



Welcome to Union Street #52 (Obsessive Press [JG] #154 and Peerless Press [SC] #54), the zine with the transmogrifying masthead (Tiptree's on our minds). It comes to you from Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis, whose address is coincidentally 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704-5136. Phone 608-246-8857. Union Street was created on a Macintosh Quadra 840AV, and hardcopy was printed on a Laserwriter IINTX printer. Text was created with Microsoft Word 5.1 and laid out with Aldus PageMaker 5.0. The Union Street Logo was designed with Adobe Illustrator 5.0 and Adobe Photoshop 2.5. All contents are copyrighted © by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, May 1994 for Turbo-Charged Party Animal APA #95. Members FWA and AFSCME—locals 1218 and 0013.

Business

[JG] I nominate Steve Swartz for (re)admission to *Turbo*. He's interested in rejoining us here—having heard, I think, about some of our recent conversations—and I am very eager to see his fascinating writing back here in *Turbo*.

The James Tiptree, Jr. Award

[JG] My tenure as chair of the Tiptree judging panel is officially over. On Sunday, May 14 the judges chose the winner and selected the short list: Nicola Griffith will receive the 1994 Tiptree award at Readercon in July for her novel, *Ammonite*. For my comments about this fine book (and those of my fellow judges), and for information about the short listers, check out the sidebars in this issue of *Union Street*. I think we ended up with a very interesting list: several short stories, fiction by women and men, representation by at least 3 countries (US, Australia, and England), and some really wonderful stories. I'm glad we're done, but at the same time I will miss the great discussions-by-mail with my fellow judges. This was definitely the most fun I have ever had as a result of saying, "Sure, I'll help."

I telephoned Nicola Griffith on Monday to tell her the good news and she was very, very happy. She'd been crossing her fingers about the award all year. Both she and her partner, Kelly will be attending Readercon for the award ceremonies.

The same weekend that we finished voting on the Tiptree winner, Elk Krisor and her crack sewing team locked themselves in the spacious offices belonging to **Diane Martin's** employer, and began the final piecing together of the quilt blocks. Actually they almost finished, and have yet to add only three more columns and the top and bottom borders. I do not sew, (so, perhaps **Diane Martin** will describe the weekend for us), but Steve Swartz and I cooked and baked for those who do, and were thus able to share the spectacular "viewing" late Sunday afternoon. Picture the scene: Tired fans (sewing veterans and refugees from a difficult, 4-hour long WisCon meeting) climbed on top of desktops and chairs to get a bird's-eye view of the quilt, which was arranged upon two director's tables, placed side-by-side. We looked, exclaimed, laughed and sighed. It was quite an amazing sight—both the quilt and all these excited fans, perched on office furniture. I wasn't prepared for the emotional rush I would feel when I saw the nearly finished piece of art that **Tracy Shannon** and I had designed (so long ago): the pieces fit the way they were planned, the colors were vibrant, and the whole thing was so much more complex than I ever imagined it would be. (Since, by necessity, I used solid colors in the computer design—even though the fabrics we chose were all patterned—the final effect magically surprises.)

Wonderful, generous **Bill Dyer** has volunteered to photograph the (unquilted) quilt, soon after the crew finishes piecing together the blocks (but before the top layer of blocks is basted onto the stuffing [?] and back panel). That way, we will be able to take some pictures of the quilt to Readercon and will have some good slides to use for publicity. **Julie Gomoll, Ellen Franklin** and I will be working on marketing the quilt. Actually it's gotten a little more complex than simply selling the quilt, though that's still part of the plan. I'll tell you more about it when we get the details settled.



Judges:

Steve Brown = SPB
 Susan Casper = SC
 Jeanne Gomoll = JG
 Ursula K. Le Guin = UKL
 Maureen F. McHugh = MFM

Winner of the 1994 James Tiptree, Jr. Award:

Nicola Griffith, Ammonite, Del Rey, 1993

Griffith details a civilization—several generations old—composed entirely of women. Her novel displays uncommon skill, a compelling narrative and a sure grasp of the complexity of civilization. While avoiding rhetoric, cant and stereotype, Griffith's politics run subtle and deep. [SPB]

A well-written first novel of a world on which there are no males, the men having been killed by a virus long ago. The story is told through the eyes of a woman who goes there to study the society that has evolved. This is the story of how people interact, and the evolution and adaptation of the protagonist to a world that is different from the one she's always known. Also a novel which postulates that a society composed of only women would not be fundamentally different from one containing both genders. A real page-turner with beautifully well-drawn characters. [SC]

Ammonite is an interesting rite-of-passage novel in which the main character—Marghe—works out who she is and what she wants to do with her life. The culture of the planet Jeep—influenced by a virus fatal to most women and all men, that also facilitates genetic mixing and not-really-parthenogenic births—was fascinating and believable. This book is not based on "difference" gender philosophy (i.e., that women and men are basically psychologically different), and therefore, the

In the meantime, Elk is looking for experienced quilters for the quilting bees which will be scheduled on several summer weekends....

Karl Hailman

[SC] Congratulations on the upgrade to permanent status on the job. I figured it wouldn't take you too long to get something going once you moved out here. This position may not be exactly what you want, but having a bit of job security is nice.

YCT Winz: Did I hear you say "July 4th party"? I happen to be off on the 4th of July this year and along about mid summer, I get *very* thirsty.

[JG] Well, that's an interesting bit of information, that car rental insurance is even less valuable than we thought...

Pat Hario

[SC] YCT me on community and safety. Thank you once again for a very thoughtful response. You said it was sad that, as a community in the apa, we have enough in common to keep us together but not enough of a feeling of closeness as some would like. I think the degree that people here choose to open up about themselves depends on their personal thresholds. We have writers who are very closed about their lives, others who are quite open. Some people who are shy in person are relatively bold on paper and so on. I think you might find these same sort of variances in thresholds in any community of friends. Often when people complain that *Turbo* isn't "safe" enough, I wonder if they feel that way not because of the feedback they are actually getting, but because of the *lack* of feedback they hoped for or expected. I think it is more often a case in this apa that people who pour their hearts out onto the page are more likely to be met with silence than argument. And silence can be a scary thing.

The apa seems to be doing it's job well. We are getting a chance to meet a lot of people from around the country and the world. How far you want to take any particular friendship is up to you to pursue in or out of the apa. The apa provides a reasonably good testing ground for sizing people up. And it *is* safe in a way. Right now Michael Shannon and I are having a mildly heated debate on unions and management. I think we are both learning a lot more about each other than about the issues, but that's OK and I think it is unlikely to get out of control. The discussion might actually proceed in a more civilized fashion here, where we have time to think and respond, than in person, where shit can escalate quickly. At some point in the apa we will probably agree to disagree while in real life we still talk and socialize.

Since your Rush Limbaugh ad last month, Jeanne and I have been trying to buy non-Florida orange juice. It hasn't been easy (or tasty). Our OJ of choice used to be Minute Maid. The closest we've come so far is something called Texsun and it's not that close. Any other suggestions?

[JG] I agree, the *Cherry Ames* series wasn't exactly captivating reading material. Probably I didn't read many of them either. Certainly I remember much less about them than I do of the *Nancy Drew* series or even *Trixie Beldon*. But of all the series, I followed the *Tom Swift* books most fanatically, at least until I had access to a large library with a big SF section.

You mentioned your state of recipe-disorganization to Karen Babich. I'm getting better on that score—by computerizing my recipe collection in a database (FileMaker Pro). The actual inputting is slow going. I've put in many of my recipes that were on 3x5 cards, and have been typing new recipes fairly promptly. But I still want to go through my cookbooks and copy out my favorite recipes—the ones that have the double stars in the margins or encouraging notes like "Great!" or "Make again!" Even though there's still lots to do on this project, my electronic file has already turned into an extremely convenient resource. It's been super easy to give friends copies of recipes: I only have to print out the page. And when I'm looking for a recipe that

women-only culture wasn't portrayed as a utopia for its lack of men. Greed and mindless violence exist in this culture as in ours. Its gender-bending message was that sexuality is only a minor part of human relationships. The characters all seem to take it for granted that sexual preference is an almost irrelevant aspect of understanding one another. In fact, the lack of men in this world is important only for the fact that because of it, Jeep is quarantined from the rest of the (mainly corrupt) Federation, until and if a vaccine is discovered. The human women on Jeep are never referred to as a lesbian community. They are simply a community of people, all of whom happen to be women.[JG]

A self-assured, unself-conscious, convincing depiction of a world without men, this is perhaps the strongest pure science fiction on the list—doing what only SF can do, and doing it with skill and brio. Is it a gender bender? It answers the question "When you eliminate one gender, what's left?" (a whole world, is the answer), but a lot of books like *Moby Dick*, eliminate one gender, and yet nobody thinks anything about it. I believe Kate Clinton has the answer: "When women go off together it's called separatism. When men go off together it's called Congress." [UKL]

When plague wipes out all the men and many of the women of a contingent of marines, a planet is declared quarantined. Marghe is sent to study the "natives," women left from an earlier colonization attempt which was also infected. Ammonite could have been a didactic novel or a utopian fiction, but Griffith has made her world of women complex and full of people both good and bad. [MFM]

includes certain ingredients (that I happen to have on hand at the moment), it's nice to be able to run a search for recipes that include those items. Also, I like running off a copy of a recipe, letting it get messy with drips and fingerprints, because it just gets tossed out after the meal is cooked or dessert is baked.

Andy Hooper

[SC] Thank you for the convention piece. The very idea of an SF convention in Las Vegas is hard for me to digest. I confess that I still think cons are weird. I like them well enough, or at least parts of them, but I have never thought of them as normal. And then to attend one in Vegas (which is the most bizarre city in America in my opinion) is too much. I'm glad to be reading about it from you Andy, because I wouldn't have gone myself.

I thought your comment to **Lynne Ann** was excellent.

Bill Humphries

[SC] Interesting and troubling article on the Clipper Chip. I have heard very few references to this in the mainstream media so thanks for franking it in. It would be ironic indeed if apas survived the "information superhighway" because people wanted to communicate with each other with a little privacy.

[JG] John Leonard's comparison of cigarette smoking to a revolutionary act isn't merely hyperbole, it's a blatant misrepresentation of the actual situation. Cigarette smoking can in fact be discussed as a political act, but I think it's a reactionary one, not revolutionary. For some time, the tobacco industry has been targeting women—along with many other groups—as replacement smokers for its diminished consumer groups. In the 1970s, Virginia Slims successfully targeted women by appealing to female sensitivity to societal pressures to lose weight. Cools markets its product in ghetto areas to appeal to African Americans. Camels uses the cartoon character, Joe Camel (and race car logos, and t-shirt designs) to appeal to pre-teens. The cigarette industry has successfully lobbied the US government to put pressure on Taiwan and Korea to import our cigarettes or face trade sanctions; to pressure Thailand to allow cigarette advertising or face trade sanctions, and to convince Korea to take cigarettes without the health warning. 70% of all cigarettes in Europe come from the US, and Eastern Europe is now being saturated with tobacco ads. Our government recently heard from the Hong Kong Asian Consultancy on Tobacco Control when it complained to a House subcommittee about tobacco companies targeting Hong Kong women, only 1% of whom smoke.

I'm surprised at you, Bill, for showing sympathy for big business on this matter of tobacco, where it's so clearly a choice for them of profit over people's well-being. No woman (or anybody else) displays revolutionary zeal by lighting up. Sadly, they only demonstrate the power of an industry that puts such a low value on human lives.

Thanks for including the article on the Clipper by Barlow. Scary stuff. I will send an e-mail message to Reps. Cantwell, Hamilton, and Toby Roth, since he seems to be the only Wisconsin representative on any of the committees.

Hope Kiefer

[SC] You've sure been a powerhouse since your return to Madison. If a small child and a new house were not enough to keep you busy, you're also editing *Cube*, co-chairing the program committee for WisCon 19 and organizing our move to a new Wednesday night meeting place (you were the last person to successfully accomplish this). It's good to have you back. Even though you like to secretly add Pepsi to our grocery list when you visit.

At least with *Philadelphia*, you knew going in that you might see some familiar locations. On a couple occasions I've been stunned during a movie to see a brief familiar Iowa location. During *Starman*, there is a shot of the main characters driving



1994 Tiptree Award Shortlist

Eleanor Arnason, *Ring of Swords*, Tor, 1993

A novel about human interaction with a culture where cross-gender relations are forbidden, and even contact is kept to a minimum. A lovely book, though the violent male, non-violent female aspects were a tad heavy-handed. Also suffers slightly from a read-the-next-book-in-the-series sort of ending. [SC]

This novel is both a rousing page-turner and idea-turner. The aliens in this book might be the technically advanced version of the aliens from Arnason's Tiptree-winning novel, *Woman of the Iron People*. In both books, Arnason created an alien race whose social stability stems directly from the separation of male and female cultures. Both books are also based on the arguable premise that the male tendency toward violence differentiates gender. Given that premise, the culture and story that follows are fascinating. Both *Hwarhath* and *Human* culture must re-examine all their assumptions when the two races meet one another and begin negotiations to avoid war. (JG)

Both the narrators of this book use an understated, slightly self-mocking, casual tone which may lead the reader to take the story lightly. It is not a lightweight story. It is intellectually, emotionally, and ethically complex and powerful. A great deal of it is told by implication only, and so the moral solidity of the book and its symbolic and aesthetic effectiveness may pass a careless reader right by. The characters are mature, thoughtful, imperfect people, the settings are vivid, the drama is tense, and the science-fictional reinvention of gender roles is as successful as any I have ever read.

The only physical gender difference between human and

around a corner that was located only a few miles from my Dad's farm in an out-of-the-way spot that would be difficult for me to direct you to. In *Field of Dreams*, there is a scene shot on Hwy. 151 that I travel on every time I drive back to my hometown. On both occasions the scene is very brief, maybe a second or two, just long enough for me to recognize it and say, "Hey!"

YCT Pat: Oh Hope, you are very very bad.

[JG] Huzzahs for your first *Cube*! Good job!

I loved your story of how Forrest used to walk only partway through the playground tunnel, and then—rather than walk through to the other end—he'd return to you. I wonder if he worried that the world he saw through the other end of the tunnel might be *another* world, a world in which he might not find you....

Great nostalgic comment to Pat. I guess we'd all better be careful about what we say and write around you!

Lynne Ann Morse

[SC] If I have never said so before, thanks for letting me know how long it takes *Turbo* to reach you. I wish Lillian, James Bron and Alison would do this also.

Once again I enjoyed your weaving comments to people through your trip description and essays. It is a very effective technique.

I found your "With Friends..." piece particularly interesting. I agree with much of what you said. I have written to you before that I often feel as I read the apa that you are a local contributor. Part of that is because you do know quite a few of us and you are familiar with Madison and the dynamics of the group. But you also talk to us. It's clear that you are hearing and appreciating us. You have made yourself an active member of the community by communicating so well and that it seems like you are close even though you live across the ocean. The amount of energy you pour into talking with us is not lost. That sense of closeness takes shape when you visit.

[JG] I agree with Scott, and really appreciate the effort you make to connecting with the conversation here in *Turbo*.

Well, yes, I think it is rather ironically appropriate that you grind your teeth in the presence of some teens. But then it's ironically appropriate that all of us who were once young get to experience familiar situations from the other side.

Jim Nichols

[SC] YCT me for #90. I have often toyed with doing a little statistical analysis of the apa. I would like to test out Hooper's theory that zines at the front of the apa get more comments (or more substantial comments) than zines at the back. Also we could see who has contributed the longest without missing a month, etc. But I don't have the time. I only have issues running back to when I started as OE and I can't think of a positive use for the information other than simple curiosity. As you wisely observed, it actually might do more harm than good to find this stuff out (some people might be embarrassed or feel that the rest of us will disapprove of their performance based on numbers, rather than seeing the results as simply curious trivia.)

YCT Jae for #93 on WisCon: "I thought all the factions were well represented..." What factions? Would you care to elaborate for us? I see you as someone who has a foot in several camps. Your view would be helpful to those of us out of the loop.

[JG] I liked your additions to the Cockbuster video library, and also (as long as we're referring to Jim Brooks' zines) your subtle comment on the slightly redundant layout in Jim's last zine. Funny. Funny.

Hwarhath is that alien women are a little larger than the men; but the cultural gender differences are immense and their implications fascinating, both as a device for questioning human prejudice and convention, and as the basis for a very good novel. The shadowy presence of a third species runs through it both unifying its ideas and always putting all assumptions back in question—a beautiful symbolic device. A beautiful book. (UKL)

A story of alien contact where the male of the species is considered too volatile to have at home. Arnason examines some of our assumptions of gender by creating an alien race whose assumptions are just enough different than ours to bring ours into high relief. (MFM)

Margaret Atwood, *The Robber Bride*, Bantam Books, 1993

Two young girls, minor characters in *The Robber Bride*, demand that all storybook characters—good and evil—be read as female. So too does Atwood portray all the main characters of *The Robber Bride*—good and evil—as female. This fictional warping of gender role expectations forces an understanding that is ironically more complex than the so-called real world in which behavior and archetype are frequently divided into two sets, female and male. The hint of possibly supernatural motivations, give me the excuse to include this wonderful novel on the Tiptree shortlist. [JG]

Though in this book Atwood does not extrapolate from gender construction as she did in *Handmaid's Tale*, gender construction and the behavior and relationships forced on people by their gendered sexuality is always one of her central topics. In this case we have a major artist at the height of her powers telling a very grimm's fairytale about what a Bad Woman does to Good Men

The last couple WisCon meetings have been ... painful. I hope we're almost through with the squabbling and can soon get on with the work. We all share, after all, the same goal: to make WisCon a great convention.

Michael Shannon

[SC] I have been enjoying the direction this discussion of unions and management has taken. I find it much less frustrating carrying on such a discussion in print than in person because I need the time to study your remarks to get a sense of where you are coming from and that is too easily overlooked in a face-to-face debate. We might not be as far in disagreement as it originally seemed but there is plenty about your viewpoint that I still don't understand.

On qualifications. You are right that I haven't cracked a current business school tome on management in awhile, but my undergraduate degree is in Business Administration and I still peruse the business press now and then to keep up a sense of what's happening. *The Insurgent* (when it comes out at all) thinks the whole system sucks and doesn't waste much space on business philosophy. In my work career I've been a non-union factory worker as well as a member of AFSCME and the UAW. I've also been a non-represented salaried supervisor in two positions, one of which I was dealing part of the time with Teamsters. I asked you whether you had ever been in a union not to undercut your credibility but because, in my experience, it can make a big difference how you see the landscape depending on which side of the fence you happen to be standing on.

I still have reservations about the difference in attitudes you see between union and non-union workers. Are you talking about white collar workers you've known? I cannot deny the evidence of your observations, but I think you are on shaky ground trying to generalize from them. You imply that non-union workers have a better attitude than union workers toward their jobs and company. I don't agree. I have known many blue and white collar workers who have been proud of what they do, what they make and who they work for. They may not always be happy with every decision their employers make. That doesn't mean their attitude has gone bad, only that they disagree, and union workers sometimes have a say in company decisions that non-union workers don't have.

It seems to me that the emphasis in management these days is toward increasing productivity and reducing costs. There are a variety of ways of trying to do this. They may take the enlightened view you talked about or they may turn their places into sweatshops or close down and move away altogether. Often a union is the only thing standing in the way of the latter and unions have been under serious pressure from much of corporate America for almost fifteen years. They took their cue from Ronald Reagan. In 1980, Reagan fired the airline controllers (PATCO). He gave a clear signal to corporate U.S. that his Administration was hostile to unions. He worked to gut OSHA, reduced the responsiveness of the NLRB and stymied legislation that would prevent firing striking union workers and replacing them with permanent scabs.

I think there are companies that aren't evil or malicious. After all, every year a list of the best companies in America to work for comes out. But I don't think the evolution of the workplace necessarily has to mean the decline of unions. In fact, I think unions should play a bigger role.

Tracy Shannon

[SC] It's nice that Chloe is such a good sport. Still I feel I'd better take her vow of revenge seriously.

You wrote an entertaining zine this month, but all the short comments make it difficult to grab onto something to respond to. I don't think you need to apologize for the look of your zine. It was quite readable and the cartoons were great.



and Good Women. It is a splendid novel, and far and away the funniest book this jury got to read. (UKL)

Sybil Claiborne, *In the Garden of Dead Cars*, Cleis Press, 1993

To me this is the most original book we read, and the most honest. The grim, repressive urban future seems familiar, conventional, but it grows less so as we read: its vivid, gritty reality is not borrowed, but discovered. What has happened to men, how women have adjusted to it, who the "carnals" are, all this complex matter is told with a mature and subtle simplicity, as the background to a strong love story and to the yet more powerful relationship of a daughter and a mother. [UKL]

L. Timmel Duchamp, "Motherhood" in *Full Spectrum 4*, Bantam, 1993

"Motherhood" considers the very interesting premise that human sexual dimorphism (e.g., gender) is a physiological accident that might be swept away by a virus. A young girl reconsiders her body, her self and her relationship with everyone around her when she catches this virus. [JG]

A nineteen year old girl discovers that her boyfriend has given her a virus that makes her something not human, maybe not female, and the government wants to keep her quarantined. This story could have been the story of a victim but Duchamp has made Pat, her nineteen-year-old, both nineteen and anything but a victim. [MFM]

R. Garcia y Robertson, "The Other Maggie", *Asimov's*, 4/1993

Robertson has crafted a vivid portrait of a Native American society—the Sioux, at a time when the events of Little Big Horn are occurring just over the horizon. His main characters are two women, one enacting a

Excellent comment to **Jae** for #92.

YCT Karen: "But women never learn to hit anybody." True. It is a shame we live in a society that values physical aggression as much as it does. Until that changes I think schools should teach compulsory self-defense classes for girls starting at an early age.

[JG] Your comment about so-called "victim feminism" and the Gaitskill article in **Karen Babich's** zine gives me an excuse to reprint part of the article I wrote for *Hot Wire*. I won't inflict the whole piece on you here, but I think you might be interested in this section.

But first, I have to respond to your comment regarding girls' and boys' tendencies to fight back or not. You wrote: "...I've been wondering ... if the girls were just encouraged to hit [boys] back? Up until about the age 15, the girls will be bigger than the boys. Maybe if all the girls beat the heck out of the boys until they were sophmores ... I know, I know, it won't work." Maybe you've got something there, Tracy. I physically intimidated my younger brother (by 4 years), Steve, regularly, until he grew bigger than me. Then I declared physical confrontations out of bounds and we fought on a verbal battleground for the next 4 or 5 years, at which time we finally became friends. Who knows how that early experience affected my assertiveness in later years?

Here's part of the *Hot Wire* article:

The backlash against feminism in the 1980s broadcast this message: "Feminism was just a fad, and now it's dead." It wasn't important; it was a waste of time. Now, let's move on to really significant things. In the science fiction world, the wave of feminist SF which dominated the 70s was trivialized: It was boring, the guys complained. The dramatic increase of women writers and fans of that period was minimized: It was the "me" decade. They were just a bunch of selfish yuppies. They can be ignored, the guys assured us.

That didn't work. Feminism recuperated from its greatly exaggerated death. Science Fiction publishers have seen a resurgence in gender-bending themes and feminist visions.

Faludi wrote *Backlash*. The reactionary administrations of Reagan and Bush, and the Supreme Court's attack on Choice re-energized several generations of activists. Less than a year after *Time* magazine ran its lead story on the so-called death of feminism, a new cover screeched in mock horror against feminism's apparent assault against men. In the science fiction world, we rebuffed the attempt to trivialize the 1970s wave of feminist SF and have institutionalized the work of praising and preserving feminist SF, through the annual James Tiptree, Jr. Award. (More about this award later.)

Things seem to be happening again. Women's issues are far from dead, but the attack against feminism has been launched from another direction.

The new backlash has exchanged weapons. One seldom hears the claim that feminism is a defunct fad. Instead, we are warned about the dangerous Cult of the Victim. Feminism, we hear, is inflicting lethal wounds upon itself by its obsession with the idea that women are victims. ...Victims of child abuse, victims of biased educational systems, victims of pay inequities, victims of poverty, victims of the glass ceiling, victims of fashion, victims of the media, etc., etc. It all gets very tiring.

Katha Pollit theorizes that,

The current attack on "victim feminism" is partly a class phenomenon, a kind of status anxiety. It represents the wish of educated female professionals to distance themselves from stereotypes of woman as passive, dependent, helpless and irrational. [*The Nation*, 1/21/94, p. 224]

The newest version of the backlash has eagerly latched on to this insecurity felt by newly empowered women and trumpets a message: *Feminists are cry-babies.*

warrior role and the other transvestite, that seem startlingly unlikely to our eyes. Robertson fearlessly avoids presenting his Sioux with politically correct Noble Savage stereotyping, giving us several thoughtless, cruel, even stupid examples, and ends up with a three dimensional picture of a fully human milieu. [SPB]

A vivid story about Indian Wars of the last century that explores gender in both its look at a young woman who takes on the role of warrior to assuage her brother's ghost, and her transvestite friend who has his eyes set on the white soldiers. [SC]

This story is interesting for its message that cultures based upon different understanding of humanity create dissonant communication when individuals from those cultures try to understand one another. Indians and Whites; women and men; White men and Indian women... [JG]

**James Patrick Kelly,
"Chemistry," Asimov's,
6/1993**

In Kelly's vivid story, all of the interactive negotiations that transpire between lovers have been reduced to chemical transactions. One might think that this love story would end up as interesting as the purchase of a used car, but ultimately it is love story and a touching one. [SPB]

A lovely story which makes the distinction between love and sexual attraction in a different way. A sweet love story and good science fiction. If gender-bending can be construed to mean the way men and women relate to each other sexually, as well as socially, this one nicely fills the bill. [SC]

a short story that starts by talking about love as if it were the interaction of chemicals and ends by making the interaction of chemicals a sweet and poignant story of love. [MFM]

And as we all know, the best way to forestall a child's tantrum is to ignore her cries. Don't listen. Wait till she's quiet. (Then praise her for being a "good girl.")

The attack on "victim feminism" is an effective backlash, especially because women themselves can be counted upon to fire a salvo or two at one another. But is this so-called "cult of the victim," something new? Not at all, and neither did it start with women. Patricia Nelson Limerick, in her excellent book, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, (W. W. Norton & Company, 1987) tells the fascinating story of a long-standing American tradition, that of "the innocent victim."

Whether the target resource was gold, farmland, or Indian souls, white Americans went West convinced that their purposes were as commonplace as they were innocent. The pursuit of improved fortunes, the acquisition of property, even the desire for adventure seemed so self evident that they needed neither explanation nor justification.

If the motives were innocent, episodes of frustration and defeat seemed inexplicable, undeserved, and arbitrary. Squatters defied the boundaries of Indian territory and then were aggrieved to find themselves harassed and attacked by Indians. Similarly, prospectors and miners went where the minerals were, regardless of Indian territorial claims, only to be outraged by threats to their lives and supply lines. Preemptors who traveled ahead of government surveys later complained of insecure land titles. After the Civil War, farmers expanded onto the Great Plains, past the line of semiaridity, and then felt betrayed when the rains proved inadequate.

...Contrary to all of the West's associations with self-reliance and individual responsibility, misfortune has usually caused white Westerners to cast themselves in the role of the innocent victim...

...Decades of expansion left this motif of victimization entrenched in Western thinking. It was second nature to see misfortune as the doings of an outside force, preying on innocence and vulnerability, refusing to play by the rules of fairness. By assigning responsibility elsewhere, one eliminated the need to consider one's own participation in courting misfortune. [pages 41-47.]

The "cult of the victim" goes back a long way—and further, of course, than the American West. To this day, claims to the role of victim are frequently heard. A victim, by definition, is not responsible. Someone else is at fault. Someone else will have to pay/change/take care of the situation. Thus—at times—certain advantages accrue to the persons or group that can most successfully cast themselves in the role of "innocent victim." Limerick uncovers an interesting historical process: Powerful corporations and agencies tend to invalidate the complaints of those they employ or govern. Subsequently, powerful corporations and agencies frequently turn around and claim for themselves the role of victim. For example, Limerick describes the history of how western miners forfeited the right to call themselves victims when big business hired them. Poorly paid workers requested assistance from the federal government to reduce the terrible hazards of working in the mines. They formed unions but mining companies convinced government officials that the principal of "assumed risk" should apply; that is, "the miner voluntarily entered what everyone knew to be a risky business." [p. 109] At the same time, mining company owners petitioned the government to rescue them from the financial risks of exploratory mining. The Federal Government obligingly delivered assistance in the form of subsidies to the innocent entrepreneurs and in the form of soldiers and guns to defend them against newly formed unions.

The tug-of-war for the mantle of victim continues to this day in a thousand arenas. Less powerful groups and individuals are advised to learn self-reliance. More powerful groups and individuals convince us that they deserve assistance.

❖ Native Americans were not considered victims by early American settlers, we are told. Indians failed to make the best use of the land and did not deserve to



**Laurie J. Marks,
Dancing Jack, DAW,
1993**

Dancing Jack is a wonderful fantasy, with a very unusual portrayal of magic and powerful portrayals of three women characters—the heroes who rescue their post-plague world. This is a wasteland story: saved not be a fisher king or a single knight, but by the combined magics of a riverboat pilot, a farmer, and a toymaker. The land is infertile, crops are not growing, animals die; people have mostly given up. The magic with which these three women reclaim life for themselves and their land is the lesson that acceptance of pain brings the possibility of joy. It turns inside out the formula of the quest and the knight-hero with gender-bending insights. [JG]

I thoroughly enjoyed this very realistic fantasy, but found no genderbending in it: just a fine depiction of competent, independent women working, and a very satisfying, lesbian love-story. Fantasies about grown-ups are very rare; and this is one. [UKL]

Ian McDonald, "Some Strange Desire," in *The Best of Omni III*, Omni Publications International, LTD.

McDonald has taken a well-worn fictional path, that of the non-human race that has always lived in parallel with us (usually responsible for the generation of vampire mythology), and reworked it into something new. His "vampires" have a sophisticated form of pheromonal communication and an ambiguous concept of gender. Their interaction with humans is compelling, and tragic. [SPB]

Aliens/changelings/an unrecognized third sex? McDonald doesn't quite say where these gender-shifting people come from, but they pay a high price for a desirability far beyond that

keep it. But white Americans are now sorely victimized by modern Native Americans who insist upon the enforcement of unfair fishing, hunting, mining, and gambling treaty rights.

- ❖ Poor, inner-city blacks are not victims, we are told, because they are lazy, because they are criminals... (Pick your rationalization.) Savings and loan bank officials, on the other hand, deserve to be bailed out because they are innocent victims of the economy.
- ❖ Cigarette smokers are not victims, we are told, because they understand the risks. The cigarette industry, on the other hand, need subsidies to protect their profits.
- ❖ Americans who cannot afford health insurance are victims of no one but themselves. New York obstetrician, Dr. John Ayers, who offers no apologies for not insuring his four full-time and four part-time employees, asserts "I believe that everybody ought to be personally responsible for everything they do." [Christopher Connell, Associated Press, 4/29/94] On the other hand, Dr. Ayers might agree with the anger of many of his physician colleagues that the escalating price of liability insurance victimizes members of his profession.
- ❖ There is no such thing as acquaintance rape, we are told; women know the risk when they dress in a certain way, or walk in a certain way, or go a certain distance with a man. Men, on the other hand, are victimized by the lack of consideration women exhibit by failing to want the same thing and act the same way as all other women. It gets so confusing: "What do women want?"
- ❖ Women hurt only themselves when they call themselves victims, we are told, and for their own good should be quiet and stop acting like crybabies. Men, on the other hand, are victimized by child custody laws, false sexual harassment charges, political correctness, and confusing sexual signals. Men deserve a little slack.

In the end, the debate over who more deservedly casts themselves in the role of victim can be more properly understood as a question of who will be blamed for the problem. However, as Barbara Ehrenreich points out [*Time* essay, date], all this arguing camouflages the fact that real victims do in fact exist, that very real problems which need attention do in fact exist, and that the feminist movement represents a very real revolution. The current backlash seeks to preempt revolutionary change by invalidating the perceptions of those who have begun to understand their victimization.

Jae Adams

[SC] Interesting commentary on *The Piano*. I share your preference for a more literal view of the story. Other interpretations are interesting, but I find them difficult to hold onto for long. Like those popular visual puzzles that you have to stare into until you see the hidden object. I can see the Freudian angle briefly, but it doesn't stay with me long.

I was intrigued by your question to **Bill Boddin** in your comment to him from #91, "Do you find this violence inevitable...What style of conflict, combat, one-upmanship, assertion, do you model for the younger men?"

I don't believe this sort of roughneck combat has to be inevitable. It is actively encouraged and rewarded unfortunately. I've known plenty of gentle boys who had no interest in fighting but were forced into it by other kids or family pressure. It is a shame, but it is also the way things are. I didn't like it either when I was growing up and went to great lengths to avoid fighting. I was lucky in that I was always a tall kid and I had a lot of friends. But eventually I, too, had to face the fact that sooner or later some asshole was going to insist on pursuing trouble with me for no good reason. I learned then that one has to be ready, and that it is better to have thought about it before the big moment comes. I'm an advocate of diplomacy or running as

of full-time women. Touching and well-written. [SC]

Any story that includes in its first sentence, "Mother says he can remember Grandmother taking him..." grabs my genderbending radar. It's a suspenseful story about aliens-among-us who change their gender at will from female to male to hermaphrodite, and who are subject to an awful AIDS-like disease. I liked it a lot. [JG]

Alice Nunn, *Illicit Passage*, Women's Redress Press, 1992

One of my favorite novels of recent years, *Illicit Passage* concerns the actual mechanics of a feminist revolution, a revolution from within. As the individuals in the asteroid mining town in Nunn's novel learn self-confidence, their lives change. And as the people organize, the social order changes. The establishment panics and looks for "the usual suspects"—the revolutionary agitators, the bomb-throwers, and entirely misses the secretaries, mothers, factory workers, and servants plotting radical change right under their noses. *Illicit Passage* is a novel of mistaken assumptions, misdirected expectations. In fact, we never actually hear the main character (Gillie) speak. We only learn about her from characters who dislike or are intensely jealous of her. That we end up liking her very much anyway, in spite of the strongly biased points of view of the other characters, only strengthens our admiration for her. [JG]

a first choice option since I've probably lost more fights than I've won (whenever it's been clear who won or lost, which is rare), but anyone (girls too, as I said earlier to Tracy) should be ready to go to the floor with someone if there is no other option. We live in a society that values violence as a solution. Teaching your son to be non-violent isn't enough because it won't change the world he has to live in. Best to give him the tools to deal with as many situations as possible and focus on trying to instill in him some good sense.

Of course I'm hardly in a position to give parents advice on how to raise kids.

[JG] You have developed some really fine and interesting ideas in your essay about *The Piano*. I especially liked the bit about the piano-sinking scene, which you interpreted as Ada's separation of her sexuality from the piano/material attachment, a transformative experience. And you are absolutely right, that most people seem to avoid talking about the daughter and her motives. I certainly do, though not consciously. I didn't like the daughter very much, and tended to avoid thinking about her betrayal. But you are right, there is a lot to think about there.

In fact, there is more depth in your review of this film than any I've seen. It really deserves to be published. Thank you.

Bill Bodden

[SC] We are all waiting anxiously for more career news from you. We all hope you aren't planning on moving again so soon, but I can understand you're not wanting to do the coffee thing forever (although your espresso making skill was certainly a hit at Bill's Feast.) Loved the work piece by the way. Puts me fondly in mind of Hooper's great Taco Bell stories awhile back. Now that you've introduced us around I hope you'll give us an update from time to time.

Heather-Aynne Brooks

[SC] Thanks for bringing Nina around to see us. It was fun and surprisingly explosive. After reading your zine, I can sort of see where she was coming from that day. I mean you were a bit rough on her in the apa. Not that she didn't necessarily deserve it, but you could hardly expect her to be pleased with your description of her in your "Honeymoon's Over" section. In the future you might want to wait to get honest about somebody until it's no longer likely they will see your zine. It was quite an entertaining experience for us. Did Jim really stick Nina in the trunk and you on the roof for the trip home?

Sounds like your ears are pretty thoroughly punctured. It also appears that you have a high threshold for pain. We'd better keep you away from Nevenah for awhile.

Jim Brooks

[SC & JG] Good luck on the new job.

Bill Dyer

[SC] "...at my place of business, management will act in a fashion that is not always in the best interest of the employees..." Your experience is not at all unusual even in human services. After all, management is faced with a wide range of competing priorities and frequently make decisions that employees don't view as directly beneficial to themselves. Unions are there to give employees a fair voice in decision making. So I take a bit of exception to your referring to them as a "necessary evil." They serve a valid purpose. In a healthy environment, unions and management will negotiate openly and fairly to meet the best interests of both. In real life, it can get much uglier, as you observed.

Excellent zine this month Bill. Particularly good comments to Jeanne on *Schindler's List* and to Bill Humphries about violence toward Jews in Germany.

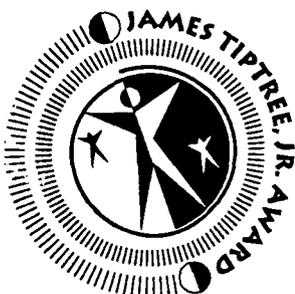


Paul Park, *Coelestis*, Harper Collins, 1993

This novel of an alien surgically transformed into a human woman who is gradually reverting—sloughing off one human attribute after another—and the confused human man who thought he was in love with her, is a dark and wrenching experience. Park explores the shadowy alleyways of the city of gender and studies the age-old imperialist clash between rich and poor civilizations. [SPB]

To me this ambitious and complex book is ultimately a failure both as a novel and as an exploration of gender. The self-conscious tonelessness of the narrative voice imposes a real lack of affect. As gender exploration it is seriously handicapped by the fact that there are no women in it, except a girl who is fucked on page 46 and killed on page 49. The alien called "Katherine" is supposed to have been transformed into a female or a woman, but appears, to me, merely genderless from beginning to end. The setting and mood is standard neo-Conrad-on-distant-planet. [UKL]

Simon, a human diplomat, falls in love with Katherine, a gifted pianist and more importantly, an alien who in 'her' natural state is not female. As a series of events deprive Katherine of the drugs that keep "her" human, she becomes less and less so. The book is written from multiple points of view and it becomes clear that while Simon continues to find human motivations in her actions, Katherine is more alien than he wants to know. [MFM]



Last month we welcomed a new family to the group here in town. They moved here from Germany and **Hope, Karl** and I were among the brave souls who helped them move their stuff into their house. They were talking about the situation in Germany these days. They say it's very bad, particularly for foreigners. Or at least people who *look* like foreigners whether they actually are recent immigrants or not. They say that roving gangs of kids are common even in smaller towns and regularly attack people who are clearly not of Aryan decent, often ignoring the white immigrants who are more numerous. They say the pressure is building and the government is not acting quickly enough to stop it. It was surprising for once to hear from someone that they moved to the U.S. because it was a less violent place.

Scott & Jeanne
21 May 1994

Late Breaking News!

WisCon 19 will be held at a warm time of year!

Memorial Day Weekend
May 26-28, 1995

Concourse Hotel,
Downtown Madison

Two Dealers rooms: one
for books and
one for farm produce

