# WISCON 3

## PROGRAM BOOK

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# ★WISCON 3 PROGRAM BOOK★



ARTWORK

Richard Bruning (1, 3, 6, 10); Fanto [photos*] (11, 18); Jeanne Gomoll (3, 4, 19); Jay Kay Klein [photo*] (12); Ole Kvern (4, 8); James McLeod (7); Vicki Pierce (6-7); Victoria Poyser (2); Georgie Schnobrich (5); Dan Steffan (23); unknown [photo*] (13).

*all photos enhanced by Jeanne Gomoll



Program Book Production Staff: Janice Bogstad, Perri Corrick-West, Randy Everts, Jeanne Gomoll, Ellen LaLuzerne, Lesleigh Luttrell, Diane Martin, and Richard S. Russell. Printed by the Strange Company.



Additional copies available for $1.00 plus 50¢ postage from SF³, Box 1624, Madison, WI, 53701.

## Information

Confused? Lost? Or is something else lost? Or someone else?

Don't be embarrassed to admit it; the con committee feels that way most of the time, too. Here are some tips to help you out.

First, for schedule information, check your pocket program, but remember that some free-form events have schedules posted outside the door.

Second, for compass checks on the tundra (and other forms of orientation) take a look at the restaurant guide on the freebie table, just downdrift of the registration desk.

Third, personal messages may be left (and read) on the message board, also in the general vicinity of the registration desk. For really personal messages, you can put them in writing, leave them with our discreet registration staff, and make a note on the board to that effect.

Fourth, the registration folks can tell you who has arrived as of any given time.

Fifth, lost and found stuff is handled through the university's desk staff in each building or by the Madison Inn staff in the hotel.

Last, for items not covered to your satisfaction above, talk to a con committee member if you can get one to hold still long enough. They're the folks with the red or orange name tags.

The con is not responsible for any "legal" opinions anyone renders, nor for the validity of any medical advice.

## War Games Room

Coordinator: Paul Matzke. Computer games: Don Senzig.

Science-fiction and fantasy fans generally enjoy vicariously passing through alternate worlds, imagining themselves to be part of the adventures to be found there. This happens not only via books, magazines, and movies but also through games.

At this year's WisCon, standard board games like "Risk" and "Diplomacy" will share time with technological innovations in the field of small computers, as video games make their debut. And of course there will be the basic items like chess and backgammon available.

Looking for a place to rest and relax for awhile? Drop into the games room with a friend or two—or drop in by yourself and make a friend or two.

## Denis Kitchen and the Underground Comic

This special display in the Wisconsin Historical Society (816 State St., just across Langdon St. from Wisconsin Center) will be held to coincide with WisCon. Denis Kitchen is an artist, editor, and publisher of imaginative comics who presently works out of Princeton, Wisconsin.

## Multi-Media Room

Coordinators: Carl Kucharski and Ellen LaLuzerne

Slides, audio tapes, and video tapes gathered or produced by the Madison Review of Books, $SF^3$, and The Circle for broadcast over WORT-FM and Madison's Community Access TV outlet, Cable Channel 4. These items include a variety of science-fiction programming, plus old-time radio and a review of the Viking Mars landings. Check the schedule outside the door for times.

## Authors Read Live From Their Own Works

Authors: Suzy McKee Charnas, Gina Clarke, Neil Kvern, George R. R. Martin, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, John Varley, Gene Wolfe, and (possibly) Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

At WisCon, a room has been set aside for authors to read recent works (some not yet published). After WisCon, on Sunday before everything winds down completely, this feature will be extended to Lysistrata Restaurant (325 W. Gorham St.), where soup and sandwiches will be available.

## Films

Coordinator: Perri Corrick-West. Head Projectionist: Greg Rihn. Projectionists: Kris Sellgren, Rick White, and draftees.

*Forbidden Planet* and *Fantastic Planet* are the feature films planned for WisCon as the program book goes to press. Selected short subjects will also be shown. Major film presentations will be screened in the auditorium of Wisconsin Center, with night-owl specials shown in the penthouse of the Madison Inn.

The final film schedule—with exact titles and times—will be drawn up at the last possible minute, well after this program book has gone to press. But we will provide a separate insert sheet giving film information. Just to be on the safe side, though, check the sign board outside the movie room to find out if the films are running on schedule.

Pursuant to city ordinance and popular demand, no smoking will be allowed during the movies.

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2-4 February 1979

# WisCon PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

WisCon 3 is being held at the Wisconsin Center, 702 Langdon St., and the Madison Inn, 601 Langdon St., Madison, WI, 53703. Co-sponsors are:

University of Wisconsin-Extension
Madison, WI, 53706 and
SF$^3$, Box 1624, Madison, WI, 53701

convention committee:

George Hartung & Sis Kopp .. UW liaison
Janice Bogstad .... overall coordinator
Lesleigh Luttrell . deputy coordinator, scheduler, secretary
Diane Martin ..... treasurer
Jeanne Gomoll ..... program coordinator
Perri Corrick-West ... film programmer, program expediter
Steven V. Johnson ..... art show
Karen Axness ..... huckster's room
Philip Kaveny ..... security*
Nancy Smith ..... groundhog captain
Hank Luttrell ..... public relations*
Richard S. Russell ..... registration, hotel liaison
James A. Cox .... master of ceremonies, auctioneer, handicapped accommodations
Terri Gregory ..... opening ceremonies, child care
Greg Rihn ..... head projectionist
Paul Matzke ..... games room
Bill Hoffman ..... head dungeonmaster
Ken Konkol ..... hospitality suite
Ellen LaLuzerne ..... music, media room

*also equipment and facilities

## *Marathon Dungeons and Dragons*

Head Dungeonmaster: Bill Hoffman. Dungeonmasters: Vickie Loebel, Mike Luznicky, Carl Marrs, and Greg Rihn. Asst. DMs: Ethan Merritt, Kim Nash, Lucy Nash, Julia Richards, and John Woodford. Computer Programming: Paul Matzke and Rex Thomas Nelson.

A crazed member of an ancient race had turned the creations of his departed fellows into a playground wherein he enacted his warped fantasies. He fancied himself Master of the Universe. In a sense he was, although it was quite a small universe: it contained only three suns and ten planets.

He had peopled this universe with beings from a nearby source in that larger universe (ours?) which he had long ago fled. He gathered humans from the plains and cities, fair elves from the forests, sturdy dwarves from the rocky bones of the earth, and the small furry-footed folk who burrowed in the ground. He also gathered fell beasts and dragons and set these against the humanoid peoples for his own amusement. Many beings were tortured and killed most foully. The ancient one styled himself "the Overlord", but he was known to all as "Gorthaur", which translates roughly as "he of evil most unspeakable".

Among the captives, there were a few who banded together and defied Gorthaur's power. They explored unknown places, fought and killed dragons, contended with dinosaurs and undead monsters—all in search of a gate out of the evil one's domain. The first chapter in their adventures occurred at the 1978 WisCon D&D marathon. Ordinary fans became (for a weekend) magic users, psychics, thieves, and fighters. (One of them may even have been a spy for Gorthaur.)

Last year the fellowship searched for and found a way out of Gorthaur's pocket universe. This year, they must find a way to close the gate from the pocket universe into the larger one. Legend has it that there exists a machine to which must be added nine parts....

Want to help? Find your way through the labyrinthine corridors of the Madison Inn to the D&D room. The game starts at 4:00 p.m. on Friday and runs continuously until noon Sunday. Pick a character and play as little or as much as you like. You don't have to have played before to enjoy D&D. There are characters available for players from neo to expert ability and assistant dungeonmasters on hand at all times to answer questions and act as a general nudge.

A word to experienced D&Ders: our game is different in many ways from the standard game. The system has grown from a scheme developed by Emerson C. Mitchell, a PhD in mathematics. Almost every aspect of the game is governed by mathematical models using random numbers as the independent variables. This has had interesting repercussions. Come and see.

## *Hospitality Suite*

Host: Ken Konkol.

The standard for parties at SF cons has been firmly established by Mini-Con. We will make absolutely no claims to come anywhere close to that standard. But we will have a room at the Madison Inn set aside for the consumption of various edibles and potables, including soft drinks (variously known as "soda", "pop", and "soda pop"), munchies, and the beverage that made the dairy state famous. (Milk?) The main feature attraction of the hospitality suite will be other fans, who will be delighted to entertain you with scintillating conversation.

One of the things the room will not contain is cigaret smoke; smokers are welcome, but not their smoke.

Actually, since none of the rooms in the Madison Inn is large enough to be called a "suite", we expect some space problems. We are asking everyone to cooperate in alleviating this problem by circulating as much as possible. Ideally, the con suite will be a place where you can meet other fans and go off to start your own party.


And this seems as good a place as any to call your attention to Madison's rather provincial liquor laws. You can't buy beer or booze for off-premises consumption after 9:00 p.m., and the bars all close by 1:00 a.m.

Don't say we didn't warn you.

## *Opening Ceremonies*

Participants: Madison Science Fiction Group and audience

Although WisCon will officially open Friday afternoon when the registration table, art show, and huckster rooms open for business—and some early-bird movies are shown—the convention will ceremoniously open at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Wisconsin Center. At that time, as you make your way in, Scott Spaine will entertain you with his magic act while the Madison Science Fiction Group prepares backstage to give you a brief preview of the convention in the form of a series of short skits designed by Phil Kaveny and Terri Gregory. Although you may wish to leave immediately upon realizing what you have gotten yourself into, we hope not to lose too many people this way. We're expecting a large enough casualty rate as it is, simply as a result of the packed schedule we've got in store for you Saturday.

But, in any case, after the opening ceremonies, we'll all troupe over to the Wisconsin Memorial Union (half a block down the street, but wear your coats) where there will be music, a schizophrenic get-acquainted game (which proved to be quite popular last year), and a cash bar. We think you'll enjoy it.

## *Saturday Evening Program*

If you survive the hectic schedule of Saturday afternoon and the quest for Saturday supper along State St., we've got more on the agenda for Saturday night.

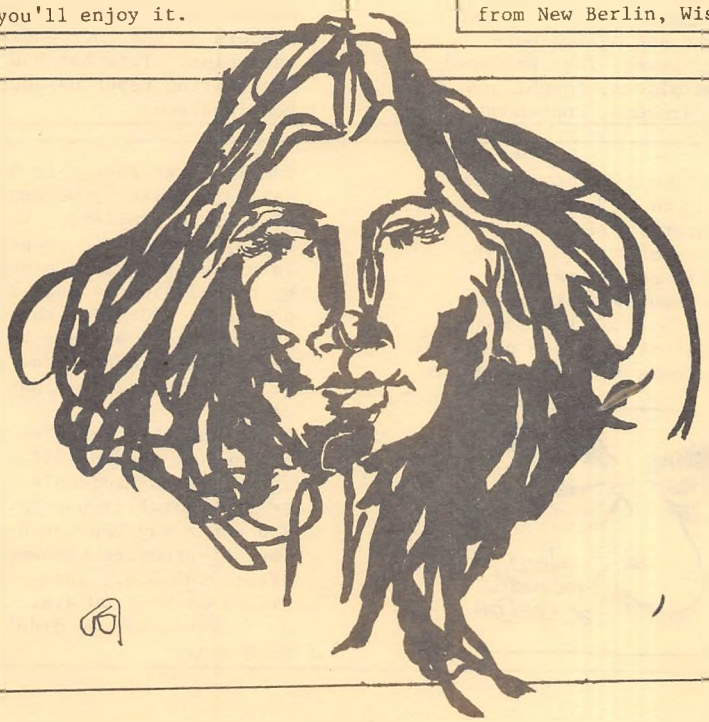
First, there will be an awards ceremony for the winners of the WisCon art show. The winning works of art will be displayed, and presentations will be made to the artists. This is the second year WisCon has publicly honored the artists, and (as illustrated by the fact that IguanaCon, the 1978 worldcon in Phoenix, was the first worldcon to make such awards) it is still only a tenuous "tradition".

Following the art awards, the first of two art auctions will be held. This one will feature all items from the art show which have received bids. (The second auction will take place Sunday morning.) Auctioneer James Andrew Cox will entertain and tempt you with works of science-fiction, fantasy, and fannish art.

Next comes a brief musical interlude. The band Equation (two guitarists, a flautist, and a keyboard player) promises an exciting and enjoyable program of SF-oriented music. The four young musician/fans may seem vaguely familiar; that's because they also volunteered for groundhog duty. Since Madison lacks any organized group of fannish singers, we had to import these folks from New Berlin, Wisconsin, through one of those infamous fannishly nepotistic links.

Finally, if you still care to remain in the auditorium and not retreat to the WisCon dungeon or join friends in parties, we will show the two featured films, *Forbidden Planet* and *Fantastic Planet* until midnight Saturday.

After that, Wisconsin Center closes for the night, and you can either continue watching movies on the seventh floor of the Madison Inn, hit the parties, or (lacking adequate adrenalin) rest up for Sunday.



## *Amazons: Then, Now, and Tomorrow*

Moderator: Jessica Amanda Salmonson. Panelists: Elizabeth A. Lynn and others

"Restless as the moon, in every human epoch the female of our species has soldiered and adventured, to great sorrow, and great reward." Thus begins the introduction to *Amazons*, a new anthology forthcoming from DAW Books, Inc.

"Amazons: Then, Now, and Tomorrow" is the title of our panel, on which we will discuss a largely ignored aspect of history and of speculative fiction: woman as warrior, wanderer, and hero—from the ancient

## *Artist Podium*

Guest artist: classified.

This is a special—secret—program item reserved for a so-far unconfirmed artist guest. Watch for an announcement regarding this program item on the message board near the registration desk.

## *Can Science Fiction Be Taught?*

Moderator: Gregory G. H. Rihn. Panelists: Fannie LeMoine, Marshall Tymn, and Susan Wood.

As science fiction has slowly made its way into the academy, both high school and college, the treating of it as a pedagogical subject has met with a great deal of skepticism. The big question in everyone's mind is: "Can science fiction be taught as other literature is taught, given that the point of science-fiction novels is somewhat different than the point of other literature?" Can anything that is supposed to deal with science as well as with literature be taught as literature?

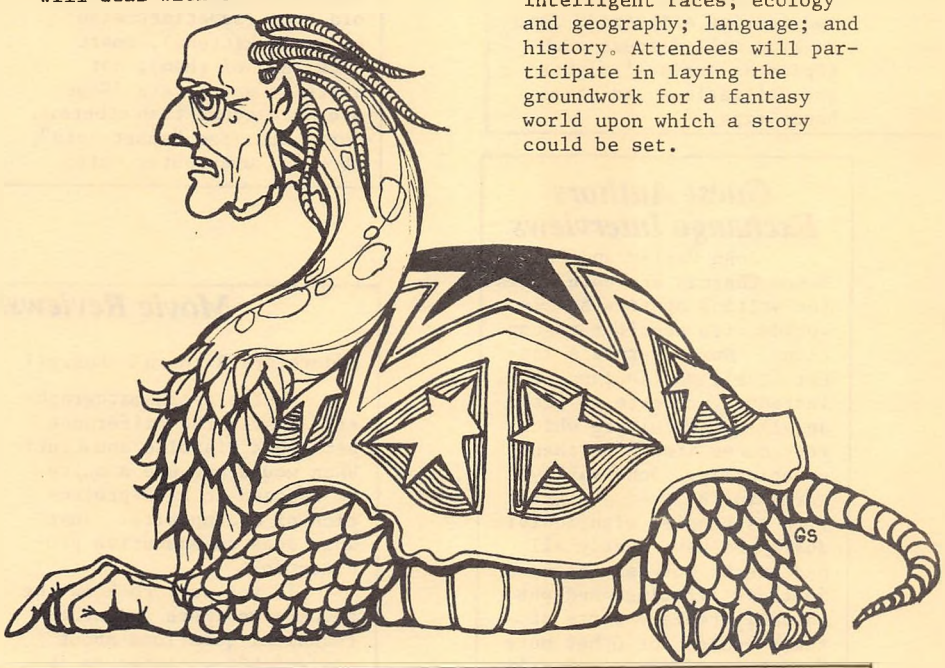
Some have answered this question by teaching science fiction in courses which deal with it more as science than as fiction. Others have taught it as literature but have evolved ways to deal with the traditional literary categories so that they can be fitted to the investigation of science fiction, with varying degrees of success, but their efforts have been interesting for the illumination of science fiction and for the expansion of literature as a field.

Susan Wood operates in this vein as a professor of English at the University of British Columbia Fannie LeMoine has reached back to the history of classical literature in her search for the origins of SF thinking. Marshall Tymn will add his reminiscences to the panel, dealing with his SF-teaching experiences. All of the panelists will discuss their methods of teaching science fiction and talk about whether science fiction can be taught and what meaning the question really has.

## *Build-a-Fantasy*

Discussion Leaders: Gregory G. H. Rihn and Richard C. West

This group discussion will deal with the factors that are a part of the creation of fantasy worlds. Topics will include technology; magic and its effects, sources, and justifications; intelligent races; ecology and geography; language; and history. Attendees will participate in laying the groundwork for a fantasy world upon which a story could be set.




past of Jirel of Joirey to the future of Sybil Sue Blue, intergalactic cop.

We will discuss and trade impressions of and feelings about women's "traditional" roles in science fiction and fantasy and what those roles are becoming instead. We will discuss individual women of amazonian importance as well as mythological and historic "races" of powerful women. We will look at the concept of amazon rule in fact and fantasy—and matriarchy as realistic subject matter for extrapolation in science fiction (not merely as an expression of male "femmephobia" in such books as *Gender Genocide* or *The Feminists*, but as a legitimate SF premise). We will attempt to investigate what would be a more realistic approach regarding the creation of societies wherein amazons were common or women ruled, and what might have been the jural, cultural, and sex-role institutions in these imagined, or real, societies.

From the panel we hope to gain, and convey, a sense of power in all women—to learn, and teach, better and realistic ways to depict and view women in science fiction and in reality.

## *Fannish Reminiscences: Busby, Clarke and Wood*

Interviewers: Elinor Busby and Susan Wood. Interviewee: Gina Clarke.

Susan Wood is known as the Duchess of Canadian Fandom (West). What could be more appropriate than to have her interview our fan GoH, Gina Clarke, the Duchess of Canadian Fandom (East)?

Well, Elinor Busby is also a fan-turned-pro with experiences dating back to the '50s, just like Gina. What could be better than having her interview Gina?

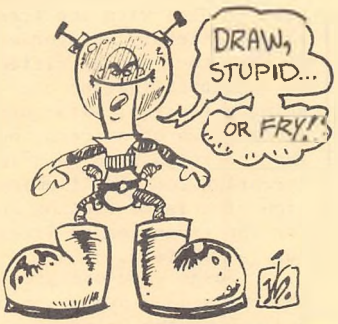
Answer: the best of both worlds. It will be a joint interview, covering what it was like to be a young, female, Canadian SF fan in a world full of adolescent boys with slide rules and screwdrivers and dirty old men with sticky fingers.

## *Fanzine Production from the Artists' Point of View*

Moderator: Jeanne Gomoll. Panelists: Jane Hawkins, Carol Kennedy, and Lee Pelton.

You have a drawing done in ink with large black areas. Should you send it to a mimeoed fanzine?

You've done a lovely delicate drawing in blue pencil. Will that fancy offset zine like it enough to print it?

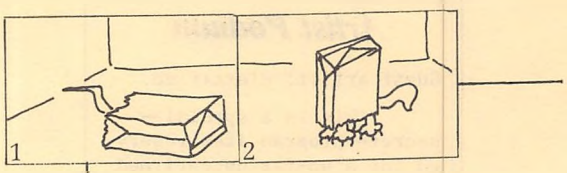



Can your etching (done on good-quality poster board) be electrostenciled for the mimeographed clubzine?

You want to use your drawing again, or sell it at an art show. Should you give the fanzine editor any special instructions?

What should you expect in return for your drawing? What does the fanzine editor expect of you?

Usually the use of art in fanzines is a subject covered by convention panels exclusively from the viewpoint of fanzine editors. We're going to try it from the other end this time. *Rune* co-editors Carol Kennedy and Lee Pelton, *Janus* art editor Jeanne Gomoll, and fanzine aficionado Jane Hawkins will discuss such topics as artists' rights and obligations and share handy tips.




## *Magic Lantern Madison*

Moderator: Diane Martin

Remember last year's Madison Parade of Cats? Well, the 1979 Magic Lantern Parade of Cats is a none-too-subtle variation on the same theme. Instead of traveling to folks' homes to visit their cats, we will stay in Wisconsin Center and look at slides of fannish cats. Lots of cats: young cats (commonly known as kittens), old cats (sometimes also known as kittens), smart cats (all of them), not quite so smart cats (Some are more equal than others.), cute cats (See "smart cats", above.), even cuter cats,

## *Getting Published*

Moderator: James Andrew Cox. Panelists: Suzy McKee Charnas, Gene DeWeese, George R. R. Martin, Antonia Petniunas, Margaret Thielke, John Varley, and others.

New and used SF authors reminisce about their favorite (or otherwise memorable) rejection-slip experiences. Words of wit, wisdom, and wanton ways when dealing with editors, publishers, agents, and other perpetrators of the dreaded rejection slip will be related.

The Clarion Workshops will also be remembered by those who have experienced the birth pangs of the scientifiction muse—and sought a little literary midwifery.

Finally, there is academia—*deus ex machina* unchained.

## *Guest Authors Exchange Interviews*

John Varley and Suzy McKee Charnas are both known for writing stories set in worlds with peculiar assumptions. Suzy Charnas's latest novel, *Motherlines*, for instance, presents us with an all-woman culture which reproduces itself parthenogenetically. John Varley's world in *The Ophiuchi Hotline* is peopled with individuals who have nearly all had one or more sex changes in their lifetimes and who casually replace parts of their bodies for other more "convenient" parts. Hearing these two authors interview one another and exchange ideas in regard to these peculiar assumptions with which they construct their fascinating fictional worlds should be...interesting. To say the least.

## *Movie Reviews:*

Moderator: Richard S. Russell

What's a cinematographer? What's the difference between a dissolve and a cut? When would one use a matte as opposed to back-projection of a composite? Just what does an executive producer do?

If you want to know the answers to these and other technical questions about movie-making, listen to the members of the audience at this discussion. I've been co-authoring movie reviews for *Janus* for a couple of years now, and I've never gotten beyond saying whether or not the plot made sense

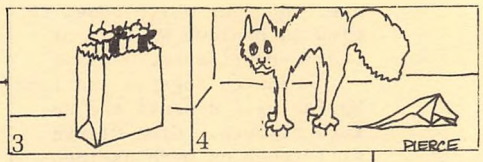
## *How to Get Rich, Attract Lovers, and Stop Bullies from Kicking Sand In Your Eyes*

Moderator: Jeanne Gomoll. Panelists: Jim Cox, Philip E. Kaveny, Hank Luttrell, Diane Martin, and Richard S. Russell.

Find out why Madison fandom does the crazy things it does, like publishing the Hugo-losing (but nominated!) fanzine, *Janus*, along with three others. Like holding weekly business meetings and producing monthly programs for the community. Like doing WisCon each February. Like working on radio and television projects, and grant proposals, and much, much more.

Find out the amazing truth about how we've managed to overcome the need for sleep!

Those of you who are intrigued by the massive amount of activity and projects coming out of Madison are invited to this informal program featuring many of the most ~~crazy~~ active of the Madison group. Richard Russell will talk about how we incorporated all of our projects and interests into the non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, $SF^3$ (the Society for the Furtherance and Study of Fantasy and Science Fic-




## Parade of Cats

knee cats (Haven't you read B. Kliban's book?), and hep cats (ancient history).

We will serve the traditional* refreshments of lemonade and cat-shaped cookies. There will be a display of some of my purrsonal cat memorabilia: candles, placemats, figurines, calendars, doo-dads, and, of course, books—picture books. You will also have the opportunity to haul out your own wallet photos of your favorite felines and regale the rest of us with tails of their cuteness, devotion, or diabolical intelligence.

*We did it last year.

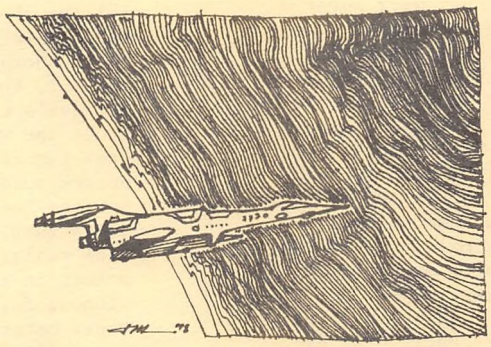
## You Tell Me How

to me.

But there's plenty of material for discussion. In addition to the con's feature films, *Fantastic Planet* and *Forbidden Planet*, there are all the Christmas-time flicks that hoped to cash in on the *Star Wars* phenomenon: *Superman*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Watership Down*. So if you've seen any of these movies (or even if you haven't), and would like to express your opinions on them, show up at this free-form bull session and let's rap.

I'm hoping to pick up quite a few pointers.

## Magic Lantern Media Presentation, Symbols in Locomotion



Producer: Philip E. Kaveny.
Photography: Diane Martin.
Technical Assistance: Hank Luttrell.

This year's magic-lantern media presentation will have a new focus We will be looking at the process by which a material object, a human edifice, develops a symbolic identity. We will explore the process through which it exists in the mind and language long after it has disappeared from actual time and space.

Throughout history, it has been possible to find architectural forms which have become representative of, if not equal to, certain periods of time in the popular consciousness. Though the walls of Babylon and the temples of Rome have fallen, we see them everywhere around us. Alexandria's lighthouse has become our skyscrapers; its libraries, our universities; and its villas, our singles complexes. The last century and a half have seen this precess expanded so that the symbol and motion itself have become melded together. Hence our title: "Symbols in Locomotion".

Through the use of slides and narrative, we will be looking back across the last 150 years at the development of this new class of symbols We will also be looking into the future, trying to determine what material realities of the future have had their symbolic antecedents in contemporary popular consciousness, for the process has started to operate in the other direction also. There is, after all, a spaceship *Enterprise* in actual existence many years after we watched the starship *Enterprise* on our television sets.

## Poetry Corner: SF, Fantasy and Experimental Poetry

Moderators: Terri Gregory and Neil Kvern.

The poetry corner is a chance for people who are interested in reading and/or writing poetry—particularly SF, fantastic, or experimental poetry—to gather to discuss, learn, and read poetry. The opening panel will serve as a focal point and will provide an opportunity to distribute handouts on writing and publishing resources.

The panel will lead into broader discussion, attuned to the needs of the poets and other interested people at the convention. Readings will be scheduled at various times. Those who are interested in reading their poetry should mention this to one of the moderators at the panel.

tion), and he'll offer suggestions and practical advice for those interested in organizing their groups in a similar manner. Jeanne Gomoll and Diane Martin will summarize the history and changes that have contributed to the production of *Janus*. Hank Luttrell and Philip Kaveny will talk about some of their activities in connection with WORT-FM, MCAC (Cable TV Channel 4), and the Madison Review of Books.

We intend to have a lot of fun reminiscing and telling jokes and recreating the craziness that makes all our alleged "serconicity" possible. We hope you enjoy yourselves, too.

## *Myth and Fairytale in Science Fiction*

Moderators: Janice Bogstad and Jeanne Gomoll. Panelists: Judith Clark, Gina Clarke, and Tom Moylan.

Our panel will cover a varied body of material concerning the operation of myth and fairytale, including science fiction, in the forming of our self-images.

Myth has recently been the subject of much speculation. Its nature and relation to how humans think about their existence in the world has been explored in many different ways, and some of our old myths about myth have recently been exploded.

One common way of looking at myth is to see it as a simplified explanation of some natural or social phenomenon. For example, certain creation myths give a simplified picture of how the world was created. Starting with this sort of myth, however, Claude Levi-Strauss pointed out that creators of myth seem to be dealing with a problem of language rather than one of understanding. They know how the world works but may lack the linguistic tools to convey this understanding. For example, the beginning two chapters of "Genesis" tell the story of creation best in combination. Thus myth is a simplified way of telling about a social or natural fact.

Another contemporary thinker, building on Levi-Strauss's work, has written about the way that ideology operates as myth in contemporary culture. Roland Barthes sees it as a language that masks some social realities and brings others to the attention without fully revealing their nature.

The feminist movement is currently involved in another aspect of mythological thinking: the rewriting or recovering of long-dead myths as an alternative to the self-definition of goddess/whore offered us by patriarchal mythology.

The best form of literature for such explorations and recoveries is science fiction. In fact, several SF writers are engaged in just that process. Notable among them is Joanna Russ for her *Kittatinny*, a tale of magic which is an adventure fairytale dealing with a female rite of passage. Another which comes to mind is Monique Wittig, of *Les Guerrillieres*.

Janice Bogstad and Tom Moylan will discuss the nature of myth. Gina Clarke will touch on myth as ideology. Jeanne Gomoll will talk about rewriting of fairytales and will illustrate her remarks with a rewritten version of "The Magic Flute". Judith Clark will do a specific investigation of a certain use of myth in the Amber series. She notes:

> In Amber and its shadows, Roger Zelazny incorporates mythology and what our world calls "magic" from several different cultures. Within the predominant mythos, the Western European, one important group of elements comes from Celtic mythology. Zelazny not only uses pieces of the later Norman Arthurian romances, but he also uses elements from the older Irish and Welsh tales. More interesting, however, than just the noting of the existence of these elements is examining Zelazny's manipulation of the old myths into his innovative new world concept of Amber.

## *Science Fiction and Fantasy in the Comic Comic Books: A Talk with Slides*


Discussant: Richard C. West.

At WisCon 2, Gregory G. H. Rihn presented a delightful slide show giving a broad overview of science fiction in comic books, focusing mainly on superheroes and adaptations of science-fiction stories. I propose to give a similar overview of science fiction and fantasy in comic comic books—those that are really meant to be comedy, either wholly or in large part, as distinct from horror comics, war comics, superhero comics, Westerns, or any other "straight" genre. We will discuss the use (often the burlesque) of fantasy and science-fiction elements (robots, spaceships, BEMs, *et al.*) in comics such as *Bugs Bunny*, John Stanley's *Tubby*, Hergé's *Tintin*, and, most extensively, in Carl Barks's *Donald Duck* and *Uncle Scrooge*.

The talk will be illustrated with color slides from the stories mentioned.

## *Work: The Image in the Future*

Moderator: Philip E. Kaveny. Panelists: Hank Luttrell and Tom Moylan.

Representations of future societies in science fiction often take for granted the component of human society that most of our offspring will have to deal with on a day-to-day basis: work, the time we must exchange for the necessary credits, goods, and services that we need to maintain and continue our existence. This workshop will explore more closely the various ways that this process, work, is presented in the representations of future societies created by SF authors. We will discuss writers of philosophy, fact, and fiction such as Marx, Fourier, Own, Braverman, Bellamy, Wells, Dick, Le Guin, and Vonnegut, and we welcome participation of others in our search for what others have thought and what we think about the status of work in the future.

## *So, You Want to Enter/Run an Art Show?*

Moderator: Jeanne Gomoll. Panelists: Jim Cox, Jane Hawkins, and Steven V. Johnson.

Veteran art-show coordinator Jane Hawkins, WisCon auctioneer Jim Cox, and Madison SF artist Steven V. Johnson (winner of the worldcon SF art award) will discuss the things to keep in mind for either the art-show coordinator or the entering artist. The round-table format will include information on how to set up an art show (what to hang things on, rules, choosing judges, money considerations, types of awards, auction procedures, etc.) and how to enter one (how to price your work, how to prepare it with matting, what categories to look for, etc.). Although this may seem to be pitched at two different audiences, it is likely that each group can learn from the interchanges with the other.

Since both Hawkins and Gomoll will be continuing to work on art shows in the future (Hawkins on the Seattle worldcon in 1980 if Seattle wins the bid), they will welcome your criticisms, complaints, and ideas as well as your questions.

## *Space Colonies and Human Life in Space*

Moderator: Janice Bogstad. Commenter: Michael McFall.

The interest in space colonies and living in space has increased at an exponential rate in the past two decades. From Freeman Dyson's work in the late '50s to Gerard O'Neill's celebrated investigations and publications in the '70s, there has been an unending stream of literature of all kinds, qualities, and degrees of basis in technological reality dealing with the possibility of space-colony life in this century. O'Neill claims that his predictions are based on technology that is already with us. Others, such as Nigel Clader, in his *Spaceships of the Mind*, give free rein to their imaginations in predicting the future of human life in space. The L-5 Society, another phenomenon of the '70s and of SF fandom, is composed of people who are actually involved in the pursuit of life in outer space.

The WisCon discussion on space colonies will be an informal event. I will want to review the literature on the subject, my knowledge of which is admittedly not vast, and will invite comments from others, so that this discussion will become a multilog (as opposed to a dialog) for ideas, knowledge, and speculation about the future of space-colony life in this century.

## *Sex and Violence in* Rocky Horror Picture Show

Moderator: Perri Corrick-West. Panelists: Mary Kenny Badami, Linda Coleman, and Cathy McClenahan.

The *Rocky*. Why do some people see it every weekend? Why do some teachers use it in SF, communication-arts, and women's-studies programs?

We'd like to get a discussion going among *Rocky* addicts, academics, and everyone in between who's seen or even just heard about *RHPS*. Sex and violence is only a starting point for this discussion. Mary Badami will discuss it in relation to Nancy Henley's *Body Politics* and the ambiguity created by dominance and caring in touching behavior and sexuality. Linda Coleman will discuss the negative aspects of the physical and psychological violence in the movie. Cathy McClenahan will talk about the connection between the film's techniques and its contents and the creativity of the film's audience. And Perri Corrick-West will address herself to the relationship between sex and violence in *RHPS*.

## *Violence and Ecstasy in Current SF*

Moderator: Janice Bogstad. Panelists: Karen Axness, Mary Kenny Badami, Dorothy K. Dean, and Ellen Kozak.

In literature, close interpersonal relationships have often been represented in one-sided models. These models involve aggression on the part of one partner to the relationship and submission on the part of the other. They are thus essentially power relationships, with the power resting solely in the hands of one member. Science-fiction novels often represent such interpersonal interactions as ones in which violence on the part of a man, which he executes on a woman, leads ultimately to ecstasy for both. Thus the male is the source, and the female is a passive participant. This model of a one-way power relationship is then presented as the norm, and its sexual reverse—with females holding power over males—is unnatural. Some stories even involve the overturning of such an unnatural order so that its "natural" reverse can be reestablished, ignoring the fact that it is nonetheless unbalanced also.

Recent SF has implicitly questioned the aforementioned unbalanced model, depicting interpersonal relationships along a model of power exchange rather than of dominance and submission. Violence and ecstasy are still copresent in these relationships but appear in a totally different light, with violence being an unreasoned force which engulfs the character, often forcing him/her to act irrationally, while ecstasy is a similarly strong emotion motivated by a reasoned attempt at rapport. Gone is the model in which someone is forced into ecstasy before he/she can enjoy it. It is replaced by one in which two strong emotional states, violence and ecstasy, interact, but not in a cause-effect relationship.

Janice Bogstad will look at this change in the representation of two strong human emotions and their relationship to interpersonal relationships through the novels of Octavia E. Butler, Suzy McKee Charnas, Elizabeth A. Lynn, Vonda N. McIntyre, Marta Randall, John Varley, and others.

Parallelling this interest, Mary Kenny Badami

continued

will discuss a certain contemporary coding of the use of touch in the communication between men and women. Relying on Nancy Henley's book, *Body Politics*, and presenting sections from Raccoona Sheldon's story, "The Screwfly Solution" (which she points out as an extreme example of the tendency in Western society to link physical violence and sexual encounters), Badami will discuss the ambiguous message that is often conveyed to women through men's touching behavior. She will focus specifically on women's tendency to interpret touch as representing care and affection as opposed to men's tendency to treat it as a form of aggressive behavior.

Ellen Kozak is studying a similar phenomenon, the implications of what she calls the "hurt/comfort" or "pleasure/pain" syndrome as especially exhibited in the works of male authors and in the television series *Star Trek*. She contends that the male confusion about pain and pleasure produces some curious contrived situations in their writing. One taboo, the stricture against a man touching a man to express affection or friendship, means that men only touch each other to hurt or in the special case where they are able to comfort a wounded companion.

Dorothy K. Dean believes that feminist authors are allowing their characters more freedom of expression. Using the works of C. L. Moore, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Suzy McKee Charnas, Ursula K. Le Guin, and others, she will discuss the incidence of violence in their descriptions of interpersonal relationships. Some of the questions which will be discussed in her presentation are as follows. Are there recognizable patterns in the handling of violence by these authors? What is the significance of the treatment of violence in character and plot development in these works of fiction? These issues will be explored using diverse examples from many contemporary feminist-oriented SF writers and comparing them to older writers, especially C. L. Moore.

Karen Axness, basing her synthesis on three contemporary approaches to the breaking down of incorrect images of women's natures, will develop a theoretical approach to the relationship between violence and ecstasy at the symbolic level in contemporary patriarchal societies. Here primary texts are *Gyn/Ecology* by Mary Daly, *Woman and Nature* by Susan Griffin, and *The Violent Sex: Male Psychobiology and the Evolution of Consciousness* by Laurel Holliday.

## *What Did It Say?: Language Problems in Science Fiction*

Moderator: George Hartung.
Panelists: Richard Doxtator and John Varley.

How would nonhumans of superior intellect communicate with humans? With mathematics? But is math a language or just part of a language? Is communication possible between beings whose sense organs differ radically from ours?

Language problems were long neglected in science fiction, but the situation has improved. *The Ophiuchi Hotline* may be a good starting point for a discussion of how sophisticated about linguistics science fiction is becoming.

Perhaps we can get into questions such as the following. Is humor possible in all languages? If telepathy is possible, what gets telepathed? Can we expect "more efficient" artificial languages in the future? Can languages be learned by hypnosis or other shortcuts? What makes proper names sound exotic? If I take a trip into the next millennium, will my descendants understand me? Is there a universal grammar—i.e., a basic structure common to all intelligent communication? What does "intelligent communication" mean, anyway?


## And now, a word from the Sponsor

WisCon is being brought to you in part by SF$^3$, a non-profit Wisconsin educational corporation, which also keeps busy doing:

§"The Science Fiction and Fantasy Hour" on WORT-FM, hosted by James Andrew Cox.

§SF Book of the Month Circle. Discusses a different novel each month. Meets informally in people's homes and apartments. Pretzels featured.

§Dungeons and Dragons. A corps of dungeon masters holds at least one adventure a week.

§Speakers' Bureau. Presentations (many with slides) on an SF-related subject, including the metric system.

§Library. Group collection of fanzines, paperbacks, magazines, etc. Contributions welcome.

§*Janus**, *Starling**, *Corr*, *Orcrist*, and other fine fanzines. (*Hugo nominee for Best Amateur Publication).

§Madison Science Fiction Group. Meets Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. at Nick's Bar and Grill, 226 State St., except for "event night", last Wednesday of each month, at Union South on the UW campus. Also contributes to the Madison Review of Books, heard over WORT-FM (89.7 MHz) and seen on Cable Channel 4 and other outlets.

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# INTRODUCING SUZY McKEE CHARNAS

*[Note: Suzy McKee Charnas has been involved in fandom only since MidAmeriCon in 1976. Because of that, and because as a dynamic individual she is seen in many different ways by different people, we present a composite biography, pieced together in part by telephone conversations with the biographers. Each of the biographers met Suzy on the indicated occasion. —JANICE BOGSTAD]*

Jeanne Gomoll (V-Con, Vancouver, 1977): She gets up early; I remember that much. She was wandering the halls of the UBC dorm looking for someone to go to breakfast with. She hadn't learned that breakfast in the morning is simply not fannish at cons. (You might look for her at WisCon at some similarly unfannish hour.) She hauled Sherri File, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, and me off to eat and demonstrated the most fearless and creative ordering (in the face of a complete lack of price lists) that I've ever witnessed. Though I couldn't figure out why I was still awake at such a crazy hour, I soon forgot my sleepiness in the midst of the laughter and good eating that characterized our company.

Janice Bogstad (MidAmeriCon, Kansas City, 1976, and IguanaCon, Phoenix, 1978): Suzy Charnas was the first real live author whom I had ever interviewed. I was really excited to start with, and, when she began discussing some of her viewpoints on feminism, world politics, and the future of women in Western culture, I was overwhelmed by her conversational abilities. I had read *Walk to the End of the World* and not really liked it, but, as she explained the things she was discussing in the book and talked about the sequel and the difficulty of getting it published, I became fascinated with the trilogy idea. What really sold me on her as a person and as a writer, however, was the manuscript for *Motherlines*, which she lent us for prepublication review in *Janus*. I knew from our interview that she was friendly and articulate, but the manuscript showed that she writes so damn well about the things that many of us in the feminist movement are concerned with. I can't wait to meet her again.

Susan Wood (MidAmeriCon co-panelist): Someone, probably Pam Sargent, had told me to get Suzy on the "women in SF" panel at MidAmeriCon, because "she's terrific!" I did. She was. She is.

My first impressions of her were of warmth, strength, and absolute directness. Clothes, hairstyle, manner, approach: in Suzy, all of these are basic, functional, simple, unpretentious, but somehow still astonishing enough to make you look at her twice when you first meet. I don't mean that she invades your personal space—far from it, since Suzy is a woman of great tact and consideration—I mean that she deals with each person directly and openly. She's got a grin that can light up a room; she's got a style that says, "Let's deal with Real Things"; and she's got a manner that makes you feel as if you, here, right now, are with her at the center of the universe. For me, her fiction is the same: simple, direct, getting to the heart of matters.

What I'm trying to convey is the cutting-through-the-crap-ness which is the essence of Suzy. She's...real! And I love her for it.

Vonda N. McIntyre (a conference in Corvallis, Oregon, 1975): Suzy came to the conference on her own steam, but she was kind enough to serve on a panel with some enlightening title like "Women in SF". The conference was backed by some granting agency that didn't want any of those "libbers" involved, but it was very energetic, very feminist, and very science-fictiony, despite the 103° weather. Suzy fit in well.

I also recall that Suzy likes hiking and backpacking around in the mountains out West and that she's even been in Switzerland and served two years in Africa in the Peace Corps. Among her many activities, she includes teaching art as a volunteer in the Albuquerque school system. Oh, and I like her letters.

Elizabeth A. Lynn (letters and phone conversations): To me, it is significant that Suzy begins many of her letters with "Yes, yes." She writes frequent and voluminous letters, all of which are exciting (much like Joanna Russ).

I write almost no letters, but we started exchanging comments in 1975 when I wrote her and said something like, "Hi. I'm a woman SF writer and I really feel the need for a support group." I got back this wonderful letter in which she introduced herself and initiated a long and fruitful correspondence. Suzy is really open to new people and seems to understand what they are trying to do with their writing. She takes it seriously and can tell you what she thinks is wrong with it without asserting any "superior knowledge".

(By the way, she has this dyky image I really love, especially considering that she has a husband who is a really fine person.)

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (tarot reading for Suzy): I won't bother telling you she's a good writer; you already know that. Anyone who reads her work knows that. Instead, I'll mention that she has a passion for opera, a passion I've also had for almost 30 years, and we exchange long and opinionated letters about specific operas and singers and music and productions because each of us understands the passion of the other, which is a delight. (We don't always agree; we recently had a heated exchange about tenors.)

Some time back, I did a tarot reading for Suzy. (I'm a serious occultist.) It said that this would be a time of three steps forward and two steps back. It also indicated that the purpose was intellectual growth. In a recent letter, sandwiched between tenors and thumbnail reviews, she mentioned that the reading had proved to be quite accurate and that the first signs of growth were coming through. It was good to hear: Suzy is willing to go beyond the familiar into that cold, clear light of perception, and as a writer she's willing to describe what she sees so that we can grow along with her.

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# INTRODUCING JOHN VARLEY

by Paul Novitski

Most science-fiction writers must sweat and slave to invent their futuristic technologies and alien worlds. However easy the actual writing process may be, they really have to strain to project their worlds. Too often—with a frequency, in fact, once cited by Theodore Sturgeon—the SF stories born of such hard labor turn out not to seem quite alien enough. While reading them, we are kept wincingly aware that their authors are, alas, all too human and contemporary.

But there are a few SF writers who are Different. No matter how difficult the act of putting words on paper might be for them, the visions they conjure share a very convincing tone. Almost too convincing. Alarmingly real. While reading these stories, one gets the uncanny impression that they are not so much extrapolations as reminiscences, not dream but homesick nostalgia.

You've seen some of these writers. They do come to conventions occasionally. You can recognize them by their private smiles. Often they are left-handed, say, or speak with unlikely accents. They're the quiet ones, the seemingly shy who hover at the outskirts of crowds instead of hogging the limelight. Yet if you approach them politely and strike up a conversation, you'll discover that they do indeed have a lot to say, much of it rather off-the-wall and some of it quite off-handedly brilliant.

Above all, they seem to be observers from... someplace else. We find ourselves quietly inspecting them for tendrils in their hair or multiple eyelids or sixth or seventh digits. We wait patiently for them to slip up in their use of the contemporary jargon or their censored knowledge of subatomic physics. Most, I fear, are camoflaged to look nearly authentically terrestrial.

For the four years I've known Herb Varley, my suspicions have steadily grown.

Not merely because of his fiction, a dead giveaway by itself. No one could write so persuasively about sex changes and limb grafts—and the cultural milieux in which those are commonplace—without a a great deal of first-hand experience. Any of us who have enjoyed "The Phantom of Kansas" or *The Ophiuchi Hotline* must have guessed that this Varley is just a wee bit too well-versed in the personal and legal ramifications of memory banking and clone reincarnation. There will be some crusty old cynics who will insist that Herb Varley is nothing more than one of the most brilliant science-fiction writers of the century, and that his fictions result merely from talent and hard work. But I cannot believe it's that simple.

Herb does give himself away. I don't mean to be critical, mind you; don't get me wrong. It must be incredibly difficult to visit a primitive world in a barbaric era and pass yourself off as one of the yokels. He probably writes his "science fiction" to stay in touch with the good old days of the future, with the mercury pools of home. But he does slip up.

He'll tell you, for example, that he was born in '47. Note that he isn't more specific than that. He claims to have grown up in the improbably named town of Niederland, Texas—which you'll be hard-put to find on any Earthly map—and even sports traces of a Texan accent. (Not a very strong accent for one who supposedly spent his first 18 years in a tiny rural town. Never fooled me for a second.) He'll spin tall tales about hot-rodding across the Southwest desert with his buddy, hiding out in California, and even spending a week in a Los Angeles jail for lack of proper ID. Now, doesn't that sound like a thin metaphor for jockeying a battered interstellar craft across the deserts of time and space, only to disembark in 20th Century LA without properly forged papers?

What was he fleeing? Genetic crimes? An identity crisis with one of his clones? Or is he trying to forget a soured relationship with his favorite computer? Perhaps he's simply an archeologist here on a dig.

Herb lives today in the Eugene, Oregon, home he shares with activist/musician Anet Mconel and the three youngers, Stefan, Roger, and Maurice. Their non-human housemates include one dog, two cats, and dozens of exotic fish. Herb spends much of his time working or lounging in his luxurious penthouse basement—when his attention isn't given to his family or to the household computers with which he pits wits.

For a man—and one wonders if that's always been his gender—Herb demonstrates a serious interest in feminist issues, in his fiction, by his actions, and through his humor and his heart-to-heart talks. Once upon a time a physics major at the University of Michigan who switched—he claims—to English before getting his baccalaureate, he can be persuaded to reveal a considerable knowledge of the physical sciences. These two concerns, for social equality and for the nature of reality, combine in his fiction to provide us with some of the most exciting and solid SF in recent decades.

After four years, I still don't know why he came here or where he's from. All I hope is that he extends his visit to the here and now for as long as is inhumanly possible.

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Long ago and far away, in the mythical kingdom of Middle Canada, at a time chronicled by fan historians of old as Seventh Fandom, and by their mundane counterparts as circa 1954, there lived a hobbyist with tufts of hair between her fingers. (Spending too much time alone in your room abusing your typewriter will do that, not to mention drive you insane and if not make you blind at least make it necessary to upgrade your prescription at intervals.) She had been a fairly normal child, except for a bout of brain fever at age 8 or 9 brought on by reading Jules Verne (Who says a novel can't lead young people astray?), which precipitated the total collapse of her reason and restraint when she stumbled across the science-fiction publications of her day, ingloriously known as pulps. (This referred, presumably, to the paper in the magazines, not the minds of the readers.) In her adolescence, therefore, she could be spotted (and, alas, frequently was {but thankfully the condition has almost cleared up} sidling crabwise into newsstands, snatching up the shameful mags with the BEMs and half-clad maidens on the cover. Some of these mags had fanzines listed inside, and our heroine wrote away for some and thereby lost whatever shreds of sanity had been left. It was some time after this that she suffered delusions to the effect that the Secret Masters of Fandom in the guise of little green men coming out of a saucer that had landed in her back yard, had named her Duchess of Canadian Fandom and had given her the entire prairies to rule over in solitary grandeur. She then began issuing a long series of rambling proclamations to the inhabitants of her invisible duchy, which documents she published under such dignified titles as *Mimi* (short for *Mimeomania*), *Grunt*, *Mooncalf*, *Slagoom*, etc. And, some time later, in conjunction with her husband, the Duke of Canadian Fandom, as he was never known, a "fmz" called *Descant*.

No, seriously, folks, the real genuine poop is that, way back when, some dodo fan had claimed to be baffled as to the pronunciation of a name like "Georgina" (Fans are slans, as we used to say.), and therefore he unilaterally dubbed me "duchess". I wasn't too crazy about it—it reminded me of the character in Alice in Wonderland—but it beat "Georgie", which was what I usually got. And then someone else shortened "Duchess" to "Dutch", and I used that, sort of, for maybe six months. All this a quarter of a century ago. Then came the Dark Ages, when my total fanac consisted of FAPA (same thing as being dead) and LILAPA (same thing as being embalmed), and I was blissfully unaware of any fans in the rest of my native land, until a couple of years ago I was jolted out of my complacency by some upstart named Susan Wood declaring herself to be the new Duchess of Canadian Fandom. I spun in my grave a bit, but essentially ignored the whole thing, and I'm happy to say that the misunderstanding has almost cleared up.

Nowadays our erstwhile First Duchess is a crabby old lady with tufts of hair in her nose and ears, who will snarl at anyone who wants to hear about the good old days, because she doesn't remember anything that happened prior to the day before yesterday and furthermore doesn't care. But tomorrow.... Now that's another story. Let's hear it for tomorrow!

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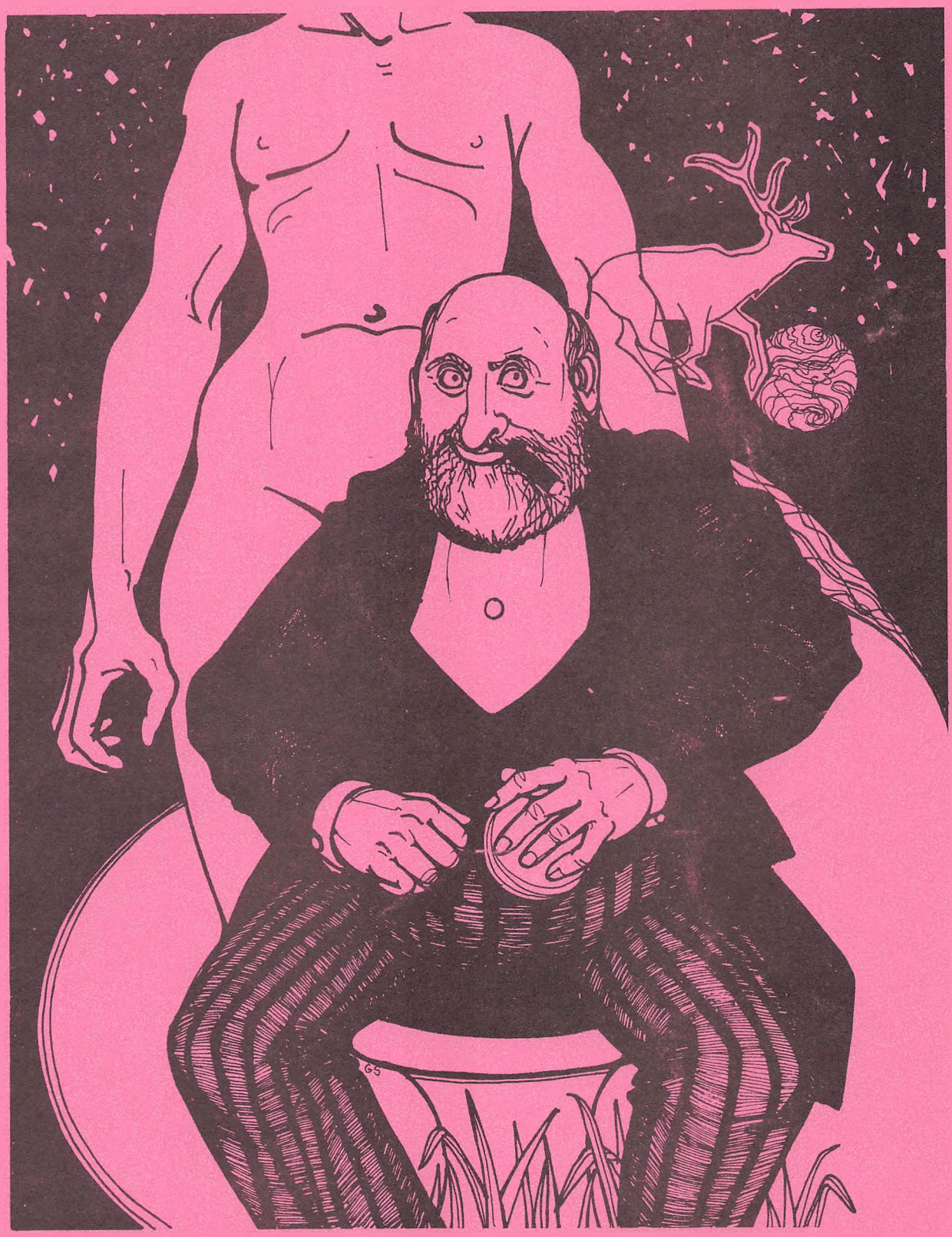
"without another glance back she started uphill with the slow gait of a runner warming up for a long, hard run."

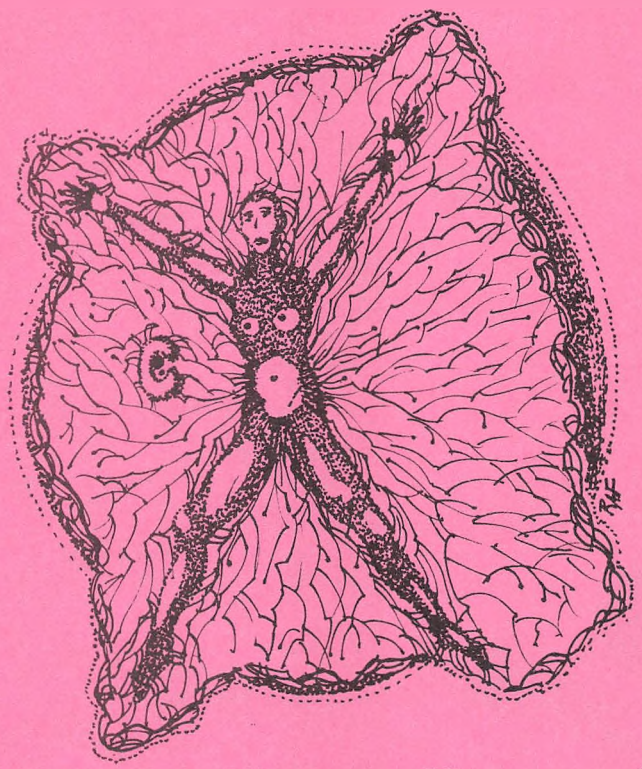
WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD
S. M. CHARNAS

"...new stories have to be told in new ways..." S.M. CHARNAS
MOTHERLINES

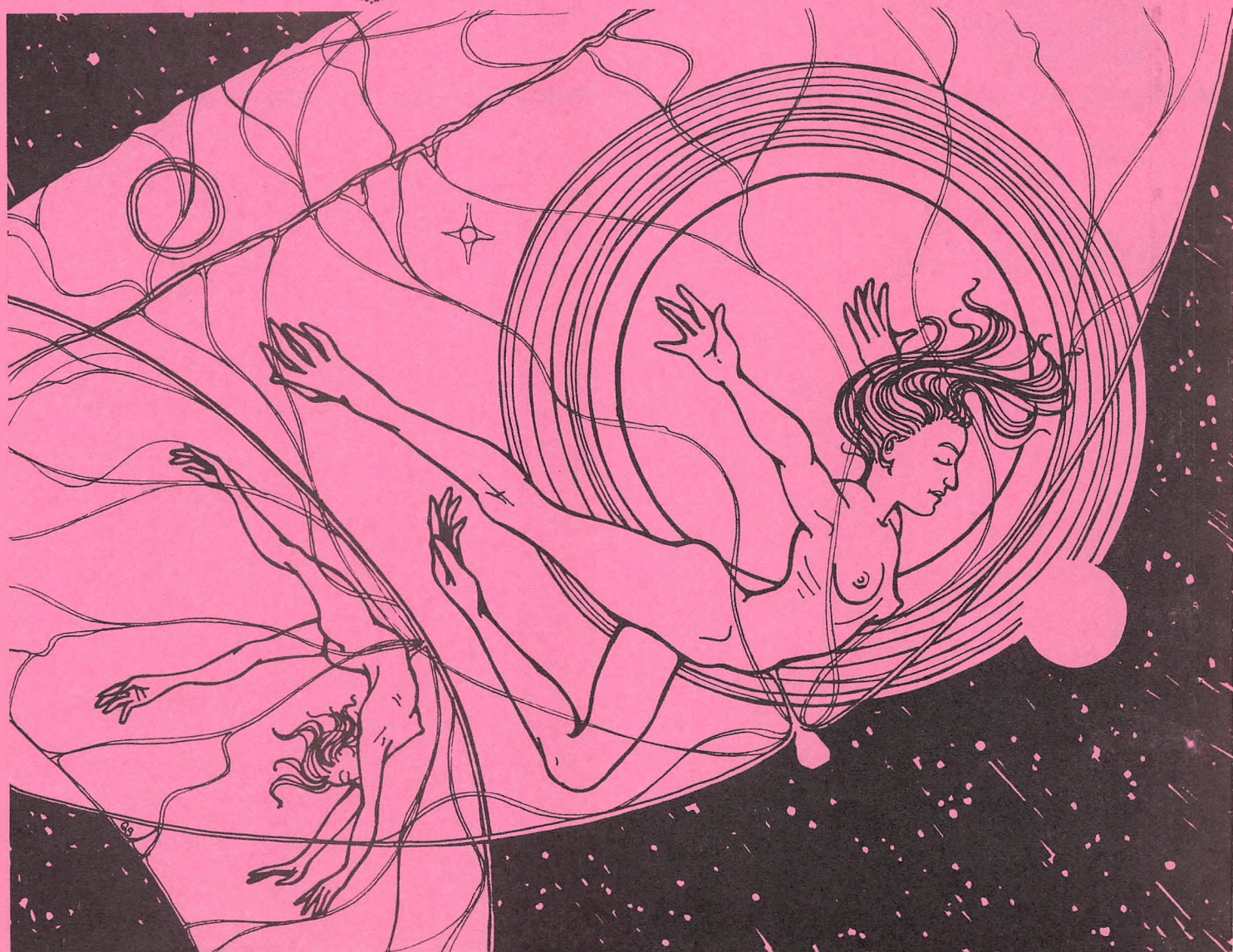


"You've already met Vaffa," Tweed said, gesturing to the standing woman ..." There are many Vaffas. One here, the other who helped you escape a few hours ago. Others in other places."

THE OPHIUCHI HOTLINE
JOHN VARLEY

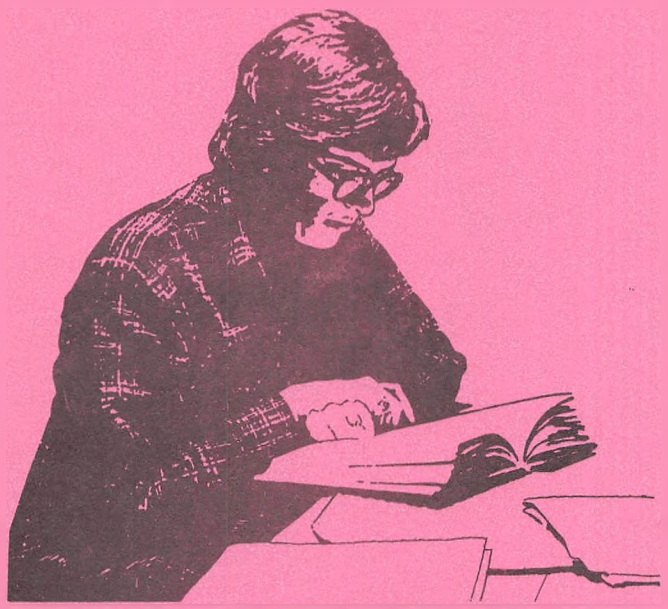


"GOTTA SING, GOTTA DANCE"
John Varley



## JANICE BOGSTAD INTERVIEWS

# Suzy McKee Charnas



JB: *Walk to the End of the World* is your first published novel, right?

SMcKC: Yes.

JB: I read it first some years ago. How long have you been writing?

SMcKC: I've been writing since I was a little kid, for a long, long time. But in fact that book was begun, I guess, about 1968, 1969, and it took a long time to do because it was done all wrong at first. It had to be done over.

JB: I see. And when was it published?

SMcKC: It was published in 1974.

JB: And didn't you just publish the sequel to it this year?

SMcKC: Yes, the new book came out this summer, that is, the summer of 1978. That was *Motherlines* and that was about three years in the writing too. I'm slow.

JB: And this was in hardback this time, wasn't it? From a different company?

SMcKC: It was a very nicely put-out hardback from Berkley-Putnam.

JB: I recall that I found the cover very attractive. Did you have any input into the design of the cover?

SMcKC: Well, not really. I had, in that, when I talked to my editors, I had expressed some reservations. I was a little worried because I'd seen what had been done to other people's books and had some experience of my own of covers that I felt were not really appropriate for the material inside. And by the time I was sent a proof of this cover it was already pretty much set, except there was a change in the lettering. I was pleased with it, though. They did a good job.

JB: Yes, I do know that authors have that problem not having too much input, but I like the cover, too, so maybe it came out well for all con-

## ...AND

# John Varley

JB: I wanted to start by asking you how you actually get down to writing a story.

JV: Each story is a little different, but I would say that my general way of working is to begin with a picture that just comes without any kind of searching for it...some kind of picture that comes into my head of some odd thing happening, and I begin to think about it for several nights in a row and begin to put together a story around it that would make this rather odd picture become believable. Often, at the time I start writing, I know how it's going to begin and how it's going to end, with really very little difference between the two, and of course the ending is not always what I thought it was going to be.

JB: Do you prefer writing short stories to writing novels?

JV: Emotionally and for my own satisfaction, I prefer the short stories. In some ways they take the same kinds and almost the same quantities of thought and preparation as a novel does and yet, when you finish them, they haven't taken so long to write. You feel nice about it when it's done. It's something that's right there, and you can really grasp it fairly easily, and that's a lot of fun. When I finish a novel, my immediate reaction is, "Thank God, that's over with; it was such a huge project." But I have to say I prefer writing novels... because it's the only way you can make a living in this business unless you've been in the business for 20 or 25 years and have so many royalties and reprint books that you have a steady base income. Then you can go back to fooling around with short stories. I'd like to. I like to find more time to do it. People keep coming up and asking me to write more short things.... With *Omni*, Ben Bova came up and said to write something, and just at the convention I must have had a dozen people say something like that. I can't give them all stories. There's no way it's gonna work. *Omni* is paying quite good money but still nothing like in the range of what you can get for a novel. And of course an *Omni* sale is once; you may try to sell it again but you're not going to get that kind of money again. In a book, theoretically, if it sells well you have a stake in it, and you get royalties. I hate to, but you always have to look at the money side of everything.

JB: Sure, especially if you have to support yourself.

JV: And that's what I've been doing, with varying degrees of success. I do fairly well for awhile and real poorly for awhile, but novels are what you have to do.

JB: Then short-story collections aren't very lucrative either?

JV: No. You get a fraction of the money for a short-story collection that you do for a novel. Story collections used to be very popular, but they don't seem to sell so well now. I don't really have any figures on the one of mine that's just come out. It's been reviewed very well, and I hear that it's selling all right, but even a short-story collection that sells very well—for a short-story collection—is really not doing that well; it's just not approaching the novels in sales.

cerned. Do you also write short stories?

SMcKC: I didn't used to, and I didn't think I could, but not too long ago—I guess a couple years ago—I was asked by George Martin if I could contribute something to his *New Voices* series. You know, he's doing those collections by people who have been nominated for the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer..... At first I said, "No, I don't do that kind of thing." But then something came up, and a story kind of boiled out of it. It wasn't very short. I don't like very short stories. My stories run anywhere upwards of 12,000 to about 25,000 words. And now I'm writing this series of more or less short stories about a vampire.

JB: Oh, really? That sort of thing seems to be interesting science-fiction writers lately.... Chelsea Quinn Yarbro wrote something about a vampire recently. I guess I don't know too much about it, since I haven't read it yet.

SMcKC: Yes, it's called *Hotel Transylvania*, and it's a kind of a historical.

JB: I see. Don't you also write essays about SF? It seems to me I read sonething like that in a magazine.

SMcKC: You probably read some letters that I wrote as part of a thing that Jeff Smith in Baltimore did in *Khatru* [the symposium on women, *Khatru* 3 and 4, 1973]. I think that's his regular fan magazine. And he put together a double issue on sexism and women in science fiction. And a whole bunch of us were invited to contribute to that. Somebody suggested my name, so I put in some letters. I wouldn't say they were essays exactly; I'd hate to get trapped into anything as dry as that....

JB: Maybe it was that interview in *Algol* that I am thinking of?

SMcKC: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that actually was written material. My interview was done as a series of questions submitted on paper, and then I wrote answers to them back. I like that very much because it gives you a chance to think and go back and make it all come out right.

JB: It seems that you prefer writing books, that is novels, to writing short stories.

SMcKC: Well, I did until...the vampire stories, which I'm really enjoying doing very much. I think mostly it's because it's for the same reason that I don't write really short short things. My major interest in fiction is character, people, not situations, and when I either read or try to write short material I find that it's very boring, because as soon as you get interested in the people they disappear. The situation is over. And the story stops.

JB: Yeah, I see that. Why do you write science fiction? Because it gives you more chance to be creative with your characters or something like that?

SMcKC: I started doing it because I had these characters I wanted to write about and I could not find a realistic setting that would let me open them up as much as I wanted to and let them exercise their capacities. Well, it finally dawned on me that the thing to do was to go invent one...that would be tailor-made to what I wanted to be able to show—what I wanted to be able to do with them. And I think now I'm kind of spoiled; I really like the freedom of invention and I like the exercise of, I guess you have to call it, logic. That is, there's the setting up of a premise, and the working out of that premise in the story. And that premise is usually about background, the conditions of life of the people in the story. And I find that that gives a certain "spice" to the situation. Even vampire stories now, they're very realistic, I think. And their background is present-day, but the thing that makes it pleasurable to me to write about present-day ordinary

JB: It seems that what people mostly read for a long while were short stories. I remember I did read novels, but I got my introduction to science fiction through big short-story collections like those of H. G. Wells.

JV: Science fiction seems to be the only place where that kind of stuff survives with any strength at all. But, even then, the majority of people would rather read a novel. I'm not that way. I'm about evenly divided. I like to read a good novel, but there are so many good short things available in science fiction that I like to read them too.

JB: It always surprised me that there were only two major regular magazines, and one of them isn't that regular anymore. You know it's easy to read a magazine story on the bus or something like that.

JV: Well, I guess we should be happy that people are still reading at all. I keep expecting that any year now they're going to say that we don't need to teach reading in school any more because who needs it? Of course they're doing it *de facto* already.

JB: Well, to change the subject a little, do you have any hopes that your writing changes people's minds, or do you write with that end in mind?

JV: I don't know about changing people's minds, really. I'm not aware of ever having written something whose purpose was to say, "You believe this and you're wrong. Here is the way things really are." So, not in that sense, but you want to move people, you want to affect them. And if changing people's minds is showing them another way something might be and something that might be better without actually shouting at them or preaching at them, and getting them to see it in the context of a story which is entertaining at the same time, I guess I definitely like to do that. But I don't have a hard and fast political philosophy that I could really expound on and wouldn't want to anyway if I did.... I myself am exploring, and in most of the stories that I write I'm trying out different ways at looking at things. When it's successful, the people that read it see the kings of things that I was trying out, and so in that sense they try these new ideas out too. And it's either valid or not for them, depending upon what they bring to it and what kind of things they like, I guess.

JB: Is that why you write science fiction, rather than try to write other kinds of mainstream

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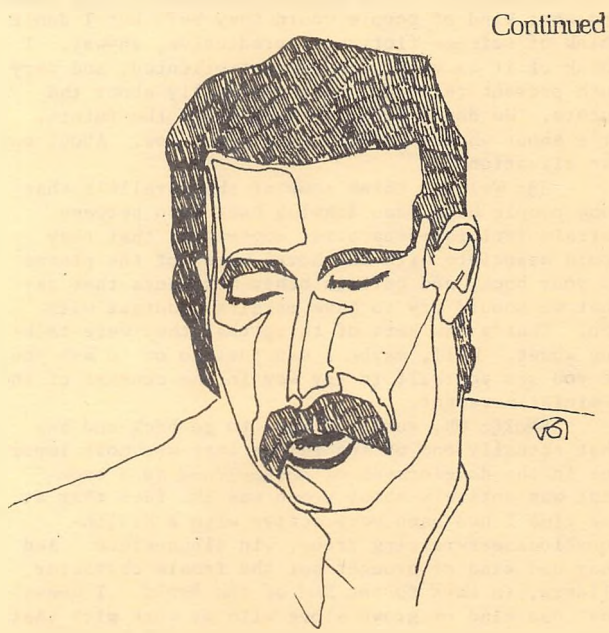

things is that there's this injection of the very unordinary and the premise that there is the vampire who is a kind of beast of prey and how does that work out in terms of the world.

JB: Do you also work with it in terms of what it does to an individual?

SMcKC: Oh sure: the people and the situation both.

JB: It sounds very interesting.

SMcKC: And the whole setting is involved. That's one of the reasons I like to do a whole book, because it gives me enough scope to work out some of the finer points.

JB: Well, since you concentrate on characterization, I guess it's interesting to me that you have so many female characters developed in both of the books, but especially in *Motherlines*. Did you focus for a particular reason on female characters?

SMcKC: Well, I didn't intend to so much. That was kind of by accident. What happened was that I started with the idea that, as a kind of counterpoint of the first book——which was about a very male-dominant society——I would like to write a book about an Amazon society. I didn't intend that it be all women when I started out. Only, as I was writing, I discovered that there wasn't any place in that story for men. And I tried to put them in but they wouldn't fit! So I just had to give up on that and go ahead, and it was a little scary—to develop all female characters for that story—and I thought, "This isn't going to work.... Nobody will read a book that's all about women. The characters won't be interesting." I didn't have any confidence in it. But I think those problems were solved.

JB: Yes, I do think the book is quite popular. I know I keep passing it around to friends and they keep being very pleased.

SMcKC: I hope so!

JB: A lot of people whom I've discussed the book with point out that perhaps you were exploring different futures that are outlined in the feminist movement presently with your different societies of women that interact. Did you have that in mind?

SMcKC: I don't think I really worked it out in those terms. I really was looking backward rather than forward. I don't see that book, *Motherlines*, as a "blueprint for the future" and I don't see it as a realistic development for the future, although I wouldn't mind. It just doesn't seem to me to be very likely. No, it was much more an exploration of a premise again:...just suppose that there is this kind of society. What kind of life would they live, and what kind of people would they be? But I don't think of science fiction as predictive, anyway. I think of it as very much present-oriented, and very much present-related. It's not really about the future. We don't know anything about the future. It's about what's in our heads right now. About our own situation.

JB: Well, I think some of the parallels that some people have been drawing have been between certain feminist-separatist movements, that they would associate with the horse women of the plains in your book, and certain other movements that say that we should try to have marginal contact with men. That's the sort of thing that they were talking about. Well, maybe I can just go on to ask you if you see yourself in any way in the context of the feminist movement.

SMcKC: Oh, sure. I have to go back and say that actually one of the things that was most important in the development of *Motherlines* as a book that was entirely about women was the fact that at the time I had been very active with a health-consciousness-raising group...in Albuquerque. And they had kind of brought out the female character, Alldera, in *Walk to the End of the World*. I guess that had kind of grown along with my work with that group, so that when I finished that book I was all ready to start a book all about women. Certainly the feminist movement has sparked a lot of my thinking and helped a lot of my thinking and given me some of the directions I've been going in. But again, I kind of draw the line between theoretical work—like some of the really good theoretical texts that people have written recently—and fiction. I don't like to confuse them. Because then the fiction gets unfree. You begin, like propaganda, you begin to think, "Well, it has to work out this way." And I don't ever want to be in that kind of a trap. So, whatever the book comes out to be is organic to the book. It's not the sort of thing where I sat down and said, "Now I'm going to illustrate certain kinds of thinking and the direction of separatism for women."

JB: Well, but, just going along with that, would you agree that writing (fiction, that is) does change people's minds about things, just in changing their self-images?

SMcKC: Well, I sure would like to think so. I'm not sure I really agree. I think that good, honest, exploratory fiction can help people to move their own thinking in certain directions if they've already started that way. I think it's very seldom that a book will come along and change the mind of somebody...into a different set of values, but I do think that this kind of fiction can, first of all, reinforce people's thinking if it's going in the same direction as the fiction and...kind of flesh it out, make it alive, make it fun, not just dry didacticism. And I think it's useful, but I'm a little skeptical about people who think that fiction is really a major tool of changing people's minds.

JB: Well, maybe I can just tell you a little about an experience I had while reading your book, because it was a matter of the book giving me a chance to look at something through eyes that I had not used before. You know, I was sitting reading the book and I got on the bus and watched the interactions between a young woman and some young men. The young woman was all very drawn in and defensive because she had to be, and it was such a shock after reading the book. I'd been sitting in the sunlight reading *Motherlines*, where the women act totally differently and there's no teasing and such about one's appearance and that sort of thing. And I guess The question I was trying to get to was, "Do you see your work in that context?" In the context of allowing people to create or to see the world in a different way juxtaposed with the one you create.

SMcKC: Oh, sure. I think that it helps to illuminate and throw light back on the way we really do live. There's no question about that. If you're already seeing that. Again, I don't think it's too common to actually bring enlightenment to somebody who hasn't really seen it in their own lives. But, yeah, once you've begun to see a little bit around you, if somebody gives you a vision of something totally opposite to conditions you're living in or really very different from them, then I think it's very helpful in lighting up the differences and making appear what you'd like for yourself, if you could make your own life.

JB: Your characters, at the same time as they're in a world that is very different from our own, don't seem all that different from people that I know.

SMcKC: Hmmm. Well, that's good. Gee. Say that again: that's great!

JB: Well, I think that it might help in creating a certain amount of rapport between your reader and the characters that these women seem like something we could become. But maybe you don't agree with that.

SMcKC: No, my thought was, "What really might we be if our conditions were so changed? What might women be like if they lived in that kind of freedom and didn't have to deal with a whole lot of constraints that we all live with presently." And I am surprised when I come across people who say they know people

who were like that, because it seems to me it would be awfully difficult to be that sort of person in our present-day life. But then, when I wrote *Walk*, people said, "This is just like my life right now." And I was surprised then, too, because I had forgotten that for a lot of people living in the real world now as a woman is very much like slavery. It really stunned me, because you know I'm a middle-class woman. I live a lot more freely than a lot of other women do.

JB: Yes, much more different than, say, the characters that Marge Piercy described in *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

SMcKC: You bet.

JB: Well, moving on to something a little bit different, but that is still connected to the feminist movement, it seems to me that a lot more women science-fiction writers are being published lately. Do you think that's because of the feminist movement making us aware of women writers, or the writers themselves, women therselves, being aware now that they can write science fiction and see it, or a combination of the two?

SMcKC: I think all of those things are important, and I also think it doesn't hurt a bit that women who are writing science fiction have a tendency to get in touch with each other. There's a lot of support from one to another. You don't just kind of strike out on your own and then there you are swimming out in the ocean all by yourself. I think there's a lot of support and I think that's due to the creation of the feminist movement. You write and you find out that you have colleagues who are at least in sympathy with what you're writing. You don't just draw a lot of flak from people who think you're progagandizing and you're being a radical and all that stuff. And certainly there's been a blossoming of this sort of thing. I hope that it continues and it's not going to get snuffed out by the next decade. It seems to be very retrograde in all kinds of directions already. But so far... people are willing to publish, and that's due to pressure of a certain kind, and...people are willing to read books that may have only women characters or be about women's subjects, so called. This has called out this potential in science fiction, as it has in regular fiction, where it existed before maybe, but it just was never exercised.

JB: Well, in that context, how do you see a relationship to science-fiction fans?

SMcKC: It's funny, because, you know, when I was reading science fiction as a kid I didn't know there were such things. I was never a fan myself, and now that I write I have come across this big world of, what, 3-4,000 people who tend to show up at conventions, and I know that there are more who never get there! First of all it's a pleasure to have a kind of ready-made audience, although of course a lot of those people don't read my stuff and don't want to read my stuff and never will, and if they do they hate it! But a lot of them <u>do</u> find it pleasurable, and that's delightful to have that kind of built-in response there, because there's this close tie between the fans and the writers which I don't think exists in any other genre of fiction. If you write something you get something back! They talk to you and write you letters and <u>yell</u> at you! And, secondly, I think that there are a lot of people in fandom who grew up on very reactionary, sexist material in science fiction and who are ready to be thinking in different ways, and science fiction can help them to expand their thinking a little in non-sexist areas, and I like to think that maybe I'm having some effects on some of those people, especially since so many fans are young. It's really important to reach people who are still youthful and are still changing their minds pretty flexibly. (At least you hope they are!)

JB: Well, I know that I had a similar experience to yours in that I wasn't a fan until I was in my 20s. I think that that's the case for a lot of the women who are in fandom right now, that it was also a male-dominated field and that might be why we're seeing some of the interest in women's writing in science-fiction fandom that we weren't before. Because there are more women in it.

SMcKC: There are more women fans as well as more women writers, yes.

JB: Have you been going to conventions very long?

SMcKC: Not so long. I went to Kansas City in '76. That was my first convention; I'd never been to one before. And it was huge, and it was a lot of fun. I think I kind of got bitten by the bug. I don't know how long I will be, but I went to Phoenix, and I'd like to got to Brighton, and I'd love to go to Boston. I really enjoy the kind of... Well, there are a lot of awfully bright people in fandom, and it's a lot of fun. I took my stepdaughter to the one in Phoenix, and at first she was very shy and hung around me and sort of looked at things. And then she started talking to some people, and she met me for lunch and she said, "My god, these people are smart!", and she really started to enjoy herself and go around to some of the parties and so on.

JB: Do you have any special ideas about what you'd like to do at WisCon? Do you have any ideal in your mind of what you want it to be like?

SMcKC: I'd like to have a good time. I'd like to not catch the flu. I'd like to not be frozen to death. And I'd like to get enough sleep.

JB: Oh, well, that last one might be difficult.

SMcKC: And I'd like to talk a lot. I'd like to talk to people and see what they've got to say. And I'd like to do some readings, I mean to say reading out loud. I've got some stuff I'd like to read. What else? See some friends. I know a lot of people are coming down from Canada and some people coming from the West Coast. And I know some of those folks from one of the WesterCons that I went to that was a <u>lot</u> of fun. That was up in Vancouver. It was terrific. And of course I'd like to hear from people who've read *Motherlines* and hear what they think and get some feedback. One of the peculiar things about this book is that, although it came out in July of 1978, outside of fandom—and even inside of fandom to a degree—there's been almost a complete silence in reaction to it. It's been really quiet out there. I think I got my second letter from a reader last week. And I'm really surprised because I got a rather warm, voluminous response on *Walk*, more than I did on this book. It's got me wondering what the silence is due to.

JB: Maybe people are just so floored by it, being fascinated by it.

SMcKC: You think that they're just flabergasted!

JB: Well, let's see, I did have to ask you a couple of things, not related to the interview. Is there anything else you'd like to say to people in Wisconsin?

SmcKC: Well, people of Wisconsin, I'm looking forward to coming out. I hear Madison is a lovely town.

JB: Yeah, there's a lot of things to do; it's kind of colder, though.

SMcKC: Well, I'm looking forward to seeing it and seeing some of my friends there, you folks and others. It's really kind of a surprise to me that parts of the country like Madison, which I tend to think of as being out in the god-knows-where (since I'm a New Yorker originally), have so much activity going on and can really mount something like this, apparently with a fair amount of confidence and ease. Which WisCon is this?

JB: This is the third.

SMcKC: It's still young, but it looks like you've really got things rolling, and I'm very impressed!

JB: Oh, <u>good</u>! That sort of response makes all of the work worthwhile.

# Varley

literature? Because you can try out ideas? Or is it just that it's the first thing that you started writing?

JV: A little of both, I guess. It is the most flexible medium for being able to write absolutely anything. Like Delany was saying yesterday, he could see other fiction as sort of a subset of science fiction because, just on the sheer numbers level, there are more combinations of words that you can put together in science fiction that make sense. Whereas they would be nonsense sentences if you were trying to put them into a mainstream novel. That's a very pragmatic way of looking at it. I can see what he's talking about. The universe of science fiction encompasses not only the real world but everything else, too, and the real world is all that mainstream fiction can deal with—the absolutely observed real world. You can argue that, as mainstream begins to depart from it, even in psychological fantasies or satires, it begins to get into the realm of fantasy, which science fiction might more properly claim.

JB: One of the reactions I've heard from people who don't read a lot of science fiction is that, as you say, the things that we consider to be sense if we read a lot of it and know something of science fiction, come out as nonsense to them. Do you read a lot of science fiction? Did you start out reading it?

JV: Yes, I did start out reading it. I read less now than at any other point in my life, I guess, except for a time just before I started writing again when I read none at all.

JB: I get the sense that in contemporary science-fiction writing one writer builds on what another writer has done already.

JV: Yes, that's true in a lot of ways. I do a lot of that myself, and I know that my novels and stories are not likely to be very accessible for somebody that has absolutely no background in science fiction.

JB: Someone who gets put off by something like faster-than-light travel, or black holes, or...

JV: That probably wouldn't bother the reader so much as when you try to bring in social changes. They can accept as a given that a black hole does this, or that a ship can go faster than light. They may not want to follow all the mathematical reasoning you put into your faster-than-light drive. If you make some kind of fancy-sounding line, say how a ship could actually do that, they are more likely to accept that, but I think the kind of social extrapolating that I do is so foreign to what you see as almost natural laws of the universe, the way your society operates, that it may be harder for you to accept that than that something would go faster than light, which, after all, is just an abstraction to most people. You can see that light goes at a particular speed, and you can't <u>feel</u> that nothing can go faster. You just have to take Einstein's word for it, and most people don't know Einstein from anything.

JB: Do you consider part of your extrapolation to be on the influence of technology on society?

JV: Right! That's always been the most fascinating part to me. Like, if this could be done what would it do to the people who had this device, or this new process, or this new biological possibility?...Not just the nuts-and-bolts terms, but would it change their thinking, the way they relate to the people around them? And, if that happens, what social institutions would evolve to take care of that? It's very complex, and you can't do it with any assurance at all of getting it right, but you try to speculate and say this is what might work, or this is what might come about in this situation.

JB: So you're not being precisely cautionary or predictive when you write?

JV: No, I would never say that I was predictive. I wouldn't bet a penny on any prediction I've ever made in science fiction. There are just sorts of things that I take as possibilities. I say, "Take this thing, and this is the way it might come about.", but there is no reason why somebody couldn't make very good arguments that it would come about exactly the other way. I've never seen science fiction as prediction. The things that science fiction has predicted are just items of hardware, things that could be seen in the future by someone who was sufficiently involved with the technical culture—which most people never hear about, so they think these predictions are miracles. The atom bomb was no real trick. I mean, I'm not putting it down: when the guy predicted it in *Analog*, way back, it was astounding. But the information was there; people were working on it.

JB: Or things like waldoes?

JV: Yeah, that's a nice device, but SF is not like crystal-ball gazing or anything like that.

JB: Do you ever think of your writing in terms of cautioning people that, if they don't watch out, such-n-such might happen and that wouldn't be a good way for the human race to go?

JV: I haven't done much of that, no. I'd rather just present something, say: "Here it is. You can like this or you can not like it, but I want you to see that the people who live in it probably think it's just as perfectly normal as can be"....
One of the central themes of the series of stories that I've done is something which I postulated that might exist quite a ways in the future, which is that at some point it will become cheap and easy to have a sex change anytime you want one and that it will be a natural and complete sex change, so that a man who changes into a woman is able to bear children. It's functional, it's not just a surface rearranging of skin and genitals, and things like that. Don't ask me if I think that's possible, because I really doubt it, but it might happen. But that's really beside the point, because what I try to explore in those stories is what this would do to the people to whom it was available. First of all, would they use it frequently? Would people cling to the sex they were born in, or would even children begin to get sex changes if their parents approved? Raise a boy one week and a girl the next and you wouldn't get the kind of cultural imprinting that we have now, so that you really don't know what the difference is between men and women, because so much of it is the way you're raised. If you raised a boy as you would a girl, the boy would probably be quite different, but you don't know exactly how. It's so hard to do the research. I got kind of off the track on that. The stories just try to explore my own ideas of what that kind of thing might do to society, and there's a lot of possibilities. I've selected a few and built them into a series of stories.

JB: In this series does each of these stories explore a different possibility?

JV: Well, to some extent, yeah. Some of the stories, I guess, try to explore social things in a more outfront way than others. Some are more concerned with just telling a good story and a good adventure. But the background is all there. What you try to do is to drop these ideas in painlessly, or almost as invisibly as possible. You have these characters moving through their world just as competently and as unamazedly as we do through ours. Nothing about the world outside here really amazes us. We see new things come along every once in a while, but they're quickly assimilated. Before long any new development becomes as common as the kitchen sink.

JB: Some developments seem to have profound

ramifications.

JV: They do, but they diffuse through the culture gradually. And there may be opposition. It may take a long time for something to really become accepted, but eventually, except for the transition time, it rearranges the culture to fit itself. It makes a new culture if something is sufficiently different. Television is the best example, for something that has totally rearranged society. The automobile is probably an even better one, because our entire cities are built for automobiles. People are definitely secondary.... I read somewhere that virtually every living room in America is arranged for the viewing of a television set. You know people tend not to arrange rooms for conversation anymore. The prime consideration in placing a chair is can the TV be seen from it when someone is sitting in it. If it can't, it means you're going to be moving it around a lot, because the TV is on and nobody is going to be using that chair. That's a very minor little thing there, but that's the kind of thing you want to consider when you're trying to see what an invention is going to do to a culture. And the more profound thing is that if people are sitting in the chairs all the time watching the television set, what happens to the conversation and what happens to people's minds and their desire to read, for instance?

JB: You can't interact without a television on.

JV: Yes, you sit there and stare at it.

JB: Another thing I'd like to ask you about is how you feel about being involved in a kind of writing that gives you contact with fans? Except for the super-best-seller writers, I don't think writers get very much mail. Ones that I talk to don't.

JB: They don't?

JV: No, not very much mail from readers.

JB: Gee, that's amazing. I always would write letters to writers and never send them because I thought they'd never notice.

JV: That's what most people do. They write them and they don't send them. You get a letter here and there, but nothing like the flood that a lot of people seem to think that writers get. Of course Harlan Ellison gets a lot. These are the superstars of the field, and there are any number of best sellers in the mainstream field that I'm sure get an awful lot of mail. But talk about millions of books there, and you've added up a lot more readers that actually do get that letter in the mailbox.... I always answer my mail, and the people seem invariably surprised that I took the time to answer, as though I'm snowed under by mail or something, but I'm not.

JB: So you enjoy that sort of input?

JV: Yeah, I do. That's why I come to the conventions. There are business reasons I come to the conventions, also, but I know a lot of authors—or some authors—who really seem very contemptuous of conventions and come only to talk to editors.

JB: How do you feel about coming to Madison as a guest of honor?

JV: It feels real good. I've been a guest of honor once before, and I know it's a little frantic, but it can be fun, too.


# ENDPATH