hours hearing of it.

But because women do it, it is invisible and embarrassing.

Look at the atmosphere that surrounds the small area of child-raising that men do: prep schools and college teaching. Think what a "professor" is! And he has perhaps taught a young person the names of some minerals or French poets.

But the mother who taught the young person to speak at all--she has done nothing.

Right?

(I am reminded of the story of how it was discovered that black leopards are not inherently vicious. For as long as man kept them, zoo-keepers knew they were the most savage of all animals, hating man from birth. Then one day a N.Y. zoo-keeper's wife took a new cub home and raised it normally. Abrupt end of one myth.)

All of which boils down to saying that I, personally, want to go on looking at this behavior. And since there is nothing duller than a minority defending itself, let's leave it at that.

I gather you suspect me of paranoia, or at least an inaccurate grasp of the power balance between men and women and/or whites and blacks. Well, yes, I am paranoid. We're all prisoners of our histories, and mine has included concentration camps on American soil; 50,000 Americans robbed of their land and possessions and caged in a desert behind barbed wire. The lesson of my time is, If it is unhuman, cruel and unthinkable, it'll happen.

Of course I don't believe it will....At least on my better days. And I would be very glad to live long enough to be proved WRONG. Very happy.

But as I mentioned to Joanna, I am the type of person who gets a twinge down the spine when I see the gun holstered on a cop's square arse. And I can count guns....The opening scenes of Charnas' novel struck me as all too life-like. In fact, I've seen it alive. So...here's hoping.

Let me end with a question that occurred to me:

If men did not exist, would women have invented them?

If women did not exist, I do believe men, alone, would have invented them or something very much like them. (I have changed my mind, by the way: Of course it is not women who are aliens. Men are.) And I wonder, in literature or life, would women alone have invented men?

Would you?

Trashing

SMITH:

Let us start off with a confession: To me, the idea of Women in Science Fiction was an intellectual concept. That is to say, I was interested in the subject, but it didn't apply to me directly. And Tip was interested, and when I mentioned the idea at a convention I was urged by interested fans to follow it through. So I did.

I did not realize how emotional a subject this could be. I wrote my dumb little questions and expected simple little answers, to have a little article to publish in my fanzine. Right.

To further the confession: I still am not completely emotionally involved in the symposium, though I am a little more so since the initial replies. I am not totally divorced from the subject, but my personal involvement lies elsewhere. Several of you have had reason to call me down for (mild, I think) sexism of one sort or another, in and out of the symposium, and I suppose I can't deny the specific charges. I could wish my lapses were shown to me rather than thrown at me, but I understand your impatience--I feel it myself, all the time, as I bump into ignorance and unreconstructed chauvinists. My personal involvement, though, is with my wife. Although my lapses with her are frequent (for instance, I know if I let the dishes pile up long enough, she'll do them; I hate myself for letting them pile up, but pile up they do), I am actively involved in helping to turn a mass of Catholic guilts and supposed inadequacies into a person. A bank teller with a B.A. in History, Ann has always felt unnecessary. It has been a long, long climb, but I think the summit is in sight.

Basically, simplistically, I believe that if I had not insisted that our marriage be a partnership, I would not have to worry about the dishes piling up. Certainly Ann's father doesn't wash dishes. I don't want to attempt to paint any sort of marvelous picture of myself (far too difficult a task even for someone of much greater talent), but if I had insisted that Ann do all the "woman's work," I don't think she would have protested. (Maybe she would have; who can be sure?) I do think that I get a checkmark on the Good side of the ledger for volunteering to be an equal partner in the marriage. (And besides, when things break Ann can fix them better than I.)

I wanted to let you know that my heart is in the right place, even though I slip more often than even you all see--as I expose my ignorance to you.

Nonetheless, public mea culpas, while they can be voyeuristically interesting, serve little practical purpose.

Incidentally, Chip, that "Dear People" thing has been aggravating the hell out of me. I've been using "Dear People" for years and years, long before...uh...my consciousness was raised (*blush*), whether I was addressing men, women, a mixture or an unknown. On the one hand I figure it's a part of me so I can still use it, but on the other hand I see your point and don't want to do something so easily misconstruable. But I am in a quandry over lack of a substitute.

(As a possibly amusing sidelight: The term "chairman" has been abolished at the college where I work. Two women are now "chairpersons" and the department chairmen (almost all men) are now "department heads.") (Though if the men had stayed chairmen while the women became chairpersons I would have been truly irritated.) (Another irritation: the forms for which in front of your name you are asked to mark Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. Wrong, wrong, wrong! I complain about that to the form-makers, too. It would seem to me that if there was to be any sort of discrimination--and if you've never had to hire somebody for a position you'd be surprised how hard it is not to discriminate--the "Ms."s would be discriminated against as "potential troublemakers.") (Not by you or me, of course--but we'd probably discriminate in favor of them.)

RUSS:

Every time you open your mouth, your foot goes in deeper. Stop it, man! There is nothing more disgusting than a belligerent/apologetic husband telling all us (women) how he was the one who made his marriage egalitarian because of course she would never have thought of it on her own.

As I said (more tactfully) you do not have to apologize or defend yourself or explain. Just listen.

See, uh, I MADE my wife into a feminist, uh, because I'm really more aware than she is, er, that is, I hope nobody's offended out there (heh heh) but, uh, I didn't mean....

Shut mouths do not engulf feet.

The substitute for "Dear People" is "Dear Symposium Participants" or "Dear Caviar Consumers" or "Dear Conferees" or (in short) whatever you actually, really mean.

As you know as well as I, "Ms." was intended to obliterate the distinctions between "Miss" and "Mrs." i.e. having to announce not only your sexual availability but also your financial status to the world simply by identifying yourself (not you, us). Nurses at allergists' ask me, "Miss or Mrs?" I've

been so surprised by this lately, I once said "Why?" and she answered, "Oh, you're paying." That is, if I were a "Mrs." I automatically had no money, no control over money, and no financial responsibility. The doctor then called me "Mrs. Russ" all through the allergy tests. The form-makers aren't wrong; they're clever. As you say, they are trying to weed out the political positions. It ought to be illegal.

WHITE:

Jeff: First you address your initial letter to "people;" then (post-Delany era) you assure us that you've always addressed all groupings of humanity--men, women, cripples, blacks--as "people." But in between you say of your wife "I am trying to turn a mass of Catholic guilts and supposed inadequacies into a person." WHAT THE HELL IS SHE NOW? No mea culpas this time, just an answer please. You (who?) have got to confront this notion of women as not-yet-people, some separate species only a man can make human. It's been floating around in sf for years, incidentally, Fritz Leiber's CONJURE WIFE (or BURN WITCH BURN)--the isolated, special evolutionary stratum of humanity (who?) using witchcraft not for their own betterment, but to help the menfolk.

SMITH:

To my mind there is quite a bit of difference between a people and a person. To be a person (or perhaps more accurately, a Person) is to realize the potentiality of the individual You. I seriously doubt that anyone ever achieves the goal as an absolute, but basically it's a matter of being mostly satisfied or mostly dissatisfied with yourself. One can be mostly satisfied with oneself while still well aware of many improvements to be made.

So, at the moment, Ann feels dissatisfied with herself far too often. At the moment (and one's self-esteem is subject to mercurial changes) I'm fairly well satisfied. Ann was a great help to me in achieving this, and I see nothing wrong in attempting to return the favor.

You misquoted me, incidentally. "I am trying to turn..." is arrogant, and I'm glad I said "I am actively involved in helping to turn..." instead.

McINTYRE:

Ok...I have got to say something to the men in this discussion. I've already trashed Tip a bit, and Joanna trashed you, Jeff, a good deal more gently and kindly than I would have done. Both you and Chip are doing a standard liberal male guilt trip on the rest of us. You excuse your flaws by admitting guilt and failure. This gives you the chance to reveal how well-meaning you are--doing women's work!--and at the same time get lots of nice positive feedback and sympathy for your martyr number. Well pin a rose on your nose. If Jeff were a woman and let dishes pile up in the sink people would say he was a shitty housekeeper (and isn't his husband a prince to put up with it?). That's what people say about Quinn when Den fails to do his share of the housework. If Chip were a woman and consistently came home late when Marilyn was taking care of their kid, Chip would be considered a bad mother and a worse wife.

But what really matters is that you put the women with whom you share your lives in a double-bind situation. If they do your work for you they can't help but feel angry, resentful, and to a certain extent betrayed. (But how can they feel angry? You have offered to help and that's more than most men would even consider!) (So the anger is directed inward.) If they don't do the work they get hit with the social sanctions. But you have an automatic out: you were raised in our sexist society and can't be expected to succeed.

How can you do that to people you care about?

Women's work (either "women's work" or individual accomplishment) has been consistently and irrationally discounted over the last 50 or so years: is this why you feel the work can be safely avoided at your convenience? What everything we are talking about comes down to is rights and responsibilities.

I fully expect accusations of hitting below the belt about this, but you brought up the subject, I didn't. Please examine very carefully the assumptions on which you base any complaints about foul play. Then flail away.

SMITH:

I think we can consider the "housework" issue closed; you've polished it off very nicely. Interestingly, I think the whole discussion shows another point: just as we males can intellectually sympathize with you, so have you intellectually said the same thing I have intellectually told myself. But the emotional levels are harder to reach, on both sides.

Of course, there was no "hitting below the belt"--and you knew it. Were you trying to goad a response out of me, or did you really expect me to find it offensive? Either way, no.

(S(23 October 1975: Vonda mentioned in a recent letter that I hadn't answered her question here, and she's right. Perhaps I missed out because I don't think the events are really sexist in nature. I fall behind in my correspondence far more than I fall behind in the dishes and other housework; the only difference is that Ann will do my dishes but she won't answer my letters. As for the big question, "How can you do that to people you care about?"--I agree that we shouldn't. However, again, it is not a sexist problem: this is the sexist manifestation of a larger problem. We take advantage of our friends. It's part of the same problem that finds you, Vonda, as everybody's big sister, as you mentioned earlier. It's something we try to do as little as possible of--but it's inevitable, I feel.

(S(I know, Vonda, that this answer is not what you had in mind. I think you wanted me to go into self-introspection and come out with a clearer mind. I only wish it were that simple. I do recognize the problem, but I think it's a bigger problem than you do. I may be wrong, and you may be right, but I have thought about it and this is the way I see it right now. "How can you do that to people you care about?" It's an extremely unsatisfactory answer, but I don't know anyone who doesn't. Which I use not as an excuse. I try, I think we all try, but we fail.)S).

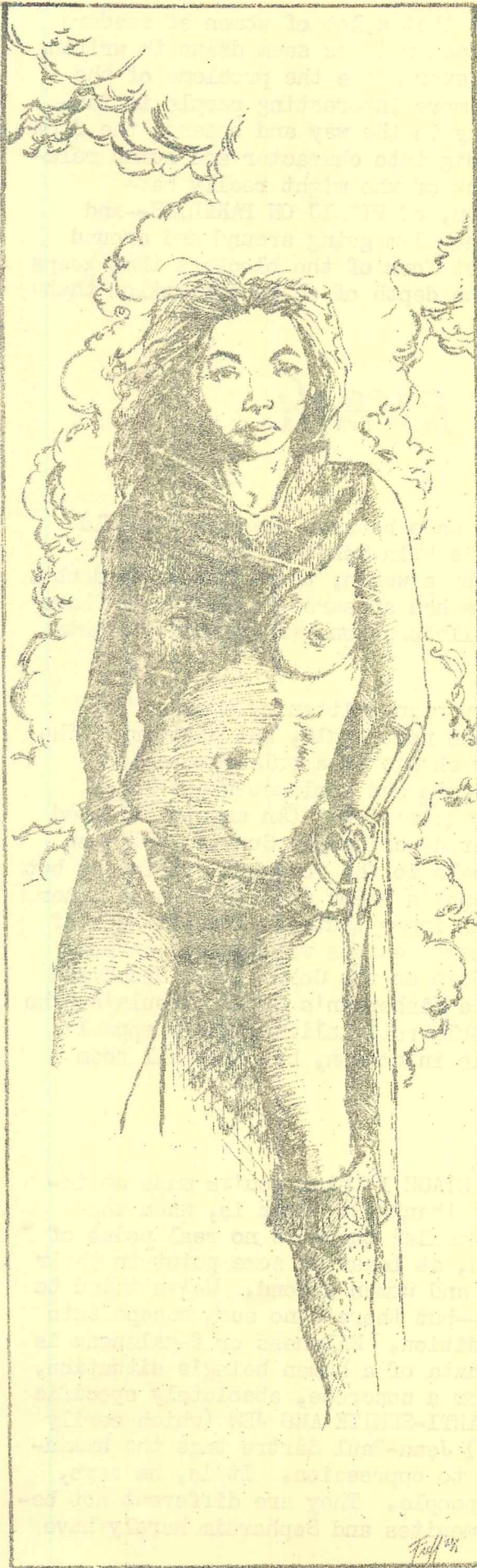
The sexist nature of the heroic quest form

CHARNAS:

Is anybody working on a fantasy book, real fantasy, which will hopefully break away from the old heroic-quest pattern, which is sexist in its nature and can't seem to get free of it--or does anyone know of such a fantasy book already written? One in which the men are not all parfit knights or oily villains and the women all fair white damsels or wicked witches? Or even good witches, for that matter.

DELANY:

What makes the quest a "sexist" form? Is it the abstract form itself, or



is it the make-up of the society that the quest must send the heroine/hero through? An adventure inside the house (or the heart--and admittedly these are not the only two alternatives by any means) is not symmetrical with an adventure in the world. You can learn a lot from both. But you can only learn about the world from going out into it. And there is this unidirectional relation between the two: If you do not know about the world, while you are having your adventure in the house, the world (especially in this day and age) may just come along and knock your house down around your ears, whereas it doesn't work the other way around. (Besides, there's an element in keeping women out of the center of quests that seems to me almost identical with keeping women "in their place.") Is the answer, perhaps, to get our heroines out in the world with a few less illusions about it, ready to see just how nasty it is in sexist terms, and also to arm them with the knowledge that they can find other women out there as well? It is just amazing how many sf (and other!) books are written in which the women have simply vanished from the society. Not only are they not there explicitly, they're not there implicitly. For the first hundred times, I suppose, one can accept the tacit authorial explanation: "Well, that just isn't where I was interested in looking." The hundred and first time, I think it's fair to say back, "Well, I'm not terribly interested in looking where you're interested in looking--especially when you have to distort so much to see it the way you'd like to believe it is."

CHARNAS:

I think the problem is mainly one of the uses to which this basic fantasy-form has historically been put. From fairy-tales to folk-tales to THE ODYSSEY and IDYLLS OF THE KING, it's all bold heroes and evil enchantresses, temptresses, or villains who are called men but who fight "like women"--deviously, dishonorably, ruthlessly and unfairly. The writer who makes use of the echoes of ancientry that this form automatically raises can't help raising those other sexist echoes as well. Those who respond to the form at all have learned to respond to the whole package, including

the sexism it has traditionally included.

On the other hand there is a curious fact that a lot of women sf readers whom I know prefer fantasy, and a number of women writers seem drawn to writing it (Kurtz, Chant, McCaffrey--myself, if I can ever solve the problems of the form). One reader has told me that she finds more interesting people in fantasy. Maybe because there's so little gadgetry in the way and because the form is relatively fixed the writer feels free to dig into character and human relationships--and yet the only heroine I can think of who might really have stepped out of a good job of doing this is Alyx, of PICNIC ON PARADISE--and that's sf, not fantasy. I have the feeling that I'm going around and around this without being able to get at it--the exact form of the blockage that keeps the fantasy form from truly blossoming with the depth of characterization that it seems to invite.

Gimmicks are not enough

SMITH:

I think an interesting comparison can be made between Joanna's "An Old Fashioned Girl" in FINAL STAGE and Joan Vinge's "Tin Soldier" in a recent ORBIT. Joanna's is a story that was written by a woman; there can be no doubt. The subtleties are such that if a man's byline had appeared on it I would have called it a pseudonym or an unacknowledged collaboration. There are thoughts in there that I've never heard from any man.

Vinge's story, though, I think could have been written by a man. The dominant societal point of view is neither male nor female, but military. The implicit moral is that things will not really change in a role-reversal. Really, "Tin Soldier" is a story about a spaceman and a planet-bound woman, with the sexes suddenly changed just before publication. (An unsophisticated version of the technique of the British writer described by Suzy.) It is an enjoyable, well-told story that strongly appeals to the romantic within me, but it is an inconsequential fairy tale where Joanna's seems to burn with an inner truth. (I like stories that seem to burn with inner truths. I don't know if they really do or not, but they strike responsive chords within me. Several of Tip's do, like "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" and "Her Smoke Rose Up Forever." Chip's "Dog in a Fisherman's Net." Ursula's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." I have trouble rationalizing their appeal (and I've tried), and they seem to have little in common, but they all seem true to me.)

RUSS:

In what you say about my story in FINAL STAGE I think you've made an important point (not because you praise it, but thanks!): that is, when the "dominant point of view is neither male nor female" there is no real point of view at all. Many women (like me) have tried, at least at some point in their lives, to insist that they are writers first and women second. We've tried to escape into a generalized, abstract humanity--but there's no such escape into such a condition because there's no such condition. Maleness or femaleness is among the most important concrete, specific data of a human being's situation, and to write authentically one must write from a concrete, absolutely specific history. In a brilliant little book called ANTI-SEMITES AND JEWS (which eerily enough applies almost word-for-word to women) Jean-Paul Sartre tags the human-first-Jew-next reaction as a common reaction to oppression. It is, he says, inauthentic. Jews are different from other people. They are different not because they share a common culture (Poles, Yemenites and Sephardim hardly have

that) or a common religion (anti-Semites don't worry whether their victims are atheists or Hasidim) but because they share a common situation, i.e. the rest of the community has agreed that they are different. And this does indeed make them different; the common situation produces remarkably similar results in people who are otherwise quite diverse.

This doesn't mean that a literary point of view is either male or female and that's that. It must also be young or old, black or white, urban or rural, short or tall, athletic/short/healthy (say Vonda McIntyre) or weedy/tall/weak (me), either Ursuline or Raylynish, Samuelly or Joannian. That is, it must be authentic and to be authentic it must be individual and to be individual it must be specific, and therefore male or female.

McINTYRE:

I can't answer your question about Joan Vinge's story vs. Joanna's because I haven't got FINAL STAGE. I must say, though, that I did read "Tin Soldier," and I found it considerably more than an "inconsequential fairy tale," as you so cavalierly dismiss it. I recommended it for the Nebula; it's on the novel/novella/novelle borderline (turns out to be a novelle), and I think it should win over any story in either category including--here I will probably annoy everybody in this symposium--"The Women Men Don't See." Which has a lot of things going for it; but it still isn't as good as "Tin Soldier."

You ask for tolerance and understanding so I will be as polite as I am able. Where do you get off proclaiming that Vinge's story is really about "a spaceman and a planet-bound woman"? Translation: the Natural Order of Things is that men go exploring and women stay home safe on mother earth or wherever. As far as I'm concerned you can take your translation and its assumptions, fold them five ways, and stuff them where the sun don't shine. The male sf writer doesn't exist who could have written that story with anywhere near the understanding and compassion Vinge showed. I don't know how you could have read that story and let it slide right off your back like that--well, yes, I do. It was a little bit sexist, female-chauvinistic (boy, did I like that; I am so sick of stories about spacemen and planet-bound women), and I expect that really got to a lot of men.

SMITH:

I don't have "Tin Soldier" available--I read a library copy--so I have to work from memory. And I can't say much more than I said originally. Which is: If you took that story, and merely reversed the roles, made every female male and every male female, it would read like any number of romantic stories of spacemen and planet-bound women. The spacewoman in the story is not a woman, but a space-entity who could be made male without so much as a hormone shot. The female military is identical to the cliché-weary male space militaries--as I mentioned before, the implicit moral is that the military ambience is so strong that no matter who's in it it remains the same.

Tell me, if the tin soldier had been the spacer and the woman the innkeeper, how would the story really have been different? How would the essence be changed? I think you're responding to the surface of the story (and as I said, I really liked the surface as well; I recommended the story to people; it was probably the high point of the week I read it in) and not to anything deeper.

You can take your translation of my comments and its assumptions and take them out of my mouth (or wherever). I dismiss "Tin Soldier" for my own reason--which is that outside one imaginative, effective gimmick, the story has been done before, often. Gimmicks are not enough.

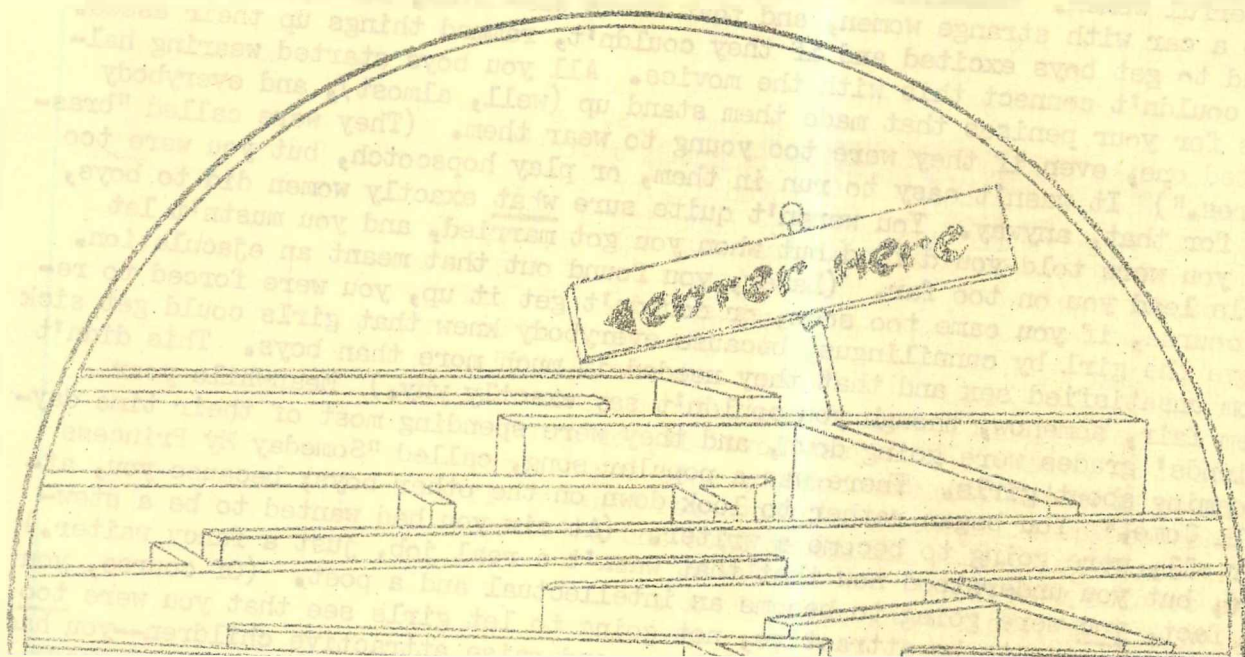
This is your life

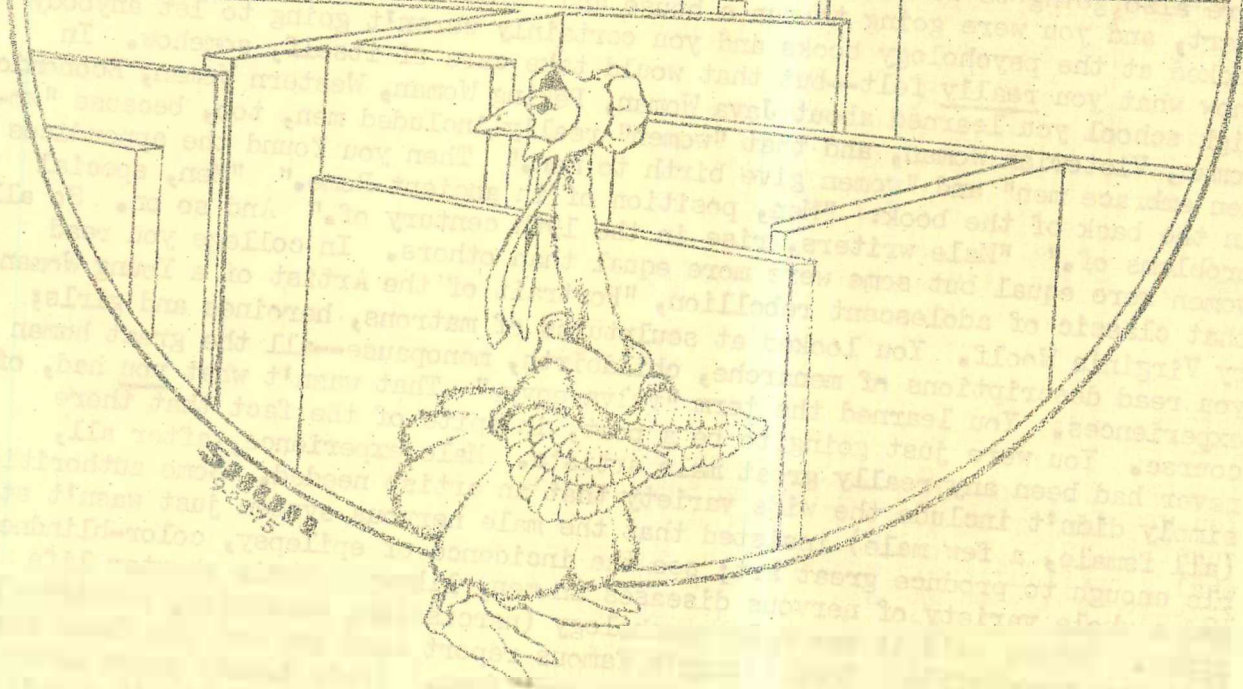
RUSS:

Here is a piece called "This Is Your Life" which might be taken as scratchy sf; anyway, I had it duplicated in self-defense because I got so sick of writing the same letter over and over. Men often ask me what I have to complain about, since I'm so "successful" (whatever that is); well, here it is. I have had to slice my soul in half. I flatter myself that I must have a lot of soul because I'm still kicking and protesting, but all the same, it's one hell of a process.

THIS IS YOUR LIFE

Your doctor is a woman. Your dentist is a woman. Your lawyer is a woman. The police are (almost) all women. Government, business, finance, agribusiness, art, science, and the military-industrial complex are controlled by women. 40% of the work force is male, most of them in low-paying, dead-end, non-unionized jobs; 98% of welfare cases are to men with small children. Men's bodies are used to sell almost everything, from cars to tractors to matches, both to women and to men. Since women bear children, men care for them. Your mommy "worked" but your daddy "stayed home" and didn't "work." Actually your mommy didn't like her job that much, and when she was especially annoyed (your mommy often got angry; your daddy sighed a lot) she'd come home and tell your daddy how lucky he was he didn't have to work. You had a sister only a year older than yourself; sometimes your daddy would burst into tears because there was so much to do (but it wasn't "work") and your mommy would either get guilty or angry, because the house was a mess. Then your sister went to school. So did you. Somehow when she organized the class party, it showed she had organizational ability; but when you did it, it meant you were a good boy. Somehow nothing you did had any real connection to the future, except when you played with your dolls (everyone knew that because women bore children, nature equitably planted a fathering instinct in men so they would take care of them; otherwise nobody could've done it alone) or your play-stove and play-kitchen things. That did have a connection to the future. You knew that girls had organs for sexuality that were separate from their procreative organs and boys didn't; that was why boys' sexuality was inextricably bound up with loving children and taking care of them. Everybody also knew that little boys must try and be as deft and dainty as possible (because that was natural to them) and never use their muscles because they would develop horrible lumps all over them and that wasn't pretty. Everybody greeted you with, "What a pretty little boy!" and was very protective of you. When you and your sister flirted with grown-ups, she was told that big strong girls didn't do such things; you were encouraged to continue. ("Oh, look! Isn't he the little man already!") In school the teacher (male) told the class that any girl could become President because this was a Democratic country, with opportunity for all. He also told you that men were now equal to women because men had been given the vote only thirty years before (given it by the women, of course) and could legally go into any profession, but of course most men chose to become fathers and husbands instead. (When one bold little boy asked if a boy could become President, the class laughed and the teacher sent him to the (female) Principal for disciplining because he was being bad.) At thirteen you were pulled by other little boys to the cosmetics counter, where you all fingered--fascinated--the false chest-hair, shoulder-pads and buttock-cinchers that would make you attractive to girls. The salesman smiled kindly and called you all "dear." Meanwhile the





girls—who didn't have bouncing, delicate genitals that might be hurt—were practicing hockey, football, basketball, etc. (occasionally beating up some slight girl who wasn't good at athletics). You started reading and going to the movies; seeing endless variations on the Man with a Past, the Career Man who gave it all up for love, scenes in which men swooned away into the arms of masterful women. Meanwhile you were learning that you should never, never get into a car with strange women, and that there were sick, perverted women who tried to get boys excited and if they couldn't, rammed things up their asses. You couldn't connect this with the movies. All you boys started wearing halters for your penises that made them stand up (well, almost), and everybody wanted one, even if they were too young to wear them. (They were called "brasieres.") It wasn't easy to run in them, or play hopscotch, but you were too old for that, anyway. You weren't quite sure what exactly women did to boys, but you were told you'd find out when you got married, and you mustn't let girls lead you on too far. (Later, you found out that meant an ejaculation. Of course, if you came too soon, or couldn't get it up, you were forced to relieve the girl by cunnilingus, because everybody knew that girls could get sick from unsatisfied sex and that they needed it much more than boys. This didn't seem fair, somehow, though you couldn't say exactly why.) Meanwhile your friends' grades were going down, and they were spending most of their time day-dreaming about girls. There was a popular song, called "Someday My Princess Will Come." You began rather to look down on the other boys; because you, after all, were going to become a writer. (At six you had wanted to be a steward, but you understood now that that wasn't a real job, just a fancy waiter.) In fact, you were going to become an intellectual and a poet. (Of course, you were also going to be attractive, not going to let girls see that you were too smart, and you were going to run a house and raise attractive children—you had looked at the psychology books and you certainly weren't going to let anybody know what you really felt—but that would take care of itself, somehow. In high school you learned about Java Woman, Peking Woman, Western Woman, Economic Woman, Victorian Woman, and that "women" really included men, too, because "women embrace men" and "women give birth to men." Then you found the appendices in the back of the book: "Men, position of in ancient Rome." "Men, special problems of." "Male writers, rise in the 19th century of." And so on. So all women were equal but some were more equal than others. In college you read that classic of adolescent rebellion, "Portrait of the Artist of a Young Woman" by Virginia Woolf. You looked at sculptures of matrons, heroines and girls; you read descriptions of menarche, childbirth, menopause—all the great human experiences. You learned the term "vulva envy." That wasn't what you had, of course. You were just going to be a poet, in spite of the fact that there never had been any really great male artists. Male experience, after all, simply didn't include the wide variety that an artist needed. Some authorities (all female, a few male) insisted that the male nervous system just wasn't stable enough to produce great art; see the incidence of epilepsy, color-blindness, and a whole variety of nervous diseases in men, likewise their shorter life spans. Others said it was male psychology (narcissism, masochism, passivity) that was responsible. Emma Kinsey's famous report came out and you found that as male education went up, male potency went down. (Only twenty years later did you find out that this was a distortion of the report.) Well, it didn't matter. You were going to be an exception. (In writing classes, you were usually either the only boy, among a whole bunch of women, or one of a few boys.) You read Zelda Fitzgerald's "Women and Boys," a classic of life in the 1920's. You wrote stories of heroines who seduced their first boy, or descriptions of cunnilingus in which boys just loved it, or stories about women who hunted whales or found their womanhood by shooting a bear, or fought with other women in the Old West. Books by men bothered you; you liked them but they were too much like soap operas, all about love and suffering and domestic interiors. (The critics agreed with you.) Woman landed on the moon; "One small step for me, one giant step for womankind." A couple of girls tried to make you, but mostly you were too shy for that; you envied your brilliant, melodramatically

suicidal classmate who had twenty phone calls a night. (He later married and had four children, and hasn't written much.) When you wrote stories, you naturally wrote about heroines, although you tried hard not to. But of course it didn't matter which sex anybody wrote about; art was above all that. After school you found yourself in Bohemian society in NY (as it was then called); everybody was equal, of course, but somehow it just happened that not only was your lover a woman, all your friends were women. You began (with some shock) to realize that there were odd, strange women who almost behaved like--well, like boys and you felt an odd affinity with them. There were a lot of them in the theater; they didn't care about athletics or fights, or really womanly things, but of course they did behave rather peculiarly. In fact, you rather condescended to them. (You were later to write a friend that you'd spent most of your life feeling like "a rather peculiar Lesbian" but that's much later.) People were, of course, perfectly free to do just what they wanted, and if your parents (especially your father) kept questioning you anxiously about your marriage plans or having babies, that was their problem. Except you did wish, sometimes, that some of the women you knew didn't order their boy friends about quite as much. And it was tiring to keep looking good, but on the other hand, it was too frightening to think what would happen to you if you didn't....

When you knew married couples, you of course always talked to the woman, not the boy.

You laughed tolerantly at movies in which women kept ramming things up men's asses because the men couldn't get it up. Only there seemed to be hardly any movies without at least one scene like that in them.

You began losing your taste for literature, you really didn't know why, except that it seemed all about irrelevant power struggles or something, and anyway, there wasn't much to write about. Perhaps because you were such an exceptional man. ("The proper study of womankind is woman.") Well, of course. Maybe if you had a baby...

Nobody had ever told you about the Roosterettes in the 19th century (of course they didn't call themselves that) or why your love-affairs kept turning out so badly, or why you never felt like a real man when you did all the things a real man was supposed to do (like mopping the floor). And none of it mattered, anyway, because people were individuals. (Women run the world. Women are people. Therefore people run the world.)

You got annoyed when you were asked, "What does it feel like to be the first male to teach here, eh?" or "You're funny creatures, you boys who have brains" or "Of course your maleness doesn't affect your teaching, does it--?" Some people just didn't understand. (Not "women," people.)

After all, you were free to do whatever you wanted. Weren't you?

Women didn't seem to care as much about human relations as men, but that wasn't anybody's fault. Certainly it had nothing to do with sex. I mean, finding out that your father had been impotent for years and years (in fact, he'd hardly ever practiced anything but cunnilingus with your mother, though they never told you; you'd been born via artificial insemination)....Of course, you yourself had often wanted to stop in the middle of sex, but you couldn't do that because, well, because. It was an awful thing to do to a woman. If you got her excited, you just had to do something about it, even if it nauseated you. (Of course if she couldn't get excited enough to let you in, there was nothing she could do about that.)

And of course you're not one of those hysterical pricks (as a female friend of yours called them once) who run around burning their phallus-holders

and shouting about hommy-lib because if you have to question everything, it's too...too...and people might actually think you were a jock. (You think you actually saw one of them, once, in Greenwich Village. With those fake breasts--at least his shirt was cut that way--and no ruffles on his trousers! And hair on his head! You shave yours every morning, of course.)

You've got a problem. You're neurotic. Either that, or you've been hanging around with the wrong women. There are nice women, after all--well, there are--who don't mind if you act more freely and if you even do things that might be called role-reversals.

Of course they work and their men don't.

Or their men work at low-paid, boring jobs. But that's a personal problem.

Or they move to Wisconsin and their men have to come with them, when their men do have jobs.

Or, just generally, in their circle, the women do most of the talking and own most of the money, and the men sort of are quieter.

But they like intellectually and sexually aggressive men. They really do.

So what are you complaining about?

And meanwhile your doctor is a woman, your lawyer is a woman, your dentist is a woman, agribusiness, the army, the navy, the government, the arts, finance, corporate life are all run by women. The museums are full of old mistresses, but as some wag wittily said (don't know who she was) "old masters" would be quite another thing, a lot of superannuated beaux sitting around trying to look desirable and being only rather--well, superannuated!

And meanwhile the magazine racks are full of boy-boy mags with naked boys in all sorts of provocative positions, and boys' bodies are used to sell everything from cars to refrigerators to stockings--even to you--and people are even speculating whether a black--or a man--might be President in twenty years or so, and you've found you like all those Bobbie Davis and John Crawford movies from the 1930's, sort of Soffering, Soffering, but it does get you somewhere in the old Ur-masculine--and you've finally dared to write a story about how men are suppressed in this society. (And strange, beetly girls and overbearing young women come up to you at sf conventions and say, "You know, I never liked male sf writers until I read your works" and you know you're not supposed to say: "You know, I liked fans until I met you." And you don't say it.)

And you've just gotten a letter from a female friend who met someone at a convention, who was a hom-libber, and who talked about Men's Wrongs, and she says, "He's been hanging around with the wrong sort of women." But you do think there's more to it than that, and it even strikes you that there's something typically feminine in limiting the whole business to a sexual problem, and assuming that the crux of a man's problems must be in his relation to women. Or in sex at all.

What IS wrong?

ON THE NATURE OF CONCRETE PHENOMENA AND RHETORICAL SLEIGHT-OF-HAND

The Greeks invented Democracy. Their slaves...(who all lived elsewhere)

Men have permanently enlarged breasts, with which they suckle their young. In

this way men are unique among mammals. (Wome, however--)

TIME magazine, 1973: A first-year college student can get into a lot of trouble. He can fail exams, not do his work properly, or get his girl friend pregnant. (Hm! Somehow back in 1953 I wasn't worrying about that last...)

Erich Fromm: Men have always gladly surrendered their freedom to strong leaders who, in return, have provided safety, the sanctioning of aggression through wars in which men have obtained booty and women.

The Goats were hardy warriors. Their wives--(all Jutes)

Washington Irving: The Bowyerie was a favorite promenade for the inhabitants of New York and their wives--(who lived in Schenectady? Oh, these commuter marriages! Actually, Father Knickerbocker mentions "the citizens and their wives" which is correct. Married adult women were not citizens.)

The conditions of coal-miners in the 19th century were very bad. Pregnant coal-miners had to pull carts...

Man is unique among mammals; he has an extremely long infancy, a very well-developed cerebral cortex, and he menstruates.

In 1960 the average man in America was a middle-aged woman who lived in Ohio and voted Democratic.

Americans can no longer support their wives and children; the two-income family is becoming more and more common. (I think I just lost my citizenship.)

To get the viewpoint of the man in the street, I stopped a young secretary who hitched up his pants and-- (fooled you)

TV GUIDE: He then meets a beautiful girl whose years of experience as an assassin have jaded her-- (must've started at 7)

"Man will conquer the universe," said Georgette, gazing at the stars, "and I will be among the first of him to do so." (Filthy sf magazines, writing stories about transsexuals--!)

1066 AND ALL THAT: The Scandinavians with their sagas, or sisters... (This problem of mixed-nationality families is getting acute)

Victorian Man was a creature of sexual ignorance; he visited prostitutes, believed that women had no sexual feelings, and put vinegar-soaked sponges in his vagina to prevent conception. (True, apparently.)

Irving Howe, in his preface to an edition of Sophocles' OEDIPUS: We all want to kill our fathers and marry our mothers. (Question for Rhetoric 101: who is "we"?)

One of the characters discussed in our new freshman textbook, EXISTENTIAL MAN, is Sophia Loren. (You will all now go home and read "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" by Virginia Woolf.)

In the 1850's Southerners were divided in their opinions about slavery. They held debates, argued publicly, and printed many articles in their newspapers. (A fetching idea--black Southerners arguing publicly and printing articles in newspapers. And Angelina Grimke speaking without let or hindrance to cheering audiences. Who'd a thunk it?)

Statistically speaking, Man has breasts and a vagina and wears skirts, except when she prefers pants-suits, of course. (But under the age of twelve...)

Women science fiction writers don't sell

DELANY:

Like Tip, I (predictably) too would rather not discuss the subject and natter on instead about the inevitability and unchangeableness of "male" sexuality (read male behavior in all situations for which sex can conceivably be used as a metaphor, i.e., all situations); I would also like, rather than discuss the subject, to project the particular behavior I feel like indulging, out of the immense range of my political freedom, onto the animal kingdom: like the already-mentioned lichen, or the dog-fish, who receives the mother's eggs in his mouth and raises the young till they can take care of themselves, while the mother goes away right after laying them. Likewise, it is equally tempting to choose from the far more politically limited range of behavior that is opened to women and choose one that most complements mine and find some species of animal in which that is how the females behave--and, with a little hierarchic thinking, I can take any behavior of any species, from lemmings to mud-wasps, and make it either a description or a proscription for the behavior of women and men.

An incident occurred this afternoon, however, about four hours after the first sheaf of letters from the symposium arrived, that compels me to stay on the subject. During my second reading of the symposium, at about eleven, the phone rang: it was the editor who was taking me out to lunch this afternoon. He had volunteered to come pick me up, as I was a "stranger" in London (he was, apparently, unaware that I had been living here for two years); I informed him that we would have the lively (but extraordinarily well-behaved in restaurants) Alyx--ago ten and a half months--with us--but never fear, there was a reasonable French restaurant where she'd been many times since the age of three weeks not three blocks away. I hung up, and shortly before one, Piers Dudgeon, of Star Books (a newly starting paperback line from W.H. Allen), a tall thin gentleman of twenty-five, with very large, rimless glasses, arrived; and, with Alyx in her push-chair, we set off.

Once we reached the street, the third exchange of conversation was:

"Do you know anything of Joanna Russ's?"

"Yes," I said. "In fact, that sheaf of letters I was reading when you walked in began with one of hers."

"Ah," he said. "You know, when I was working for Panther, two years ago, I rejected two of her novels--I didn't even get a chance to read them. My boss told me women science fiction writers don't sell." (May I pause here to state the obvious: when you get your books rejected, unread, by the major paperback sf publisher in England, this is a diminution of your yearly income as a writer by a substantial amount.)

"Doesn't Panther publish Ursula Le Guin?" I asked. Next to Heinlein and the Holy Trinity of the Great A's (Asimov, Anderson, Aldiss), for the last six months, Ursula has been the widest-distributed science fiction writer in the British Isles.

"Oh, yes. In fact it's the same editor who told me women sf writers didn't sell who bought her books." (Pause: "The Double Standard" that women face today is simply that men in positions of power--economic through social--will

judge them anyway they like, with no consistency ever demanded. And the situation is over-determined in such a way that there is no appeal possible. And this is why Suzy's "master/slave" terminology is all too appropriate.)

"Well," I said, wondering if in maybe two years the situation had changed, since after all, Le Guin was selling well, "maybe the situation has changed. Le Guin is selling very well."

Dudgeon: "Oh, well, I haven't read Le Guin, but he's supposed to be very good." And he then went on to refer to Ursula, alternately, as "he" or "she" over the next five sentences at least six times. Congratulations, Ursula, you've become an honorary man by the sheer expedient of having sold!

What you, women, are dealing with is something that is only not called a psychosis because a) it is so wide spread and b) the vast majority of male psychiatrists suffer from it just as much as most men. Yes, psychotics can be cajoled and wheedled and gotten around by devious misdirections. Shock treatment, however, is more effective. And the most extreme Women's Liberation programs don't seem to be asking anything more than sanity.

Dudgeon's initial interest in Joanna is because he had just read AND CHAOS DIED and "was just knocked out by it." He had just requested the ms. of Joanna's latest novel, THE FEMALE MAN, from her London agent. Had I ever heard of that? Yes, I explained that Bantam Books had sent me a copy of the ms., to write something nice on the back of; I proceeded to quote him my most enthusiastic quote, told him I thought it was the most exciting piece of fiction of any sort, sf or otherwise, I had read in the last five years (which I do), and in general carried on like a minor imitation of Harlan Ellison, jumped up and down, waved magic ju-ju's at him, and engaged in arcane and powerful male bonding rituals, in which the participants chant back and forth such magic phrases as "...hot property..." "...Bantam Books publicity campaign..." "...THE FEMALE EUNUCH, big commercial success...titles related..." (he hadn't noticed; and THE FEMALE EUNUCH was at the top of the paperback bestseller list here in England not two years ago but three months ago!) and "...special publicity attention in the USA..."

The point, however, no matter how excited Mr. Dudgeon is about a given novel by a given woman novelist, if he is publishing them from within then context of "women sf writers don't sell," then he sees publishing women sf novelists as doing something extraordinary, possible quality overcoming innate non-commercialism, pushing something that has a block to overcome from the beginning. And this is not the context from which he would be publishing mine. Even if he likes Joanna's novels far more than he likes mine, the contexts still remain the same. It puts Joanna's novel specifically into competition with other women-written sf novels at a much higher degree than it does with men novelists! (consider he publishes eight books a month, only two of which are sf); and it gives men novelists a wholly unfair edge, and, in short, represents a wholly unfair situation. (Yes, I told him that was silly, ran over Hugo and Nebula awards, Andre Norton, etc., and told him it was a situation that was a) non-existent and b) self-defeating and c) broken by nothing more than publishing women sf novelists. His grunts of assent had the perfunctory quality of someone listening to a discussion of religion or politics in a situation where it's politic not to disagree. The bonding-rituals were more successful.)

Women in sf, therefore, is two problems. And characterization is only one of them. Yes, the situation is probably better in the USA, but it is really shameful that one of the most exciting British sf novelists, Josephine Saxton, is just not published in her own country, in either hardcover or paperback. And if the situation is better in the USA, it is only somewhat so. Instead of

"Southern Style" prejudice, with signs and laws ("Women sf writers don't sell,"), it's "Northern Style," with innuendoes and shadings and leanings, so that for most of the time the "people" who perpetrate it can even convince themselves that they're not doing anything.

SMITH:

Chip mentions the editor who was told "Women sf writers don't sell." Actually, I believe this is true--not because they have feminine by-lines, but because they don't write the kind of sf that does sell. I see two kinds of science fiction--and let us wave them off as New and Old, just for convenience. (Shorthand, of course.) Women write the New sf--not all women, but most of them. Andre Norton is a minor phenomenon of Old sf. (There are still adults who read her books without ever picking up from the publishers' blurbs that she is a woman.) Anne McCaffrey writes the Old sf, and sells well. Ursula used to write the Old stuff. (Remember, Ursula, when you and Norton and McCaffrey were all considered to write alike?) Zenna Henderson. Leigh Brackett and Katherine Kurtz and...the fantasy writers. No woman--or at least none with any reputation--writes straight technological sf (who can blame them?). Most women write the more introspective type of story.

From my sf bookselling experience I discovered two things: Novels sell better than short stories, and adventure sells better than intellect. It's really a heartbreaker to watch DRIFTGLASS and the NEW DIMENSIONS books and many of the best volumes of sf published sit on the shelves and rot. They end up separated from their covers and mashed in trash compactors.

Despite Virginia's glowing words of praise for the imagination and open-mindedness of science fiction readers, these are mostly conservative people reading a conservative literature, non-thinkers who can't see that there is a real difference between an average issue of ANALOG and RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA, people for whom Russ and Saxton and Company are "boring."

I am certainly not denying that there are imaginative and open-minded sf readers; some of my best friends...(sorry). But the number of such people is not enough to make publishing for them viable. That's why the books you people write have to look like "science fiction," whatever that is. If Chip Delany's books don't look like Larry Niven's, they aren't going to sell. Of course, if they look like Larry Niven's, a lot of people who would enjoy them, people who don't generally read about rocketships, will never even notice them--but publishers don't care who buys their books, just that as many as possible do. (I'd be interested in the sales figures on Disch's 334 from Avon, which was packaged (and over-priced) as a Modern Novel.)

So, here is an extremely constructive question, not exclusively devoted to Women in Science Fiction, but one with which women sf writers should be very concerned:

Somewhere there is an audience for your books. How do you find it? (I can assure you, for the most part most of you haven't found it yet.) What have you actively done yourself? Have you been blocked anywhere?

RUSS:

In worrying over "women sf writers don't sell" you are trying to make sense out of what does not make sense. You end up in the absurd position of saying "women sf writers" don't sell but they do if they write "old sf" which somehow explains why "women" don't sell sf! The whole point is that the publisher Chip is talking about subsumed all women sf writers under one heading except those he didn't want to, who became male. Sort of. It is truly crazy.

And in trying to make logic out of it, you only expose how totally arbitrary it is. 1) Women don't sell. 2) Except for Anne McCaffrey, Andre Norton, and Ursula Le Guin, to name a few. 3) Anne McC., Andre N., and Ursula L. either aren't women (Piers' way of resolving the dilemma!) or 4) Some women do sell (also Piers' way of resolving the dilemma) so that 5) Women don't sell. Q.E.D.

LE GUIN:

I write. I submit works to publisher/editor. He rejects. I write. He rejects. In 1962, she accepts. I go on writing, submitting, getting some accepted. In 1967, I obtain agent. She submits much harder and smarter than me. I go on writing (better). Publishers, under stimulus from agent, give a little more publicity. Books get bought more. I write more (better). Agent sells more (for more). Ascending Spiral has been established.

I see it as about ~~50%~~ luck and ~~50%~~ very hard work (on part of self, agent, and editors). Except for one further element, whose importance percentagewise I don't know:

My first sf editor was Cele Goldsmith Lalli (f)
My agent is Virginia Kidd (f)
My editor at Atheneum is Jean Karl (f)
My editor at Harper has been Victoria Schochet (f)
My editor in the Children's Department at Gollancz is Joanna Goldsworthy (f)

Now, Don Wellheim bought my first three novels, and Terry Carr (whom I first addressed, by the way, in 1954, as "Dear Miss Carr") asked for LEFT HAND, and buys far-out stories; as does Damon; and John Bush of Gollancz is a brave editor who's taken some very long chances on me. I don't feel the men are agin me. Campbell would have been, because I was agin him; Charles Scribner was, because he's agin science fiction; and I'm sure that there are always some men who as Quinn observes go around sniggering, but wotthehell? If a turd wants to anigger, let it. But all the same that list of five up there is kind of interesting. I wonder how many professional men would have five professional women so centrally involved in their career?

WILHELM:

It happens that over half of what I write is not science fiction, but straight fiction. I've had one story published in a slick magazine, but most of them are rejected with lovely notes from the editors who always enjoy them immensely and can't publish them. They are frank sometimes and say outright one doesn't publish stories about sexy old women, or stories that question our value system, and so on. One editor at HARPER'S suggested I write a novel about the woman in my story, because that would be published. Unorthodoxy is accepted in certain areas, not in others. Old women are not sexy in general circulation magazines, for example. In fact, they aren't in them at all, except as minor characters. I don't choose to write such stories, but they come and won't go away until I do. MARGARET AND I, not science fiction, took slightly over two years to find a publisher. Most editors don't want straight fiction with many ideas in it, not ideas of that sort anyway. It's based on Jungian theory and not terribly difficult (not difficult at all to me), but people reacted as if I were expounding something never voiced before, that had to be thought about. A no-no. How does one find an audience? I wish I knew. There is a hard core group of readers who like kooky things, things off the usual track, thank heaven, and they do gravitate to the sort of thing I write. It's not a large audience, and probably never will be, and I accept that. I know pretty well the way to become a "successful" writer, but I can't do it; I'm not interested enough to give it the kind of time and care even that would take. I went "commercial" for one whole year, wrote only those things that I

would be safe and acceptable, and did them all so badly that none of them sold. I can't campaign for my things. I'm not an entertainer or public speaker and have sense enough to know it, so I don't try. All I can do is write those things that won't go away and think longily of fame and fortune. There has never been any trouble at all with getting my science fiction published.

If I could write to order I could publish a lot more of it, but I can't. Whenever anyone approaches me for a story for a theme anthology, I have to turn it down. I reject it totally out of hand, without giving it a second thought, without trying to justify it at all usually, when anyone tells me what to write, or asks for a story about this or that one subject. It's because I can't. I'd like to; I would be richer. But I can't. What has surprised me about the letters I get is that apparently men read my work as much as women. They write more of the letters actually. I'm not sure at all why this is so.

If anyone else can tell me how to get a bigger audience, I'll be very grateful.

CHARNAS:

Maybe sf publishers don't care about reaching the mythical but all-too-real housewife, but as a writer and a housewife myself, I care. Certainly many women who defend the traditional role (mainly because they have already invested in it, and for compelling reasons) do not have minds open enough to enjoy free-ranging inquiry in fiction. But as the women's movement in all its forms touches more and more deeply the lives of women in all sorts of situations and states of minds, I think that more and more of them will try to regain the habit of questioning, and will discover the uses and delights of sf in that process.

In connection with this, let me reply to Jeff's question about finding one's audience. My own efforts began when I took from my copy of THE NEW WOMAN'S SURVIVAL CATALOG a list of women's bookstores around the country. There were about ten of them, and I wrote to each explaining that while a lot of women don't read sf and for good reasons, women are now writing it and changing it into something worth a woman's reading- and thinking-time, and that women's bookstores are in a position to help bring these writers into contact with the female readership that they would like to find. With each letter I sent a copy of my own book and a list (frequently amended since) of sf by and concerning women. The response was encouraging. So I went on, that summer, to write to all the women's centers in the US and Canada that I could find (in phone-books at the UNM library), asking them to return to me on a postcard enclosed the names of any women's bookstores in their areas.

To date I have contacted nearly fifty women's bookstores. Out of 110 letters to women's centers some 15-20 have been returned as undeliverable, and 44 postcards have come in. The last one came this month, with apologies for lateness--there had been no women's bookstore in Tallahassee, but there is one now. This rate-of-return on what was essentially a very simple questionnaire I offer, together with the number of warm and positive responses from bookstorewomen themselves, as my personal evidence against the old lie that women are incapable of mutual effort and support. Frankly, this effort to begin some connection between women sf writers and women's bookstores has been possibly the most rewarding aspect of being an sf author.

RUSS:

I (like Suzy) sent out an unofficial publicity mailing of THE FEMALE MAN to feminist bookstores, magazines, newsletters, groups, what-have-you, some of them overseas. (New Zealand and Australia are booming.) I am still trying to

persuade the publicity department of Bantam to put a classified ad in MS. for three months---they keep waffling. I have friends who teach women's studies and three of them say they will use my book. I kvell a lot. The worst kind of being blocked is not being published.

*Commentary:
If only one could get away from the whole world.
But that would be lonely.*

WILHELM:

I didn't respond to the previous mailing because I was much too busy, and because it was too depressing. I began to think of how many causes there are that I should respond to, and came up with a dozen without even checking--ADM, Common Cause, FOE, three fellows in a Georgian jail who probably didn't do what they probably will die for, hungry ghetto children, starving Indian children, dehydrated African children, various local Save Our--(lakes, rivers, beaches, bird sanctuaries, etc.), bans against food additives, prison reforms...I'm on many lists obviously. Likely most of you taking part in this symposium are also on those same lists. I can almost envy those people who never get such mailings, who remain happily ignorant throughout their lives, who think SALT is something you throw over your shoulder, who are certain when the local atomic energy generating plant is finished all our energy problems will be solved. Almost. But I am aware and I can't pretend otherwise. What happens, I think, is that people, any people, who become aware, find one or two of these problems claiming their allegiance, taking precedence over the others, and no doubt it must be like this. No one can suffer for all the world's woes and remain sane. So we pick and choose, or find ourselves chosen, which feels more nearly right in my case. I didn't consciously choose, but one day I realized my obsession had become simple survival of humanity on the large scale, and of individuals on the small.

I believe humanity's chances of surviving the next two or three decades are not good. I also believe the chances of any individual surviving intact are possibly less. These beliefs color everything I do, what I think, what I write, and I don't see how it could be different.

I also believe the cause of the peril to all of us that I fear lies with our system of government and business, the whole concept of capitalism; I don't believe any serious attempt to stop the coming disasters is possible, because we are all so locked into the system as it exists. Communism isn't the answer, either, because again the individual is secondary to the system.

So, believing these things, finding one or the other or both at the core of virtually everything I write because this is my obsession, I realize I appear detached from the problems of women's lib. In one sense I am. I view it as one of the very serious, but secondary, problems we all face. Before the screams start, let me put my foot in even farther and say this, I don't think women are more noble, more intelligent, more enlightened, more anything than men are. Solving the sexist problem of our society isn't likely to raise the odds a fraction of a percent for survival. I could match horror stories with

anyone and come out ahead, I am sure, but to what end? I've had my troubles getting various works published because the viewpoint expressed was unorthodox, in one way or another. I have a book now that is in trouble because a woman refuses to admit she's being irrational when she objects to rape, by her husband, but rape nevertheless; and because she is willing to risk her marriage for her job, to which she is thoroughly dedicated. Unorthodox on both counts. But this is not a feminist book, it is not a polemic for anything except the right to be an individual human being with certain inherent needs, the most important of which is to be free to choose. And, finally, we all have this need, and the freedom to exercise it. Even those of us who were ill-used as children, as adolescents, as young adults. We can choose to live in the past, or to change our lives. I agree wholeheartedly with Raylyn about this. None of us will live to see society change enough to suit any of us obsessed with any of the causes that haunt our dreams. Change doesn't happen that fast, and we're all too far gone to live that long. What we can change is our own lives.

RUSS:

Are we all going to be sitting around in 1999 STILL writing to each other? I can't resist. Dragged screaming to the typewriter.

Raylyn: It's exactly like a toothache; it won't go away and after a while there's nothing left to say about it and what is one to do? I think breaking the deadlock has to take many forms, one of which is political action, of whatever kind the act-or finds congenial. I tend to Write Letters myself, to magazines, Congress, NYS versions thereof, newspapers, even fanzines. There is nothing like public protest to lift the spirits. I consider it a civic act, like paying one's taxes, and personally satisfying. The way you say that "no conscious person" is going to be guilty of trying to perpetuate the old standards is, of course, true--and tautological, since quite obviously anybody who does is not conscious. This is often quite true. I remember, some fifteen years after I got my B.A., suddenly being astonished at what had happened to me--that an English Department that did not hire and never had hired a single woman teacher was encouraging me to get my Ph.D., telling me what a good student I was, that I must become a teacher and scholar, and so on. Where did they think I would end up teaching?

At a women's college? They do not hire women; a head count of the English faculty at Skidmore, which I did recently before a job interview for that astonishing place, reveals almost all women Emeriti, 3/4 of the Full Professors women, none of the Associate Professors women, and perhaps 8% of the Assistant Professors women. The division is clearly a division by age, and strongly suggests that the dividing line is WWII. What the students learn is that teachers come in two types--old spinsters and glamorous young men. Which will a female student become? (Answer: faculty wife.)

At an inferior college? Certainly not at any place comparable to Cornell, where I then was. I might add that the same college that encouraged me to pursue a professional academic career also taught (in all its departments) that women artists and scholars were exceptions (both in their profession and their sex) and that their marriages and personal lives would be seriously imperilled by careers! I asked a friend recently, "What did they think I would do? How did they think I would live?" and she answered simply, "They didn't." Needless to say, I am now very active in the Women's Caucus of the MLA (Modern Language Assn to those blessed ones out there who don't have to know), have found some wonderful friends there, and spend a lot of time fomenting trouble of various kinds. There are lawsuits, class action suits, forums (like this one!), letters, lectures, &c., &c., whatever the spirit dictates.

More important: I think that the single-lens kind of thinking eventually

broadens into a whole analysis of society, and there is nothing more exciting than that.

Even more important: the analysis-plus-action leads to something else--what I think of as the exact opposite of a ghetto situation, that is, repairing an enormous deficit in the lives of all the women I know anything about (Quinn speaks very poignantly to this), and that is bonds between women. It seems to me no accident that Suzy Charnas, who is currently married, is also currently writing a book in which there are no male characters (or so she tells me), and that I--who correspond passionately with Samuel Delany and James Tiptree, Jr., and love them both (and carry on at parties with Fritz Leiber in a way that makes even my typewriter blush)--have just written a book in which there are essentially two male characters (a Bully and a Simp) and which concentrates on a far-future society in which there are no men. My mother has also become a friend of mine for the first time in my life.

So an anthology of sf by women seems to me, far from being a ghetto situation, something quite different: it is Us the Tribe getting together for the first time, after having been atomized, isolated, kept apart for centuries.

I hope I don't sound offensive or sarcastic, but why is it that when an anthology (like Norman Spinrad's excellent MODERN SCIENCE FICTION) contains works by men only, that is not a ghetto? Because it isn't. In fact, it can be matched over and over again in the field. My heart always stirred when I read Coriolanus' statement, "I banish you" (monster tho' he be). I do think we (who? women) must become gynocentric before we can do anything about this dead-lock, admitting to our confidence whatever men we think deserve it, but centered on our individual (and gendered) selves. The point is that segregation already exists. It is segregation along power lines. Indifference or left-handedness or myopia don't matter; you are not given or denied social power this way. But sex does matter. That way.

By the way, "ghetto" anthologies like BY A WOMAN WRITT (ed. Cynthia Ozick, I think, in pb. an excellent book) of The Feminist Press have been publishing works buried by neglect and bias, some of them for centuries; it is wonderful to read the journal of Juliana of Norwich, a medieval mystic, or notes on 18th-century lives that you can't find in the official culture. Without the Jewish ghetto no Sholem Aleichem, no Isaac Bashevis Singer--and no Kafka (who seems to have used an already-established tradition in Yiddish writing). Women already have a tradition, but it's been an underground one, a buried one. It is indeed different from the official one (just as 19th century Russian writers faced entirely different problems aesthetically than English ones) and far from deploring it as a ghetto, I think we still have before us the extraordinary excitement of discovering it.

Having written a good deal about my power-situation as a woman, I find I'm now writing about death. Which is hardly sex-segregated. Maybe this means something.

Alas, you and I don't need terms of address, but the moment you step out in the world they do it to you, dammit. (In the old RADICAL THERAPIST there was a very funny and good article on I'M OK--YOU'RE OK entitled "I'm OK and You're OK But What About Them?")

Chip: I don't remember what the dickens I said in my last letter about being original, except it had something to do with the extraordinary difficulty of describing experience as it is. Autobiography (in that sense) is absolutely the hardest thing in the world to write. Many many intelligent writers I know falsify, in their works, experiences they can talk about perfectly well in conversation. The myth takes over in the absolute teeth of the evidence. There

is a naive idea that autobiography is easy and fiction difficult; nothing could be farther from the truth. It's always distressed me that so many sf writers (who are extremely intelligent) do not seem to use their brains in their work. The emotional bias or the learning about what's "real," what "counts" (i.e. cliches) just overwhelms even clear perception.

Everyone: take a look at a letter from Jack Wodhams in the SFWA FORUM, the most recent one. Is this unconsciousness? Stupidity? Malice? Daydreaming? What isn't awful is that a man is capable of this kind of thing (I've done it myself in the past; I know that) but that he is allowed to do it. That some people are fair game, publicly, that very few protest, that it is one more small lesson in learning that women don't count. (Quinn makes this point about SFWA vs. MWA.) It is sexism Southern-racist style. Ted Cogswell's printing it is sexism Northern-racist style. The (I predict) lack of response from most of the FORUM's readers is sexism Gentleman's Agreement style.

The Philcon discussion (with nice, sweet--and he is--Gardner Dozois the worst offender) is the same kind of thing. In the context of Utopia Gardner would just be an eccentric. But that isn't the context he's saying these things in. And so on, and so on. Raylyn is right; the subject is unbearable, not because we get stuck but because every time we walk out of our living rooms we get beaten over the head with it. (And inside, too, unless you leave the TV off, don't look out the window, and never open a book. Faugh.)

There is some sort of ghastly irony in the fact that it is Chip Delany, for goodness' sake, who keeps saying that women's main task right now is to find out about, relate to, talk to, build something with, other women. I just finished reading Poul Anderson's DANCER FROM ATLANTIS which has a very sympathetically portrayed superwoman in it who is clearly 20 times better in almost every way than the men in the novel.

She has no mother. She has no daughters. She has no female friends. She has no female friends. She has no female teachers (or pupils). She has no gossips (like the Wif of Bath, for Heaven's sake). She has no female colleagues. She has no female cousins. She has a lover, a husband, a son, and assorted rapists, and that's all, folks. An inadvertent lesson on what really counts, I think. The Vanishment of the Women--an essay somebody ought to write.

YES. GODDAMMIT, WHY IS JOSEPHINE SAXTON, WHOSE BOOKS ARE FANTASTICALLY GOOD, OUT ONLY IN DOUBLEDAY HARDCOVER? No paperbacks here, no paperbacks or hardcover publication in Britain, and the only pb here her earliest book. I wanted to teach GROUP FEAST (which is wonderful) to a women's-literature class and couldn't even get it.

Quinn: I don't like Bonnie and Clyde, either. But Franz Fanon also sticks in my head. True, Kate Millett once said that bloodshed is the sign of a failed revolution. But (seriously) are you and I going to get the chance to kill anybody? Or in any way that will really change things? I doubt it. You sound as if you are really talking about anger. And that is a must, and if you direct at the men who do their stupid numbers on you, then there is less chance, I think, of eventually blowing up at the men you love. If ten women in the class had stood up and argued your Nana-prof. to a standstill, he would have hesitated long over his ill behavior before committing it again, you ten would have discovered considerable solidarity, and everybody's knowledge of the world would've been improved mightily. There are, after all, degrees between blowing your stack and planting literal bombs under the US Senate. There is an extraordinary amount of talk (in places like THE VILLAGE VOICE, for example) about "killing" in the women's movement. It is rather odd, realistically considered. I think it betokens a great deal of anger on women's part and guilt on men's, but I think we are all really talking about something else. After

all, as Flo Kennedy once said, why call her a militant? Call Gen'l Westmoreland a militant (she said), "I don't even own a helicopter."

Could you write an essay on the equation sentimentality = cruelty? I long to read it.

Virginia: As of February 1973 membership in SFWA was as follows: 2 women to 11 men, or between 1/5 and 1/6. This does, of course, include a large number of one-story writers. My experience with Clarion workshops is that the ratio is about 5 or 6 female to 15-20 male and that for some reason the average age of the female students is mid-early 20s, that of the men very low: about 19 or so (and that's the average, remember). Since students were almost always self-selected (a deep dark secret, which we kept from them) the ratio of number and age clearly indicates something. Dunno exactly what. (February 1973, total 437. I counted about 20 doubtful first names or initials I couldn't place, and assigned them evenly to each group. If the same ratio held among the initials/doubtful writers as among the others, this was too generous and the ratio of women to men drops a little.)

All: what is needed is an overall theory that will somehow make distinctions, for example, between behavior-done-by-powerful-people and the same behavior done by the powerless. Obviously there is an immense difference. And why (this to me is a real mystery) some gay men react to their marginal situation with sympathy towards other marginal people, and some look desperately for somebody to put down (and why, and the varieties thereof). In short, what we really need is a comprehensive, all-embracing Theory of Human Behavior. Very simple! But I do think it's necessary. For example, who you sleep with (re Quinn's letter) matter and does significantly change your public behavior. Sometimes because it is a choice that follows an ideological stance (which is often absurd), sometimes it is an expression of all sorts of other choices, sometimes because you are treated differently by most people on account of who you sleep with and sometimes (cross my heart) in what position. (A friend of mine, after narrating what seemed to her a trivial incident in her sex life, found herself being looked up to with awe by her consciousness-raising group (or whatever it was). She had become The Leader because of her awesome boldness and knowledge. This kind of thing can be rather unnerving.) The knowledge of how others would treat you if they knew, or will treat you, is extremely important in the behavior of some gay men and gay women I know. And in the behavior of the student who comes to tell me (defiantly or ashamed) that in spite of everything she said in women's studies class, she's going to get married and drop out of school. And so on. It's the usual reverse-curse; it would not matter to you if it did not matter to them but because it matters to them it does matter to you.

If only one could get away from the whole world. But that would be lonely.

WHITE:

Most of this has been lying around in scraps of notebooks for weeks, so this is not a proper response to the mailing, but Quinn's remark left me hurt and offended. Please could you read my pages again. What I thought I was saying was that here we have a literary tradition in science fiction (which I analyzed, did not invent) in which women are legally empowered to kill and that it was rather sexist of Mr. Smith to turn around and ask science fiction writers (women) whatever induced them to enter a man's field. You write, "this picture you paint of vendetta...": I didn't paint it, I only saw it--and "vendetta" is a word far more suited to opera than anything in sf or African history, and not a word I used--and I find it sexist that you don't refer to Chip's mention of Robin Morgan's carrying a gun on her lecture tours as part of the murderous syndrome you accuse me of. Quinn, I once passed a pleasant even-

ing at your home in 1969, talking about sf; a few weeks later I went to work in Chicago for the Conspiracy Trial, where one of the defendants, a hero of 1960s proportions, took me aside during an argument, pointed with awe at the poster of the Vietcong lady on the wall (you all know the one: head high, battle dress, rifle) and said: "When you're like that, you can talk to me in that tone." Can't win, can I? Now look, if "killing is no way to freedom" then I can only assume that you let Chip's reference to Robin Morgan armed go without criticism because Chip is male. I never mentioned Bonnie and Clyde, and for literary referents, I want to hear about Bonnie and Bonnie. Would you tell Huey Newton that "killing is no way to freedom"? You've already said that most women get what they deserve. Now I'm sure you don't mean being put down at Worldcons, so I assume you must mean the beatings, the unwanted pregnancies, the uterine disorders called "neurosis" by doctors: how do we get out of "deserving" that? Look, in literature, in life, there are certain powers and capabilities that make one better equipped to accept that we are human despite constant disappointment; we need not employ these powers. One of the things 18 years of science fiction reading has left me with is a literary sense that the right to kill, like the ability to hit High C, is something that makes me what all Great Men in history have been: creatures of pain and art, lightness and liberty. Sorry to sound upset, but I am upset. But please, please, don't get me wrong: I too have been brainwashed (and it works!): I spend many evenings whispering (hopefully in the proper note) into the ears of my oppressors.

And thank you, Joanna: somehow (but it's not "somehow," is it?) I always laugh when I'm sobbing my way through one of your essays/novels/stories. But for the reading list, may I add (especially for James Tiptree) Olive Shriener's STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM. It is the best thing I know about the brutalization into femininity (Tip's "leadership without aggression"---now that's somebody's son speaking) and going from being daughter to woman to mother: the pain and the liberty again.

Now for my earlier angers, in exchange for which I will try to be brief.

My impression was, don't any of you "people" read science fiction? It's all there. In my hubris (see first paragraph) I thought I said that we have a literature in which women characters kill, and someone turns around and says to women and men writers, my dear lambs, when did you first put down your powder puffs and put the fairer sex into sf? Now come on.

After all, these "lambs" have been writing about the deaths of men, even in its feyist fantasy form, like Lafferty's "Parthen." Most of the issues Chip touched on have been covered in sf, to my belated surprise. (Surprise, that is, because as an historian, about once a week I find myself reading an article that bends over backwards trying to prove that women are political, and here I've been feeling guilty about "wasting my time" with sf.) For example, let's assume that feelings about menstruation are very much the nitty-gritty all of us talk about getting down to. OK? Sturgeon, SOME OF YOUR BLOOD, in which the vampiric hero gets off on performing cunnilingus on his hick lady friend "every 28 days" (Sturgeon can't even have the sensitive lady social worker say menstruation). Now I've talked to those men for whom sf is supposedly written and they were shocked by that. How do you feel? Is it more sickening to you than Gully Foyle's tattoo? Look, the Hells Angels have a special badge worn only by members who have performed cunnilingus on a menstruating woman. Do you understand? I do: in life, in literature, "performing" (and think of all that the use of that word implies) cunnilingus on a menstruating woman is not the sort of thing you'd do to arouse/satisfy/even be cordial to the woman in question. It's something you do when you are beyond the pale of human society. There are referents, the things all of us see in literature that form the basis of the myths with which we lead our lives (because a lot of things just don't get discussed, and that Wonderful-Story-Of-How-You-Were-Born you got, if you had lib-

eral parents, when you were nine just didn't mention cunnilingus), and in sf (god only knows how it's treated in mainstream literature) one aspect of sexuality that involves women has been accorded the same horror it would have aroused in a 7th century Westphalien priest.

Friendship between women does exist in literature, and can be seen to be dying out since the 17th century; it's more common in Shakespeare than anywhere else, but where it is present it's usually between sisters (from Louisa May Alcott to Chekhov) or Lesbians (Violette Leduc, or *THE WELL OF LONLINESS*); the sexism that isolates one woman from another has been an increasing phenomenon since the breakdown of the extended western household in the 17th century and had to be reinforced in literature when, in the 19th century, women were banding together as an industrial labor force. But I think that the relationship (the friendship, the advice, the feedback) that exists between Mrs. Hanson, her daughters, Amparo, January and Milly in Tom Disch's *33* goes a long way to modernize this trend, and give a literary basis to feminine friendship. Perhaps more importantly, I think Disch has moved in an anti-elitist direction which science fiction desperately needs: i.e., you don't have to be Empress of the Universe to know which way the wind blows. Disch is writing a solution without superwomen, it's unpleasant, and it works.

And as for Tiptree's men giving women the rights/power/chance, I think the historical perspective of the last ten years is significant. I first read Zelazny's "The Doors of His Face, the Lamps of His Mouth" (in which hero makes ex-wife, begging for his help, capture the monster herself, or else she'll never be sure of him, ex-husband on his way back) in 1968, a year in which most of my emotional energy went to trying to stop what America was doing in Vietnam. Then I thought it was a great story for women. I read it again last year, looking forward to it, and thought feh--it's liberalism, and the wife is a silly superwoman (we're just told she's done everything, we never get to see it, and besides, she's



another lady richer than any government). But--and this is the point--in the intervening years, I've been reduced to guilty tears (by "people" and by myself) for caring about my own oppression more than that of the napalmed inhabitants of the DMZ. That's real too, and I try to live with that reality. And it hurts.

And Chip, as for Kid Death as a 10 year old girl, well, there was Shirley Jackson, a woman who must have felt the pain of living all the mythologies you and Joanna have brought home, and a lovely little mad murderess in WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN A CASTLE.

I fear this has been self-indulgent, but not enough to allow anyone to edit it. So let me rush through to a close, trying to hang in there for an analytical framework. None of this gender of the authors bullshit, if you please. (Imagine, that equation could have been written by a woman.) Now leave us face it, Heinlein's politics are a lot closer to that exhibited by 61-year-old white spinster teachers in Tennessee Williams plays than anything seen in modern life. And show me a John Brunner story in which a woman is not double-crossing an agent that is the vessel of evil to interfere with the Man (he even does a neat explanation of this idea in a story called "Nobody Azzed You," and then does the idea) and I'll show you a forgery. Yet Brunner always has some woman in the sidelines of government service, a lady Eskimo administrator or Rumanian Department Head....

So where are we? Chip, I think, said it best, when he said that for him, Tip, and Jeff, Great Music was written by Other Men. For me, the philosophers, the architects, the composers, the painters, the heads of kingdoms and leaders of peasants' revolts--they are "creatures" I know far more about than I do my sisters. That's me, a woman who menstruates and has been known to enjoy cunnilingus and entertain murderous fantasies and it seems that the men get to feel the pain, they get slapped to see salamanders in the fire, they see beauty and injustice: they create and destroy, build and re-build. They have the beauty and the pain, the lightness and the liberty. Where's mine?

The funny thing is, most of what's mine in literature comes from science fiction. Next time, I'd like to look at it more closely.

(A final note on mothers. Haven't seen many in sf, have you? Notice that Chip has to kill off Rydra Wong's mother when she's 11 and replace her with an African psychiatrist. But then can you imagine superwoman Rydra, at the end there--sorry, Chip, but you know I don't like the end--can't you just see it, Rydra has broken the code, the language, ended the war, saved earth, and if her mother were alive she'd run in and tell her she couldn't be seen with a guy like that.)

PS: This is appallingly written, but it's rushed, and the reason is that I work nights, and I'm doing this on my break, because I want to get out of here so I can visit two women: I want to see what the women are doing, I want to share the pain, the laughter, the liberty there too.

THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, July 1878:

"It is an undoubted fact that meat spoils when touched by menstruating women."

CHARNAS:

I must put in my bit about yin/yang: pernicious is the word. One of the bookstores I wrote to turned out to be not feminist but mixed-radical, so naturally a man wrote a reply. He protested that sf is not mostly junk because it

is a male ghetto, but that each sex has its strengths to contribute--men's strength being plot and women's character (he did qualify this with "probably ...or something like that"). He illustrated his thesis with a yin/yang symbol. I wrote back that I do not feel my writing to be in any way complementary to that of male writers and that what I have against dichotomous systems (yin/yang, believers/non-believers, mental health/mental illness, etc.) is that--as Tip says--they are used to point out supposed differences not between individuals (who may well be complementary in a lot of ways; why not?) but between whole classes of things and people, with one inevitable result: the upgrading of one class and the downgrading of another. Of course the experts always know better: that Christianity is not really anti-Semitic; that yin/yang doesn't really say that women are passive/dark/cold/damp while men are active/bright/hot/dry (now which would you rather be, ha?); and that Freud admitted that he didn't understand women. But the real world consists of (among other things) the real condition of women in Catholic countries and in countries that have followed the Tao; the reality of the endless persecution of Jews by Christians, now apparently gathering new steam; the reality of what psychoanalysts say and do to their female patients. It's the general understanding of a system of ideas, however inaccurate, that has an effect in the world. As one of those who gets done-to according to such understandings, I have to judge such systems by what they do, rather than by their structural beauty as comprehended by a handful of experts, who may not even be right about the real meaning either. So away with it!

About women characters in great lit: I saw WAR AND PEACE on tv last year and got interested, picked up the book, made the mistake (or was it one?) of skimming the epilogue first since the tv version had omitted it, and I was curious about the future of the people in the story as I'd seen it--and nearly pitched the book through the window in a seizure of fury, for just the reason that you state. It's not that Natasha becomes a nebbish (that happens, it's why and what we fight) but that Tolstoi so clearly approves of this as a cure for everything in her character that makes her attractive and interesting. So I haven't read the book. I wish I could, but the churning of my guts has a tendency to interfere with the operation of eyes and brains. Isn't it rotten, to be shut out of a chunk of your own cultural heritage because that particular chunk is insulting to you?

Quinn: yes, yes, down with the concept of penis-envy! When I was a kid I wanted to be a man, not so that I could have an extra organ to play with (let alone stick into other people's bodies--what a yucky, outlandish idea!) but so that I could run away to sea and not have my life dominated and pushed out of shape by men and the idea of men, as I saw my mother's life distorted.

On being a mystery writer, better received among other mystery writers than among sf writers: isn't there a long tradition, and a strong one, of women writing good mysteries (particularly British women)? I am not a devotee by any means, but I can think straight off of Sayers, Tey, Christie, Rineheart, Highsmith and Bell, and with time could come up with more. The tradition of fine women sf writers is much younger and less firmly established. (Fleming, Ruth Rendell I think--they are still coming back to me--Charlotte Armstrong--lots of good women mystery people!)

I must also second your motion on Luise White's apparent blood-thirst. Yes, frustration and rage often lead me to scream KILL THE FUCKERS! But what you recognize and hate in your enemy you also contain, or you wouldn't be able to recognize it--and the worst thing about having enemies is the ease of becoming just like them. If the only way to be "free" or even to survive is to let loose one's impulse to be destructively demented in the manner of the worst of men, then I don't think it's worth doing; not for me, at any rate. There has to be another way. If there isn't, then it has to be created. Maybe in somebody's sf novel?

SMITH:

Quinn: In mysteries, what would you say the ratio is between (oh gosh, I'm going to get in trouble for this, I know it; I cannot phrase this the way I want) women who write mysteries (Sayers, Tey) and women who write Women's Fiction with mystery-story bases (Rinehart)? Is there a high average of strong women characters? Is there any reason why even strong women writers seem to prefer male protagonists? (I don't want to talk about Sayers, Tey and Rinehart here, but the current writers. I seem to see a lot of women doing police procedurals--Dell Shannon/Elizabeth Linnington, Maj Sjowall (the Martin Beck stories are practically my favorite books), etc.)

This is getting off the subject (if we've ever really been on it), but it seems to me related. Can you give any information, or do you feel it's totally irrelevant?

McINTYRE:

I did some approximate statistical analyses of women in various segments of sf writing, Virginia. Joanna thought people might be interested. The original-anthology percentage is the shakiest because it depends on the anthologies I happened to have on my shelves, which wasn't very many. SFWA membership: 17.5% women. Original anthologies: 23.1% stories by women. Major awards, 1974: 25% (this is fairly consistent over the last several years--of course, Ursula, singlehanded, has a good deal to do with that. But percentage of major award nominations is higher). (S(What do you count as major awards? Counting just the Nebula and the Hugo, percentages are lower: 12.8% in 1974, 14.3% in 1975.)S) Best-of-the-year anthologies, 1974: 7.5%. (Harrison/Aldiss published 21 stories in their "best" collection--none by women. Terry Carr is the only Best editor who consistently publishes more than one token woman.) In fact, most reprint anthologies consist entirely of stories by men. More about this later.

Chip: your response to Suzy is really a good refutation of Poul Anderson's response to Joanna's VERTEX article. Poul claims men never left women out of their sf--but if they did they didn't mean to. Then he takes an example, MISSION OF GRAVITY by Hal Clement, and asks if Hal should be trashed because there aren't any women in it (a cheap shot for two reasons: there's only one main human character in the book; and Hal Clement is one of the very few "golden age" writers who did ever put women in his fiction in any kind of three-dimensional participatory way). Should Hal, Poul asks, have introduced a love interest?

A love interest. That's Poul Anderson's analysis of what we are all talking about.

Raylyn, and Jeff's note: I feel kind of a responsibility to mention the background of WOMEN IN WONDER, which contains stories by women only. Basically I disapprove of sex-segregated activities under any circumstances. But a year or so ago when I started to realize that women are severely discriminated against when it comes to reprints (thus the figures listed above--listen, I'm in Oregon now and I don't have the complete notes on percentages: sorry), I got really annoyed by SURVIVAL PRINTOUT, which arrived from Vintage with a puffsheet that translated "Please tell us how marvelous our anthology is." I wrote and said yes, it certainly is marvelous, but twenty people are associated with it and all of them are men. This is ridiculous, there are stories by women as good as or better than anything in any of your various categories, and I don't understand how an anthology supposedly dealing with future possibilities can discount or ignore all this work. In fact, stories by women could be found that would make an even better anthology, and if you want proof I'll be glad to

show it to you.

They wrote back and asked if I would do such a book. I would have--because I was (still am) totally sick of de facto male-only sf anthologies. A little affirmative action never hurts. Reprint money is extra, and there's plenty of it around for guys. But between writing my letter and getting Vintage's, I heard that Pam Sargent was trying to sell a similar book. I hadn't snitched her idea, but I would have felt as bad as if I had, so I got her in contact with Vintage and they bought her book. Pam paid well, too.

On the other hand, I've encountered at least one instance of being offered 2¢/word, for an original story, en spec no less, for an anthology of stories by women. I'm afraid I wrote a very nasty letter. This is the powderpuff derby syndrome: here, you girls, you compete with each other for half the money and 1/4 the prestige and leave the men the major audience, acclaim, and money; after all, you can't compete with them, everybody knows women can't write as well as men and besides you might damage your uteri.

As you say, this is rank segregation.

MOORE:

Your comments about the 2-cent game just happen to knock the scabs off some nasty old war wounds of my own, so if you'll pardon me for succumbing to temptation and prodding at them a little more...

When I hear that someone is paying two cents (or one cent, or--heavenhelp-us--a half cent), I am inclined to put it down to the shockingly low pay in the sf field itself. For instance, I don't really believe Harlan Ellison's payment to Ward for the current VISIONS was all that much more. But whoops, here I go, probably doing someone a grave injustice, because I don't have the kind of firm info about going rates that you do.

So let me make the point with figures I'm surer of. When I am paid \$1000 by a general interest magazine (one keyed to the women's movement, incidentally) for a simple little story I just tossed off in a few days, and \$200 by an sf mag for a much more intricate yarn which cost me weeks of labor and agony, I get the feeling there's something crazy-wrong with sf pay.

What I (obviously) mean is, I think we're too hasty in blaming publishers for trying to kiss off the females with unequal pay for more-than-equal work. It's a problem that runs far deeper and wider and touches upon my own *cris de coeur* that

as a woman I don't wanta be separate but equal;
I wanta be equal but not separate

as a writer I don't wanta be separate but equal
either

It seems to me a lot of blame could logically be placed with our (yours and my) spiritual forebears (largely male, true, but not entirely) who have not accepted the segregation of sf writing from "mainline" complacently but actually insisted on it, thus permitting exploiting publishers to divide and conquer.

Mary Shelley didn't get less for her work (it was little enough) because she was a woman sf writer. Wells and London got the full going rate because they were not categorized as sf. Only since Gernsback have sf writers, glorying in segregated status, left themselves open to ruthless exploitation.

Only when writers of whatever color, sex and classification unite into a

militant writers' union and withhold the basic material of literature from all exploiting editors and publishers will writers have a chance to get a really fair wage for their work.

(sound of trumpets here)

Well. I've always held a Caine Mutiny/Dr. Strangelove view of publishing in general anyhow: someone up there on top has gone mad as a milliner and nobody knows it yet. Only way to explain such curiosities as Kate mentions, perfectly fine fiction being turned down unless it happens to be genre, or category fiction.

But enough. Except to add a note of regret about my own half-informed state on many of these things. Science fiction--though I love it and enjoy it, just as I love and enjoy all of you I've met through your work and through the symposium and elsehow--is such a small part of my concern and my output that I have awful trouble keeping up with what's going on (especially since so much is). The symposium has been a great help to me in that direction, and I thank you all for this.

LE GUIN:

Raylyn: General Reaction: Yeah, yeah, right on! Specific Comments: 1) "To be a humanist is to be a feminist," and vice versa, huh? YES. Here's one agreement. 2) "Of course, no anarchist likes to do dishes." Tsk. I do. Good time to think, also to sing offkey without being heard; if there's more than one of you, good time to talk. What this anarchist hates is Toilets. (I gave up Ovens entirely last year.) If you know any anarchists who like cleaning toilets (especially after male usage--men do splatter more), I honestly don't think I want to meet them.

Chip: This isn't of the first importance to the rest of us, and I'd let it go, but I'm irritated by your kind of know-it-all tone on the matter and think I'd better speak out than simmer in silence. I have read Jung pretty intensely, and I honestly think your brief summation and dismissal of his Animus/Anima ideas is superficial. I'm not a "Jungian," nor have I had any Jungian or other analysis; in psychology, I'm a semi-informed clod. But Jung has meant a lot to me personally and as an artist the last two years, and I won't have him dismissed with such arrogance! Points that I think worth noting: 1) Freud's great work rests upon an authoritarian, male-supremacist set of theories. They were only theories, and the work remains real, and unequalled; but they were sexist theories. Jung broke with him precisely on some of these questions. Jung's own theories may be nuts, but they're not sexist; or when they are caught in the sexism of his time/nation/class, there is, I feel, a constant fighting against it, an effort to free himself of it. Which I honor. 2) I advise you (if I may briefly waive shifgrethor) never to say "what Jung said." Because in the next book he usually changed it. He changed meanings as a running stream changes course. His definitions of the Animus are many and various. In general, they're inadequate, as compared with a woman's own experience, and as compared with his discussions of the Anima; and he knew it. But why can't we go on from his inadequate, but immensely sensitive and provocative, guesses and glimpses? No great psychologist should be taken as doctrine, but as a starting point. I find Jung a pretty fine starting point for a whole lot of hard thinking about feminism, about age and growth, and about art. --End of counter-lecture.

Virginia: Yeah. Me too. I didn't know till I was about twenty that any men thought they were better than me because they were men. I had a father and three older brothers and a mother and none of them thought that. In high school there was all that static and I tried to roll my bobbysox just the right height and go oooo at Frank Sinatra and hide my intellect, but it never worked

anyhow, and then I got to this college full of women intellectuals, and as I say, I was twenty or so before I ever realized that a lot of men believed that stuff. And a lot of women. I thought it was funny. Then I got slightly less egocentric and began to see all the pain and waste, and never thought it was funny again. But it still doesn't sting and cut me, so as to cripple me, and never can; because the child is the mother of the woman, and the child was brought up free and equal...and I guess freedom and equality are things you can't unlearn. In solidarity, out of conscience, I have tried to learn to speak up and speak out for those who are in pain; but it's not a native, basic reaction in me, as it is in Joanna, and the great feminists. It's a willed one. To me morally, sexism is a terrible thing, and I must fight it as best I can. To me emotionally, a sexist isn't a jailer or even an enemy, just a minor irritation, occasionally worth slapping, usually better ignored, like gnats.

Joanna: "Personal guilt is the most useless emotion there is." Oh cheers, oh brava bravissima! Oh well said and worth re-saying, like a mantra, till it sinks in--deeper, deeper--

Everybody: Excuse me, but what's all this about Yin/Yang and how lousy it is? Are you taking it as a synonym for Either/Or (cf. Kierkegaard, yecch)? I always took it, in my own peculiar understanding of Taoism, as exactly the opposite...except that in Taoism there are no opposites....

Quinn: "Very few women have real friendships." Yowp. What is your authority for that statement? Personal experience? Mine is. It contradicts yours flatly. So now what do we do? Of course, most likely you stick to your knowledge-through-experience, I to mine; but I prefer mine, because yours is an old misogynist truism, and therefore suspect.

Tip: I think Tip's thing is the most crazy interesting part of all this dreadful Jeffersmithian Porridge yet (unless/until Susy will go on about Death, yes, Susy??). I know he said about one fifth of what he wanted to say, and all in a hurry, and I know he CAN'T do it now, but I want some more, more, please, sir, I want some more?

Female equals nature equals death

CHARNAS:

Here is something I've been trying to think out since reading what everybody had to say. It isn't a treatise, and I haven't gone burrowing into history to support what I say--it may only apply to us in our present state of knowledge/ignorance, if it applies to anyone, but here it is; and if anybody can tear some good big holes in it and let some light in, I'd be grateful.

First of all, I think Delany is right: all men are sexists. So are all women. Sexism springs from a vein that lies deep enough to bridge the gap of sexual difference. It springs, I think, from the fear of death.

Men perceive Nature as the force which creates them, which is mysterious but all right; and which kills them, which is also mysterious, but insupportably bad. Recent western cultures have learned how to strike back on the one hand with devastating technological destruction (though of course the laws of existence will persist while it is we who will be devastated) and grope with the other for a "solution" to death. But all cultures have always been able to strike back at Nature through women, who have always and everywhere been seen as Nature's representatives, whether willing or not. Hatred of women is in part a form of psychic self-defense and retaliatory magic which hopes to hurt

Nature by striking at her symbol, that reproductive animal, woman.

Hatred of women is also the product of jealousy. Not only do women live longer than men (if excessive child-bearing doesn't kill them early), but they seem to men to have an option on a kind of immortality in the children of their flesh. It's as if women not only personify the forces of Nature by obvious physical obedience to them, but are in collusion with those forces, for which they are rewarded with a sort of evasion of death.

So it's no wonder that men hate women. No ages-long guilt over a supposed world-wide patriarchal conquest, no fear of having the tables turned, is needed to explain it (though this may certainly contribute). There is an on-going stimulus to men's desire to punish and control women: the perception of a woman herself, as not a person but a symbol, in which a man sees his own bondage and his own inevitable death.

You'll notice that I'm not a Freudian. I do not believe that sub- or unconsciously we believe that we are immortal. On the contrary: at our deepest levels we believe that we ought to be immortal, but we know that we're not, and this enrages and terrifies us. As soon as a child starts discovering that it is not omnipotent it has caught the scent of the ultimate human limitation, its own death. That must begin very early, when in spite of its best efforts the child is squeezed out of its warm, dark home into the harshness of the world. Moreover, if it turns out that decline and death are actually encoded in our cellular beings rather than inflicted from outside, possibly there is some deep comprehension of that fact right from the beginning, whatever the conscious mind may choose to believe later on.

Now I'm talking about our experience, as if men and women see the same way. In fact, I think they do. That's why women are so receptive to the "hate-women" messages in most societies, and even generate their own. Look: living in my female body, I know better and more constantly than any man could how much I am a slave to Nature; and since I am a human soul, I'm as scared of my own death as any human soul in a male body.

What about the supposed consolation of biological progeny? I have no biological children of my own (though I do have stepchildren, whom I love very much) so let me venture a guess: I guess that this idea is mostly crap, at best a self-manufactured rationalization of a mother's own mortality and no truer than a father's rationalization along the same lines (the son who carries on his name etc.). If a child's life is seen as an extension of its mother's life then--aside from the hideous damage that the mother will do by trying to turn that child into a substitute for herself--what is that child's own inevitable death? A mother also gets to live again, through her child, all the early experience of denial and limitation that is a youngster's early perception of mortality. She gets to worry about her child's vulnerability as well as her own, especially in most cultures now and ever in the world, where so many young children die--hardly a promise of immortality to their bereaved mothers.

And then there are all the women who do not or cannot have children (numbers of them, though men tend to ignore their existence) and who still must face the surety of their own deaths. Generally speaking, the advantage in having children of our own bodies is illusory as a cushion against the fear of personal death, so what men begrudge us is largely imaginary; while our bondage to natural rhythms and functions (though not really much more than the less obvious bondage of men themselves) for which men fear and hate us is real. And I think women know this.

I am not the only woman I know who swore during adolescence that I would never be like my mother. I don't believe that I was rejecting her personal



failings alone (I didn't recognize her strengths until too late), or even merely the societal crippling to which she, as a woman, was so clearly subject. I was rejecting Nature's grip on the adult female body, personified in my mother. I was rejecting death by rejecting the woman closest to me.

Female equals Nature equals Death--for all of us, I think, male and female. Why else would women have put up with male oppression for so long? Why do so many still cling to it? We women hate and fear what we ourselves symbolize just as men hate and fear it, and so we collaborate in its repression and punishment.

Seen in this light, of course Tiptree's mothering pattern is doomed to degradation if not outright invisibility: it's a "natural" pattern, something easily observable in other mammals, not a product of the human rationality that recognizes and fights against death but of the unreflective subservience to Nature that animals exhibit. It's part of the set of limitations that we're trying to get away from, so it's pushed off on those whom we--all of us--hate and fear: women. That it is one of the few positive responses to mortality that we have is distorted and rejected in that false, jealous vision that men have of women as insulated from death by the bearing of children.

So my question is, can sexism--or racism or ageism or anthism--ever be solved, unless death itself is solved? As a rule, it seems to me that human beings do unto others as has been done unto them. Nature does death unto us. We do death back in whatever form we can manage to anything we can reach, especially beings which can be perceived as representing Nature: women, kids (who have the distinction of being the walking death-warrants of the elders whom they will displace), other races of men, non-human organisms, all of whom are sooner or later described by revealing terms like "close to Nature," "instinctual," "non-rational," "uncivilized," and generally non-moral, like the force that insists on our deaths.

My answer is, yes: if we can grow great enough to stop being so scared of death that we try to avert it from ourselves by dealing it out to others, or by lashing out at stand-ins for Nature which decrees death. Me, I am much too scared of dying to stop being afraid of death. But maybe we can grow great enough to do it.

Then there are those who say we are within inches of whipping the monster anyway, which raises all kinds of good sf-type questions, most of which have been ducked by writers who have ventured near. What would be the effect of a partial solution--conditional, say, on contributing positively to society (whatever that means) or being politically obedient, but mostly being lucky or protected? If accidental, irreversible death is hard to stomach in a world of necessary death, the specter of same in a world not subject to necessary death would surely be wildly distortive of human behavior, if not actually paralyzing. What would it feel like to live on permanently in a universe in which other beings--human or not--continued to die all around you per schedule? Would 2000--and-some years of human history become totally inaccessible--incomprehensible, meaningless--to the immortal descendants of its creators? What kind of culture would immortals create, if any? In fact would they be even remotely human at all as we understand the term, considering that death has always been a major part of our definition? Most sf treatments of this kind of thing that I've seen show human beings behaving just as they do now, but with multiple careers and marriages, as if they were merely ourselves but for longer. What a failure of imagination from such imaginative people! Why?

Frankly, I think it's because of the same thing that keeps many of us from diving deep into sexism, or racism, or any of the isms that go down so far: it's dark down there, and it's complicated, and it's scary as Hell. In fact,

maybe it is Hell.

Thanks for bearing with me--I've packed this pretty tight to keep from taking up too much room, and hope it remains comprehensible. I should add that in spite of all this grimness, I push and shove for reform just as if I didn't know any of it. But then, how many people can really live by what they know or at least believe to be basically true? We'd all be saints. Or something.

*Commentary:
If men did not exist, would women have
invented them?*

MOORE:

I wish I were able to argue on paper as cogently as Suzy, but I haven't the time even to try and if I had, I'm sure it wouldn't come out so well. Not that I can agree with all of it, but I do admire it, did thoroughly enjoy reading it and the other commentaries. Failing argumentation then, and having no new point to add, I do want at least to skim quickly past, hitting some high spots, maybe none of them important except to me.

Yes, Jeff, I felt rather reproached by the appearance of WOMEN IN WONDER (which I haven't yet read on account of our far-outness here; I have not yet seen a copy of the book itself), but that blow was more than offset by the earlier appearance of JOY IN OUR CAUSE as unlabeled, unghetto-ed, noncompartmentalized, not-yet-pigeonholed fiction. I think it will, deservedly, reach a far wider audience in its free flight even though obviously three or four of its component stories could fairly be placed in the speculative fiction camp, and several more within the purlieus of the Women's Movement. (Carol Emshwiller's book is, incidentally, the only volume I've ever included in a bibliography of recommended student reading before I'd read it myself. A risky and irresponsible act, but justified as it turned out, now that I have, quite recently, read it.)

And yes, Joanna, yes, you are quite right. It is part of the theory of revolution (as I understand it) that one must achieve some kind of solidarity before it can even be hoped that a change can be made in the scheme of things. You almost persuade me. And in any case I would have been (will be) glad to march with you any time you need me (really). It is only a slight difference in any case. I am greedy and want to take the second step first. And of course I regard all-male anthologies as ghettos too, no matter how good the content (or how sorry.) That's only the other side of the coin, and a bad penny it is (I still think, but not now so bone-headedly, so hard-nosedly perhaps). I can only fondly recall that story sometimes attributed to Richard Wright, I believe, about a black man dining on a Pullman in the deepsouth in a curtained-off compartment who told the porter, "I'd rather be where the people are." That's all I meant. That's all I want too, to be where the people are.

As for social titles, another case of bagatelle maybe, but I could wish to persuade Joanna that "they" would adjust soon enough if women in any numbers simply repudiated all use of titles. For years, long before this last wave of feminism hit the beach, I've been fighting the title battle (virtually single-handed evidently). When faced with "Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.: choose one," I just didn't choose. The worst that's ever happened to me was--because like Andre Norton, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, and, yes, Terry Carr, I have a somewhat ambiguous name in terms of gender--I once received a nasty "Dear Sir" letter from Ohio

State University demanding, in essence, how the hell I expected to take a degree there when after $3\frac{1}{2}$ years I'd made absolutely no effort to fulfill my ROTC requirements.

In the on-the-other-hand department: the other day our local tv station invited me for a promotion interview on a book. Ordinarily I'm too neurotic for this kind of exposure, but the book (a university press publication) has had so little publicity that it threatens to sink without a ripple, so I agreed. On the program a rock singer was put ahead of me who cut ten minutes into my time, so in protest I (uncharacteristically, I think) got up and stomped out of the studio. At the time I believe I thought I was protesting their display of contempt for writers and letters and their lack of programming sense for scheduling a rock sequence back-to-back with a book interview.

Funnily enough, the talk-show emcee was a woman. The rock singer was a woman. The camera operator was a woman. The engineer was also a woman. The thought had already, much earlier, crossed my mind that here was life holding a mirror up to art (specifically Joanna's "This Is Your Life"), and I admit to a moment of being pleased at such female triumph. Yet I reacted just as offensively to their plan of either squeezing my interview into minus-ten minutes or having me "come back tomorrow and we'll put you on first" (the old, bland assumption that writers don't work so they can come back any time) as if they had been the expected all-male crew.

Anyway, at the risk of contradicting my earlier plea for solidarity, this is something I want to hang onto. My right to become just as burned-off at "us" when some really important principle is involved, as at "them."

RUSS:

James is right and it's partly my fault; I suggested asking Tiptree and Delany into this symposium and both have contributed a good deal, but it's true that they are time-hoggers and that they--and Jeff--keep drawing our attention away from what (to me) is what is truly interesting: what we think. I want to find out what Ursula's version of Jung is (of course she is selecting and re-creating his work; would anyone think of wholly accepting or wholly rejecting, as truth, Isaac Newton's work? much of it consisted of Bedlamite number-occultism); I want to hear from Kate, who (it suddenly came clear to me) is the most radical of us all, and I don't want, and don't think we should want, to dissipate our energies and waste our time with the distractions men inevitably bring into this sort of discussion.

I'm not sorry it's gone as it has so far--but I think we've done as much as we can that way and it's time to talk to each other.

For example, what are the connections between Kate's diagnosing the disease as capitalism and (well, I can't find it right now) somebody else's talk about hierarchy, and Ursula's scheme of ideas in THE DISPOSSESSED which disposes of hierarchy and uses instead centrality vs. peripherality? (Inevitable relative; hierarchy is absolute.) Capitalism, patriarchy, linear hierarchy--it all hangs together. And we seem independently to be arriving at much the same sort of social analysis. (A grad. student friend of mine in Ithaca got to the "linear hierarchy" business before THE DISPOSSESSED came out and pointed out to me that patriarchy is absolutely based on--from the ancient Greeks on down--a one-dimensional vertical/updown line on which everyone must be placed. I.e., there are only rivals, subordinates, superordinates, and if two persons occupy the same level in the hierarchy it's only if they are identical. Not equal, identical. "Identical" becomes the only kind of equal.) Not all societies from 300 B.C. to this one have been as extreme (though many have) but I would bet you anything you liked that vainglory, symbolic triumphs over others, rivalry,

struggle between young men and old men, and cross-sexual hatred (you can't fit women on to this linear hierarchy at all) varies exactly with what we would call sexism and patriarchy.

And I begin to understand that Ursula's version of Jung is not what I thought (and certainly not the popular version). And I want to know about it. And I want to know how not only Jung and Freud but Taoism and yin/yang got corrupted--if they did--and how much corruption was in them in the first place, and so on.

I don't want to see Vonda taking up her time stepping on Jeff and Chip and Tirtree (all of whom deserve a good deal of it)--maybe they don't know this but I think we do. Anyway, whatever things may be (I thought when Jeff mentioned trying to make a mass of Catholic guilts and inadequacies into a person he meant himself), the end result is a lot of confusion, anger, talking and so forth--which only distract us from the real issues at hand.

The basic one of which is our own writing. What Kate says about finding a larger audience. How does one cope. What sort of understanding of the world can we get out of this. For example, Vonda says that she is in general against sex-segregated activities. I have a funny feeling that in the symposium as set up my instant response is somewhat quarrelsome. But I suspect that my real response should be, simply, "Explain," and I'd probably find out that we don't disagree. For example, I am against religiously-segregated activities (like housing) but in Germany of 1942 you were either being hidden by the Resistance or you were in a quite unsegregated death camp, except that one sort of person happened to be the killers and guards and another the internees. I could go on and explain more, but I'm sure Vonda and I could easily get to a very large area of common agreement.

What I mean is, the irritation at having to answer those damned usual arguments about baboons and dish-washing spills over into the rest of it and we end up somehow in pugnacious positions. Well, having to answer Poul Anderson's VERTEX article is enough to make anybody pugnacious. But we ought not to be so with each other; I really think we share so much experience (if not beliefs) that what we need is something far different.

The only recent letter I would disagree with is Suzy's. She's obviously working through some important ideas, but it sounds to me like that immense leap from one thing to another is poetic rather than mediated by genuine causality. I recognize the theory, and I don't believe it. There are some cultures which do not do this, and there's the difficulty of explaining how a woman deals with hatred of the fragile flesh (that's really it, isn't it, O deliver me from the body of this death?) by hating herself. Hating oneself is, strictly speaking, an impossible project.

If children were brought up by fathers (or both fathers and mothers) would "nature" be symbolized by Mommy?

If my mother hadn't been a Squashed Woman who was guilty at being intelligent, guilty at having gone to graduate school (she always explained effusively how much she hated it--she, who knew the Oxford Book of English Verse by heart!), guilty at having a job (the most conventional one for a woman, an elementary school teacher), guilty at being competent at anything--she once told me that men's egos had to be built up by women, and clearly a woman like herself was a dreadful threat simply by existing--well, if all this hadn't happened, would I have vowed at age 16 never to be like my mother? (All my friends did the same.)

Does Ursula feel that way about her mother, who was a novelist?

Phyllis Chesler traces a lot of this out in her book, WOMEN AND MADNESS; her thesis is that women in a sexist society never get enough from their mothers; mother hasn't it to give, can't protect. Women don't inherit, as she says.

This seems to me to speak far more to the subject and more specifically. Or does it?

Now this sort of thing is what we should be talking about.

And as writers: why do women writers start writing so late? I read somewhere that Theodora Kroeber did. So has Ursula. (She's recapitulated a novelist's development with startling speed, in my opinion, in only a few years.) One can say Oh yes, bringing up children, but Woolf had none and didn't publish until she was thirty. And I didn't really start writing with any facility or in any quantity until I was about thirty. Is this common? Does it mean anything?

Why is "Nature's grip on the adult female body" Death? Is it bad to be reminded of mortality? One of the grimmest of male fantasies (I have seen some men act it out) is that if a man could only acquire a young enough woman, somehow he himself could cheat death. And this is mixed with the fantasy or immortality through children--which somehow doesn't involve doing the real work--and is not the whole revolt against Nature itself something we are trying to get away from? (A real tangle, no?)

Is all human society produced by the fear of death? I don't believe it. Children and adolescents don't believe they can die. I might add that death is one of the strongest American taboos there is. And would recommend Slater's EARTHWALK (as well as his two other books) on the subject.

What a business! To cheat death by making life wretched.

(I am writing about death now, myself, by the way; perhaps Suzy and I have both just hit that notorious age when it suddenly becomes real.)

I think what Kate could do is perhaps print something very like her letter as non-fiction. I've always been surprised about her avoidance of non-fiction; that's a very good letter and would be read by many with avidity. This doesn't give you a bigger audience but it may give you the audience that matters--somewhere Shaw says that for the purposes of social change, the vast majority of people really don't count. They seem to be solidly entrenched in status quo, but in reality they will do whatever is supposed to be right and respectable. The people who aren't like this are the levers of change. This is a cynical and grim view, but there's a lot of truth in it. Most people can't afford to think unless something hits them directly. They haven't the time or the strength. So...?

(I'm afraid I couldn't help groaning a bit at "this is not a feminist book ...not a polemic for anything except the right to be an individual human being ...to be free to choose." If you printed this in Watch,* for example, which is a small place to begin but I think important, you'd get howls of rage for that one! It's funny, really; having disclaimed feminism, you go on to define it. Who of us would be activists of any sort if somebody wasn't stepping on our toes?)

*THE WITCH AND THE CHAMELEON is a very intelligent, feminist-oriented science fiction fanzine published by Amanda Bankier, 2 Paisley Avenue South #6, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Subscription prices are 4/\$3 Canadian, \$3.25 American.
--jds

I want to find out what going to a women's college meant for Ursula and in that decade, and why it was different from a co-ed college (which in some ways put the cap on it for me--in high school I was one of a small co-educational group of Misfits who knew that we were real intellectuals and Above All That, and then I went to college, where real intellectuals go, right?, and the intellectual men treated me just as the high-school football players had). I like doing dishes, too, by the way, but not many.

Who of us have had good, solid female friendships throughout most of our lives? Why? Are we different from those who haven't? What about our mothers?

How much cultural heritage can we accept? How? Why? How does it differ for each of us, as writers? I once read Baldwin saying that he couldn't stand Chartres Cathedral because although it was beautiful it was both beautiful and not his, and at the time disagreed violently. But in a way he's right. What if aspiration doesn't appeal to you? What if it does and the aspirers were those who enslaved your ancestors? We are marginal people with all the opportunities for insight (and suffering) that that brings. How are we to read Tolstoy? I literally don't know what to do with books sometimes; I love them and am corking away at them and suddenly I run my nose up against a brick wall and am left outside, yelling, "But it's me, me, me, your reader!"

Would it be possible to write a Quest about a devious, dishonest, ruthless, unfair woman? This recalls Luise White's pattern of woman-working-for-the-state--which IS, by God, in sf (it's shocking to find that it is, but it is). I think the point of the Quest is that nobody has any idea of what a woman would find at the end of it--the traveling/adventuring itself is not such a problem. The male quest-hero is more important for what he gets rid of than what he finds--he cuts himself off in some way from his past (family, childhood --i.e., mother) and acquires adulthood by way of repudiating childhood. (This is not the pattern of EARTHSEA, interestingly.) There's an article somewhere about the discontinuity of boys' lives vs. the continuity of girls' which I think bears on this pattern: little men have to be yanked or lured out of their primary identification with mother and their childhood world in a sort of re-birth (a social one, that is) in which mother is replaced with father and in return for giving up childhood, the little boy is promised the whole world, like Satan tempting Christ (!). ("Some day all this will be yours.") The Hero goes out on his quest to get that whole-world in some symbolic form (success, the Grail, the golden fleece) and naturally has to leave his women: mothers, sisters, lovers, wives, behind. He then returns to "society," having Made It. (The Christian form strikes me as a bit more moral; sometimes Making It means sacrificing yourself for others.) And--in real life--gets bored and wonders where all the excitement of his early days went! It's not a stable life-plan. The whole point is that what the Hero is educating himself for is usually left undefined--and we fade out before the actual return to society which is always, inevitably, rather dull. Variant pattern: the adventures never end, he goes out again. Faustian Man. Conquering the Earth, Alexander weeping (no new kingdoms). General ghastly mess.

Could this be why women seem at home writing mystery stories? Because the whole point of mystery stories is a restoration of the status quo, which existed before (undisturbed before the murder or crime, which disturbed it). (I am NOT getting this from Auden's essay which I frankly consider absurd. Charming perhaps, but 'tain't so, M'Gee.) And if the status quo is worth restoring, then it is worth living.

Suzy: If I weren't afraid of being jumped on, I'd say that the cure for raging against men is to stop investing emotion in men. This can go all the way from keeping a few exceptions who are husbands, lovers, friends, to absolute separatism, period. Not on principle, of course, just to avoid being bit-

ten to death by gnats. (Probably the controversial subject, I'd think.)

Part of the trouble is an excess of information; one simply can't attend to or care about (as Kate said) everything. But only in the last few decades was it possible to know so much and to come in contact with so much. A mixed blessing.

By the way MS. (which, as Vonda says, prefers conventional-realistic, verisimilar and bad fiction) has finally--well, I hope so--tentatively consented to publish my article about women in sf in which the article (1100 words) has been cut to two paragraphs and the list of books is reasonably intact. Also a list of sf bookstores. Unfortunately Kate's books are out of print (the ones I listed) and also Josephine's and Naomi Mitchison's MEMOIRS OF A SPACEWOMAN. Also THE SHIP WHO SANG. I think I convinced the editor that 1) hardcovers stay in libraries and 2) out of print pbs can be found in sf bookstores and 3) these authors have written other books, which are in print. If they ever get their heads together, the thing could be out in July. Everything in it will be undoubtedly out of date by then, having been written a year ago. Thought you'd like to know.

Oh yes, one note: major awards 1974: 25% female; "best" collections 7.5% (short stories and novellas, I assume). One would have to do a statistical breakdown of major award winners (female) vs. contenders (female) to get any idea of what's going on. There may be few women competing and they all win prizes. A fairer comparison would be Nebula Award Stories volumes vs. best-of-the-year volumes. With some control on length--most "bests" would not be over a certain length, I'd think. (Sorry, Vonda did this already.)

By the way I think Jeff meant (about "Tin Soldier") that it did not follow the stereotypical pattern of planetbound woman, male soldier; then Vonda said the turnabout was merely a gimmick and the story wasn't; then Jeff said yes, he had meant it was merely a gimmick. This is the kind of quarreling I should like to avoid (having done so much myself in the past).

You see what happens; Tip says things which are silly to me (though to him they must make sense though I don't know what kind).

If men did not exist, would women have invented them?

If women did not exist, I do believe men, alone, would have invented them or something very much like them.

The gulf of experience!

If quaoInargns did not exist, would women have invented them? How can you tell what something is if it doesn't exist, for goodness' sake?

Men have invented women. That is, the nightmare/ecstatic dream/fantasy/projection one finds all over literature, the Belle Dame Sans Merci, the Angel in the House, the Bitch Goddess, the Good Wife, the Girl Next Door, etc. etc. Look at the feeble, reactive myth of the Byronic lover in the modern Gothic. (And that's the only one I can find.) In fact men (or rather, let us say, men with power and men with the power over women allowed them by the men with power over both men and women) have actually created real-women-as-they-are. We are all creatures of our culture but the power differential, even down at the poverty level (in most of our society) runs one way. The powers that created both you and me (I'm talking here to a hypothetical Tip for a moment) created you a Self and me an Other. Even to myself.

Women, alone, might well have invented something like...women. That is, that marvelous other person, that pocket myth, that servant-cum-goddess on whom

you can project all sorts of useful things, including 1) all sorts of shitwork, and 2) the myth that she loves doing it.

Tip's question is, unavoidably, master-talk not servant-talk, however sensitive. He needs to read oodles and oodles of books before he knows what's what down belcwstairs here. I think I sent him a list, even.

If masters did not exist, would servants invent them? (Hardly.)

If servants did not exist, would masters invent them? (Of course. Everybody tries to invent servants, especially servants--God, brownies, luck, leprechauns with bags of gold, undeserved success, undeserved homage, things to revere--safely because they don't exist--things to command, magic, science, you name it. Even other people. "See here, from now on you're my servant because God means it that way.")

This is the kind of stuff we get into by not talking primarily--if not exclusively--to each other. Annoyance because X or Y or Z doesn't see the blatantly obvious, knowledge that he's still clinging to all sorts of silliness that has nothing to do with us. It does have something to do with him--why don't the men get together and talk to each other? Think of all they could straighten out without us having to leave our real work and bother about it. I've been doing so much of this and I'm sick of it.

Maybe if men got together and thought things through they could present some coherent account of what it does mean to be male--not tropical fish or baboons or geese but men. Our literary tradition is full of lies about men's experience; you can't dig into it at all; most of it is just nonsense from a woman's point of view--the usual projection, denial, self-defense, illusion, and so on. What I want to know is what lies underneath all that and no woman can know; it's the men who have to do that work.

But I don't want to spend any more time patiently (or more probably, impatiently) correcting what to me are bound to be elementary errors. Tip may end up by working through to something perfectly stunning but I can't spend my time as a public library on feminism. It's like teaching frosh comp over and over. And these men are sensitive, intelligent, conscious, decent, and working very hard at their sexism. One ends up feeling like Atlas ♀.

Enough, enough. As in all such things, we're only beginning to scratch the surface. E.g., to Suzy: women outlive men only in the industrialized 20th century. (But one woman in ten is sterile. Well....) Some insurance company could probably provide the exact moment when (after, say, the first year of life) a woman's lifespan equalled or surpassed a man's, on the average. And I bet it's very, very late even in this century.

TIPFREE:

Seems to be symposium-time again, assuming you want any more from me. I feel about as relevant as a cuckoo-clock in eternity.

But I did feel the good, hot, exciting relevance of all your letters, even those that diverge or disagree. Revolutions are not monodirectional streams, they are turbulent wave-fronts full of Yes buts and squabbles over priorities, if not worse.

I read the bundle at the same time that I was reading the Winter issue of APHRA and Howe and Bass' feminist poetry collection (NO MORE MASKS). That's worth getting, by the way, if you haven't. I admit to a touch of disappointment that they didn't find room for at least a line or two from some of the

older forgotten women. Anybody else here an admirer of Anna Wickham ("My work has the incompetence of pain.")? There is a verse of hers that struck deep in my mind:

I have to thank god I'm a woman,
For in these ordered days a woman only
Is free to be very hungry, very lonely.

That's worth a lot of ranting about beautiful urns. And I may say she isn't as irrelevant to our topic here as I am. Her poem that begins "Up the crag / In the screaming wind / Naked and bleeding / I fought blind"--ends when "In the house of my love / I found a pen." It's called, "Weapons."

For how many of us, me in my way, you in yours, are not our pens the weapons with which we can do something--a tiny something--about wrongs? Even if only to name them?

To our muttons.

Of the letters, the two which spoke most immediately to me were Kate's and Suzy's--because they spoke so clearly of what are my own fears of the abuse of power and death. (Kate, how guilty are you going to make me feel? You're deep in all those things I quit even dabbling at when I had my recent bout of illness. Someday I want to ask you more about AIM; Craig Strete has given me, and, I suspect, Joanna, some slightly devastating insights. Probably like everything, biased. He's very, well, young.)

But Suzy. Dear lady, your essay on the death-relatedness of women was excruciatingly interesting. But--if you will forgive a stranger--may I seize your arm, gaze into your eyes and plead with you to cast that thought from you with all your power?

It's not that it's totally untrue; we can find Death in almost anything, in Fall, in drought, in animals, in our hearts, in the physical processes of our bodies, female or male. (Believe me.) Maybe what you say has appealed to the mythic terrors in some people in some places. But it is not a thought you should dwell on--forgive me again. Because to me it rang a terrifying bell. I have heard that same reasonable, intellectually excited tone in the writings of some few highly intellectualized Jewish writers who thought they could see why non-Jews could hate them, why they were peculiarly persecutable. Hateful. Exterminable--appropriate for extermination. Yes.

This took place during World War II so you may have missed it. But those, Suzy, were men. You must realize that 99% of what you're dealing with here is far more easily more easily explained as the self-hatred of the oppressed. It is a deeply pernicious thing, preventing friendship and solidarity. I have had a close look at it in some older women--my mother would vote for Midge Decter--and it wrings the heart. It has nothing to do with deathliness. In fact, I've known something of the same feeling in the wretched soldiers, the Tommies of Colonial Empire, who felt they merited, were suited for, death. Men felt this about themselves.

Of course I realize you are saying that it is only a belief, that bodily processes can scare both men and women into feelings that are deathly. And you are (to me) quite right in pointing out that the fear of death is a great unacknowledged participant at our mental table. But--

Maybe because I have just myself emerged from a bout of depression, Suzy, forgive my alarm. But I wish and hope that you would be very careful of this thought, and hold it at arm's length if you must hold it. Like a savage snake.

And there is the other side of the coin, the well-known life-giving aspect of female processes. I won't go on about this because I myself have some doubts about the Great Mother business, but you can't deny that the over-all suggestion is at least as much life-promoting as deathly. Maybe the fact of birth itself is deathly--"My replacement has been born"--but I suspect the general feeling is more on the order of satisfaction in increase of life. My flocks, my herds, my children.

By the way, maybe a final word here on my excursion into trying to redefine the sexes so as to lump men and women into more inclusive categories. I am not, by the way, trying to "defend" motherhood as Chip says--except in the general sense that nurturant men and women are a bit less likely to blow up the world. But they may just as easily over-produce young and end us their own way. To me, each of my "sexes"--males and mothers--have their own pathology. What I was trying to ask, maybe buried in my own verbiage, was this:

Why are children raised? Or,

What is the personal, immediate, reward? Or,

What motive urges us and ensures that it will be carried out?

Every human activity has some rewarding aspect, some goal, some good-feeling prize for which we do it. Eating satisfies, fucking feels good, walking out of the sun saves us from frying. But what is the orgasmic or homeostatic goal of mothering? In short, why does that rhesus or chimp or opossum--male or female--lug that youngster around? Why?

Are we, for god's sake, to fall back on that taboo of taboos, "maternal instinct"? Come on, I had hoped somebody would turn their jumbo brain to this problem and enlighten me.

But nobody did. Oh well.

But it is a mystery, if you compare it with any other animal activity. And nobody seems to care.

Now I have loused up another page, and so given myself indulgence to go on a bit. What I've been mulling over, partly in relation to men, is something about power. Authority. Dominance-submission structures, whether state-wide or confined to a pair.

But first, a word. Chip, and to some extent Joanna, seemed to think I was "threatening" when I said that our liberties are precarious, that our enemies have the power. Now it's true that when someone says "You're gonna be buried," it can be a covert threat. But the thing I left out, which let you think that, was that I see myself, very accurately, as one of the mob-ees. If the dark day arises when through war or famine or panic a nucleus of red-necks rises up and decides to subjugate everybody different, Tiptree will be right up there on the list, despite my Wasp credentials. I have learned in a long life in organizations that I am a natural lynchee if I let down my guard an inch. I exude the same smell of subversion which those good ole boys can smell a mile away, like the way they used to hunt gays. It is something I shall never get rid of; one look at me and you just know I'm thinking something un-American. I myself don't know what it is, all I know is that when the gang closes ranks, I'm out. And I'm afraid I know where the real power is, despite the brave words. All I feel I can do about it is to hope that Der Tag cometh not--and keep my ammunition in a dry place. (Paranoia, anyone?)

Back in 1936 I saw a funny thing. In those days the main coast highway

down California was a two-lane black-top, which wound through a wide place in the woods called Los Gatos. (yes.) Los Gatos consisted of a tarpaper whorehouse and a line of enormous lead slot-machines, called the Wise Men. They were got up to caricature the Three Kings of Bethlehem. (yes.) But the most impressive feature of Los Gatos was a huge wrought-iron sign stretching over the whole road, which said:

THE GENTILE WHITE MAN IS THE KING OF THE EARTH.

I never stopped to play the slot machines. Because I know this did not mean Me. Call me a wise man.

Well, much has happened to Los Gatos and to kings, but how deep has it gone in the human heart, and how far are we from 1936? All that far? My.

Which brings me to kings. I've been reading a mess of Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Wm. Morris, and T.H. White. And I find extraordinary the unspoken assumption that the greatest boon a people can achieve is--a king. The King Has Returned! Well, perhaps in the feudal state of things one can understand some of that. But I suspect it is a largely male contribution.

It led me on to think how women are supposed to be more dependant, to slide easily into and adjust gratefully to domination. Well, to the extent that many women don't care who decides what car he buys, and that some women are just plain younger and less experienced than the men they go with, something like that might be visible some times. But who are the real dependents? Who insist on a captain, a boss, a Great Leader? Who have evolved lunatic systems of authoritarianism in every known activity except maybe solo farming? Who gratefully accept being beaten up and then faithfully follow the bully?

Three guesses. And don't say guppies.

Joanna, your piece inviting me out of the talk is exactly how I feel. My own concept of what I at least was supposed to do was simply to learn and perhaps talk enough to get knocked down after which I felt acutely that I should fade away, but didn't know how to do. Without, you know, sounding like gimme my wagon and I'll go home mad. So I just bumbled on figuring that you could ignore me as well as I could. (After all, one possible use for a male participant is just to remind everybody of everything there is to be mad at. All the small exquisite vilenesses I mean.)

I have to end with a note that may amuse some of you.

I thought of it while studying penile displays among the monkeys, and considering the activity known as "flashing" among human males. The motive is an obscure and yet apparently potent one, which seems to have missed me or be buried deep. I kept wondering, what in hell is the threat value of a penile display? It's the most extraordinary abstract behavior, isn't it? And what is the magical value of the flasher's unzip? And this came to me:

A penis is an organ which is strong against the weak--and weak against the strong.

In other words, those men who have difficulty with impotence when trying to make love to "strong" women--really have love confused with penile threat.

I bet it's more common than we think.

PS: That unspeakable answer of Arthur (Jiggling-nuts) Clarke to Joanna's letters (FORUM) should be framed in solid human lampshades. Can you believe such self-blindness?

CHARNAS:

Kate: Yes, the question is, are women basically the same as men (as Black is beautiful, too) or better than men as well as basically different (Black is more beautiful)? Personally I don't believe that suffering and oppression automatically ennoble and in my natural self (whatever there is of it) I seem to recognize a plain old messed-over but otherwise ordinary-type human being, rather than a latent superhuman above and apart from my lowly, jealous male oppressors. Frankly, the superhuman or let's say specifically superman image strikes me as rather pathetic self-delusion.

On the other hand, if women are just more of the same once you strip off the cultural strait-jacket, then I see no future for humankind at all. I can manage depression and anxiety about the future as well as others, but I don't think I can manage out-and-out despair. And besides; there is also something attractive in the idea of women as latent superhumans who are the only ones fit to save the world.

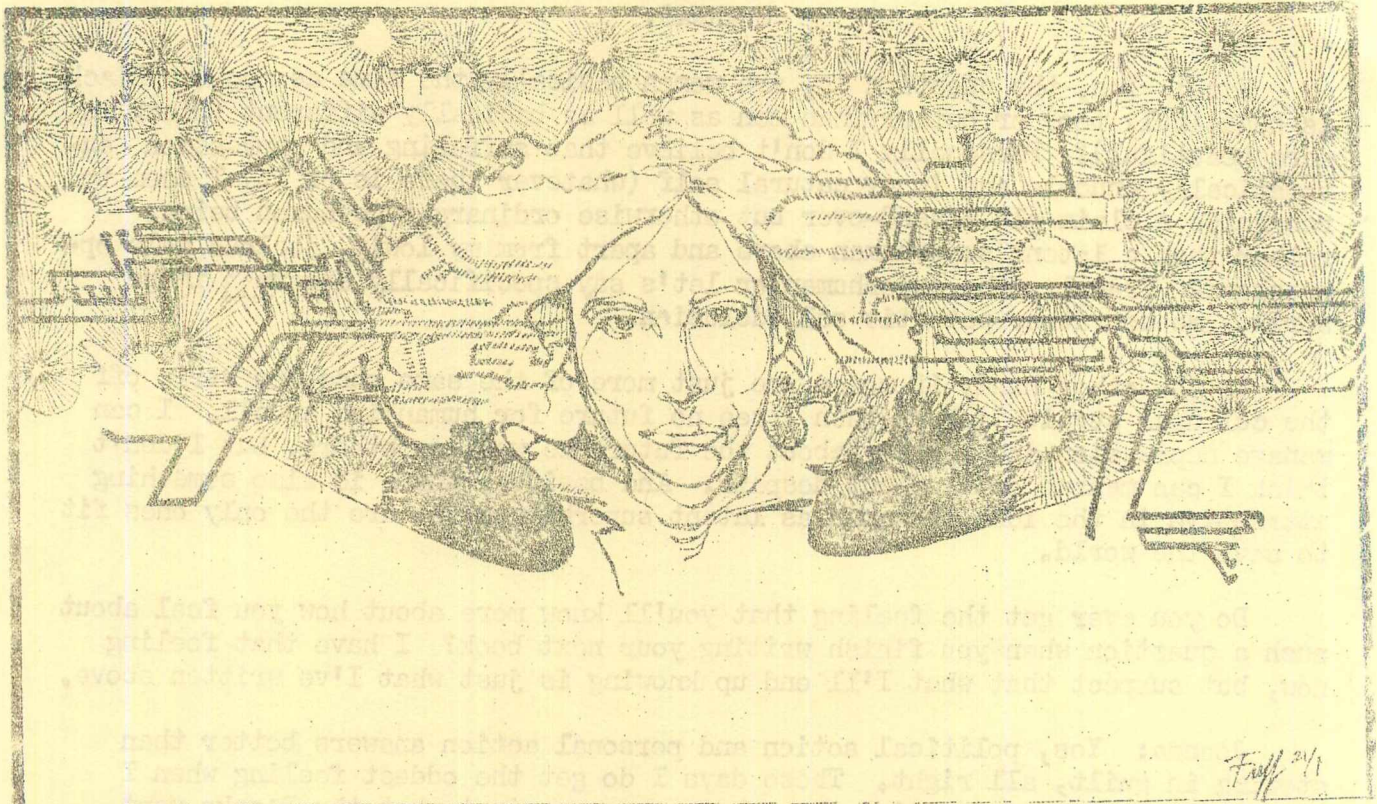
Do you ever get the feeling that you'll know more about how you feel about such a question when you finish writing your next book? I have that feeling now, but suspect that what I'll end up knowing is just what I've written above.

Joanna: Yes, political action and personal action answers better than stewing in guilt, all right. These days I do get the oddest feeling when I check the stages we are going through as women against what the Blacks went through ahead of us, and then try to figure out just where, so far, it has led them. It's all *deja vu* (in spite of the distinctions that people have drawn between the two movements): thanking the Man for his help, reaching back to a dignifying past even if you have to construct most of it out of whole cloth because of the absence of evidence in your favor, drawing together and beginning to exclude the helpful Man much to his resentment and anger, even to the gun on the hip—a panther's hip or Robin Morgan's hip. And now?

I also suspect (as plenty of other people have no doubt known for some time, thanks to the habit of looking around at the present rather than getting lost in the future) that we are already well-launched on the downslope of a terrific trough of reactionary and romantic backlash, signalled by (among other things) nostalgia that looks about ready to settle—after some ludicrous thrashing about in the hideous fifties and forties—on the periods just before and after WWI. I only hope that we can hold the line at two steps forward and one step back, rather than *vice-versa*. Nostalgia itself strikes me as an illustration of your equation of sentimentality and cruelty. Against what's coming, we're going to have to take all the concerted and personal action we can muster, just to stay in the same place.

Lulise: As another woman who is prone to man-murdering fantasies, I'd like to put in a word about them again. I think it's not the ability to kill that makes anyone a creature "of pain and art, lightness and liberty," but the ability to suffer and rejoice: to be aware. Any rock, obeying the laws of gravity, can kill. As for having social license to kill, that's the making of monsters, not free people. Look at America—everybody has a gun and we're all hiding from each other. If women characters in sf kill freely and with the approval of their societies, or clandestinely and with self-approval, how does that make them free? They serve as executioners for society, or descend personally to the obsessive level of those who cope with the terror of Death by pretending to be Death's master—that is, by dispensing death to others.

Moreover, I think that many women have been what you aspire to, as I do myself—for instance, some of those in *BY A WOMAN WRITT*, as Joanna pointed out.



They have not had access to the more lasting ways of expressing their quality for the exaltation of the future. We have our hands on those ways now, and we're not going to let go again. But I don't think that killing is one of the ways.

On the other hand, as I said, I have my killing-fantasies too, and I'm not about to give them up. So I could be a lot wronger than I think, and you could be a lot righter. I guess what it boils down to is that furious as I get I do choose to resist letting anybody or anything actually turn me into something as narrow and fearful as a killer-by-intention.

Ursula: God knows, it behooves all of us time- and culture-bound creatures to be tolerant as far as we can of the limitations of strong minds that have gone before us. I've also taken nourishment from some of the offending great and their creations, even from the ones I finally reject. Come to think of it, once someone got me to read MEMORIES, DREAMS AND REFLECTIONS of Jung, and it meant a great deal to me at the time. I can't remember what it meant, exactly, but I have a lousy memory and can only put up with it by pretending that what is forgotten is actually sinking down out of immediate sight to become part of the next creative surge up out of ye depths. On ye other hand, even a cursory reading of some of the recently published Freud-Jung correspondence is enough to turn mind, stomach, and fermenting depths. Ah well. One does the best one can, as we all do, even if one's best at any given moment happens to stink.

Vonda: On the general application of the master-slave analogy: I never meant it to be absolute, of course, but beware anthropology. Quote from a local student paper, Navajo woman responding to an all-too-easily -reconstructable letter in same by a Navajo man: "If the Navajo woman walks two steps behind the Navajo man, it's because she's telling him which way to go!" Sounds just like my Viennese grandmother explaining to me the superiority of the European woman's approach to handling her man.

As for how things have always been, can you or anybody tell me just exact-

ly how convincing the evidence is (assuming that there is any) that the artists who decorated the caves of southern France and Spain with hunting-pictures were men, or that hunting itself was strictly a male pursuit? I wonder whether the whole idea of caveman-hunter and cavewoman-gatherer is a projection backward by male scientists, drawn in the first place from observations of modern, woman-suppressive "primitive" tribes. If that's all there is, then maybe we could junk all these compensatory contortions according to which yes, men invented fire and the bow and arrow and flint-chipping and cave-painting, but women invented agriculture and weaving and pottery and religion and blah-blah-blah. It just seems a lot more likely to me that a lot of people of a lot of different cultures and times and of different sexes invented all those things a lot of different times, and I'm tired of all this apparently totally conjectural and propagandistic waffling around about which side scored what.

All of which comes to mind thanks to the interview that closed the first segment of Jacob Bronowski's THE ASCENT OF GUESS-WHO. An anthropologist or archaeologist was asked with excruciating pointedness (because it showed up the total lack of this consideration in the body of the program itself) whether there wasn't SOMETHING that had been invented by prehistoric women. He opined that there sure was: the idea of bringing back home some of the berries and things that they gathered instead of gobbling them all up on the spot, and sharing the goodies with the folks back home. Presumably the (male) hunters were not capable of originating this tender, nurturing behavior, ate up everything that they killed right there, leaving the women and children to starve, and so they all died off and none of us are alive today. This is a ghost-symposium. Bronowski himself is (or was) a good example of why I find science in general less trustworthy all the time. Here was a charming, brilliant, cultivated man whose whole intellectual perception of the world seems to have simply excluded women. How can such a creature even begin to see straight? And yet some of his insights are compelling even while you doubt their foundations... back to tolerance again. It's the labor of sorting out the good stuff from the shit and trying to correct for bias that's so damn frustrating.

Tiptree: Men did "invent" women, using their own projected hatreds, fears, and hopes. If women are in reality basically the same as men, then in the imaginary circumstance that you propose they would do the same sort of thing: invent "the feminine" and enforce its pattern on whomever they could. If women are basically different than men, it's perfectly possible that they would find their own society sufficient. I can't help feeling that a one-sex society of men or of women would be undeveloped somehow, cheated of the realization of much of its potentiality. But that may be indoctrination talking, or merely the story-teller's bias; plain folks will take the quiet life over passion and drama any day. Unless Rebecca West is right in holding that we all want to try to make works of art out of our lives. Hell. I don't know nothing.

YARERO:

One thing to Luise and Joanna: no, I don't want to kill anyone. Oh, yeah, I wouldn't mind the solid satisfaction of giving back some of the hurt I've got from various and sundry, but I've had to kill animals for food, and I really don't like it. Besides, killing someone does not change their mind (pardon: his mind) and for the most part, I would much rather change minds. It's not difficult to kill chickens, and dinner is a lot nicer with meat, but that doesn't mean it's fun to take the bird, put its head on a block and cut away the head with an ax. When you kill sheep, you slit their throats. Same with pigs. And of course, with deer, you have to shoot them, then slit their throats and gut them. But I am not anxious to do this to human beings of whatever sex or persuasion. Because I don't like the way killing makes me feel. My soul has enough scuzzies to deal with without that.

Ursula: about friendships between women. Well, yes, I find it hard to have women friends. Now, there are writers who are my friends, and whom I love and trust, Vonda for instance, whom I value very highly. But it has been my experience with other women, and some I have known for twenty years and more, that our friendships are on very odd ground indeed. At least three women I know want a mama confessor, not a friend. And they choose me because I am safe. I won't try to take them apart at the PTA meeting, and I won't make a play for their husbands, and I won't be shocked if they complain about sex, and I won't tell them how horrid they are if they talk about not liking their own children very much. But they don't really trust me, and I cannot get close to them except in this capacity. I'll listen to them, because someone has to, and every now and then it makes a difference. But none of the women I am thinking of has ever shown any interest when I despair (in fact, they resent it) or when my life gets filled up with my characters. Then why do I do it? With such a one-way street, why bother? Because I can't abandon them, that's why. Because trust has to start somewhere, and there has to be some kind of beginning.

Vonda, Joanna, et al, about characters: I can't write about characters, male, female or ambiguous, until that person is real to me. I have to be able to see that person, know what they do and how they do it before anything can happen in the story. The character lead of the suspense novel I just finished is very real to me. Just as the characters he's involved with are real. Admittedly, Charlie is stronger in my mind than the others because he is the point of view character, but that doesn't decrease the validity of the others. It's not that they're male or female, but that they are people of certain experiences and feelings, and they, only they, will react in this particular way when a certain thing happens to them. Without this separate uniqueness, I can't begin to put words on paper. It's not that I worry about it, or ask myself if this is a believable male or female; no, it's not that intellectual a process. But I find that when I have characters who are true to themselves, I am in general more satisfied with what I write than I am when the characters have turned into puppets.

In addition, I think one of the problems we all face in this exchange, as in real life, is that on one level we are having to deal with social pressures and all the other hellish propaganda around us, and in part this zine is a chance to expose some of the more pernicious practices we are the victims of. But, on the other hand, we are also writers, which means part of our heads are somewhere else. We are involved in telling stories. And those stories we tell do not necessarily reflect us and what we are. I don't know about the rest of you, but I have created characters I positively disliked. But they were a part of the story I was telling. And there is another aspect to being writers--we want to sell what we write. That does not mean we slant our work, although that sometimes happens, or that we think only of markets. But it does mean that our business is fiction, and that we have a responsibility to deliver the best stories we can. It also means that we won't waste our time and nerves sending a pro-woman atheistic story to Roger Elwood, for instance. We will try the most likely market and hope for the best.

One of the hardest things to bear with in writing is dealing with those people who insist on analyzing you according to your work. Sure, if you were not who you are you would not have written a particular work, but you are not the work and the work is not you. To be forced to deal with those who believe that you are what you write is one of the most frustrating things I know, and in this instance, all of us, men and women, are up against the wall.

Vonda: About WOMEN IN WONDER, since I'm in it, too. First, I'm very pleased to be in it because it is a good book. There is no one viewpoint in it; what it is is a group of very articulate stories covering a wide range of subjects, styles and concepts by women authors who have told their stories with

strong women characters. I don't see anything wrong in that.

Jeff: In regard to your question about mystery writers. First, over half of all Gothics are written by men. Which is one of the reasons for their great unreality. Also, most Gothic editors are men. Which might explain why many times there is a great pressure to make the heroine as fluffy as possible. Who knows? But last year a midwestern college (sorry, I don't remember which one) did a study of mystery readers asking about 5,000 persons who read more than 50 mysteries a year who their ten most popular writers were. The only men on the list were Dick Francis (and I like him myself) and Ross Macdonald. All the others were women, and in general Agatha Christie led the list.

Why do women choose male characters? I don't know in general why, other than saleability, but I know why I did, and that was because only a male character would and could do what Charlie does--and before you all rise in indignation, I must explain that Charlie is not only an attorney, he is an Ojibwa medicine man and there ain't no way I'm gonna get a female shaman, at least not among the Ojibwa. Now, for those of you who ask why I didn't write about a woman, well, because the integrity of this particular story wants Charlie, and it will have Charlie. I'm writing fiction, not propaganda. And I find that the three strong women characters in the novel convey quite a lot of information, one way or another.

Chip and Luise: What Chip mentioned about guns is a real incident, not a projected one. The person to talk to is the one with the gun. And that is all I am going to say on that.

Joanna: I will write you that essay on sentiment and cruelty before mid-summer, how's that? But for an instant capsule, think about Tiny Tim. Why do people love him? Because he is sticky sweet and kind and good? No. They love him because he is a cripple and sticky sweet and kind and good. His whole value is in his being slightly less than human. He's obvious because the crippling is visible, but the romanticization (and if there is no such word, tough) of physical or cultural or emotional cripples--think of all the Southerners who insist they love Blacks, and in a certain sense, mean it--gives rise to a curious attitude. I love you (not really adult love, because you aren't capable of it) in spite of your handicap, and therefore I will protect you (you are not capable of protecting yourself) and you will adore me. If you don't adore me, or if your handicap gets in the way of my love, then I will punish you (and this is where the cruelty comes in, and grows) because you have let me down. Of course, you couldn't help it, being handicapped, but because I love you, I am going to help you face your handicap (and wee unto you if you don't admit you have a handicap) so you will appreciate my protection...etc. etc. etc. on that very unpleasant merryground.

Suzy: What I really want to do is have you here for a visit and a marathon talk. But about WAR AND PEACE, which is a book I love right up to the epilogue. And if you saw the BEC WAR AND PEACE last spring, which I did, that was a real treat because they took the 17 hours necessary to put it on the screen. But I have also read (in translation) Tolstoy's letters about the book, and they are dammingly revealing. For one thing, Tolstoy HATED women. He was utterly convinced that all the ill of the world, including war, was caused by women. For Tolstoy, but not for most readers, Natasha is directly responsible for Pierre's tribulations in the Retreat from Moscow, and, of course, for Andre's death. Her very vivacity makes her a dreadful trap in Tolstoy's eyes. Notice that Pierre's wife Helen is the one who makes Pierre's life hell. All he wants is happiness, or at least Tolstoy thought so. He and I don't agree about Pierre or Natasha. And Tolstoy apparently was totally unaware of Andre's overwhelming death wish which had little or nothing to do with Natasha. But that's writer's myopia for you. Tolstoy was bitterly disappointed

when his readers found Natasha delightful and the love she inspired in Andre and Pierre not only understandable, but wonderful. But remember it was Tolstoy who said, "When I am dying, I will tell the truth about women, then leap into my grave and be safe." Obviously the woman/death thing was very strong in him.

Raylyn: Although I would like to agree with your earlier comment that there is no need for a woman's anthology, I can't. Sure, it would be nice if there weren't the need to show this inequality, because it didn't exist. But so long as it does, and so long as women are assumed to be less accomplished than men on the basis of their gonads, then there will be not only a place but a need for this kind of anthology. Just as there is a need for anthologies of Black writers. (I haven't heard anyone object to them.)

What is about the most frustrating thing to deal with as a professional writer is the bland assumption on the part of other--male--writers that if a woman writes, it isn't the same as a man writing. What the difference is escapes me, but quite often the whole question of women writers, particularly women of writers, is dismissed with the turn of a hand. This can go for editors as well as other writers. I know of one writer who when I asked him to send me the money he owed me at the time, explained that he would in a month or so. I then reminded him that he had owed me the money for some two months already and I was broke. The editor was surprised about that and told me that if I had run out of money, I should ask my husband for some more. The assumption that Don controls the money in this house (he doesn't; by the terms of our marriage contract we control our own) and that he should subsidize this editor by giving me money which the editor hadn't paid is demeaning in the extreme.

Another example. Right now we have a house guest. I don't particularly like him, but he is paying Don a lot of money for a sculpture and so we're stuck. Don is at the lab, and so this annoying man expects me to entertain him. He knows I am a writer. But he is hovering in the door to the office, making occasional compliments about the artwork and plants in the office, in theory to let me know how much he likes the room, but in actuality, to get my attention away from these keys. He is growing angry because I am putting this before him. He knows--knows--that it is his right to have my attention because he is in the house. Now, I have told him that I have work to do (I start on the Doubleday novel as soon as I finish this) and Don has told him that he must not disturb me. And he told Don he wouldn't. But there he is, snuffling in the door, wanting to know if he can read my latest story. No. Now, mind you, last night while Don was working down in the cellar, he did not go down and hover there, even though Don is working on his commission. Because Don's work is "legitimate" and mine is not. He has also broadly hinted that he would like some orange juice and there isn't any in the fridge. I am going to have hysterics in the corner in about ten minutes. I'd go yurn over the ground in the back yard, but then he'd come and help me, since obviously I can't do a job like that myself, even though I've done it for several years. I think I'll put the "Auto-da-Fe" scene from DON CARLO on full blast. He doesn't like opera.

Tip: You say you've changed your mind about "The Women Men Don't See" and decided that the men were the aliens. Funny. I thought that from the first. That was what I got out of the story. Humm.

I think one of the reasons that we women are a little slow to rise to the topic the way Chip did, when it comes to what we endure, is that for us what we have to talk about is pain. Now pain is not only socially gauche, it is embarrassing. We don't like to bleed in public. And because this is pain, touching these wounds, or taking the bandages off them, is a grisly prospect. So if we get all prickly with each other it's not surprising. After all, most of us have had part of the sentimentality-cruelty cycle done on us at one time or another, and each time it happens, it makes us all a little more brittle.

LE GUIN:

Final Deliberately Irritating Statements arrived at by Le Guin after reading Russ' Female Man, reading part of Delany's Dahlgren, and rereading this whole symposium so far:

I do not think that people who take the essential problem facing women to be a power struggle are working for, or with, the women's movement. They have adopted the enemy's method, and therefore the enemy's goal (supremacism). Power is not freedom. Vengeance is not justice. Do we all have to sit here writing John Wayne's wetdreams with the sexes reversed?

I do not think that copulation solves any social/ethical problem whatever. It solves personal problems, sometimes; sometimes it creates them. The identification of feminism with free love (1970), promiscuity (1965), or fucking (1975) is a blind alley. The issue is free choice, not Sex as the Magic Cure-All.

I think that the identification of the women's movement or feminism with lesbianism is equally stultifying. Feminism, lesbianism, and male gay lib are naturally related in that they are all liberty-seeking; feminism and lesbianism are further related in that they originate with women; that's a lot, but that's all. The ends, and means, of feminism are immensely larger than those of lesbianism. In so far as lesbian rhetoric is separatist and anti-male/anti-straight, it is in conflict with and obstructive to feminism.

So long as men go along with Freud and repeat endlessly, "What we shall never know is what a woman really wants"--in other words, so long as men refuse to listen to women--the movement must speak to men, clearly and obdurately, till they do shut up and listen. So long as women assume and insist that they know what men really want, and therefore refuse to listen to them, none of us will get very far. We have got to speak to each other, and we have got to listen to each other.

The Confessional form is no longer useful to the movement. It was at first. It is now mere dog-returning-to-vomit. It's time we stop whining about what awful things I have done to women and what awful things men have done to me, and then compensating by daydreaming about retaliation and the Perfectly Guiltless Society; it's time we try to start intelligently and passionately and compassionately considering, proposing, inventing, and acting out alternatives. If even people in science fiction can't do that, can't look forward instead of back, it's bad news for the women's movement, and everybody else.

I have now spoken. I am now listening.

Commentary:
Any freedom that is granted can be retracted

RUSS:

Answers to Deliberately Irritating Statements by Ursula Le Guin (whom I assume is playing Devil's Advocate, so I'll reply in a public manner rather than specifically and stray somewhat from the questions):

What astonishes me is how quickly everybody has picked up the idea of

killing. As far as I remember, I did not say killing but capable of it, which I consider an entirely different matter and (for most of us) highly impractical. Certainly if I were stockpiling submachine guns in my basement, I would not write a novel to tell the world about it. (I put this in because Lester del Rey seems to think this is what I am doing.)

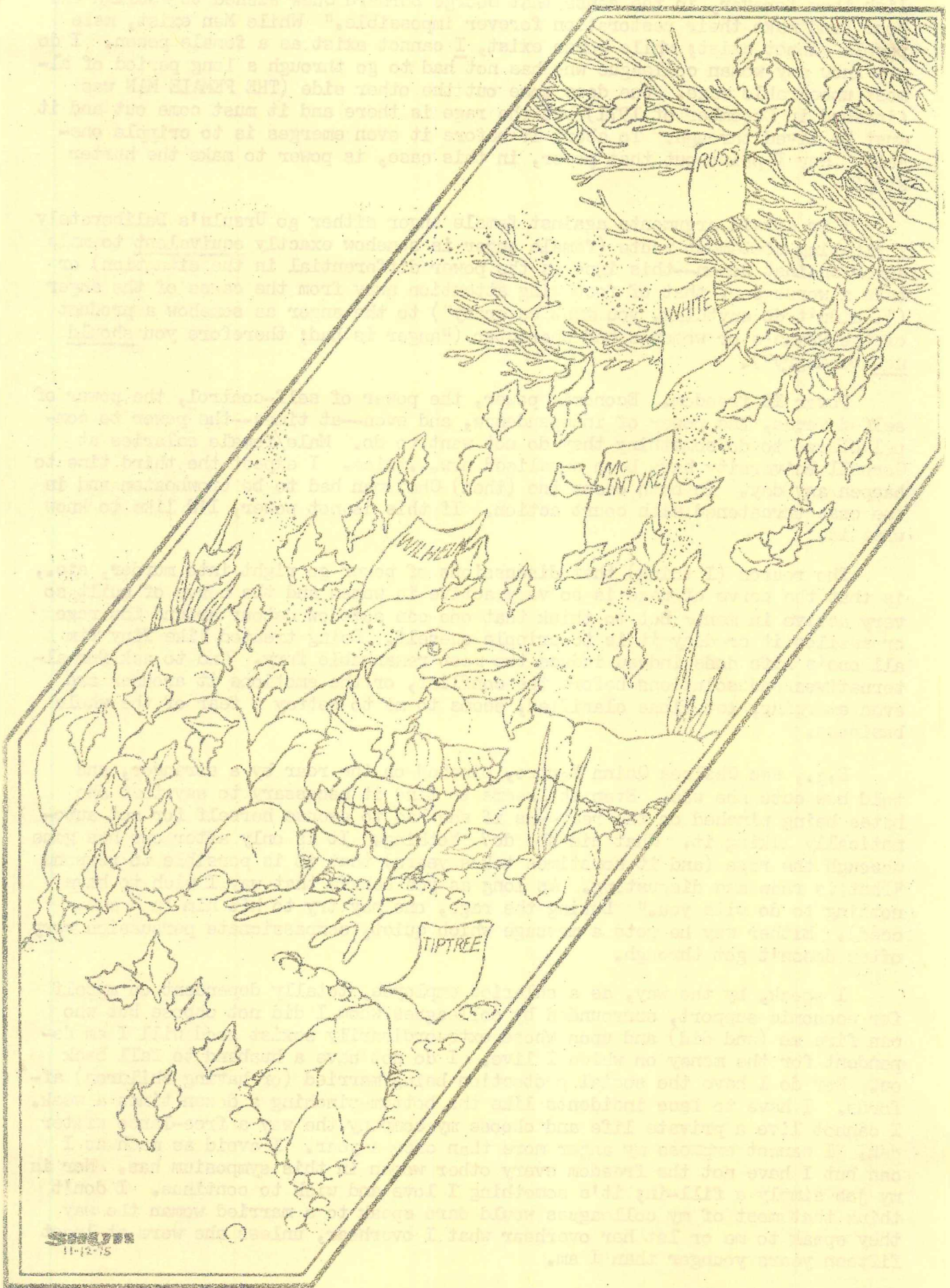
The essential problem facing women is indeed a power struggle, in the sense that Marx talks of a "class struggle." I am sick of Americans using "power" as a dirty word and identifying it with control-over-others (which is, to be sure, one form of power). I think the immediate problem facing women right now is the creation of a female middle class. This does not mean women married to middle class men but women who are in the middle class by their own efforts, economically. If the social analysis behind feminism is that women and men comprise classes or castes into which helpless infants are simply born--i.e. ascribed status--then feminism cannot avoid formulating a theory of class struggle. Or caste struggle, if you wish. The extraordinary nastiness of the whole business is partly due to the fact that male and female castes are not living in separate ghettos but have the most intimate relations with one another and that (therefore) large-scale violence is highly unlikely. The worst thing that might happen (it is happening already) is that feminists (not all women) will be harassed, fired from their jobs, punished in various ways, and possibly "lynched" in one way or another. This does not mean that every man's hand is against every woman's or vice versa; but it does mean that those who consider "power" a nasty word (I think this has a lot to do with Americans' losing our innocence after WWII) will help create a climate in which harassment of the worst kind can occur. And it won't be women harassing men. We haven't the power.

Right now it seems to me that the crucial struggles are economic and legal, and especially the power (strikes? boycotts? lobbying?) to establish equal wages (farther from realization than ten years ago, by the way), equal opportunity for work, and a whole host of things. This means forcing a great deal of behavior on a great many unwilling men, many of them employers and husbands. If men don't wish to listen, this means changing behavior first--often by legal means--and then (having done so) being in a position to explain why. People do not give up their privileges by persuasion alone. They do it when they fear to lose money, when they fear court action, when enough of their compeers frown upon them, etc.

I do not think it is within twenty years of even envisioning alternatives to sexism and science fiction has failed signally in doing anything of the sort. We have no models. And I include the work of everyone in this symposium.

Clearly, persuasion and education are also crucial. Anyone who thinks that talk of a power struggle means John Wayne wet-dreams ought to study the history of the trade union movement in the United States. Every possible tactic is necessary.

So why all this business about killing? Because I think that the most formidable taboo women have to cope with is the taboo against anger. And as I pointed out in a VILLAGE VOICE article, anger-plus-helplessness turns into rage. It is a commonplace nowadays that men have been denied emotional expression, but if one is to judge from their behavior and their books and their movies, one of the emotional expressions they are not denied is anger. I find it astonishing that so many of us are worried about women's anger when a cursory watching of TV indicates who is indulging rage and against whom. In my VV article, I made it very plain that oppression leads to anger, that anger is an entirely human, entirely predictable emotion, and that not only that, it is honorable and we ought to accept women's anger against men as a potential in every situation...until the power struggle is won. If you will remember,



Marx's class struggle abolishes class; I indeed hate Men and would like to abolish them forever, in the sense that George Bernard Shaw wished to abolish the poor "and make their restoration forever impossible." While Men exist, male people cannot exist; while Women exist, I cannot exist as a female person. I do not know any woman colleague who has not had to go through a long period of almost unbearable rage. One does come out the other side (THE FEMALE MAN was finished in December of 1971) but the rage is there and it must come out and it must be lived through. To abort it before it even emerges is to cripple oneself. May I point out that power, in this case, is power to make the hurter stop?

I am afraid arguments against female anger either go Ursula's Deliberately Irritating Statement route (female anger is somehow exactly equivalent to male anger against women--this ignores the power differential in the situation) or take a worse one, that of focussing attention away from the cause of the anger ("I didn't do anything, you must be crazy") to the anger as somehow a product of the woman's or women's bad character ("anger is bad; therefore you should not be angry").

Power IS freedom. Economic power, the power of self-control, the power of self-defense, the power of independence, and even--at times--the power to compel others to do something they do not want to do. Male/female salaries at Cornell University have been equalized now...twice. I expect the third time to happen any day. In both cases the (then) Chairman had to be browbeaten and in one case threatened with court action. If this is not power, I'd like to know what is.

The reason (I think) that discussions of power go right into murder, etc., is that the nerve of rage is so very active in women and the nerve of guilt so very active in men. But to think that one can somehow detour around the rage or swallow it or deny it is to cripple oneself. Being treated like Tiny Tim all one's life does indeed induce the most remarkable fury. And to ask for alternatives and solutions before the conflict, or the emotions it arouses are even emerging, let alone clarified, seems to me to betray a fear of the whole business.

E.g., see Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, pinched on the rear by a stranger, and told how cute she was. Even she seems to find it necessary to say that she hates being pinched on the rear--as if she had to excuse herself for not automatically liking it. What did she do? Nothing. It is only after one has gone through the rage (and it sometimes takes years) that it is possible to respond "That is rude and disgusting. As long as you behave that way I wish to have nothing to do with you." During the rage, one may try to hit him (and succeed). Either way he gets a message which quiet, compassionate persuasion very often doesn't get through.

I speak, by the way, as a salaried employee, totally dependent on myself for economic support, surrounded by colleagues whom I did not choose but who can fire me (and did) and upon whose extraordinarily sexist good will I am dependent for the money on which I live. I do not have a husband to fall back on. Nor do I have the social protection being married (or having children) affords. I have to face incidents like the bottom-pinching a dozen times a week. I cannot live a private life and choose my company the way a free-lance writer can. I cannot express my anger more than once a year. I avoid as much as I can, but I have not the freedom every other woman in this symposium has. Nor is my job simply a fill-in; it's something I love and wish to continue. I don't think that most of my colleagues would dare speak to a married woman the way they speak to me or let her overhear what I overhear, unless she were at least fifteen years younger than I am.

Copulation, far from solving problems, can only be (it seems to me) the result of solved problems. The identification of feminism with free love (1910) was the result of identifying marriage as property-in-women (which is exactly what it was at the time); the identification of feminism with promiscuity (1965) was a male invention, not a feminist one; and as for fucking (1975---?) if it means anything, it means--as one feminist writer put it--giving ourselves back our own bodies. C-r groups, groups of secretaries, kaffee-katches in suburbia...if women spend much of their time talking about sex, it's because this is the most crippled and damaged area of life for them/us. If it isn't, we're lucky. Certainly sex isn't a magic cure-all, but if one doesn't have choice there, that hits at the very springs of life, I should think.

I don't agree with certain lesbian groups who insist that lesbian separatism is the Solution To It All, but here (as with Black Power) I am not willing to scorn or condemn. I know what kinds of feelings such theories come out of and I cannot help honoring the feelings. People in pain scream their heads off. Feminism and lesbianism and male homosexuality are indeed related (I'd recommend Ti-Grace Atkinson on this) but the theory is very abstruse and goes down to the roots of sexism. It isn't simple to explain and it doesn't mean that every woman should run out and become a Lesbian (assuming she wished to, even).

I remember talking to a group at Cornell who purported to be Leftist radicals (all women) and asking them if they had ever made love to a man, that is, behaved self-assertively during sex. Blank silence. Finally one young woman asked hesitantly, "Oh, you mean telling him what you want him to do to you?" This is the kind of astounding brainwashing that is one of the results of sexism and it must be talked about until it is talked to death.

I agree that the confessional form has probably gone as far as it can go in the Oh God Look What They Did To Me line, though try and tell that to Margaret Atwood (or any other woman who has just found out that something has been done to her all these years). And certainly anger directly outward is infinitely superior to self-hatred, which is the alternative.

I do not mean, by the way, that every woman must feel obliged to start Hating Men instantler. But since it is produced so reliably and constantly by the system we all live under, I think it must be faced. Which means it must be honored in others, even if one is a pacifist on principle (which I don't think I am).

But I do think alternatives will be constructed long before they are written about, and some of them will be separatist. (For most feminists I know, all separatism means is some place to catch your breath and not have to deal with the ever-present problem, i.e., a place where nobody pinches your ass as a matter of course. You know, like all those men's clubs that are just now being challenged.)

One further word: the issue is freedom, of course. But it is so in a very radical and scary way, in my opinion. Many feminists (male and female) are going beyond the expansion of opportunity for women and into territory that is existentially frightening: a vision of the human race without the idea of sexual polarity that is taught all of us from birth (I do mean from birth; adults of both sexes treat infants differently according to sex at the age of two days, even when the infants are mislabeled). When this disappears, you find yourself in something very like Sartre's anguish of freedom. There is no longer anyone to tell you who you are, what you "ought" to do or be or feel, and it becomes frighteningly clear that we are not in nature but in culture, that sexual dichotomy or polarity are social constructs and not natural facts.

This is very scary indeed. It forces you back on what you yourself are really like. It is after this vision, or with it, that the rage comes--and the clear vision that Men and Women are imposters--and only after working that through that it's possible to see male persons as individuals at all. This is part of a process that's been happening for a couple of centuries now, but even when European thinkers believed that God is dead, they could still hang on to masculine/feminine and so comfort themselves (if they were men). It's like Spinoza's vision that when you can literally control your own sensorium, you can no longer think even of yourself, i.e., your consciousness as "given." What happens then? He said then one was in the pilot's seat. One isn't; one is the pilot and the plane, both.

According to child psychologists, children learn they are girls and boys long before they learn any other identity. What happens when that goes? One is thrown back on one's personal, real self. Terrifying. (See THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS!)

I almost hate to say that after the period of rage, one can see men (and women) as individuals because this provides such a convenient out for those who want to Stay Put in the old castes. In fact, the usual answer Americans give to being told they are members of classes or castes of any sort is to say (with Lester) "But we're all human beings together, aren't we?" Go tell it to the South African Blacks. Or the miners dying of silicosis in Kentucky. To be human means to be in a class, economic, racial, sexual; it means to be as hateful as we are loving, as selfish as we are compassionate, and so on. All I can do is insist that oppression makes people very, very angry, and that most women turn the anger in. It must be turned out, whether it involves fantasies of killing (quite different from the real thing, as Quinn makes clear) or blowing yourself up with dynamite, like Diana Oughton. God bless us, do you think you can make water run uphill? Some of us are pacifists, some of us are Friends, but some of us aren't--in fact most of us aren't--and yes, only when it all comes out will we be free of it. If my fantasies of murder make it easier for some woman to say "Look here, the next time you pinch me I'm going to wring your nose," I will be very, very glad. But I think only those uneasily aware of the rage in themselves (or playing devil's advocate) will veto anger or call a power struggle "the enemy's method," will insist on selfless, quiet, compassionate justice all the time for everybody. As Alta wrote, "I Am Not A Practicing Angel." Demanding higher standards of behavior from women than men--especially impossibly high standards of behavior--is a sexist tactic from way back. It is adopting that tactic which is adopting "the enemy's methods." It's the old double standard in new dress.

This is not an invitation to loot, kill, and pillage. We are hardly in a position to do that, even if we wished.

I find my temper tried severely several times a week. Often I do nothing. And it is very, very hard to remain quiet, polite (but firm) when you feel keenly that you have been talking to the same gramophone record for twenty years.

I might add that very few men have ever seen a woman really angry. Tears, yes; upset, yes; scenes, yes. But rage, rarely, and anger, almost never. You can talk until you're blue in the face but there are times when the issue is, in fact, male control--I include those impossible discussions in which you are asked to prove by a man or group of men, in the most rational manner possible, that you are actually not subhuman--anger is a perfectly appropriate response. So is refusing to remain in the situation. (As a matter of fact, refusing to fight at all is even more taboo-breaking than blowing your top.)

Again: persuasion very often does not come first. Changing behavior

comes first. This is coercion. It is coercion that prevents your parking next to a fire hydrant (and thus infringing on your freedom). I am not an anarchist, but if we ever do get to anarchism it will be from a position in which everybody is as strong as is compatible with group life at all, and as free ditto.

I meet so many women who dwell on the necessity for female compassion; one feminist writer has called this "the compassion trap." Denial of anger seems to me very close to this. I have three male Ph.D.-dissertation writers who weep on my shoulder (when I'm around); God knows they need somebody, but I know all too well that unhappy male graduate students come to the women faculty to cry, and unhappy female graduate students don't usually go to anybody at all. If they do, they too come to women. What is one to do?

At bottom the point is reclaiming our own souls for ourselves and ousting therefrom the large image of The Man which we have learned from infancy on up. If the current social unease were to lead not to a more egalitarian society but to female supremacy, I would choose female supremacy because I am female. I think there is no chance of this. But if the choice were a real either/or, I must still repeat that I am not a practicing angel. Perhaps in such a world it would be better to curse God and die. I am not that principled.

As Sartre says, you cannot cut off half of human freedom and call it evil. Hate is as human as love, powerlessness as human as power. And when I hear adjurations that women may not engage in a power struggle, because power is not freedom, I can only think that "power" is being very peculiarly defined--in fact, it is being defined as a zero-sum game (which it sometimes is in human relations but only sometimes), as if my employers' power not to give women tenure--a power they have been exercising since the blasted school began--is the same as my attempt to gain power (collective, in this case) so that employers will be forced to meet certain Affirmative Action criteria. It is so easy to twist this so that I must persuade them (they'd be glad to be persuaded; they're willing to talk forever because it postpones doing anything) and must not acquire "power" (which is dirty) and certainly must not dream of murdering them, which I jolly well did.

The only counter-argument I can think of is that anger is often used as a defense against pain, and we have a right to experience our own real pain without being called (or feeling) helpless or spineless. Or "masochistic."

By the way, "John Wayne's wet dreams" are those of someone who is not only in control of everybody else and ruler of a lower class, but has been so for centuries.

Women cannot possibly dream this. If we have fantasies of killing men, they are fantasies of rebellion, not putting down slave risings. It is in male stories of the sex war that men always win because they are "natural" rulers. Women's fantasies must have at least the realism of knowing what it is like to be an under-class. May I point out that this is a considerable difference?

As I tried to point out to Arthur Clarke, Muhammad Ali's racism is reactive, not taken-for-granted-as-privilege and cannot possibly have the social weight and force of Arthur C. Clarke's racism (he is as racist as I am; we were both born into it and neither of us can shed our skin privilege without immense effort, nor will we). I cannot believe that female fantasies of slave-rebellions and turnabouts can possibly be equivalent to the fantasies of those in power (or those who are used to being in power but feel their power threatened) and therefore I say again that the equivalence of women's anger with men's (mostly thoughtless) misogyny will not wash. Women who arrive at the clarity of mind to experience their rage at the way they are treated are unusual women;

but there is a Johnwayne in every man (how can he help it?). It is the unusual man who can break through his training and love women. That is, shed much of his privilege.

This spreads far beyond the confines of Ursula's questions and is a public statement, really, not a direct answer. But I suspect the nerve touched by female anger-fantasies is central to feminism. Mind you, I didn't say the fantasies were central, but the nerve they touch is central.

It is a horrible process to go through. But it really is preferable to spending one's life feeling guilty because you don't like being pinched by strangers, or in conflict because your husband's client (and that is a double-bird, Heaven knows!) treats you like a servant, or--at the worst--to putting your head in a gas oven like Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes' second wife and Anne Sexton. Quoting a male psychiatrist, inner conflict muddles; outer conflict clarifies.

I think it is only after going through the Gehenna of rage that one comes out into the light. And before that, all attempts to imagine alternatives seem to me bound to fail. Mine have. Acting on alternatives is already beginning (like women's banks and the long, excruciating legal battles); probably these must precede any attempts to paint imaginative pictures of the final outcome. I think DHALGREN fails utterly, not only as an egalitarian society (which it obviously is not) but even as an attempt to discuss the question. And one of the betraying signs is the faceless gentleman who is brought in for Lanya to fight. The real fight is obviously between Lanya and Kidd; if they could do that, and then eventually make up, and we could see what kind of arrangement the making-up was--now that would be something. But Chip doesn't know and neither do I. Yet.

McINTYRE:

For Suzy's essay I have only questions. Suzy, do you think the conscious control over fertility (for both men and women) would change your thesis? And, if women are hated as reminders of mortality, why is it that men murder women individually (usually: deviations such as the Nazis, and the Americans in My Lai, are condemned) but murder each other en masse? (In war.) These questions have obvious answers in terms of species survival, etc., but I wonder how they relate to your ideas.

I wish I had more time to think about and discuss what you've said, but I don't. I've been travelling for two weeks, and I've had hardly any sleep in three days.

Katie, your letter really disturbed me, not just because it's scary. (I have the same kinds of fears myself.) All of us must have been given the line about helping others before we devote ourselves to the "trivial" cause of feminism. But the whole point is we can't do anything until we ourselves have freedom of action. We can't redistribute resources or change the throwaway youth-oriented "culture" we've developed or convince those in power that their profits are not the most important thing, unless we are free. Unless we have, I'm sorry, Ursula, power. I have heard middleaged people (well, come to think of it, men) with children say that they do not care if the ozone layer disappears, if cheetahs become extinct, if the ocean and the Amazon rain forest and the California redwoods die: these people say they will be dead in twenty years, so why should they care? What they think they are leaving their children I don't know. They don't care. (It makes one wonder for one thing what social pressures forced them to start families in the first place, what hatreds they carry.) But we can't become like them, we can't let them destroy us. Which is impossible if no one takes us seriously.

I think that feminism--far from being a movement that "isn't likely to raise the odds a fraction of a percent for survival"--is the only chance we've got to survive. First, I see no chance at all that the current hierarchical power-structure will change its direction of its own will. It's too busy maximizing profits for the 5% who own 80% (or whatever the figures are), working on a basis of expediency and ego-protection and second-guessed justifications and destructive compromise and mealy-mouthed nonsense (which you can't even dignify with the word "lies"). The only way we can save ourselves is to spread the so-called "feminine" traits we've been taught into the "masculine" institutions. (If we just lever ourselves into available niches, we will not only repeat all our mistakes, we will lose the "feminine" attributes completely. Because they are cultural, they are learned. They have to be taught. If we don't realize soon that those attributes can save us (though, ironically, they are not survival traits in our society), they'll be gone. We'll be the Ik all over again, on a scale orders of magnitude higher. (If you haven't read Trumbull's study of the Ik, THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE, do. I fully understand his fears.)

One of the reasons I began to think the above is true, or at least valid, is AURORA. Pardon me if I'm repeating previous letters. Virtually all non-sexist cultures portrayed included not only equality of men and women as a given, but reverence for other life and biological systems as well. The societies were basically communal and relatively non-materialistic. Well, read the book and see if you agree or think it's all my and the writers' pipe dreams.

Joanna: Of course your teachers didn't think how you would live. Thoughtlessness is still being used as an excuse for hurting people. Misogynistic jokes are supposed to be funny; where do we get off not laughing? (Feminists have no sense of humor, remember? We can't possibly have one, we don't think rape jokes, ugly teenage girl jokes, "Take my wife--please!" jokes are funny.) And when we try to make men think, they scream "Paranoia!" and cut off the discussion.

Ursula: We talked about woman-woman friendships vs. our backgrounds, which I think are qualitatively different in that respect. You're academic, Quinn and I are middle-class. You said you always had close women friends. I never did till the last few years. We were raised (Quinn and I, I mean) either to see other women as competition, and untrustworthy; or if we refused to compete, other girls were silly and frivolous. Virtually all my real friends are women, now (though what Quinn describes is familiar: acquaintances of both sexes coming for armchair psychoanalysis, i.e., a sympathetic and non-critical ear). Before recently, I simply had no friends. Now, fond as I am of a (very) few men, I don't think I can really consider them my friends in the fullest sense of the word. The ones I am fondest of--would most like to have as friends--I can't even touch. I don't mean may not, I mean can not. I guess that is because of the tension between friendship and sex--if you blur the lines, snap the tension--disaster. I mean that as a totally individual analysis, not a generalization.

Suzy: Right now, a lot of literary and film "classics" are unbearable (for me, anyway) because of the underlying assumptions. In a few generations I think they will either be incomprehensible or so ridiculous as to be funny. That's some consolation. Not much, though.

I want to clarify what I said about disapproving of sex-segregated activities. In general, the segregation is to perpetuate men's control over whole realms of experience, in the guise of "protecting" women (from good jobs, good pay, etc.). It's the powder-puff derby syndrome: same race, less prize money. The reason there are so few longdistance races for women, though it's been proven repeatedly that women have more endurance than men. (Women runners often feel elated and energized after finishing a marathon. Men feel like wet dishcloths.)

However: the more I hear about women's colleges, for example, the more I think they must be retained. Maybe they're the only place women can unlearn intimidation, among other things. And the good ones, of course, are not watered-down, as, say, some of the outdoor survival classes for women are said to be. So I think we probably agree, I just said what I meant badly and clumsily.

Suzy: Yeah, yeah, beware anthro, right on. The most encouraging development in the field is the influx of women--feminists. Many old-line MCP profs are being forced by the women's ability, insight, and scholarship to reevaluate their points of view. Another exciting development is the entrance of minority people, with still other points of view, into anthro. I predict an anthropological revolution, soon.

I can't bear to watch ASCENT OF YOU KNOW WHO. On the single episode I watched, or maybe on NOVA, this incredibly famous anthropologist was displaying a very old bone chip with rows of scratches on it, to demonstrate that paleolithic "man" had a conception of time and of numbers. "You see," says he, "this bone has exactly 31 scratches and is obviously a record of the lunar cycle."

Do tell. A 31-day lunar month? I can see all those paleolithic men chipping up the year into chunks of 30 or 31 days for the convenience of the Romans, in 500,000 years or so. And matching 31 days to the moon. Ri-i-right. They may have been uneducated but they weren't idiots. I think my interpretation is a good deal more likely: the bone was a record of a woman's menstrual cycle.

By the way, most hunting and gathering people do not suppress women, as far as my information goes. Quite the contrary. But when the groups settle down and copy us the men start chipping away at the women's responsibilities, freedom, and rights. And there's nothing the women can do because the surrounding society condones what the men do.

WHITE:

On men and women in sf (or, marriage): There is another side, part and parcel of what happens when sf women are married. Ray Bradbury, capturing Indian summer in Illinois, flavors of ice cream, peaches and wine--I mean, that's what hooked me at twelve (when I was given a book of his stories by a girl my age, who four years later was to supply my first joint, eight years later gave me a coke spoon for my birthday, and still writes me letters about how I'm obsessed with pair bonding). Blacks and whites, playing it out on the Big League on Mars: the wonderful pre-pubescent liberalism of it all! And it struck me, while reading Margaret Atwood's SURFACING (written in the same cloying style) re abortion--"flesh making more flesh, miracle, that frightens all of them"--that that men, Bradbury, that lovely kind man who loves dinosaurs and hates burning books, all that sensitivity: he's out to kill women. The hick who buys the thing floating in "The Jar" (so havnting, writes Ellison somewhere) from the travelling circus, and everybody in the bayou gathers round to guess what's in it. He's now the center of attraction, his status has increased, but his wife, the tramp, always running off with some guy, she taunts him, tells him it's just paper mache (she and her boyfriend checked with the circus; but notice no papier mache in Bradbury!), and she and Charlie fight, and then the neighbors are told she's off again (well, the hero has always had to make excuses for her absences: his status as husband has always been maintained by the fiction of her relatives) but we know what's floating in that glass. And the neighbors still gather round. In another story (somewhere in GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN but I forget titles) man takes wife to Mexico, shows her the sugar skulls sold at Hallowe'en (something that has been used to more innocent drama-

tic effect by Anthony Boucher in a story whose title I also forgot, but it's in THE COMPLETE WEREWOLF), takes her to see the catacombs where corpses stand upright and naked because their families can't pay for their graves' upkeep (Jesus--could Bradbury have really known all that he was saying about the nature of Third World corruption: ~~the wife scares slowly, the story gradually menacing, he takes her back and back again to the catacombs, listens to her breathing at night--well, the story ends with husband driving back to the border alone: wifey's died there, to stand (as in erection) forever a cadaver.~~ Do you understand? That's part of the innocence of science fiction! That's part of the sense of wonder that we all supposedly, and probably statistically, got started on. At its best, the "poetry" of Bradbury is out to kill me (cf. Wells THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU and Ellison "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes"): they want me/wife/woman alone (and in all those stories there are no in-laws to ask embarrassing questions a la Boucher's Mexican investigation story: in-laws, somehow, only the men have uncles, the fathers, the mothers ever-ready with lemonade), and in historical structural terms, the woman alone (i.e., without kin) can only be one thing: tramp and whore, even if Dr. Moreau has to put her up to it. Fear of death? No, no, the death of the woman is not enough, the dead woman herself is not enough: she must be visibly dead, on view as dead, not even ashes on the mantelpiece (where Jacqueline Susann sits today), but floating, standing dead. The preserved dead wife in "The Jar" preserves the husband's status. (OK, one doesn't have to delve into mythology to realize that when women aren't being passively fecund their role is that of the harpie, the Gorgon, Cybele. But here sf poses an alternative: kill her.) That notorious Lesbian pro tem, S.R. Delany, lets the wife in "Lines of Power," and Friza in THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, stay dead. (But look at Lorq's mother in NOVA.) In the hands of our brothers, that may be the best we can hope for. For the others, the beloved sf women (not heroines), the married ones, are (figuratively and then literally) mounted, killed, and mounted again. We are not property, Charles Fort: we are trophies.

Everybody: Please do NOT say power when you mean authority; power and authority are two different things (which is why there are two English words). I have to give this lecture twice a year and I don't even teach. Authority is the legal monopoly of violence whether used or not. Power (which is bloody hard to define) in short is the ability of private parties to make you move your ass. No matter who or what you are. Examples: ain't no way five big black men following me down a dark street ain't going to threaten me; these same gentlemen have no legal rights over me nor need they have any particular prestige. (Prestige is an emblem of power that may or may not be validated by authority, the state.) Many small groups of Vietnam peasants can overpower Thieu's authority. Or: the state can punish the murderer only after she's killed you. As for Le Guin "Power is not freedom"--sorry, power is the exercise of prerogatives (in fact, I would like to start defining "power" as what happens to you when you exercise a prerogative you did not previously know you had any right to); if successful, it can lead wherever you like. It is authority that is precisely the state of non-freedom; authority is a structured reaction. Power is just fine with me.

Joanna: May I suggest that where there were male hierarchies, the more rigid they are depends on the degree to which they were bolstered not by the cheap labor of wives, but of slaves and serfs (more than half of which were women of course); this gave the wives a chance to develop separate, articulate intellectual/cultural achievements WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN RECORDED but are nonetheless rudimentary in the cultural heritage. Greece: for every Plato a Sappho; but where THE REPUBLIC is transmitted, the ladies only get FRAGMENTS (still, the nature of Forum society must have left women with a lot of time...) Ante-bellum Southern women, by no means burdened with political rights, formed a literate, subversive (to the Union), patriotic (in the truest sense) community

(see Edmund Wilson's diary compilation: and what is the conflict in Tennessee Williams' work: rich effete boy Vs. poor Southern woman who has worked her way into inheritance: either she wins or his mother does): the pure rudiments of matrilineage in action, not in books. Also 16th century Germany where more nunneries rallied to Luther's call than monasteries--a commentary on the literacy and receptivity and interaction between clerical communities at that time. We have to start searching out our roots in actions, not reactions: we can't wait for the books. Women don't as a rule get documented, but that same dismissive anger that drove our mothers briefly mad (to let us think we daughters had rights) is transferred, generation after generation. This is an incredibly bullshit theory, incidently, and all but the Southern data should be discounted. And please, write that lady's devious Quest.

Quinn: I owe you a letter. I read your contribution, liked most parts, but ended up writing four pages lauding my lady friends, which doesn't belong here, but sure as hell makes me feel good. I don't know, if I have them (and they call me sister), and good sex once a fortnight (with ~~fuck~~) how can I be so selfish as to complain? Well, someone is killing me.... (Between 1965 and 1969 I thought if I worked hard enough, cried enough, the war in Vietnam would stop. But I got very selfish...Sorry, this relates to nothing but me but I'm too proud to have it cut.)

Tiptree: On a day that has shown the utter waste and stupidity of Stalinist co-existence, and when the second declaration of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Vietnam was to outlaw brothels, you'll forgive me for wondering why, if you're such a "natural lynchee" you're still alive, and over one million Vietnamese who had no power at all are dead. And if it is just an historical accident, perhaps you could refrain in contexts from baiting minority groups of any sort: you say They're after you "the way they used to hunt gays." Used to? Next page you call Arthur Clarke "(Jiggling-nuts)": I assume that's queer-baiting, Jim. Perhaps me, Joanna, Chip and anyone else who can read find you "threatening" because if you did fear "the abuse of power" you wouldn't try to please one audience by putting down a minority group.

TIPTREE:

Luise: Re Arthur Clarke, may I apologize for your total, if natural, misunderstanding, which I hope to heaven was not shared by others.

All I knew, or know, about Clarke is that he (a) writes stories I read, (b) lives or lived in someplace like Ceylon, and (c) published an exceedingly blind, bland, and (to me) unpleasantly patronizing reply to Joanna Russ in the SFWA FORUM. She had tried carefully to explain to him why his "joke" about women-should-be-excluded-from-space-because-in-zero-gee-their-breasts-bobble-distractingly-to-the-men was not a joke and contained characteristically deep bias.

My "jiggling-nuts" line was a regretfully abbreviated reference to the point someone else made more fully, that it would be as logical to exclude males because their genitals would wave about quite as distractingly to women.

And this again was too abbreviated, because it omits the central point of holding male sex reactions sacred while punishing, controlling, or simply blaming women for them. But I refer you to the original letters.

For pain and/or offense given by my damned habit of ellipsis, sincere regret.

As to my saying "used to" about the automatic lynch-reflex toward gays and other minorities, that is because things have changed a little bit between my

youth and yours. Nowadays the would-be lyncher may in certain areas be troubled by the thought that the victim just might have some power behind him. That it will not be the last scene of EASY RIDER all the way....But, if I correctly gauge the difference in our reading habits, you will now be assuming that I have said everything is just lovely. So, silently, would that it were.

Thanks about Clarke, though. That was bad.

WILHELM:

Imagine a structure that is roughly a triangle. On each level of it imagine beings whose roots go downward only, who may reach upward, but without help from above can't remain on any tier except the one that supports the rootlets. The structure is made up of many such tiers, the beings are human, of varying economic status, the lowest naturally being on the bottom drawing their sustenance directly from nature. As the tiers climb the structure, the beings can draw on more and more of whatever lies beneath them. But the humans themselves come in pairs, naturally, male and female, and invariably the male is positioned over the female. This analogy is crude and simplistic, I know, but thinking in other categories often leads to a simplicity that is useful. If this structure were all there is to it, it would be an easy task to force oneself to the top and instantly start major changes in everything below. It isn't that easy, however, because over the entire thing there is yet another structure that is unaffected virtually by any changes that take place in the lower triangle--as long as the triangle itself remains.

In the lower section the aspirations are human: I want to make more money; I want to have better housing; I want good health; I want my children to have a better life than I did....Human. There is a lot of squirming and shuffling about in this part of the structure, on an individual basis, and nothing larger than the lives of a very few people changes.

Above this level the goals are not human and never have been. I am not talking about capitalism alone, but rather about any institution that achieves this level and has the power to maintain itself there overseeing everything below. At one time this was the Church, and that was probably the worst because the Church had a monopoly on truth and the power to enforce its dogma. Church/State in partnership was hardly any better. Then came State (Nationalistic state particularly), and now we have State/Big Business. In communist countries it is still State alone, but even there big business is making its presence felt, and eventually seems destined to become a full partner. These are institutions, and like bureaucracies everywhere the goal has changed from one of service to one of maintaining itself and growing ever larger with ever more power. In capitalistic societies this is, of course, the profit motive, but it doesn't matter very much what it is called as long as it is recognized as being inhuman. Those who pursue false gods no longer face the rack and flames, but economic reprisals. If the heretics make up a large enough group to threaten the power on top, there are reservations for them, or ghettos. This society can tolerate street people, hippies in the past, whatever those people without power choose to do in the future. It is the fact that they are without power that allows such tolerance. The cop on the corner has some power, as does the shopkeeper, the father in a patriarchal family, but it is nothing compared to the Power of the national government or of Big Business, the multi-national corporations. Adam Smith's book SUPERMONEY is very good on this subject.

It is against this background that I have been looking at the women's liberation movement. If the goals are no more than to be equal with men without examining the framework of the total society, then it seems to me that when such goals are achieved, as they will be in time, there will still be as much bitterness and frustration as there is today. The basic injustices of our so-

ciety will not have changed, because to be equal with men who are themselves trapped in roles is not a solution to the primary problem of freedom. If to become equal, women must first become superior economically and/or socially, just to catch up, as I have heard several women declare, then the same bitterness and frustration will be there for them. The structure will not have changed. Women who are accepted into corporations, and damn few of them ever have been, and women who assume important government positions (Dixie Lee Ray) have the same blind faith in the institutions as their male counterparts, or they would not be accepted there in the first place. The Church does not welcome an atheist into its inner councils to debate policy.

In the past whenever this higher Power was dislodged, chaos resulted, and there seems to be an innate fear of chaos among humans. They will accommodate gross injustices for a very long time before they will accept any solution that threatens to loose chaos among them. Women who are opposed to the movement seem afraid it will bring chaotic change to their lives. It's the old devil I know bit. As soon as women's liberation is perceived as not involving anything that drastic, that chaotic, then it will become a reality--if it doesn't threaten the structure of society. But if the Power on top perceives women's liberation as a threat, it will be stopped. Not by men, as Tip suggested a long time ago when this dialogue began, but by the State and/or Big Business, using men as their tools. If women become as directly manipulable through economic controls as men are now, they will not pose a threat. And nothing will change except the lives of a few people.

The Civil Rights movement is dead now; laws were passed and there was no need for it to continue. Yet today the unemployment among blacks is 25% or higher, and more Cadillacs were sold last year than ever before. Economic controls are not to be taken lightly. It will take the black people, as a class, two generations to catch up to where they were five years ago.

If the women's liberation movement has as its goal no more than equality with men without looking down to see whose heads and shoulders affluent, middle-class women and men are standing on, then I don't give a damn if it succeeds or fails. If this is just the first step toward a real examination of what kind of structure we're all trapped in, we should all recognize that what is happening now is hardly more than the first skirmish of a long struggle. And to succeed finally there can't be a division between men and women.

If we can see men as trapped, men as fearful of economic reprisals, men as role players, men as tools of inhuman institutions, then it is hard to see men as The Enemy. Rather they become obstacles through their ignorance. Men, women, people everywhere speak of government and corporate power as one might speak of the wind: uncontrollable, fearsomely destructive, unpredictable, unreachable, not to be approached even. They, men, turn on women as objects that can be controlled in an attempt to alleviate their sense of frustration and powerlessness. When they realize that women are not threatening to them, they are free to look beyond, to search out the real cause of their helplessness. When we, any of us women, feed men's fears and hostilities, we are doing a disservice to the overall cause of human liberation. I think we have to understand and accept that there can be no freedom for a few. If real freedom is to be achieved for anyone at all, it has to come to all. No one can be free whose position in life is obtained at the expense of other people. Those men who still believe they are free only as long as women are not, are less free than I am.

To those who claim that social changes can come about without changing the overall shape of society I can only say I don't believe it. No corporation, no government is going to vote to dissolve its power, just as no sane individual is going to vote for self destruction. I don't think we have to have a bloody

revolution, a civil war, and find afterward that what we have done is change overseers.

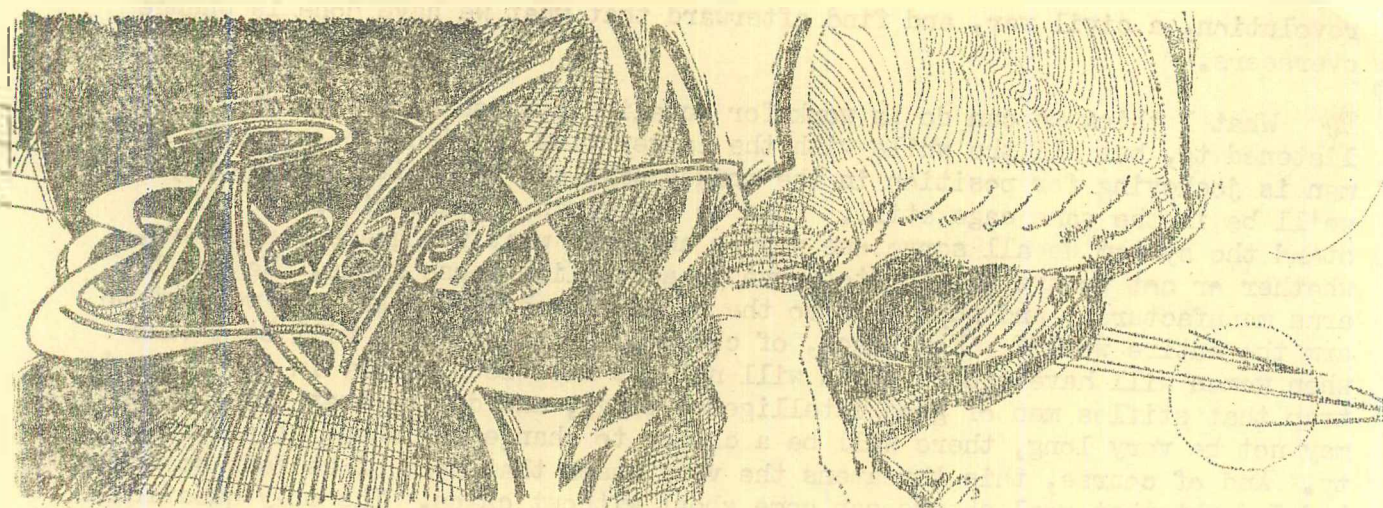
What I think we can do is work for equality because only then will we be listened to, but all the while with the larger view in mind: being equal with men is jockeying for position in the monkey cage and after it is achieved, we'll be in the same cage still. Then we can begin a joint effort to understand the system we all serve one way or another, what its goals really are, whether or not we are willing to serve to accomplish these goals. We are the arms manufacturers and suppliers to the world, for heaven sake! Do we want to arm the entire world? (For peace, of course.) I think there will be a time when women will have equality and will not yet have been caught in the economic trap that stifles men of good intelligence today, and during that time, which may not be very long, there will be a chance to change the shape of our society. And of course, this threatens the very chaos that most of us fear so much. And I doubt that real change can come about without chaos. The only question to me is will it be a minor upheaval, or a major revolution. A major revolution would indicate a new authority on top, a change in overseers only.

I'm afraid many people will settle for too little. The freedom to fuck when, whom, where and in what style they choose; the freedom to work at comparable pay to men; freedom to leave children in day care centers. They'll be as free as monkeys in cages who can get food whenever they want by pressing certain buttons. Any freedom that is granted can be rescinded.

For a few to live in relative wealth and call themselves free is illusory freedom because they must live in fear that the millions who are being exploited to maintain the life styles of the few will rise against them. It is impossible to talk about this without slipping into cliched language because it has been talked to death in the past. But the traditional ways of shrugging it off won't work any more. Tradition can't be a template for the future in any respect any longer. That is what future shock is all about. Those people we are using are not invisible any more, and we are not invisible to them any more. As women demand an end of their invisibility, others will demand the same thing, and I think if we are not ready with some alternative futures to offer for discussion and then action, we will doom ourselves to a revolution that will make the Russian, French, Chinese revolutions seem tame.

Very few men are free enough of the system to be able to see it any longer. Women are in a period of transition when it seems they should be able to look beyond their own immediate and even selfish goals of wanting a better place within the existing framework of society. I see little evidence that this broader scanning is going on. Perhaps I'm wrong about this, but even from the letters in this symposium I am left with the feeling that instead of thinking there is an ever rising hysteria, anger, hatred, frustration, all destructive, especially self destructive.

I'm not merely advocating utopia as if it were available to anyone who reached out for it. There are things we can do. Each page of this already too long letter needs pages and pages of exposition, of footnotes, sources, etc. My proposals look equally bald without that kind of material to go with them, and this isn't the place for that. But there are obtainable goals we could start working on, with little effect until equal rights are achieved, but with increasing effect after that. And it starts with an honest appraisal of what freedom the men in our society actually have, and the question: is that going to be enough? I have made this appraisal for myself and I can answer without hesitation, no. There is not a man alive I would want to change places with.



BRIAN STADLERFORD 8/6/75
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Thank you for sending me a copy of KHATRU 2, which I was most interested to see. May I make a few comments on my ideas in general and on Jeff Clark's reaction to them?

I think the chief difference between Mr. Clark and myself is that I feel that one should look at problems from many angles whereas he believes that there is only one "true" perspective. Like many committed people he attributes to me a commitment as determined as his own, which I do not truly possess. The only thing in the article I really object to is the implication on page 12 paragraph 2 that I am a behaviorist. Mr. Clark probably does not mean this as an insult but I consider that as a scientific theory behaviorism is unparalleled in its ineptitude and that social behaviorism, like social Darwinism, is dangerous. I would rather not have the word thrown carelessly in my direction. Having said that, perhaps I may clarify my own position.

I am currently writing a book on science fiction from a perspective derived from the sociology of literature. Neither of the articles in Ted White's magazines are from the book but both are "spinoff" from ideas which occurred to me while working on it. I wrote them up because I thought that they were interesting. I would not fight to the death to defend the arguments in either because, although I think they contain ideas well worth thinking about, I see no merit in being dogmatic. Basically, I am interested in finding some kind of explanation for the fact that people read the kind of things they read. The viewpoint of the literary critic is such that this question is really irrelevant. It is a fact that most readers prefer to read "bad" books (as, in fact, you point out in your editorial) but to the critic this merely means that they have "bad" taste. The critic sees no reason to ask what these people are getting out of the books they read, and why they cannot or do not care to get what he (the critic) gets out of "good" books. I am not saying that the literary critic is wrong in not asking this question, or that the viewpoint of the literary critic is invalid for the study of sf. What I am saying is that if we want to know the answer to this question, and if we even want to think about it in a reasonable manner, then we must find a standpoint which is different from that of the critic. My standpoint is that of the sociologist, who is interested in the way that literature functions as a medium of communication in society. Alternative standpoints no less valid as platforms from which literature may be studied are those of the psychologist and the linguist, and the viewpoints may themselves be subdivided severally.

Now, it is a plain fact that sf is popular, in a fairly limited sense. It

promoted on some scale as a publishing category, and makes money (for the publishers if no one else). But it is not popular because of its literary merit. Sf which is, from the viewpoint of the critic, "bad," does at least as well as sf which is "good." This fact means that in terms of its success as a publishing category the literary quality of sf is irrelevant. Why? Mr. Clark is forced by the nature of his initial assumptions to blame it on the consumer. If bad books thrive it must be because there are "bad" consumers--and this, he argues, is because of "bad" education. I sympathize with this point of view to the extent that I consider that school and university, in today's world, are the last places anyone should go in search of an education. The mass-produced product hawked there is just as bland and ersatz as any other mass-produced consumer package. But even if we admit the existence of "bad" consumers who like "bad" books because they know no better (and I think this is dangerously generalized for--again, as you say in your editorial--lots of intelligent, capable, thinking people like literary crap as much as the next man) we are no nearer to answering the question of just what do the consumers get out of bad books?

You say in your editorial that "it is only the basic ideas that appeal to them." But is it? I would like to suggest (and I am not laying it down dogmatically but simply saying that it is an idea worth thinking about) that it is not so much the ideas per se as the overall context provided by sf: the ideative environment of sf. It is, as Mr. Clark points out, difficult to characterize this environment, especially in one word. I used "extrapolative" in the AMAZING article, although I now think that "hypothetical" might be better. Sf cannot, of course, be defined in terms of content simply because the men who decide what bears the label and what does not (editors, for the most part) cannot agree among themselves as to what the category ought to contain. We must look for a description of the genre, I think, in terms of the kind of assumptions people adopt when they sit down to produce, convey or consume sf--that is to say, the kind of paradigm which they consider applicable to it. As Alexei and Cory Panshin pointed out in the extremely intelligent and interesting series of articles which they wrote for FANTASTIC some years back, there have been several paradigms proposed, none of which fit the actual product. They went on to build a new paradigm which they considered appropriate, and this is a perfectly reasonable thing to do. I, however, tend to think that whether the paradigm fits the product is less important than whether people think or pretend that it does. Sf is not scientific, not extrapolative, not hypothetical in any rigorous and disciplined sense, but readers approach it as if it were. They see it as belonging to the realms of the not-actual-but-possible rather than to the unreal (and I hope that it does not need pointing out that there is a vast difference between imaginative constructions and imaginary ones.)

I think that science fiction is selling a perspective--a "cosmic perspective"--strategically different from that of mainstream literature. The totality from which an sf work is an ideative abstraction is not the same totality which pertains to mainstream fiction, for it contains everything which might be rather than everything which is. This is a totality which, for perfectly good historical reasons, has only become important in human thinking within the last century. When the universe was considered as the product of God's design the concept of another universe which might have been or might yet be was irrelevant. Only in the intellectual context provided by science--and in particular by modern science, with its built-in uncertainty--does the kind of intellectual exercise promoted by and contained within sf become not only natural but necessary.

"Literature," says Mr. Clark, "is the highest organization of language." This is true only from a very narrow viewpoint--the one which considers "Literature" to be synonymous with "Literary quality." I agree that "good" literature contains better-organized (or, to avoid the ambiguities of Newspeak, per-

haps I should say "more highly organized") language than "bad" literature. From Mr. Clark's point of view this is utter damnation to "bad" literature because he believes that the function of literature is the organization of language. I, on the other hand, am not concerned with what literature ought or ought not to be doing--I am concerned with observing the way literature does function in society. I certainly do not, as Mr. Clark suggests, think that thought is independent of language--language feeds thought, thought feeds speech and speech feeds language in a positive feedback loop which has been paramount in determining the evolution of thinking, language, and the media which develop in series from speech. The fact that language is not merely a coding mechanism derived by logic does not mean, however, that it deserves Mr. Clark's capitalization and elevation to quasi-supernatural status. The language employed by most sf writers is purely functional, and not highly-organized at all. Some sf writers, in fact, including the most popular one of all, are quite determinedly propagandist in their use of functional language and their scorn for stylistic embroidery. (Unlike Dr. Asimov I am not scornful of stylistic embroidery--I merely reproduce this comment here as an example of a possible viewpoint.) I think that we must accept the existence of functional language, whether we approve of it or not, and I think it is dogmatic to the point of blindness to deny the existence of functional literature, which puts the priority on organizing ideas rather than words. Thought and language are not independent, but they help to create one another, and one can attempt to develop one as a strategic end without necessarily attempting to develop the other. One vocabulary can be used to express and manipulate a whole host of ideas, just as one idea can be expressed and manipulated in a whole series of differently-composed prose passages.

May I conclude this overlong series of comments by reiterating my main point in conclusion, which is that if the social needs which sf is serving can be served by fiction of low literary quality as well as or better than they can be served by fiction of high literary quality then it is futile to expect that the publishing category will ever contain fiction of a consistently high quality. Sf which is "bad" from the literary critic's point of view may still be useful, and I think it is worth asking questions about how and why it may be useful. This is the hypothesis which I am following up in my book. It is, at present, only a hypothesis. Mr. Clark thinks that it is a hypothesis unworthy of consideration and, perhaps, treason to the literary cause even to contemplate. Maybe so. But next time you are in a bookshop watching people exercise their literary preferences, why not--just for a moment--wonder what the hell Lin Carter and Perry Rhodan and Star Trek and Daw Books have to offer them? And if you can entertain that thought you might get a whole new slant on the question of why those intelligent, capable, thinking people can't get what they want so easily from sf which has pretensions to literary quality. That other set of intelligent, capable, thinking people who can't get what they want from "bad" sf but are very fond of sf which contains more highly organized prose aren't necessarily a cultural elite who have somehow escaped the imagination-assassins of the modern educational system--they're just people standing on a different intellectual viewpoint, and only some of them are wearing blinkers.

I apologize for going on so long, and for the overall shapelessness of my arguments--an inevitable consequence of ad lib composition. I hope that there is, in the above, something worth thinking about.

JEFF CLARK 8/18/75
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...Perhaps I should start commenting on Brian Stableford's response to my piece. First things first. In general, I'd like to say that I accept the validity of Mr. Stableford's position as he states it here. I have never doubted

that his sociological approach is worthwhile. In fact, in response to his first piece on the subject (I've forgotten whether it was in AMAZING or FANTASTIC) I wrote that it seems to me it would contribute toward a more comprehensive criticism. The sociological approach just doesn't happen to interest me--at least not right now. In any event, however my tone or title for the piece struck Mr. Stableford, I did not mean the attack personally. (Just good clean fun for somebody who doesn't often get hyper in public print.) And I'm definitely looking forward to his book on the "usefulness" of bad sf, whether or not I find it agreeable.

In particular, I did not mean the label "behaviorist" offensively. I meant the term rather suggestively, to describe what I think his approach is in relation to traditional literary criticism. The latter doesn't deny "literature" as an object in itself, and it looks toward (at least) a hypothetical "good sf"--even if the good stuff is not in existence measurably or at all. By the lights of literature itself, this sort of criticism tries to define sf's potential and nature in terms of what's been done within and without the field. Mr. Stableford's sociological view takes literature as a utilitarian object--the antithesis of the aesthetic view. It attempts to define sf by a sort of consensus method, getting reasonably measurable results--i.e., what readers, whatever their backgrounds educationally, think it is and does and what they get out of it. The analogy with behaviorism is centered on this matter of approach. The psychological behaviorist accepts, say, the "personality" as the sum of the person's behaviors--no more. There is no intangible whole-which-is-greater-than-all-its-parts. This is a pragmatic approach. You don't speculate on why and how a rat does what it does in a Skinner box. You just know that if you do this-and-this, you will get that behavior...the beginning of social engineering. Hence the sense in which I was applying the term. Mr. Stableford seeks the parameters of sf through the actual effects it displays through its consumers. In light of this, my objection to his definition was that it couldn't account for all of the data which could be gathered in this manner. But, since he's not putting the matter "dogmatically," I'll be good enough to admit that from any angle a comprehensive definition is likely impossible. His "as if it were" definition here is a rather happy and interesting clarification.

What led me to assume that Mr. Stableford's position was considerably more entrenched than he now says it is is my own impression that the task he is seeking to perform--finding out why bad literature is liked--is not all that new or unexplored. I should imagine one could start with C.S. Lewis's EXPERIMENT IN CRITICISM, with the chapter on the reading of the unliterary. I will concede, though, that the issue has not been adequately explored within our field per se; and also that, to a certain and likely significant extent, bad sf must offer something other than bad fiction of other genres. I'm even willing to bet that it offers at least a "higher order" of badness. That is, if it's giving a sort of infantile wish-fulfillment, that fulfillment is on a higher imaginative level than, say, that found in the romance and the western. The questions Mr. Stableford wants to ask about this subject area are worth asking. But sf as a genre definitely has more literary potential than the others I've just mentioned, so we ought not to let those questions become our only concern.

But to take another tack on this matter of what people get out of literature. I have come to think that there is a sort of continuum in this affair, from the most utilitarian reader on up to the art-for-art's-sake "cultural elite." That is, the whole thing hinges on a qualitative refinement of the ways in which we gratify the aesthetic impulse. Perhaps that strikes you as being obvious. The conclusion I wish to draw from this notion, however, is that the cultural elite are satisfying their "cravings" as much as the common consumer. They have just come to possess gourmet sensibilities, and so can no longer be fed by gourmand aesthetic stuff. One might as easily study "the reading of the literary"--except that it is never questioned in the same socio-

logical way as the "lower order" of reading is. High art is not supposed to be utilitarian; but there's probably a mixture of the utilitarian and spiritual/aesthetic gratification throughout the continuum. Mr. Stableford simply wishes to concentrate on the lower end, where the mixture is simpler and more readily analyzable--where it remains a mixture instead of becoming a subtle compound, so to speak.

But let me draw it to an inevitable conclusion in the light of Mr. Stableford's view of the stalwart literary intelligentsia. When he speaks of their concern over "bad taste" and "literary quality" he assumes, I think, that the "cultural elitism" of the attitude is a posturing, a question of almost social dignity. Bad taste and crude people must be condemned. This is perhaps not uninvolved in many cases. But what I've been trying to suggest just above is that their concern, by and large, is no posture at all. If nothing but bad art exists for consumption, they suffer. I mean that James Joyce cannot be satisfied with nothing but crossword puzzles,

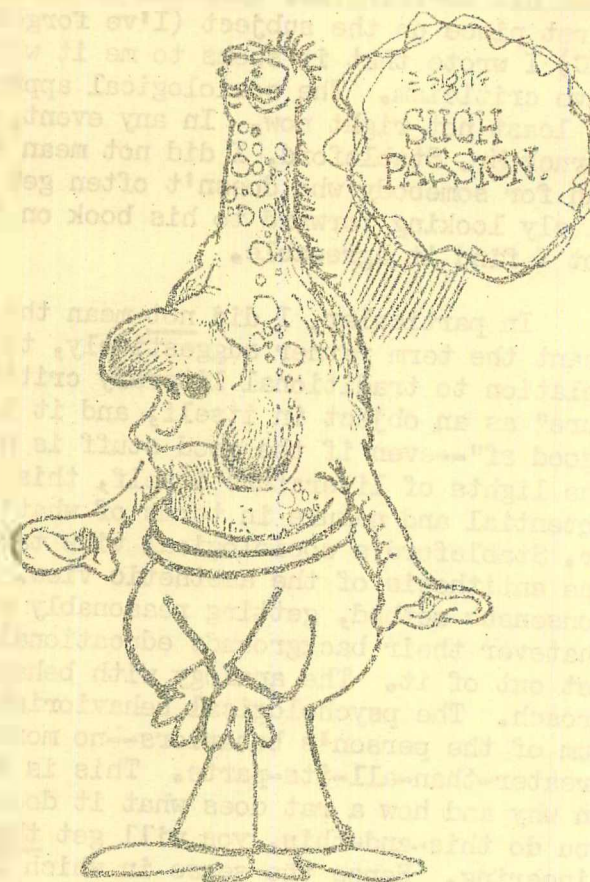
however tough. That T.S. Eliot cannot be satisfied with doing even the most exquisite limericks. That Albert Einstein cannot be satisfied with nothing but math teasers. And I mean that for lesser people, too. The matter is not necessarily that their refined sensibilities will atrophy--heaven forbid the embarrassing disgrace!--but that they will actually suffer. There is a genuine need that must be filled. Once the capacity is established, there is no turning back. It's rather like that first bite of the Apple.

These people are necessary to the existence of a sophisticated culture/civilization because they are part of the vanguard who influence it to change and adapt when required.

I still have reservations about Mr. Stableford's acceptance of "functional" language. Just a few nights ago I finally read Samuel Delany's essay of the quantitative title, the one in which he maintains that in every generation someone must maintain that in opposition to form there isn't such a thing as content. For as long as I can remember now, for as long as I've been reading "sophisticatedly," I haven't been able to see how anyone can deny that assertion. And it has bearing upon supposedly "functional" language. Functional is relative to the reader, among other things.

Mr. Stableford mentions Dr. Asimov--let me take him. Jeff Smith wrote on his introduction to NEBULA AWARD STORIES EIGHT--let me take that.

Certain aspects of science may be served well by functional language, in that science tries to be as denotative as possible--rather than connotative, like literature. But when Dr. Asimov says that the science fiction reader's "average intelligence is considerably higher than the average intelligence of the general population" and further implies some necessary connection between this and sf's being an especially difficult and fine form of literature, is he



actually telling us anything "functional"? Is he actually saying anything valid?

My contention is that the sort of "intelligence" Dr. Asimov speaks of--the sort which causes high scores on college entrance exams, which causes polls to state that the cream of students inevitably end up in the science occupations--is not at all necessarily involved in the ability to appreciate literature, in the modes of thought attendant upon that appreciation. It may be present in one degree or another, but it's certainly not vital and it doesn't insure appreciation.

Since his statement is not properly qualified, simple as it seems, it is dangerously "unfunctional"--or just plain silly--as far as I'm concerned. And I find it no surprising contradiction, therefore, that "lots of intelligent, capable, thinking people like literary crap as much as the next man." I only ask again: What do you mean by that kind of people and what has it got to do with literature?

There is nothing of real worth to be gotten out of (at the very least) this aspect of Dr. Asimov's Introduction. The people who might think they "know what he means" won't actually know anything--other than a statistic. No reason at all for sf readers to pat themselves (or us-selves, since I'm included) on the back for anything other than that statistic. (About Dr. Asimov's notions of literary aesthetics I'll remain silent. Doing so expresses more than words can.)

And this, I admit, is an attitude that comes from someone (me) who knows better. The problem of "functional" is also the problem of communication. When is a writer being "needlessly unclear"? How do you judge that, and who does so? The writer may be hopelessly inept at what he's trying to do. Or he may be attempting to express something difficult through difficult language and failing nobly at it. Or he may be succeeding--and his critical reader is just not equipped with the required language/thought capacities. In any event, the matter has to be carefully examined if it is to bear any real fruit, clear or unclear. Often, to simplify and clarify is also to falsify.

When I use the term "literature" in "Literature is the highest organization of language," I don't mean "literary quality" but rather that "literature" should be, quite simply, applied to highly organized verbal works. To art. The rest, in all its utilitarian regalia, can be called something else. Or at least a proper distinction can be understood. Then there is no problem over the function of "literature." (When you go shopping for a camera, why do they call the brochures you pick up "camera literature"? Simply because it's written? Why not leave it at "brochure" or something similar? Its function is truly utilitarian: it provides specifications on the camera, and on occasion even pornography--it gooses a little consumptive lust into you....) Literature should be the highest organization of language in the rather straightforward way that man is the highest organization of life yet known. He is the most complex state of it, the furthest away from entropy. Just so, literature is the expressive state furthest away from verbal vacuity. Period.

In final conclusion, let me just say that I'm glad to have Mr. Stableford's clarifying response--and that he may be hearing from me again on his latest piece in ALGOL. But that's for later.

(S(My turn? I have little to say, actually, at this point. But since we're just throwing ideas out, and not being dogmatic about them: If we are going to examine why people like "bad" sf, wouldn't we be better off with a psychological approach than a sociological one? Or at least a combination of the two, to get the breadth of sociology and the depth of psychology? I think

the question is less "What do these people get from bad sf?" than "Why do these people still receive gratification from bad sf?" As twelve-year-olds we all received gratification from bad sf. Yet it seems some of us "graduate" and some of us do not. Or is there a difference in what the "bad" consumers do get? Are their needs not the same at thirty as they were at twelve, but the same books still manage to satisfy the new needs as they did the old?)S)

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KHATRU 2 arrived the other day; serious, competent, handsome in its own way and largely outside my area of immediate interest. At this late date it is probably no secret (though not an advertised fact, either) that the small amount of sf I read annually isn't enough to cause me to willingly devour most fanwriting about sf and sf authors. So most Lit-crit in fanzines whizzes right by me with nary a second glance.

However, this is not to say that KHATRU 2 was a total loss in my case, for I did read and enjoy both your editorial and Jeff Clark's essay. And it's regarding the latter that I want to throw in my two cents worth first.

Though I haven't read Brian Stableford's original article in AMAZING, Jeff's piece worked well by itself, rousing some fairly random thoughts I'll try and pass along. I've heard much muttering of late about an era of post-literacy upon us, though I'll be damned if I can nail down where such muttering has appeared. Some of it, I guess, comes in via McLuhan; Edwin Newman's book on the disintegration of good English; the print media's self-focused concern over its own supposedly shrinking audience; and last but not least, via educators' cries of anguish when faced with tv and drug-ravaged hoards of amotivational students.

And indeed, just such an era may be here (for awhile at least); though I'm unsure as to the actual import of such a fact. (If thousands now watch tv instead of reading SPICY WESTERN pulps, that seems largely to be a change only of medium--not quality.) If so, how come? One can point one's finger at tv for only part of the blame, I suspect. An equal share of the responsibility can be given to the print culture itself.

Most anyone who has recently experienced the American Educational System can testify that most of the "literature" handed to students to read (i.e. textbooks) is lame and as likely to encourage a disenchantment with reading as anything. I've always enjoyed reading myself, but if I hadn't early on started to work around and beyond what was handed to me in school, I'm sure that such enjoyment would have had a far harder go of it.

But beyond the adolescent and post-adolescent school system, what about the literary culture at large? I'd say that, actually, big whopping portions of it could fall right off the horizon without the world being the worse for it. Because, it seems to me (he said, gesturing cosmically) that the majority of our culture is just an elaborate system of whistling in the dark of the void. That, apart from imparting necessary information on survival or intriguing insights into the nature of man, the world, and the void, much of culture is basically a hall of mirrors. Which may be as fascinating as all get out, but which a couple of well-placed rocks and/or exit signs can demolish in a second.

Let's pick up a few remaindered books from the scholarly table here, shall we? How about, THE IDEA OF PERFECT HISTORY: HISTORICAL ERUDITION AND HISTORICAL PHILOSOPHY IN RENAISSANCE FRANCE by George Huppert? Or how about DOSSO AND

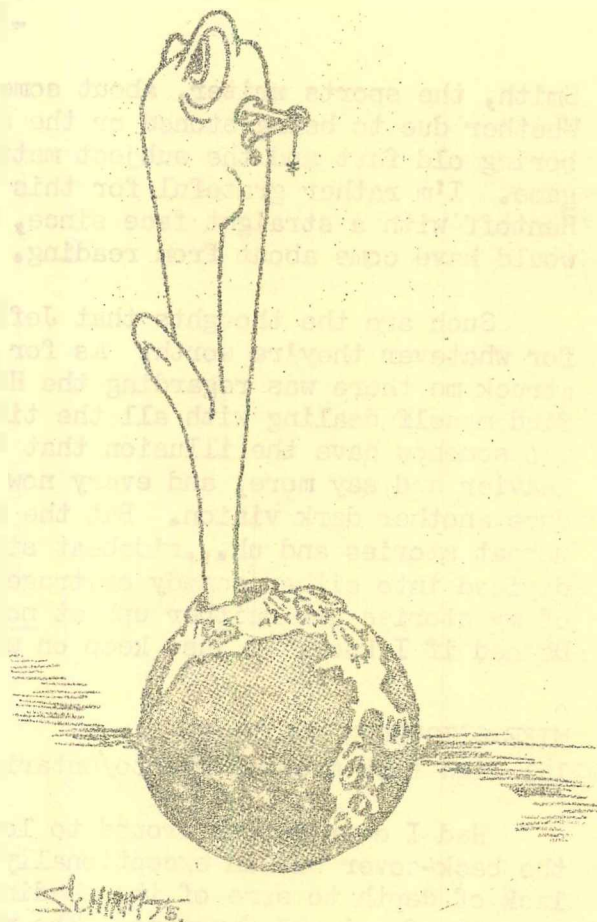
BATTISTA DOSSI; COURT PAINTERS AT FERRARA by Felton Gibbons? Or here's a new one hot off the press: CRUCIFIXION BY POWER; ESSAYS ON GUATAMALAN NATIONAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE, 1944-1966, by Richard Newbold Adams. Now far be it from me to criticize any of these gentlemen and their books or to suggest that such tomes are less deserving of publication than, say, THE YOUNG LUST READER--a tree-consumer for which I'm partially responsible myself. I guess the point I'm really making is that much of literature is folks keeping themselves busy and other folks critiquing these folks' busy work and other folks analyzing the critiques of the busy work, and on and on. And I'm as much a part of it as anyone--more so than most, in fact.

Of course, being a cartoonist and artist, I'm more tied up with the visual (choke) aspects of our culture than the purely literary, but I don't particularly hold one aspect as superior to any other aspect. Visual media excel at certain things, verbal and print media at others. Poems can convey moods/insights/what-have-you in one tenth the space of an essay on the same subject. A silent film can hit you with an impact which will stay with you longer and more clearly than a book which may have taken three times as long to read. Radio or tv can convey "news" faster than a newspaper or magazine, but an article or a news item in a magazine might have more detail and analysis in it. And so on and so forth. And, it's worth adding, in numerous instances no medium can compare with in-person/see-do for sheer information relay.

One item which Jeff seems to gloss over, though, is that of the nature of response to tv images. He says: "A chunk of the human condition enters your livingroom at the flip of a dial--and what's the effect?...The images are undigested, untransmuted: they engender no thought in themselves." Oh yeah? Perhaps my own case is atypical as I watch so little tv (by choice) that when I do see it, it hits me extra hard--painfully so, in fact. But it seems to me that while the pace of a tv show may not allow much detached thought at the moment of viewing, that doesn't mean that it engenders no thought in itself. Seeing a man on tv news be shot is going to affect me more than reading a newspaper article about it. Which may be why, given the state of current world affairs, I avoid tv news like the plague, but it doesn't at all prove that tv is less effective than print in this instance.

Or take the well-worn example of Richard Nixon. Just watching him for sixty seconds on tv always imparted more information than any amount of verbiage coming out of his mouth. In such instances, print is supremely capable of lying or camouflaging what is actually going on. Radio and tv less so. (Though not in all cases, of course. All are susceptible to manipulative editing or headlining.)

A few weeks ago I was getting ready to go to bed and was quite stoned. I had a local classical music station on, and was doing some yoga before retiring. In the middle of a shoulder-stand, the station switched from music to a "cultural" program which featured Nat Hentoff, who was going to interview Red



Smith, the sports writer, about some National Football League controversy. Whether due to being stoned or the shoulder stand, Nat Hentoff sounded like a boring old fart and the subject matter of the program like some obscure shell game. I'm rather grateful for this insight, though I haven't been able to read Hentoff with a straight face since, but I doubt whether that flash on my part would have come about from reading. And so it goes.

Such are the thoughts that Jeff's essay aroused in me, and here they are for whatever they're worth. As for your editorial, Jeff, the chief item that struck me there was regarding the Happy Ending Syndrome. It is something I find myself dealing with all the time, whenever I do a new "comic" story. I too somehow have the illusion that "serious" stories with downbeat endings are heavier and say more, and every now and then I give into that illusion and produce another dark vision. But the rest of the time I divide my output between upbeat stories and uh...sidebeat stories. Actually most of life is not easily divided into either comedy or tragedy, but just is. And so, a certain portion of my stories are neither upbeat nor downbeat. But which are more important? Damned if I know. I just keep on whistling.

MIKE GLICKSON 6/21/75
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Had I ever gotten around to loccing #1, I was planning on mentioning that the back-cover was an exceptionally powerful illustration. There's a certain lack of depth to some of the shading techniques used, but the idea and the overall effect are dynamite. The mimeo version fails to do the original justice either, but by bringing out the other column and figure this second attempt adds even more to the drawing. Of your four covers so far, this is easily the best by a considerable margin.

KHATRU certainly isn't going to win the GRANFALLOON look-alike contest, but since your main interest is obviously not in appearances, this isn't really important. The illos by Freff and Meled are excellent, but beyond that there is nothing of an exceptional nature in the graphics. Were the material less successful in achieving what you want of it, this would be more of a problem than it is.

Which brings me to the material. Most of it, I have to admit, is almost completely beyond my ability to comment on. Most of it is a little too sercon, a little too heavy for me. I find the heavyweight criticism of Jeff Clark difficult to read, for example. This essay, though, once you get past the opening page and a half, is far more accessible, but once again it is not the sort of thing I'm moved to comment on. (I'm one of the non-thinkers Jeff discusses. Interesting that his condemnation of the majority of the population should follow on the heels of your own thoughts of the mediocrity of the reading populace. With the laying to rest of the "Fans are slans" nonsense, this paints a rather grim picture of an intellectually decaying culture. And I can't really argue with it, because the evidence, both personal and cultural, supports the claim.)

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis was discussed in more detail in recent issues of KRATOPHANY. As a non-linguist, I've naturally thought the relationship was the reverse, that our perceptions of reality and our patterns of thought shaped our language. This allows for the continued changes in our language and for the development of new thoughts and new perceptions, while the hypothesis as stated would seem to restrict such developments. It certainly seems more reasonable to say the Eskimo has thirty words for snow (the example was used in KRAT; it appears pivotal in the theory) because he perceives that many varieties of the stuff because of its importance in his

life, and not that because his language has more words for snow he can see more types than we can. But I assume that tests have been made to determine whether non-Eskimos can see the differences once they're pointed out by Eskimos and it's been found they can't. It still seems a possibility that this is related to deficiencies in the purely physical perception processes, though, rather than the result of a mental straitjacket imposed by the nature of the language. I'll have to discuss this with some people I know in linguistics.

Sheryl Smith's remarks on the nature of the creative process and the fallacy of its continued upward development are, of course, correct. This is especially true in mathematics, for example, where a great many of the greatest thinkers have achieved their best work at a very early age and never attained such heights again. I suspect that a part of it lies in the reluctance of the public to think of writing as a "gift." It's somehow easier to believe that writing is an acquired skill, that all it needs is lots of hard work and ability is somehow secondary. Therefore, a writer should improve as time passes, since he's learning more and more about his "craft" (a word often applied to writing which equates it with needlepoint and macrame). And the fallacy is indeed common in sf circles, although I personally wasn't applying it to Zelazny in my original comment because I'm not one of those who have been disappointed in Zelazny's "development" as a writer. But many fans have been, and Sheryl's answer is a good reply to them.

On the other hand (you didn't expect me to agree with her outright, did you?) the majority of writers do improve as they mature, probably because they do learn more of the simple mechanics of good writing, so it's perhaps easy to understand how we are led to believe that this is a natural process. When a writer comes along who already knows the fundamentals of good writing, then this avenue of improvement is closed off, and we depend on the development of his creative insights and ideas for "better" books. And while the mechanics of writing can be taught, the creative aspects are a far more difficult kettle of fish. Few people question Roger's ability with words: I think the dissatisfaction has been that he hasn't yet written The Great American Science Fiction Novel. In other words, the "fault" as the public seems to see it, is in the ideas behind his books not growing as fast as people expected. I suspect Roger is capable of the kind of book fans have been expecting from him for the past few years; I suspect his creative processes have grown and developed from contact with his fellow writers; and now that he is out from under a bunch of contracts that forced his writing pace, I suspect we'll see a different style of novel from him entirely. In the meantime, though, I'm with Sheryl: let's enjoy him for what he does do, and leave what he might do for the future.

I read the rest of the issue, and enjoyed a lot of it (the look at Dozois by D'Amassa especially), but KHATRU is not the sort of fanzine I'm at home in. I'm a spectator looking in and watching the big kids play with toys I don't really understand. I want to keep watching, because they're obviously having fun, but if I hang around they might notice me and ask me to join in. Then what'll I do? But keep on playing, please; just don't look behind that sandpile over there...there's nobody here but us chickens anyway...

(S(I'm not a linguist, either, and so I sent a copy of your letter to Jeff Clark to see what he might have to say about the matter. The only thing I can think of is that it took the Eskimos a long time to slowly develop their realizations of the different kinds of snow way back when, but once they had, these latest hundred generations of Eskimos had the terms in their culture. At any rate, the original perception of each kind and the formation of the term had to be virtually simultaneous--until then the new snow x had just been considered the same as snow y.

(S(But I'll let Jeff reply to your comment:)S)

JEFF CLARK 8/18/75

I don't really know that the Eskimo's snow-types are pivotal to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Probably the writer for KRATOFFMANY and I just had the same anthropology profs and/or texts. I've been rethinking that example and feel now that it doesn't do much of anything to clarify the theory--a bad choice. Or at least the emphasis was wrong. Dismissing the question of whether we can recognize thirty types of snow, the crucial matter becomes what this very fine stress on one area of perception does for the human being experientially--how it affects his view of reality. That is something difficult for an outsider to assess in another culture. The Eskimo example, as it was stated by me, offered a quantitative rather than a qualitative difference in language, and so couldn't get at this matter clearly.

Let's try something else. In Hopi, certain noun "events" of brief duration--cloud, storm, meteor, lightning--are verb forms because of this. There is another culture-group (I can't locate their name right now) that has something like six or seven terms for expressing whether an event occurred to oneself, to a good reliable friend who told you of it, or to someone whom the reliable friend knows, and so on. These are all understandings implicit in the succinct terms, whereas we, of course, must clumsily qualify events like I've been doing.

My point in raising these examples is this: what is it like to habitually think and to understand the world in such ways? Yes, of course we can intellectually grasp the noun-verb form of brief events in Hopi, but we can't really understand any differences in perception they may raise experientially. Communication across different language/culture groups becomes difficult when we get down to subtleties. Look at Hinduism and the attitude it engenders in terms of world-view. It is difficult for the Westerner to really understand. Again and again E.M. Forster strove to communicate its strangeness to his readers. To the Indian all the efforts of historians, especially in reconstructing their own past, all the nice facts are as nothing. "Facts are a sign of decay in the world's fabric," writes Forster on his subject. "History is a pattern in the fallen dust..."

Can we really understand that? We, with our logical, reasonable, perfectly evident causal view of things, history or whatever. We, with our very complementary language to express this view: subject--verb--object. What could be more true?...

Another example for individual reflection came to mind recently. Do you remember having, as a child, as many emotions, as many moods and feelings as you do now? I wonder about that. It seems to me I didn't. Yet I think it would be almost absurd to say that a child doesn't have the capacity to experience as much as he does when he's older. What he doesn't have are the tools to discern that experience (if you agree with the hypothesis, of course). And he understands the nuances of his own and other people's experiences through exposure to that experience and to the language to analyze and express it. Without the language that structures thought, perceptions remain inchoate. And the language we speak subtly stresses certain aspects of reality as "significant," and so shapes our experience; we are directed in our analysis of the world.

It seems to me that as soon as we attempt to grasp a perception of any sort--as soon as we begin to truly apprehend that perception--we do so in language. The way in which we can grasp the perception depends then on two things: 1) the way in which our language is capable of capturing it correctly, and 2) the extent to which we, personally, are capable of using our language for that purpose.

An English prof and I had a discussion once in which the subject of college "preceptorials" came up. I don't know if it's a widespread practice, but basically these are courses to acclimatize incoming freshmen to literature because of the marked decline of the student's ability to express his perceptions in term papers and such. He was telling me that the defensive opinion in some quarters is that many of these students are having fresh, original perceptions of the works they are studying and cannot express them in the language at their disposal--not that their language abilities are substandard for their age-group. The fallacy in this (and I think the prof agreed with me) is that language is involved at both ends of the situation. If you don't have sufficient sensitivity/familiarity with language to express your original perceptions, how can you possibly have sufficient sense to receive these perceptions from a work composed of the stuff? --In other words, if they're having great thoughts, those thoughts certainly can't be occasioned by the literary qualities of the books they're reading.

MICHAEL CARLSON 6/8/75
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The most commentable thing for me in KHATRU 2 is Sheryl Smith's reply to Barry Gillam. I too saw and enjoyed YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, and didn't agree with all of Barry's criticisms; but even those I couldn't go along with are well-founded in principle and our differences are mainly in degree. Sheryl doesn't see this, and chooses to attack Barry on a number of spurious and inconsistent grounds. To wit:

A) IF received a number of reviews that, while not totally negative, were mixed; and a number of critics expressed disappointment--mostly for the proliferation of what Barry called "Brooks' sophomoric gags," which contribute to neither the visual homage nor the verbal parody. It wasn't as bad in that respect as BLAZING SADDLES--but that is a major inconsistency, and suggests, at least to me, that whatever Brooks' many talents, the meat of both BS and IF may be a result of the other scenarists (Bergman et al and Gene Wilder).

B) I have yet to see anything I would mind seeing parodied; Barry is a little more sensitive. But for Sheryl to castigate Whale's exceptional BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, sight unseen, is sillier and funnier than anything Brooks has ever done. Also more ridiculous. (S(Sheryl has since seen BRIDE, and reports that it is terrible. Much as I respect her critical abilities, I fear that in this case all the film suffered from was prejudice. Anyone who has developed critical sensibilities can pick apart most anything; the ideal is to set yourself at "neutral" and keep an eye on everything. Now I have no way of knowing whether or not Sheryl would have liked THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN a year ago, but I'm sure it would have received a more objective viewing. When someone whose taste you have just maligned recommends a film to you, you are probably going to want to prove him wrong again. I myself see nothing wrong in enjoying both Mel Brooks and James Whale; THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN and YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN are the two best FRANKENSTEIN movies I've seen, myself.)S)

C) If Ms. Smith ought to know characterization because she writes "verse tragedy," then Ms. Sheldon, whom Ms. Smith masticated, digested, and regurgitated only paragraphs earlier, must know it too, since she "presumes" to write short stories. Right, my dear madam?

D) There are a large number of "classic" motion pictures unavailable for any sort of general showing--for various reasons: legal, distributional, or physical (no or few prints may exist). I once saw SCARFACE in a "secret" showing--the lady who had obtained her pirated print fully expected Howard Hughes' lawyers to burst through the door at any instant. And knowing the tastes and

needs of college film series, which tend toward (except in very good or creative programs) standard film series fare, like JULES AND JIM, or THE SEVENTH SEAL, one can't depend on them either.

E) Barry has the opportunity, in New York City, to see a great many films, many of which are rare, and he takes advantage of this opportunity, and his background shows it. Barry expects a great deal more from film than I do (film as Art vs. film as art-&-goodtimes schools of criticisms, I guess) and obviously more than Sheryl does. But for Sheryl to take him to task for that is an unfounded and needless criticism. Barry expresses his tastes and his grounds for judgment plainly and very comprehensibly, and I learn more about a film from Barry's review, whether I agree or not, than I ever will from Sheryl Smith's rejoinders.

And the rest of the ish:

Did anyone else note that Don's "Tuning the Bells They Ring" is taken from Neil Young's Buffalo Springfield song "Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing," their first single and one of rock's all-time best songs? (S(No-one's mentioned it, nor the four departments I myself entitled, to tie in with the KHATRU title itself. Much time was spent by us finding quotes that actually fit what we are using them for.)S) Don's writing matches the quality of his title--it's odd that those two novels are two of the very few sf novels I've read this year.

Douglas Barbour's article on Chip Delany is very good--for a long time I've assumed my fascination with crime in general and the detective story in particular stemmed from some sort of Colin Wilsonish view of just that relationship between artist and criminal. I also have noticed I get similar reactions to Delany and Raymond Chandler--which must mean something.

Barbour's article is both insightful and concise--the latter something much good fannish criticism has never been able to achieve. Don D'Amassa is a bit less creative, but his brief histories cum criticisms of Dozois and Bishop are both well done.

And I find myself agreeing with Jeff Clark about the nature of film as a medium, even more than his comment on Stableford's thesis--which itself was interesting but not really something I ever took to heart. Like Jeff, I see no negative aspect in sf becoming good literature--I just wish more sf writers/readers could be aware of other aspects of literature than ideas and plot.



SHERYL SMITH 6/19/75
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First things first: your "Perpetual Change." The letters (of complaint I assume) you are expecting on the "We Are Presented as Fools" section ain't gonna be augmented by me. You've said it all, my dear, and make oodles more sense than Asimov....The issue I have to take with you concerns the why do downbeat stories seem more powerful than upbeat ones section, and the problem is not so much your main thesis but rather your use of the word "tragic" to describe downbeat fiction. Look: the tragedy/comedy categories are truly applicable to drama only, not to fiction; and even there much

of what you would consider "downbeat" would fall on the comedic side: for comedy comprises everything, however sad or serious, that is not tragedy, and

tragedy, despite its predominant suffering, is not pessimistic. The tragic view of man is one of flawed nobility, high but not unrealistically so; whereas the base/venal/helpless view is now and has always been the comedic one. Of course, to label the work of Gardner Dozois and his ilk "comedic," as technical correctness demands, would be notably misleading, so perhaps the best thing would be to leave the dramatic dichotomies out of fiction-talk, eh? "Downbeat" and "upbeat" should suffice.

Don D'Amassa's critique of Dozois is beautifully done (as is all Don's writing), but having read a number of Dozois' things there is no way I'm gonna be convinced he is an "optimist," dark or otherwise. However, I am not one to use the term "pessimistic" in a pejorative sense, and think Dozois is an admirable writer.

I agree with some of the things Don Keller says about THE FEMALE MAN, and understand his trepidation in approaching the work. However, in comparing Russ' novel to Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" I think he is confusing fiction with (alas) propagandistic content and (the latter) straight allegory. My reactions to these works were also the direct opposites of his: I found THE FEMALE MAN a fine and (except for the partially-disappointing politics) exciting piece of fiction, whereas I am no more impressed by "Omelas" than I am by John Bunyan. Allegory on the whole tends to bore me with its specificity, even when Le Guin is writing it.

May I recommend to Don that if Russ' shifting viewpoints confused him (I thought they were marvelous!), that he take a crack at a Victorian novel that isn't fantasy, i.e., Thackeray's VANITY FAIR. The narrative viewpoint in that is relatively inobtrusive, but goes through some really weird shifts in its subtle way. If Don can get a handle on that he should henceforth be able to manage anything.

(S(Ah yes: the editor dozes on. Earlier, when commenting on Michael Carlson's letter, I did not realize that Sheryl's paragraph on THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN was in this letter; I thought it was in another. I should have addressed my remarks to her personally, not referred to her in the third person. Forgive, Sheryl, please.)S)

Since my disputation of Gillam I have seen BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN. It was godawful, almost as much a "gothic dud" as FRANKENSTEIN (in Gillam's immortal words): overall it took itself much more seriously than it should've considering the meager substance of the material (and the Hollywood pasticheing the film attributed to Mary Shelley); the attempts at humor were mostly extraneous and/or heavy-handed. The biggest laugh I got was when the monster encounters Dr. Whosis dining in the crypt: the background music at that point was, or sounded like, that employed for the Clay People in the FLASH GORDON serials. Oy! (A kewpie doll and a cigar to anyone who can tell me: Why "Henry Frankenstein"?)

To Don D'Amassa, Don Keller and other upsettable serconists: *Sigh*-- C'mon fellas, I read criticism myself, often like it, and sometimes value it. But I think critics take themselves too seriously, and I deplore the attitude that presumes the artist cannot get along without the critic: this is bushwa of the most tiresome sort. Furthermore, although I do the best job I can on these critical projects, I cannot consider them of overwhelming importance: they are fun-work for me and seem to be fairly well received, but the world, and the genre, could do better without them, than it could do without the work of even one of the better authors. Perspective, gentlemen, please!

(I just noticed the title of your review-&-miscellany section: "We are from the sun"?? Really! I don't know about your other critics, but I have never set foot on the sun, and certainly wasn't born there. Speak for yourself, buster!) (S(Actually, in context, it's "of the sun.")S)

DOUG BARBOUR 6/19/75
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"Perpetual Change" is nice, and it's good to have some of you in the zine. You're right about the Asimov intro, which I hadn't read. And from that, so to speak, look at the sales for DHALGREN. Around here, anyway, it's not the regular readers of sf who are eating that book up (er, excuse me), but a lot of really bright young students who are looking for meaty, wildly written contemporary fiction. A lot of my most interesting students found it tremendous, but most of them had read little, if any, sf. Hmmmm? As for upbeat endings, well, yes, that is a bit of a rough one. But I tend to think that many of Delany's novels, a lot of Zelany's early good stuff, and most of Le Guin's works end with at least an open possibility of things--not improving or ending "happily" exactly, but--continuing. Of the future being there to grow into, maybe. There is loss and there are gains: there is a truth to that kind of open ending lacking in the forced endings you take to task. As for THE GODS THEMSELVES, I had long thought I was the only person around who didn't think that book ~~deserved~~ the awards it took that year. The middle section, if you could ignore the morality he foisted on his totally alien beings, was rather neat, too.

Obviously the Jeff Clark article is a biggie, and perhaps that's why I'm a little less than serendipitous about it in places. Jeff seems to waffle here in his manner of saying what he wants to get said as he didn't, for me, in his piece on FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND. Yet what he is saying is important. I am surprised that neither he, nor Stableford for that matter, the man's not dense, noticed the real central error in Stableford's attempt to annex McLuhan's often very useful vocabulary to his purposes: sf is a sub-genre of literature (or, if we must batter this bird about the whole damned bush, of film, theatre, even painting or whatever): by definition, therefore, it cannot contain any of these, certainly not literature. (S(It could, though, if you simply changed the definition.)S) Anyway, anyone who has read Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" with care deserves attention. Jeff is getting at some important points, about language; and that leads inevitably, as he must have noticed, to the connection between language and thinking, and that is where he does so well. I need add nothing. I am rather caught up by his looking at Stableford's thesis that "literature is an outdated elite cultural medium." Now that's nice, especially when we have so many sf writers telling us how the printed word--only it'll be printed on a screen by a computer of course--will continue to be of central importance in their utopian-oriented futures (in the dystopian-oriented ones, you often find versions of illiteracy, but that's exactly what it is: illiteracy--like what the kids are being taught in most schools today, I guess). And it all seems sort of funny, ha ha, when I think of NOVA where Delany has Mouse playing his sensory-syrinx and wanting to invent lovely things on it but most people want "realism": "Give us the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel again, boy." Stableford seems to be asking for the stultification of imagination--of fantasy-making--that film often insists upon. As Robert Scholes in his little book THE FABULATORS points out, film is the medium for realism, which is why as it has gained supremacy in this era the writers, the good writers, have left realism--which was never that well-defined anyway--behind (and the poor writers, the Harold Robbinses of the world, have taken to writing screenplays that get published first as novels--for the extra bread). Which brings me to William Gass and a comment Jeff seemed to take to heart: that the writers of importance are beginning to see the novel as "a monumental metaphor, a metaphor you move at length through," which is a mind-fucker of the first magnitude if you can only go with it, follow its implications right through. (As for Jeff's comments on how the language has been dis-served by so many of our leaders--straight out of Orwell, that--I enclose my response to that from a couple of years ago. They aren't really very good poems, but they do express the feeling. You can use them or not as you like.)

So Jeff's defense of sf as literature is right and proper as I see it. When I read it I want to be entertained, yes, but I am most entertained by that writing which continually keeps me off balance, continually keeps me working with it--to see, to grow through the rich experience it provides me. Not much of any kind of fiction does that, of course, but that's the only kind really worth worrying about in the final analysis.

The stuff in "Nous Sommes du Soleil" is all worthwhile, and because it was mostly on younger writers and treated them in some depth, I suspect it will be helpful to a number of readers. I haven't read enough of either Dozois or Bishop, but Don D'Amassa's two pieces and Don Keller's piece have convinced me I should read more by both of them. Keller's piece on THE FEMALE MAN was interesting, but I'd put it beside Sheryl Smith's review in GORBETT 11 for balance. Sheryl correctly pointed out some of the very interesting things Joanna Russ was doing with fictional point of view in the book--which braced me, but

[illegible]

poetics # 6 (october-november, 1972):

that there is nothing left to say / not
that it has been said

but that the language holds me
back: these
are the words politicians use,
economists, the men in skyscrapers
who can no longer speak to the natural
world / as they know it
it is concrete & easily defined
w/ the ugliness hidden, & nothing
said about it anyway .

nixons words, trudeaus,
i cannot use them i think
& my word-hoard is thus
ensmell'd .

i hoard my words for what they could say
i can say so little, find
so few to ring true .

there are some words
like 'peace' & 'honor'
now do battle in the ear
listening, a cacophony
that breaks the understanding.

& i will try to use the good words
i have left
to speak human
to human
but there are so few
& i am sick w/ my own
illnesses, political
ulcers, the cancer
of the time .

--Douglas Barbour

[illegible]

did not confuse me too much, but then I just love everything Russ writes, she has so damned much style and bezazz!--all of which Don seems to have missed, or to have thought unimportant. The book is, of course, doing many things at once, and perhaps--only perhaps--it has tried to do too much. But I just love a writer who knows how to play games in her or his fiction, and Russ knows, indeed she does.

Cy Chauvin is right, but he stops just as he should be beginning. Not once does he say anything about Le Guin's three fantasy novels, which are superbly done renderings of "other worlds," and are important parts of the large mosaic which is her growing oeuvre because they utilize the same motifs and themes. Also he doesn't seem to understand the context of CITY OF ILLUSIONS at all, tho he does appear to have read the two earlier novels, ROCANNON'S WORLD and PLANET OF EXILE. All three, as well as THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, "The Word for World Is Forest" and THE DISPOSSESSED are set in what I call "the Hainish universe," wherein the Hainish seeded a number of worlds with humanoids

[illegible]

poetics # 7 (november, 1972):

the loss of 'peace' & 'honor'
is heavy: 2 more good words gone

shit! i cry.

for the loss of good men too
due to the 2 words death in
the mouth of a man designd surely
to kill language & thought .

it is that bad,
remembering pound speaking to us
from piza, circa 1945, &
warning us then, &
dead. warning us now:

"For nowt so much as a just peace
that wd/ obstruct future wars
as witness the bombardment at Frascati after the armistice
had been signed"

lockd in his cage & seeing even then
w/ the clarity of the muse
musing on history. the poetry of

despair, not quite

fulfilled .

so many years & the man who even then
spoke the new tongue of the business
machine
garbles 'peace' fucks over 'honor'
like a hated whore

there are no words
for what he is doing

what he is saying

now •

[illegible]

several millenia ago, Earth among them. The Earth of CITY is many centuries from now, but, as we know from "Forest" and THE DISPOSSESSED, sometime in our 21st century much of mankind was destroyed because we had misused our ecology. If the earlier novel still fits into the later novels' view of the future, it's only correct that after all this time nature should have somewhat reasserted itself with forests and plains, and that mankind should have carefully prevented itself from overpopulating the planet, sending settlers to such places as Werel, the planet of exile. But this complex totality of vision is, I believe, central to Le Guin's success as a maker of other worlds, and Cy seems not to have taken deep cognizance of it. Ah well. I like you on NEBULA NINE, tho I enjoy Carol Emshwiller. And I agree fully with Don D'Amassa in his response to Bob Sabella: I couldn't have said it better myself, and, in fact, I didn't, though the point, that so many big and, I think, good novels are appearing this year, is one that gives me hope for the future. And what else is sf for, you ask? Well, uh, a lot of things, but don't muck up my rhetoric.

[illegible]

pervert of the 'straight'

war, the silent
majority of war dead cant tell
him to get off .

there are so few words left
in the public domain
we can use w/ any purity
we say
nothing . or we say
something else: "make it
new" the old master said
so many years before his death .

can we find the images/
perceptive complexes given tongue

to make the reader/listener know
peace, honor, not
the words: the loved
feeling?

i dont know
know only we must
always try : out of
our silence no speech at all .

we will speak i think
even before the killer
of human language, sweet
human flesh .

--Douglas Barbour

[illegible]

HARIAN ELLISON 5/30/75

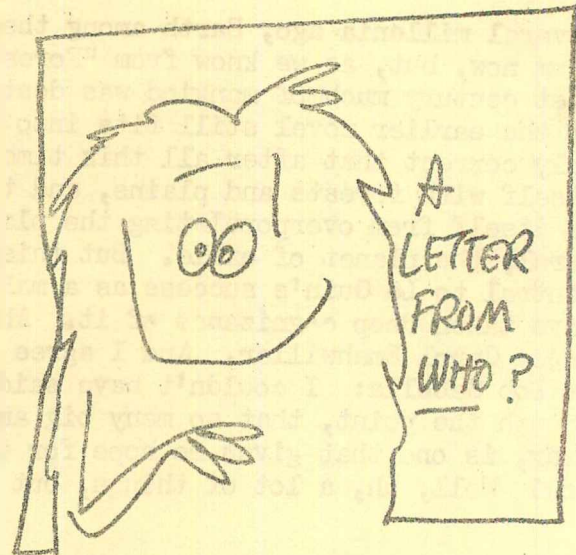
Your observations about "upbeat/downbeat" stories is very likely the most perceptive thing I've seen in a fanzine in ten years. Try the "upbeat" test on "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream," supposedly the most downbeat story of the past century, and you will see that it has an upbeat ending: it says, "No matter how debased and brutalized may be the human condition, we are each capable of nobility, heroic sacrifice, godlike behavior in the face of inescapable crushing doom." The fools who call that story downbeat clearly do not read. Similarly, the fools who call my work negative and a departure from the romantic tradition (whatever the fuck that is). Show me anywhere in the ~~universe~~ ^{universe} of the ~~universe~~ ^{universe} where any one of the "heroic" characters sacrifices himself as selflessly, as bravely, as awesomely--without the faintest scintilla of hope for himself--as does Ted in "I Have No Mouth."

By use of your equation for defining upbeat/downbeat, it is possible to pierce beneath the surface of plot to the sub-text of moral most writers use as the bedrock of a worthwhile story. What you have done, in short, is transcended the bastardized reading habits of fifty years, to rise above mere superficialities and grasp the true purpose of fiction. I commend you. This editorial displays a quantum jump in editorial acumen I would never have expected from your first fanzine offerings. With this one piece, you step into the forefront of sf critics who got their start in the fan ranks. I urge you to continue the analyses and to demand no less from your contributors. It is in the great tradition of Neohumanism begun by Irving Babbitt in the early 1900's.

The articles on Dozois and Bishop and Delany carry forth the promise of your editorial. A smashing issue! Absolutely marvelous! On the strength of this issue alone, you should be well up there for a Hugo nomination next year. In any case, you have my vote.

(And while Donald Keller's reasoned approach to Joanna Russ's THE FEMALE MAN has merit, I find it marred by illogic that tends to throw his views into question. Or perhaps it's simply that I think the book is an important road marker on the way to uplifting and broadening the field of sf.)

One small correction. "Snake in the Crypt" was not merely the core of "The Deathbird," it was an unsuccessful first draft. The reason I allowed it to be published in KNIGHT was that I saw no reason to let a commercially-acceptable story languish in the files when it could see print in a market that most sf writers and readers do not notice. But it was a failure, and is the only time in twenty years of writing that I've totally reworked a story. The final Hugo-winning novella was not just that novelette with stylistic tricks added, it was a total revising of the theme and approach. (S(Yes, I had never actually checked to see how different the two versions are. I don't think you can claim "a total revising of the theme," because it is still basically the same story. (And in fact, the one part I didn't like, the "OH, PLEASE, I DON'T WANT TO GO TO BED YET. I'M NOT YET DONE PLAYING," wasn't in the original.) The handling of the theme, though, was much improved during the revision, from the placement of the sections to the actual writing. "The Deathbird" is leaner in some spots and richer in others, just where it was needed. ## But, definitely, I was in error in calling "The Deathbird" "Snake in the Crypt" plus the apparatus," and I'm glad you took the time to redo it.)S)



"The Deathbird" was a major plateau story for me, leading me to write stories I think are far better than any I've ever written. Since "The Deathbird," I've done--as a direct result--"Adrift Just Off the Islets of Langerhans," "Catman," "In Fear of K," "Croatoan" (which may be one of my five or six best and most controlled stories of the 900 I've written), "Shatterday," "Mark," "The Whimper of Whipped Dogs," "Seeing," "Inside," and "Down Deep," some of which have not yet appeared in print. I'm surprised, however, at your comment that you haven't liked what I've written since "The Deathbird" nearly as well. Perhaps it's another case of what I'm doing now being so different from the watershed story that began the cycle. It happened with "'Repent, Harlequin!'" and "I Have No Mouth" and "The Beast that Shouted Love at the Heart of the World" and "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes." I find that every time I hit one of those--"At the Mouse Circus" was another example, which drew enormous attention and praise, but "Corpse," that followed immediately thereafter and is, to my mind, a better story, was almost wholly ignored--readers tend to say, "Why doesn't he write something as good as (insert title)?" And then, a year later, they're talking about one of those "lesser" stories as the best I've written.



I did not say you look Byronic.
I said you look moronic.

All of the preceding is the reason I go my own way, write what I'm compelled to write, without really paying much core attention to the likes and dislikes of the readers. They mean well, but I'm alone at this typewriter, and I have to go where my thoughts take me; I cannot permit myself to be influenced.

(S(The cartoon at the left is a letter-of-comment of sorts, from Pat Sullivan of Baltimore: she found it in THE SUN MAGAZINE, the Sunday supplement to the Baltimore SUN. It is by William Hamilton, and may be syndicated; I'm not sure. At any rate, Pat felt, and I agree, that it is a companion to Sheryl Smith's article "The Ellison of Byronism" (KHATRU 1). Cheers!))S)

DICK LUPOFF 6/17/75, 6/30/75
3208 Claremont Avenue/Berkeley CA 94705

Bob Silverberg mentioned your kind comment about me in KHATRU one day recently, and today Charlie Brown actually showed me a copy of the fanzine, which so shocked and delighted me that I jumped in my chair and splashed coffee all over the page.

Wilting beneath Charlie's scorn and wrath I managed a feeble, "If I die soon and achieve posthumous fame some collector may offer you many dollars for that fanzine with my very own coffee stains on it."

To which Charlie replied, "I wish you'd show more respect for the fan press. It isn't as if this were just the manuscript of your next novel or anything."

Anyway, while I appreciate your kindness, I am puzzled by your suggestion that "Lupoff could be a major sf writer if he wanted to."

I don't know what you mean by this.

Do you intend to suggest that I'm not really trying most of the time? That my heart isn't really in it? That my true wish is to be third baseman for the Philadelphia Athletics? (Ah, my secret is out! Yes, that is my true ambition! But there are no more Philadelphia Athletics, so I sublimate by writing science fiction.)

Believe me, Jeffrey, every story that appears under my byline is the best I can do. (This is also true for the Ova Hamlet byline, the creation of which was the result of a historic accident with which I seem to be destined to coexist indefinitely.) I realize that the quality of my output is somewhat uneven --but that isn't a function of lack of trying. It has to do with the condition of my stomach on a given day; the number, nature and frequency of interruptions; the functioning of my sometimes cranky typewriter; much etc.

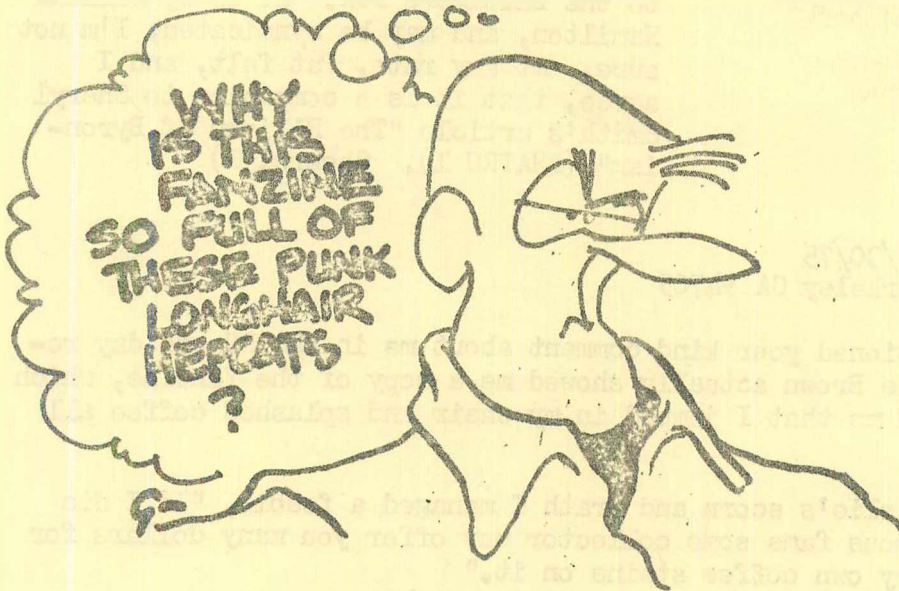
I guess what you're suggesting (however gently) that I do, is essay more serious themes than I have in the past. Well, I guess that a hijacked rock and roll band isn't exactly profound.

Look, could I ask you to look at two sf novels that are due early in '76. One is FOOL'S HILL from Dell, and my only caveat regarding that book is that it was delayed first by a number of publishers who couldn't make up their minds for a long time (Doubleday had it for five months and then decided that it "isn't science-fictional enough" for them) and later by Dell's policy of long-lead inventorying. So it's kind of a 1971-mentality book. Make of that what you will.

The other is THE TRIUNE MAN coming from Putnam/Berkley, and is representative of my current work.

Listen, I don't know if many authors have said this to you, but intelli-

gent reviews are greatly appreciated. There is damnable little feedback in this business (although more nowadays than there used to be) and what there is all too often comes from idiots.



So anybody who bothers to pay attention and provide some feedback--and who gives any indication of having understood what it was he was reading--is precious to us. Keep it up!

FRIEFF 5/27/75
3624 North Potomac/Arlington VA 22213

Your whole discussion of sensawonder and Isaac's intro really brings out only one reaction in me. To wit (cheez, ain't we formal tonight!): I question your phrasing and assumption that the level of mind which adventure stories satisfy is the "more basic" level. But then, I would like to see a development towards and the concomitant terminology, rather than western psych's tendency

to see things only in terms of what they have developed out of. A largely and less-obviously connected syndrome: the seventies as the decade of nostalgia... at least so far...but I have optimistic alternate theories about that era, too. All of this may be conceptually incomprehensible to anyone but me (it rings with the shining clarity of wordless personal Vision, always a tricky thing) but so goes it. Adventure stories that are workable only on that level satisfy not "more basic" levels, but earlier and less-demanding ones. ("Basic" really does have implications I don't like that deal with the placement of the level within a personal history.)

Turgid, turgid... (S(I must confess I don't see too much difference between "earlier" and "basic," as we're using them here. Unless...yes, I think I see...by "implications" you mean that my "basic" can be interpreted as meaning "necessary." Well, perhaps it can be. I did not say that only single-level adventure stories satisfy that basic need, but that single-level adventure stories can satisfy no more than that need. And I agree that it is an "earlier" need, as well, that part of an individual's growth is the development of perception of these other levels--and books which do not satisfy these levels are not going to satisfy the reader, unless the reader blocks off those more-recently-acquired levels, ignores their needs. This means that THE DISPOSSESSED satisfies me more than A PRINCESS OF MARS, because the former satisfies more needs of mine than the latter. On the other hand, PRINCESS does satisfy at least one level, which makes it more valuable to me than I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, a much more serious novel but one which does not reach me at all. --See, I can be turgid, too....)S)

For the record, I offer up Peter Beagle's A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE and THE LAST UNICORN as stories of fantasy with upbeat endings that don't involve transcendence. (S(Ah, but are they "High Fantasy," which is what I was talking about? They contain elements of High Fantasy, but I think they are something altogether different.)S)

On powerful happy versus powerful sad/scary endings...the culture does affect what is written in that writers are products of the culture. A catharine-wheeling cycle, down through the years. And most of the culture is programmed for downbeat endings. Let me try and offer up enough structure to support this.

First: artists' outlooks are important. How they feel affects their work. Diane Arbus, a photographer, pictured humanity in freakish ways by concentrating largely on physical freaks; and emotional ones as well. Even her normal people come off looking crass, somehow, a bit slimy, very hopeless. Eventually Arbus committed suicide, and I wouldn't be surprised if the outlook that shaped her photographs shaped her death. That was the slice of the world she saw.

Most people, though they don't see Arbus's way, do tend to see life as little bits of joy in a larger pattern of disappointment and pain. Really now --how much of each day do you just spend happy, thrilled by existence all by itself? Since people tend to view the downside as the more common one they become more interested in the ramifications of pain, and partially this is used to tell themselves that their life, after all, isn't so bad. After seeing MEDA can you think you really got troubles? But this is a path of nearsightedness: people slow down to look at accidents on the road, and they shudder with an almost prurient delight/horror and they take a small measure of joy from their continued existence, or else the clandestine pleasure of stoking their own paranoia...but these same people miss wildflowers at the side of the road. Or the kinesthetic pleasure of motion. See now, pain and destruction intrude on your life violently, whereas good things just happen to be there, for the most part, players in a silent movie. They are often missed because of walking with your nose to the ground. So our culture gets saturated with themes of

violence, sacrifice, variations on the puritan ethic, etc....and these, by their commonality, are more believable. Happy endings are less so because they are either rigged obviously by the author or else seem transitory to the reader. I think it takes a great man with a wide perception to write both upbeat and downbeat stories that work equally powerfully. I point to Leiber in this regard. If the author cannot find an upbeat ending a believable, realworld thing, then he can't write it believably. Here we get a problem: most of the writers who believe that the world is (or can be) rosy are also blind, lucky idlots. The world, by chance, has shielded them. (In this group I include most honest evangelists....)

So, more thoughts on the subject. There are fewer upbeat stories because there are fewer writers of power who can conceive of life in an upbeat manner, (Intelligence far too often breeds cynicism without going into any more complex levels.) (Is there a major flaw in this...somewhere...?)

And how does black comedy fit into all this? (S(Black comedy is downbeat humor, simply stated.)S)

"'Repent, Harlequin' etc." had a happy ending? The Harlequin achieved a major triumph? Where?

I think we ought to start cultivating a sense of rational and perceptive joy.

DON KELLER 5/27/75
3912 1/2 Laurel Canyon Blvd/Studio City CA 91604

You have garnered most of the best young critics in fandom, and I feel dwarfed by the comparison (despite how well-received my article last time was). (S(Don knows how I feel, but I don't think I've stated publicly that I feel his reviewing talent has grown enormously in the last couple years, and there are few people whose reviews I'd rather read. Most of his best material these days goes to Mike Glyer for PREHENSILE/SCIENTIFRICTION, but I'm working on that.)S) It struck me, however, that all the people have strikingly different ways of approaching material and different strengths, and they all complement each other extremely well. You are tremendous from the point of view of craft; Jeff Clark excels at texture and context (how the various things in the story interact, and how the story fits in with various outside phenomena); D'Amassa is a stunning thematic critic with a strong view of a writer's whole oeuvre; Barbour and Chauvin do quite well at seeing how certain elements in a story fit into an overall literary theory; and my strength is seeing a story as an objet d'art, a gestalt, and just how it is put together. Some of these overlap, but in general they are rather separate. I would be interested sometime, just as an experiment, to take one piece (a short story, maybe) and let all of us deal with it and publish the result.

For all the grouching and complaining you do about your writing, it comes off extremely well; it's some of the best stuff in the issue. The bit on Asimov's introduction hit home to me, because it articulates clearly and persuasively something I've been trying to say for some time. Case in point: Gil Gaier and I had an argument recently over a point in Pournelle's (surprise!) otherwise excellent article on Roger Elwood in what fanzine I forget: Pournelle claims that Harlequin's Laser of series cannot possibly hurt the field because it will garner us new readers. My feeling is that the few it will will be more than overbalanced by the people it turns away, or the people who will read that and nothing else. Gil agreed with Jerry, and I'm glad to have some documentation for my side. Thank you.

The ending thing I had seen before, of course, at least in part, and though it is just a bit aimless as you note, it does the job of asking a lot of important questions and even answering a few. As I said, your mastery of craft really shows here, especially re the Crichton book. A fine bit. However, you lose on one point: while reading it, I turned to Kate and Ian, who were sitting next to me, and asked them to name an upbeat Harlan Ellison story. They said "'Repent, Harlequin!'" Can't win them all. I think, with the exception of "On the Downhill Side," which is hardly your typical Ellison story, that it's the one most people would think of. (S(Except Freff, in the previous letter.)S)

I liked Barbour's piece, but it strikes me as a prolegomena to a fuller study; it's a bit short and superficial, but what it does say is fine. (S(I asked Doug about his thesis, which the Delany article was from, and his letter follows this one.)S) Barbour has (for me, anyway) popped out of the woodwork and claimed a high place as a critic--much the same as I have for him, apparently. Cy's piece on Le Guin, of course, I had reluctantly rejected for THE ELLDON TREE, and feel the same way I do about Barbour's. Some very good material, but largely superficial. Both also seem to strain mightily to get certain pieces to fit into their overall theories.

Unfortunately, I have to admit that Sheryl Smith has logic and reason on her side in her discussion of artistic evolution yea or nay. Unfortunately because I am a firm believer in evolution; to me holding still is a form of stagnation. I mean, I can hardly expect Robert Silverberg to write another DYING INSIDE every time out, but I nevertheless cannot help being disappointed in the lesser impact his new THE STOCHASTIC MAN had on me. And when someone like Yes follows a masterpiece like TALES FROM TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS with something like RELAYER, which is in some ways much better, I enjoy thinking that this is how the world should be. I hunger so much for transcendence that mere competence does not satisfy me any more. (However, I freely admit that my own personal creed seldom has anything to do with the way things really are.)

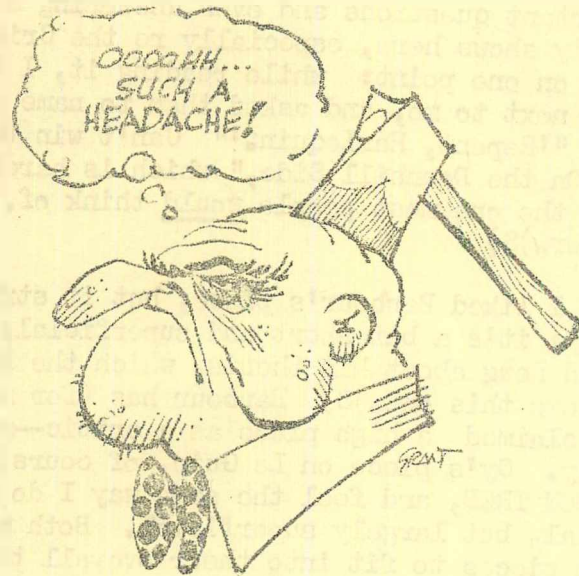
Thanks for printing the Bishop bibliography; it's something I wanted. Now I can track things down. D'Armassa on Bishop really makes me feel inferior, particularly since he deals with two stories I have written on myself, and sees much more in them than I did. I was particularly impressed with the name-symbolism in "Serpents" (which I missed entirely--I'm not sensitive to that sort of thing), and the analysis of the interrelationships in Bishop's novel. I should comment on the autobiographicality on "On the Street of the Serpents." I try very hard to avoid being caught in that trap, and it's disconcerting to find that I was. What fooled me, I guess, was the powerful verisimilitude of the first two sections; every little detail was just so 100% right that I could do naught else but believe totally. Additionally, the middle section jived with what little I knew about Bishop's life. Without evidence to the contrary, I accepted the surface evidence, which admittedly was a mistake.

Now I'm not sure whether I'm happy or pleased with the facts as they are. On the one hand, it makes Bishop's achievement that much greater, since he managed to make those invented scenes so real to me. But on the other hand, it seems to me that creative use of real-world material is a greater triumph than creative use of created material; creating order out of chaos is a challenge, while when you're inventing you can create whatever bits you need for the story. On that score, I almost wish that that first section had actually happened. But nothing can subtract from the strong impression the story made on me.

I loved the serendipitous perfection of the cartoon at the end of my letter.

DOUG BARBOUR 9/29/75

Well, in answer to your request, and I want that noted cos I am not that happy about the thing these days-- yasee, I sent the revised thesis into "them" at the end of July and haven't heard a word yet, not even a note to say they got it (which they must've, I sent it registered mail); some people are just mean, even if they're only thoughtless. So I'm depressed whenever I think about it which is as little as I can manage these days.



I have a rather huge ms. now tentatively titled PATTERNS OF MEANING IN THE SF NOVELS OF URSULA K. LE GUIN, JOANNA RUSS AND SAMUEL R. DELANY, 1962-1972, in hand, and which has undergone complete revisions three times, and some rewrites on top of that. Much has been added to the original for my supervisors, so they can understand what I'm talking about since they have not bothered to read all the novels I'm discussing--which is all the novels by those writers up to 1972, simple isn't it? Much of that rewriting was necessary, and it has in fact improved a lot of the thesis, while also, I suspect, making it more academic and less enjoyable, but maybe not. The chapter on Russ is the article--as it stands--in GORBETT 11. You published an earlier version (that is I rewrote it this summer, and lengthened it a lot) of part of the Delany chapter. FOUNDATION 7/8 carried another (and now extensively revised from it) section of the Delany chapter. I gave a paper at the Secondary Universe conference at Penn State in the fall of 1973 based on another section of the chapter on Delany. An article in SCIENCE FICTION STUDIES (1:3, Spring 1974) on Le Guin's "Hainish" novels is based on my chapter on her work. The first chapter of the thesis is aimed at the groves of academe, and if I ever publish the thing I will cut it from its many pages to about ten. Because it offers about 25 various definitions of sf and then attempts to collate them for a kind of general definition that will be acceptable with some of my own thoughts on why "real" sf could only rise after the scientific revolution of the 17th century and the rise of the novel and realism which Ian Watt explains in his book on that subject. It's not very interesting unless you really do believe it's possible to categorize worthwhile things, and I don't. I still like Damon Knight's definition: "It means what we point to when we say it," however much it may infuriate those among us who like things neatly and rationally put in their places (but I can't tell a Ph.D. committee that, can I? not when I still want the fucker). I think what I say is worthwhile, and the authors have been rather kind about the early versions of the chapters, which have, I admit, been improved upon since under the churlish guidance from above. But my superiors (as I just call them) know sfa about sf and therefore cannot appreciate that I do know what I'm talking about. I remain depressed until I hear from them, and I ain't heard nothing yet.

CY CHAUVIN 5/24/75
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I agree with the main thrust of your comments on Asimov's introduction to NEBULA AWARD STORIES EIGHT, but disagree with some of the details. I don't think that sf readers are more "intelligent" than average, but they might be more intellectually inclined--at least they read books, rather than watch the

boob-tube (as Jeff Clark mentions later on). I also rather doubt if "too much junk" is all that good an explanation why science fiction writers aren't rich; I'm not sure that more writers the quality of Russ and Delany would attract more readers to sf, and more writers like Compton definitely wouldn't (his novels have been published under the label of contemporary fiction in England, and failed). I think that Roger Sween is right: that a lot of readers dislike fantasy, or anything that is fantastic (like sf). They want realism. That's why non-fiction is so much more popular than fiction, among those who still buy and read books. (S(Is it?)S) And, as far as that goes, I think merely in terms of packaging that you wouldn't have to worry about a reader who might like Russ or Delany picking up a Cap Kennedy--its blurbs indicate it is crud. (S(Yes, but if someone hears that sf is good and goes out to the drugstore to pick one up and see, he'll probably just grab something that looks like science fiction to him.)S)

I wonder if "happy endings" might not be more difficult to make convincing than pessimistic ones; it is easier for a character to commit suicide, I think, than it is for a writer to develop logical, realistic solutions to said character's problems. (At least, this is the way it often seems in real life. (S(Yes, that's a good point, and it ties in with Freiff's earlier. If a writer can't come up with a happy ending that satisfies himself as believable, it's not going to satisfy readers.)S) Of course, I think the best endings are neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but combine the features of both. Kurt Vonnegut mentions in BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS that life has neither endings nor beginnings, but keeps going on, with things never totally solved (or unsolved). It is rare and unusual for either one or the other to happen. (S(I don't think I agree with Gardner Dozois that the mere fact of struggling is optimistic, but I tend to go along with Harlan: if you win part of that struggle, you've got an optimistic ending. Consequently, I would consider an ending that is both optimistic and pessimistic upbeat. Or, as Sheryl said, if it isn't tragedy, it's comedy. --Astonishing how none of us totally agree on this matter, but what we're all saying fits together so well.)S)

A few comments on the reviews:

I disagree with Don D'Amassa about "Chains of the Sea" by Gardner Dozois; I found the story very disappointing. The only thing that makes the story interesting is Dozois' unusual, rich style. Its content is quite hackneyed: an invasion of aliens from space, and a small boy, with an overbearing father and weak mother, "sees" and talks with creatures in another dimension. And no one else can see them. Every element in the story struck me as equally banal, and hopelessly cliched. It is definitely not (as Don says) "quite possibly Dozois' best single piece of fiction." (S(Dozois has never been one to come up with strikingly new plot ideas. His treatments are exceptional, though, and I thought the treatment of "Chains of the Sea" very nice; a sensitive piece of storytelling.)S)

Don Keller's review of THE FEMALE MAN is interesting (and I agree with a lot of what he says), but I think he may have taken the novel too seriously, and not seen the humor in the book. That section he quoted near the end of his review was meant (in part) to be funny; of course, no one would say what the female does at the end, it's an exaggeration, just as what the man says in reply is an exaggeration. But it's not an altogether satisfying book, and I don't think it will have as much lasting value as some of her other fiction.

Robert Thurston has written at least two other short stories involving twin lovers besides "Theodora and Theodora" (I find them wearying). The background in "A Thing of Beauty" by Norman Spinrad is lifted from THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE.

Jeff Clark does a very good job of poking holes in Brian Stableford's essay; it will be interesting to see Stableford's reply. I agree with certain of Stableford's notions--i.e., that 'sf deals with changes, and that good sf is something more than good fiction. Jeff suggests that a bad writer with "some nevertheless sense-of-wonderish ideas" might simply spread them personally, or through non-fiction. But he forgets the human element that is present in fiction, the emotional reaction (but I suppose that wouldn't be present in a bad sf story, by anyone's terms). In a way, though, some sf writers have done this: look at Clarke, Asimov, even Pohl. Stableford has also written two long articles for VECTOR in which he traced the development of the robot in science

fiction, and the changing attitudes writers had toward it; he used much the same thesis (his sociological perspective) in dealing with that as he did in his essay for AMAZING. I am glad he is writing his criticism, whether I agree with it or not, however; at least he presents a stimulating and fresh point of view.



JEFF CLARK 5/24/75

Quite the entire issue is a pleasure to read. I think you made the right decision in publishing two pieces on Michael Bishop. Both of the Dons have me so keen on him right now that A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE will be my next sf novel. And after that, probably THE FEMALE MAN. For some reason, I don't think it's just a fluke of mood, Don K's work this time around strikes me as unusually good. He's always been good, but the reviews just jumped into relief and caused me a curiously intense satisfaction. I have only one quibble with his interpretation of the last bit of dialogue by "ME" from Russ' book. It doesn't read to me like it's deferential--rather mock-deferential, meant to deflate suddenly. In light of which I think the "long silence" before the standard response is just standard comic stuff. --But I'd better read the whole thing.

I have a slight correction concerning Cy's interpretation of his anthropology text. Strictly speaking, one cannot say that environment causes both biological and cultural evolution. That statement isn't provable. About the best that can be said is that environment sets up parameters for the possible ways in which at least cultural evolution may develop. It's the petrie dish in which evolution takes place. On the point of biological and cultural evolution and which one has precedence, anthropologists are divided and the only consensus that can be safely arrived at is that the exclusion of either one causes too simple a view of man's development. The "economic determinists" emphasize the biological and environmental side of things: that determines culture, and culture determines the psycho-social makeup of man. The other camp says that culture is an expression of man, who gets his materials to work with from what's provided by the environment. And there's one other thing which gives you something to contemplate: the physical-natural environment is hardly a real factor anymore in man's biological evolution: we have to a great extent circumvented our environment, and our own material culture does more of a molding job on us...for better or worse. The speculative danger in this is that if culture on this planet does not remain diverse, if, say, the world becomes uniformly Westernized, we may no longer be able to adapt to some new anomaly in nature. No culture will survive because all cultures are uniform. (Shades of H.G. Wells and the common cold!)

Jeff, your thoughts on optimism and pessimism seem quite sensible and ar-

ticulate. However, they've also precipitated a few of my own which go off on a bit of a tangent. It seems to me that the basic experience of man in life is pain--physical, emotional, psychological. Happiness can be of the physical-animal "pleasure" variety, or it can simultaneously/independently be of a more emotional nature. However, happiness in any guise we know is really short-lived: it's a positive quality, but it's short-lived and in relation to pain. Even when we're not especially happy or anguished--which is probably most of the time--it's better to view this as being a kind of hiatus or neutral plateau just above the bedrock state of pain, rather than as a temporary falling-off from happiness. Optimism, I think, seems hard to achieve because it really only comes into being and convinces with another kind of happiness--the genuinely spiritual. There's a problem experiencing this; most of our lives keep us tied to animal orders of experience. There's also the problem of definition: but "spiritual" I mean as being above the psycho-emotional nexus, at least. This is damned hard to show in fiction, this kind of optimism of the spirit, a justified and struggled-for optimism. Most stories don't work on a deep enough level to justify or be able to express it; they offer a kind of animal-pleasant conclusion to what was supposed to be a pleasant activity, reading. If we think about this critically, we're dissatisfied. The difficulty of real optimism is like that old difficulty of portraying "good" convincingly--"evil" is much easier. Man basically knows evil and painful pessimism better than he does good and happy optimism. Asimov's ending to THE GODS THEMSELVES really seems to be saying that chance may always save us, and we can have our cake and eat it too. Doesn't seem real enough. While chance can save us, it's a damned fluke. I resent the other guy's having "good luck" not so much because I'm selfish and would rather have it myself, but because he's defying the true nature of things--he's escaping our condition of pain, damn him! It's not fair--we've all got to stand together in the muck....Whereas the bad-luck basis of Disch's THE GENOCIDES (if I'm not misremembering the book) is more acceptable whether we like it or not: yes, that's the way it often goes; mankind can get a fate it doesn't deserve. "Optimism" of the Hemingway variety can come out of this, though: a man can be destroyed but not defeated; that sort of thing. --Does any of this make any points with you? (S(Difficult to say. I think you're being more pessimistic than I, though I don't really disagree with you. I like the way you stepped back to point out that literature is a medium, that regardless of what a particular work may be doing, part of the process is our active reading of it, and--to tie this back into what Brian Stableford was saying in the beginning of this lettercolumn--why we read what we read.)S)

Gee, is urine really yellow? Normally, I mean? I'll have to pull up the shades and take off my sunglasses next time I peek....(S(Well, actually, the description is "straw-colored," but pale yellow will do nicely. "Normal" color can range from amber to practically clear, depending upon the weather, what and how much you've had to eat and drink, or sickness. I hope this puts your mind to rest.)S)

DON D'AMASSA 5/22/75
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I'm very ambivalent about the mainstream vis-a-vis sf. On the one hand, I insist that mainstream standards do apply to sf in most cases; on the other, I am griped by the lack of serious consideration given to sf simply because it is sf. My emotions tell me to say "screw 'em" while my reason tells me that there is no essential difference between the various fields of writing except the superficial ones. You and Cy Chauvin and others are forcing me constantly to return to the same problem. Cy's criticism (elsewhere) of Silverberg's DYING INSIDE, that it is a good book but lousy sf, grates. There is something obviously, inherently wrong with that statement, and I am incapable of articulating it. I have this vague feeling that if I ever really figure out why I object to

it, and state it clearly, I'll have one hell of a great article to send somewhere.

Moving a little further into your ramblings, I find myself in general agreement throughout. There is an interesting story about endings though. John Barth ended his second novel, *THE FLOATING OPERA*, with a successful suicide. The publisher decided that this ending was too downbeat and insisted that Barth rewrite the ending with the hero surviving, which he did. After Barth became famous, he forced the publisher to reprint the book with his original ending. Within the sf field, editorial pressure is no doubt even more effective (remember the excised cannibal closing of *THE LONG LOUD SILENCE*). So false "upbeat" endings that don't ring true might not really be the fault of the author, no matter how valid an indictment of the book.

Jeff Clark is, indeed, much more clear than usual. A well developed and presented argument, the only criticism of which I would venture is that I doubt many people took Stableford's remarks seriously in any case. Stableford is a first class writer of fiction, but I remain unimpressed by what I've seen of his criticism. Doug Barbour made some interesting points, but I was convinced throughout the article that I was reading the outline for a more thorough article. This may simply be a difference in our personal approaches to the subject matter, though. I'm notorious for overkill.

I find myself pretty much in agreement with Don Keller, as usual. I think I mentioned in a letter to David Gorman that the most interesting remark about *THE FEMALE MAN* that I've heard was at a recent RISEA meeting. I mentioned that I was dissatisfied that all the male characters were such stereotyped fools. Nancy Hussar immediately pointed out that it was really a pleasant change to have all the stereotyped fools be men rather than women in a novel. Although I still don't think the book was particularly good, Nancy's point is--I think--a valid one. *THE FEMALE MAN* may be, if not good fiction, a good experience. (S(Of course, in many books all the characters--both male and female--are stereotyped fools.)S)

Arthur Hlavaty overdoes his criticism of "message" sf. Certainly much more modern sf contains a "message" than it used to, and there are some cases where, I feel, the message has destroyed the story (*FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD*, *THE SHEEP LOOK UP*, *THE GLORY GAME*, etc.), but I really don't see any sizeable portion of the field moving in the direction of didacticism. (S(I simply can't understand why some people feel that the presence of a message is detrimental to a story. I don't know that I've ever not enjoyed a story because of the opinions of the writer, even when I disagreed with them. I liked *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, for instance, glorification of war and all. Why not? People complain that stories are supposed to be entertaining, and message stories aren't. Sure they are! I just don't understand this problem at all.)S)

ROBERT E. BLENHEIM 8/5/75
8 Catalpa Lane/Levittown PA 19055

Your editorial that attempts to answer the question as to "why do pessimistic stories always seem more powerful than optimistic ones" was very thought-provoking. I have a few comments to add and then a mild, diverting conclusion of a kind.

First of all, as to Asimov's *THE GODS THEMSELVES* (a novel that I too did not like; I thought the last third of the book ruined it), I believe Asimov's own purpose to the ending was parallel to his own beliefs: that the answer to our problems from technology is found in MORE technology. He has said this is his belief in interviews before. I don't believe it's fair to criticize this



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"happy ending" of Asimov's IN THEORY, but—I grant you—the execution seemed to me to be deplorable. (S(This applies to my above comments about "message fiction." Asimov—a prime opponent of messages—used the novel to push his own opinions. This is something that is practically unavoidable. But Asimov destroyed the integrity of his novel by ignoring all the ramifications of his problem that did not fit what he was trying to say.)S)

Secondly, let's remember our initial question is merely a generalization with a certain limited kind of conclusion possible; we must guard against trying to conclude anything SPECIFIC as to what an sf work should be. (For example, DUNE, OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET and RITE OF PASSAGE were all moving, but had—more or less—"happy" endings.)

And finally, my own idea as to why pessimistic stories are more powerful than optimistic ones:

Death is the end of our lives. We all know it. Intrinsically, this is, for each of us, a tragedy.

Optimistic endings are—ironically—"downbeat" because we know it can't last. Sleeping beauty and the Prince can go on forever (the figures in fairy tales like these are myths, and have inherent irony in how they relate to our lives), but we know in reality we can't.

An intelligent person finds that the "upbeat" ending ignores this fact. (He feels it subconsciously, rather.) Pessimistic endings encompass death, and—if one uses the death in a valuable, or a purgative way—it is a great and powerful experience for the reader. To read a story, to live through pessimism, and then re-emerge; there's more power in this than sheer fun-reading.

Also, a "downbeat" story is usually AGAINST something and has a more serious reason for being. Just as good news is sometimes not worth reporting, so—in a serious story—it is anger over something the reader is against that provokes him to write a story like this. "Upbeat" tales, in general, are usually not created or written for such complex psychological reasons.

I hope you don't think I'm in the least attempting a DEFINITIVE answer here, I'm just thinking on paper a little.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Amanda Bankier Robert Bloch Gil Gaier Dave Gorman
Arthur D. Hlavaty Darrell Schweitzer Raccona Sheldon Jeff Summers Angus
Taylor Alexander Doniphan Wallace Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

Contributors

Most of the contributors to the Symposium should need no introduction, which is just as well because I haven't much room. SUZY McKEE CHARNAS is the author of the fine Ballantine novel WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD. SAMUEL R. DELANY, URSULA K. LE GUIN, VONDA N. MCINTYRE, JOANNA RUSS, JAMES TIPFEE, JR., and KATE WILHEIM are all award-winners you should have heard of. RAYLYN MOORE writes occasional fantasy stories, most of which appear in F&SF. EISE WHITE was introduced to us by Chip Delany. Of herself she says: "Los Angeles via Berkeley to England: degrees by attrition. Nominally African historian. By now maybe doing research in Kenya. Overeats and lusts a lot. No publications." CHELSEA QUINN YARBRO was an "IF First" in 1969. In 1976 she will publish her first two novels: GILVIE, TALIANI AND MOON (a suspense novel from Putnam's) and TIME OF THE FOURTH HORSEMAN (sf from Doubleday). And VIRGINIA KIDD is a writer, poet, anthologist and (primarily) agent.

