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# ALLARGANDO 2

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Jeanne Gomoll. . .October 1986...ALLARGANDO #2. . .Obsessive Press #76...Member FWA

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Initially I thought about doing mailing comments on all three issues of TURBOAPA that I'd passed by, just reading, without commenting. So I started out just commenting on #3--but reaching page 7 in this zine, I suddenly decided to scrub plans of retrospectives. Sorry about that. I meant to join in with Jim's reminiscing about old times in the Madison SF Group. I was going to tell you about my once-planned gossippy novel based on the group (Melodrama Rampant), but there's obviously no space for that now. I was going to respond to Hope's question about why the term "media fan" seems to include the implication that it's a derogatory tag, and compare it to other derogatory tags, like "blacks", "women" and "science fiction" that have been worn proudly and outlived the original, negative connotations that was attached by others. But I ended up saying similar things in a more roundabout way using Ray Russell's comments as a jump-off point in my mc's to the third issue. Due to Ray's zine being first in the apazine, I probably devoted too much time to that subject in my mc's anyway. Ray's zine in TURBOAPA #2 would probably have prompted some more rumblings from me because I've never seen an apa restrict its discussion to one area unless it's specifically a special-subject apa, and so I would have predicted a frustrating time for him in this apa if he expects a preponderant amount of attention being paid to hard SF topics. Even A Women's Apa wandered all over the map, including stories about all aspects of the members' lives, and it was set up specifically to deal with women's issues. I hear that there's a guy in APPLE--the cooking apa--who includes lists of his favorite cars. So... I would have told some ice cream scooping hell stories from my highschool-job-days at Bresler's 33 Flavors in response to Julie's Lum's Hell story, and I would have apologized to Diane for all the spelling mistakes I've made and am making and will make in the future. I really have been trying very hard; my dictionary is at hand at this very moment, and I won't even make up a funny misspelling as I type this, because I'd probably misspell it right and then the joke would fall flat. Also, I would have seconded Diane's request that people put their names and titles on top of their zines. I had things planned to comment on Diane's review of Sagan's Contact, but then I was able to put them into a response to Ray's reaction to Diane, and so it all got into this zine anyway. I would have said "Here, here!" to Egon's reaction to Dick's glossary and also would have admired his typesetting. Eventually, I'm going to have to say why I think you're all wrong and that LeGuin's Always Going Home is a wonderful, great book, but there's no room this time. Then I would have disagreed with him (Egon, still) about the value of martial arts: good not for actual abilities taught (to kill a rapist), but for ability to be less afraid, and more self-confident which translates into an attitude that invites violence less often than intimidated cringing. I would have responded to DuCharme's challenge (to define a media fan that doesn't include all fans), but I did that anyway this issue, slipped in again to that omnivorous comment to Ray. And there must have been something I wanted to say about Pete's poem, "Sinister Carp on Parade" too, because I put a little "X" next to the line about the SWAT team, but now I don't have the faintest idea what I had in mind to say about that. I was definitely going to suggest that Dick offer handouts to anyone that wants them the next time he gets the urge to reprint something like the Roe v. Wade decision, but I think he must have gotten enough comments about that in TURBOAPA #3. I liked the way Dick quoted the parts of people's mailings that he was commenting on, though. As usual, he writes very entertainingly and I'm glad he's currently obsessed with the apa to write for it. And finally, if I'd only had room, I would have told Andy Hooper that.--oh well, no room. On to:

## MAILING COMMENTS\*\*\*\*\*

**Ray Russell** I'm glad to see people in the TURBOAPA talking about the media vs "literary fan" (Ray's term) controversy. At least we seem to be keeping our senses of humor about the thing, whereas in other fangroups the confrontation has led to shouting matches and feuds.

Like you I agree that much of the disagreement between media and literary fans comes down to differences in people's definitions of the two terms. It's basically a "naming" problem I think. Although, on top of that, there's the tendency for some of us to stereotype media fans, and that's led to some of the more emotional moments of the debate.

You can't define a media fan by the amount of film-going done. For instance, among many of the people I work with at the Department of Natural Resources, I'd definitely be called a media fan, if relative film consumption was the only criteria of definition. I see a film about every week, sometimes more. Many of the people I work with are lucky if they see a movie once every three months. On the other hand, compared to some SF fans I know, I'd be only an average or even an infrequent movie-goer. Ironically, I may see more films than someone I'd describe as a media fan if you discount multiple-viewing of a single film. To me the number of films one sees doesn't define the name. Neither does the number of books define a so-called literary fan.

I know, for instance, several people who gobble up two or three supermarket romance novels or Louis Armour westerns every week. They inhale these books, but they read them only to relax and in a couple weeks have forgotten all plot details. These books are short-term-memory candy for them, leaving cavities of the brain as a by-product.

So I'm not talking about simply the number of movies or the number of books one reads as the definition of a media fan or of a so-called literary fan. And though I admit to sharing some of the derogatory stereotypes of media fans, I don't include the derogatory aspects in my definition. (I.e., I don't define a media fan as someone who never reads, even though I've met some media fans who don't seem to have read much.) My definition is simple. A media fan is someone whose main interest in SF centers around films and televised productions of SF. A media fan may also work on conventions, participate in masquerades, read SF, and publish fanzines, but their main interest is films and TV science fiction/fantasy. I suppose literary fans would be defined in the same way: Fans who may be involved in costuming, media, concons, fanzines, etc., but whose main interest is written SF. I wouldn't call myself a literary fan: I'm more of a fanzine fan because my main interest is writing for, drawing for, and reading fanzines, though I also work on concons, read a lot of SF, see a lot of SF films, etc. None of these labels--and in fact, probably, no labels are entirely exclusive. There is bound to be lots of overlap, but the fact that they are used a lot means that a lot of people find them useful. In other words, as long as people need to refer to a recognizably differentiated group of people with a name, the label will persist, although everyone must admit that no label can ever entirely describe any one individual.

Aquacon, a Los Angeles convention, invited Jan Bogstad and myself to be Guest Fans of Honor at their first con several years ago. They admitted to us right up front that the majority of LA fans tended to be media fans and that they were organizing Aquacon as a literary alternative to the media conventions that tended to proliferate and dominate the con scene in that area. They were going to do a lot of heavy literary programming, and try to establish Aquacon as a different sort of convention.

At that time I would have called myself a literary fan. Janus/Aurora was a vehical for my literary interests, not so much an end in itself, as Whimsey is now for me. Anyway, so we went down to LA and found...

...a con at which the average age of the convention attendee seemed to be about 16.

...a con at which anyone not dressed in a costume was in a distinct minority.

...a con at which there were only two tables (out of 25 or 30) in the dealers' room that were displaying books.

Although the concom's intentions were admirable, their heavily literary-slanted program had a problem. Even though they'd scheduled a lot of literary panels, they had had a difficult time finding panelists. As a result, when I arrived in LA, I discovered that I'd been scheduled for twelve panels!! (Not counting the speech which they suggested I do only a couple hours before the banquet). It was at the first of those panels that the incident occurred which has colored my bias toward media fans.

It was a weird panel--as were all the rest of them, but at least later on I understood the problem. Feminist SF panels were pretty familiar to me, and this is what I was mostly involved with at Aquacon. But at all the ones I'd done at past WisCons and a dozen or so other cons, the main element had always been audience participation. In fact, it was usually quite a problem. The panelists could barely get out their ideas and observations on the subject at hand before the audience joined in, bringing in other books, other ideas, other experiences. But here at Aquacon, the large audience seemed strangely docile. And I suddenly understood what it must be like to be a professor talking to a class that just takes notes and never sparks, never asks questions, never argues... I started to get paranoid. And just when I was in the middle of talking about Suzy McKee Charnas' Motherlines, a woman from the audience raised her hand. I hastily finished up my thought and the moderator pointed at the woman in the audience.

"That's a really interesting idea," she said as she stood up. "It's just like in Star Trek when..." and she recounted a ST episode that had some vague connection to part of Charnas' novel.

And after that, the audience exploded into sudden energy, taking over from the panelists, talking about different ST episodes as one reminded one audience member of another episode.

It reminded me of a conversation I'd overheard once while walking down State Street behind two young men. They were talking about the three Star Wars films in general, but gradually, their discussion turned into a sort of trivia game, in which one guy would start to quote a line from one of the films' dialog, and the other would have to name the film it came from and the character who said it, and (for extra points?) complete the line of dialog.

This suggests a major difference between the styles of media and literary fans.

As someone in this apa has already pointed out (you, Ray? Maybe someone else), it's more likely that most of the people in any given group will have already seen most of the movies that might be mentioned in conversation among them, than it will be that most of the people in that group will have read any given book that might be mentioned. As a result, discussions of the films can often inspire (or degrade to, depending upon your point of view) this sort of examination of minutæ. On the other hand, a discussion of ideas found in books by a group of people will depend on individuals learning to explain the ideas they've found in concise, interesting manners, because most of the people in the group will not have already read the same books. However, they will have read other books, and the summarization of one book's ideas and their impact on one person will spur others to share ideas from other books or their own thinking or even from a film. In my experience, conversations among literary fans tends to get wider and wider-ranging, while conversations among media fans tends to focus more and more specifically upon the films.

I gravitate toward conversations (and conventions) of literary fans because I like talking to people who would rather read more books, more periodicals, see more films and share more ideas...in other words, who value making connections and learning more ideas with other people who are widely read and widely view. I tend to drift away from conversations (and conventions) of media fans because the conversations seem to be based upon the viewing and re-viewing of a small number of films. And the films seem to be the whole point of the conversations, as if the

people talking were restricted (quite willingly) to the points of view and the worlds described by those films. And so conversations tend to turn easily into an exchange of trivia: memorized lines, names and plot details.

As you can see, my biases are showing.

On another subject. I must say that I agree with Diane about Sagan's 1st person portrayal of a woman in Contact. Sagan is pretty awful at describing realistic people, period. Let's not even talk about his ability to write about a believable relationship. I don't think Diane's saying that because he is a man he can't write believably from a woman's point of view. Certainly there are male writers who have done an excellent job at it (though there aren't many). But John Varley, for one, if you'd like an example.

The interesting thing to me is that most writers and artists have things that they have difficulty writing about or difficulty drawing. Like Sagan, Isaac Asimov, for instance, can't describe a human relationship worth a damn (I think). And that's really highlighted in his magnum opus autobiography in which I got the feeling that he never really thought about why his marriage fell apart or why he had so much difficulty in personal relationships with people. So, in the case of Asimov, the failings in his writing mirrors a part of his personality. There are artists who can't draw people, and it's usually because they don't look at people very much. Artists draw what they know. Writers write about what they know.

And I get the feeling that Sagan doesn't know women very well (and people in general, to a lesser extent. I.e., he knows men a little better.). Sagan knows how to communicate a sense of wonder. He knows how to communicate the emotions a scientist experiences when discovering. But he doesn't know and can't describe other emotions as well.

And this is a result of the "general trend...which hurts both men and women" that you say should be complained against. Men are encouraged not to pay much attention to the subtext of verbal and non-verbal cues in a relationship. They tend not to be very good at verbalizing their emotions because they've never been encouraged to learn the vocabulary. So it's no wonder that we've got lots of writers like Carl Sagan who write so unbelievably when they try for the first time to see life from the perspective of a woman.

**Julie Shivers** Well actually this is for everyone that types double-spaced... I hope that you know that some of us keep reaching for a blue pencil when we see all that space between the lines. That's all you're ever supposed to double space, of course: rough draft manuscripts that need editing. It would read so much smoother if you'd switch to single-spaced typing. Please.

**Peter Larson** Thank you for the wonderful business student stories. I laughed frequently as I read along. My friend Scott Custis (who I'm trying to convince to join TURBOAPA because he has read all the issues and has been enjoying it and makes lots of interesting verbal comments about it as he reads and is going to be moving to Madison next year anyway and so joining the apa would be a great way to introduce himself and get to know some of you and so you should all suggest that he join when you see him) really liked your zine too. Of course, since he majored in Business Administration he was wincing a little bit too.

**Nevenah Smith** There has got to be some connection with that spiel on "naming" that I did as a quasi-mailing comment to Ray and your spiel on "naming" that you did in a quasi-mailing comment to Dick. There is, for instance the connection of our agreement that naming should follow upon a need for something to be identified because it has no name and yet needs to be talked about. Like the words that Suzette Haden Elgin creates for the ideas and feelings that women search for but are not named in our language. Or the characteristics of the clumps of people who tend to separate out among SF fans...fanzine fans...media fans...literary fans. And I like your idea that women tend to name people, concepts and emotions, as com-

pared to men's namings of things. I like it, but I don't think it would hold up to very much examination. Myself, I get more irritated by the masculine tendency to rename things to fit into a hierarchal view of the world. The whole concept of beaurocratic organization fits into this rant, but most everyone in the group has already heard me go into that rant, so I won't here. Women, in contrast, seem to me to want to name things that have no name and to do so against the resistance of those who say that since they have no names they do not--by definition--exist, and if they exist then, that it's your fault for naming them and calling them into existence...

**Spike** There was a news item recently about the woman who is being charged with murder of her child for not having taken proper care of herself while she was pregnant. This is an obvious move to define the fetus as a human being with constitutional rights, etc., and if she is successfully prosecuted will make any pregnant woman who has an alcoholic drink or smokes or excercises too much in plenty big trouble. The way things are going in this country, you may eventually be liable for flagrant carelessness with the rights of your unborn children. Women will be forever barred from fandom because of the high risks entailed by heavy typewriter-carrying on the future lives of their eggs.

I hope you're going to continue the story of your European adventures here or someplace. It's great. Very surrealistic. Kafka with a touch of Erica Jong.

**Pete Winz** Thanks for the quiz answers. I have written them in my left palm in case of a pop quiz. It was easier to fit just the answers in than it would have been to get the whole Roe v. Wade decision in that space.

Seriously, it was a really interesting explanation, and helps a lot with understanding some of the recent court decisions...especially why some decisions are far-reaching and others are applicable to only a narrow situation.

**Kim Nash** Yeah, once I stared at the word "top" for about 15 minutes and couldn't remember what it meant. And when I looked it up, the definition didn't seem real. On the other hand, when I took French in college I had the opposite experience. All the French words, or most of them, seemed like the right words for the things they stood for. Much better than the English words I'd grown up with. I only had to see a French word once and I knew it. (It didn't work with hearing the words, just reading them. I was an awful speaker and listener of French; but I was great reading it.) After only a few weeks I started dreaming in (written) French. After the first semester, I was reading novels in French. I hardly ever had to look up a word after I'd learned it. For a while I almost believed I'd been reincarnated as an English-speaker after a dozen or so lives as a francophone. Apparently, however, I never learned to speak French in any of those past lives. Well, a deaf francophone, then. But I've forgotten most of it now.

(I was at a Michael session once though, and was told that my happiest past life was in French-speaking Morocco where I was a wealthy woman owner of a bordello, where I treated all of my employees kindly and fairly, and was a very powerful woman --an unusual thing for a woman of the time, I forget when it was supposed to be--, and married all my employees happily off after a while.)

So what would I be, Kim? Chaotic or Lawful? Good or Evil?

Yeah, I like my job, which seems to be a pretty unusual situation among any group of people. Well, I like most of it. Like I'm still amazed they pay me to play around with technical pens and drawing paper and stuff like that. The beaurocracy part drives me crazy sometime. But I'm writing about that for another fanzine, so I'm not going to write "Beaurocracy Hell" here; in fact it's going to be called "What Beaurocracy Means To Me" or "Let's Pretend We're Beaurocrats!"

**Mike DuCharme** It's really fun to go to a movie or read a book about which you've got no preconceptions whatsoever and then to love it. The movie I recall that hit

me like that was Hester Street, a little, not-very-advertised film about an immigrant couple who adjust to American life on Hester Street in the early 1900's. I don't know if I'd have loved it as much if I'd been "prepared" by having read a lot of good reviews beforehand. But it sent me off on a sort of obsessive binge afterward: finding the book and then reading other books by the same author, and then other books about the same period and the same transitional problems of new immigrants. Whereas getting all primed and doing research before a movie in preparation for what I assumed might be a movie full of scientific references to the newest discoveries in physics and astronomy made a horrible lurching disappointment out of going to see the movie The Black Hole.

You make me wish I hadn't missed A Room With a View.

**Hope Kiefer** Go back to single-spacing please; see my comment to Julie.

Nice cover. But I told you that already, didn't I?

Once again the old rule about everyone having seemingly gone to a different convention once the con reports come out holds true. I didn't get a chance to check out the consuite/floor at worldcon, and I couldn't afford dinner at Nikolai's Roof. Did we even cross paths? For all I know, you're making all this up. Quick--Pop Quiz: Which hotel hung out laundry in the central balcony core?

**Kim Koenigsberg's** con report felt more like my worldcon memories than Hope's did. Which is not to imply a lot of similarities.

**Andy Hooper** What I mean when I drag my feet and avoid poetry and say that I mostly don't enjoy it, is that I'm burnt out from much, much, much to much bad stuff. (I am constantly making exceptions...saying things like "I don't usually like poetry, but I love Alice Walker's poems or Marge Piercy's or this one poem or Ursula LeGuin's" writing which is like Bill Gibson's poetry--prose minus the line breaks, but poetry all the way through, etc., etc.) But I am burnt out on trying, and maybe after a year or so of not having to read the slush pile of Aurora poetry submissions, I will be a little better about this sort of thing and will stop prefacing comments about the poem I just read and liked with a hedge that I usually don't... But it seems as though most of the so-called poetry we got was by people who had chosen to write poetry because it was "easier" than prose, and had decided that it was easier because there was less of it to write if they wrote a poem than if they wrote a story. Anyway that's the way it felt to me.

**Dick Russell** I disagree with most of your interpretation of The Fly. I don't think that "the flesh" was meant to mean "the birds and the bees"; rather "the flesh" was an area of experience that Brundle had never known, and therefore was also an area of knowledge that the computer was not programmed. Brundle knew the mechanics of sex--just as Carl Sagan knows the jargon of feminism, and Isaac Asimov knows the general rules of manners and polite behavior. (This is a connecting reference to a comment to Ray Russell in regard to his response to Diane's comments about Sagan's Contact, in case you're just egoscanning here and are confused.) The point is that these three men are all very knowledgeable on mechanical, scientific knowledge, but short on experience and understanding of human relationships. They can't write about it or (in Brundle's case) can't build new life until they understand it in their own personal experience. When Brundle falls in love and understands that there is subjective quality to life above and beyond the list of chemicals and finite mass, he is finally able to transport the whole living being. The plot development turns not on inadequate birth control, then, but upon Brundle's inadequate understanding of "the flesh", because it's his paranoia about his relationship that causes him to make the error in judgement, to get drunk and mess up his experiment. Seeing how that relationship is of such central importance in the film, it's understandable therefore that the film concentrates on them to the exclusion of other people. (Let's see, that's points #2, 3 and 4 that we disagree on so far. I agree with you on #1, too much FX in the last half of the film.)

But I disagree with #5 (why bother to do a re-make, why not do an original film?) too. It is an original. It's an original as much as Kurasawa's Ran is an original even though it's based on the Shakespeare play King Lear, maybe even more so, because the new Fly ends up communicating an entirely different message than did the first Fly, viz relationships. The Magnificent Seven, for instance, isn't nearly as good a film as the film that it's almost a slavish, sometimes word-for-word remake of (Kurasawa's The Seven Samurai), but since it ends up with the opposite theme--which is amazing, considering the fact that so little is changed--it too is an original film, and creative in the way all stories are creative even though you can find in their core the retold fairytales and legends of the past.

Curiously, though, I'd give it only a slightly higher rating, maybe because I felt more strongly about the make-up and FX excesses than you did, but also because rating The Fly so high in the field of horror films doesn't count for very much if one doesn't like horror films very much.

**Jim Cox**     Supposedly it's a lawyer's rule (of cross-examination) never to ask a question that you don't already know the answer to if you're trying to build a case on the answers. But this isn't a court of law, and I'll probably end up disagreeing with you anyway, so here goes.

Given that you live in a community of people who mostly believe that vigilantism is wrong, and given that you believe strongly in the frequent need for individuals to seek justice-by-violence on their own, and given that you have met and had to deal with a great many people in your lifetime who--by your own observation--have included some scum deserving of vigilante action--given all that, why haven't you ever acted as a vigilante and murdered a deserving candidate? What about the man who raped your friend? Why didn't you take action? These days it's a cliché to observe that more than half of the women anybody knows will have had the experience of being raped. As a counselor, you must have come across even more women who had this experience than others. You probably encountered children at the school you worked that were being abused by their parents and knew that there was little or nothing that the system (then) was going to do to stop it. Why didn't you do something violent then?

I'm asking this because I suspect that you are less of a vigilante-advocate than you let on in your writing. I've been there when you talked to a woman who had just been raped, and watched your reaction. You didn't pump her for details in preparation for going out and eliminating the creep from the streets. Instead you concentrated on helping her deal with the experience and feel good about herself again. Which, as I told you at the time, I admired a great deal. And still do.

I suspect that you are held back from going out and finding and killing the criminals that you have contact with or who contact those you know, by the same sense of community morality that holds most of us back, and supports governmental justice, no matter how frustrating and ineffective it is at times. Vigilante justice seems much more logical and right in the abstract. Reality makes us less sure of our sense of justice and understanding of the facts. Things get much more complex in real life...

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...This is the pattern I think. No essays, self-propelled, anyway. I'll be doing mostly mailing comments when I contribute to TURBOAPA (which I'm starting to pronounce TURBOPA in my head). Self-propelled essays are owed elsewhere... Dependant essays may be inspired within mc's.

Andy, can I do the cover next time? (Since of course this is late the night before the deadline and I'm looking for an easier way next time.) Can I, huh?

*Jeanne*  
Jeanne Gomoll, 10/22/86