

Majoon

#3



MAJ00N, A Fanzine of Advanced Sexual Politics, is uttered and published by Mog Decarnin of 2020 Portland Avenue South #3, Minneapolis, MN 55404. 200 copies of this issue will be printed, and distributed to people of known rationality. MAJ00N herewith returns to its cheap fannish roots -- MIMEO! Less brightly colored but more sensual to the touch. You give a little, you get a little.

This is MAJ00N #3. Finally.

April, 1989

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Cover: Cheryl Cline

Repro: Erik Bieber

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If you read colophons, you already know I moved to Minneapolis. And maybe you got Bride of Game Crossing, the Lettersub-type saga of that move, sequel to Terry Garey's move-zine of 1983, Game Crossing. Bride is available on request.

Being the product of serious procrastination, MAJJOON is mostly written well before its publication date. The last MAJJOON was written before the death of my mother, and I decided to go ahead and publish it the way it was. The events sur-

rounding her death were too traumatic to make detailing them in a fanzine appealing. I still don't feel this is the place to write about it in depth.

This issue, several things were written before my September 1987 move was decided on. So you'll have to do a little mental footwork (mental feet? Are they anything like metric feet, those strange poetic contradictions in terms?) (wrench of brain back to subject:) to keep your chronological balance.

So what's gone on? Well, I discovered

Clearing Up

It is not true, whatever my friends and relations may claim, that I enjoy living in squalor. Au contraire; the fact is that I so dislike dirt that I avoid coming into that intimate contact with it necessary to maintain household hygiene.

Plus, for nearly two years work had left me limp as a noodle, barely able to struggle to the laundromat each weekend, and in the evenings fix my dull walls with a stunned stare for an hour, before drugging myself with murder mysteries. The little apartment had filled. A slow silt of books, paper, boxes, clothes, and items that would someday become extremely useful had gradually constricted my movements to defined paths. It isn't that I buy things. Rather, the things simply manifest themselves. Then, because I don't turn them out immediately, they take advantage. They know I have a deep and helpless pity for inanimate objects. Perhaps I identify with them.

Now, though, I was unemployed. Surges of restlessness swept me which nothing could satisfy but forays into the intellectual and emotional logjam represented by these impacted mounds of junk. I made a vow that every day I would discard (sell, give away, put on the street or just plain throw out) at least one item. It was a regimen I thought I could live with, not overambitious, flexible as to the definition of "item", but yet strict. If I realized at one a.m. I hadn't tossed anything that day, I had to go around the house until I found something, not for tomorrow's trip to St. Vincent de Paul's but for discard right then, before I slept. Maybe just an old coughdrop box (it had seemed so sturdy and -- useful, somehow, 8 months ago). But something.

It is amazing the things you find.

Missing correspondence is the least of it. Rooms acquire corners. Desks reveal unsuspected work surfaces. Most memorable, for me, was the discovery, under a particularly robust heap, of a mouse; rather, of a mouse's mortal remains, which I could not date with any accuracy, lacking access to radiocarbon apparatus, but which I nevertheless declined to leave in situ, regardless of the loss to science.

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Much remains to be done. Clearance is not the same as cleaning; I may balk yet, when it comes to that high noon where it's just you and a scrub brush against the corruption of the ages. But I've learned something: that by throwing out only one piece of junk a day, you can lighten the intolerable load of guilt and responsibility created by all those objects you, if you were a dynamic and even slightly creative person, should have made into planthangers, clothing, or objets d'art. All those gift you have no use for. Those books you'll never open, much less read. In some cultures, there is a special holiday just for throwing things out. I think they've got something there.

Later That Eon

Yes, that was written in San Francisco time. I recommend the regimen to anyone even dimly thinking about a move. Saves a lot of harrowing last-minute decisions on what to keep and what to jettison.

A lot of stuff is still in boxes. Very tidy. I know, it's been 18 months, so why boxes? Well, few bookshelves...and an increasing dubiety about an apartment where heating one room in winter costs 90 bucks a month, yet 60° windless spring days almost suffocate me.

I'm also kinda dying on the vine without a car. It's hard to get places, and harder to bring anything back from them. I'm inert enough that such difficulties translate into major blocks to movement.

Winter has been fascinating, at times enchanting (two days in a row winter fog settled over us and, when it lifted, left every twig and tree-limb coated with beautiful white frost), at times just curse-freezingly cold. Spring hath its leaves and crocuses. Summer is Hades on earth.

Money ran out so I had to find work. My plan of amassing wealth by serious hack writing succumbed to the usual forces. Some poems, some fanac, and I did start sending out a series of formalized crank letters to major media, pointing out that 24,000 cases of AIDS in heterosexuals, 3,800 of them contracted sexually, is considered "not a problem" in U.S. public health -- that's 37% of all cases reported since January 1, 1988 -- suddenly up from the steady average of 25% that has obtained since near the start of the US epidemic 10 years ago. This had to happen, as gay safe sex education and het lack of same caught up with AIDS's long incubation period. Aside from this, I did finish my translation of Dorrit Willumsen's Programmed to Love, and am submitting it around.

About MAJOON

People have asked if it's okay to show MAJOON to friends. MAJOON is in no sense a secret or confidential zine. The limited circulation is mostly due to limited funds. There are people I wouldn't send it to because I'd be bored/angry reading their archaic ideas on sex & gender, but I'm not trying to hide MAJOON from them.

This will see the lopping from the mailing list of most of those who've never located or contributed. If you aren't reading this, either I don't have your address (Lucy? Dan?) or you got the chop. I don't require your most intimate secrets. There are other signs of life -- ordinary locs, artwork. This has only one article by not-me, and I'd like to see that not become a habit. Editorial whim, which, like the grace of ghu, falleth not only upon doers of good works but also on the sloth and the layabout, shall exist, but in extreme moderation.

Next Issue

-- will focus on sex and kids. I'm not very interested in opinion pieces. Experience -- what you knew about sex as a kid, what kind of sex you had, what kind of eroticism you experienced, what you see in kids around you, what you thought about sex and adults back then, your earliest romantic interests, what people told you, how you reacted to seeing porno, what you weren't allowed to do, whatever actually happened -- that's What MAJOON 4 Wants To Know. (How do you define "kid", you ask. You tell me.) Plus belated answers to previous SQs, and the usual motley grue.

Dear Mag Decarin -

May 7, 1985

Thanks for the words on ABUSE - More importantly, sadly & personally - the article on Bobbi was most appreciated.

Artie Bressan: Only His Films Survive
by Steve Warren

1-year

Arthur J. Bressan, Jr. described himself as "one of the gay surviving cinemamakers in America." Since July 28, only his films survive. Most of them are gay and admittedly autobiographical. Even the porno.

Check the video stores for *Passing Strangers* and *Forbidden Letters*, from his San Francisco period, and the later *Pleasure Beach*, *Juice*, and *Daddy Dearest*.

On the nongay side Bressan made *Thank You, Mr. President--The Press Conferences of John F. Kennedy*, which aired on PBS.

A combination 19th Century Romantic and 1960s activist, he was caught up in the San Francisco scene from the late '60s through most of the '70s and never got it completely out of his system. Still, there was much of the native New Yorker about him.

In 1977, when Anita Bryant inspired a record number of gays to come out of their closets and onto the streets, Bressan had camera crews in the streets recording gay pride activities for the documentary *Gay USA*.

Much of Artie's work was praiseworthy. *Abuse*, about a filmmaker's affair with the 14-year-old boy appearing in his documentary about child abuse, made its point--that the boy was better off being loved by a man than beaten by his parents--too powerfully for most audiences--gay or not--to want to deal with.

Artie's final film, made in 1985, was *Buddies*. Written in five days and shot in nine, it dealt, perhaps ironically, with AIDS. He may not have known how little time he had left, yet he felt an urgent need to make the first theatrical film about the disease. There was a lot of Bressan in the character of the dying PWA whose spirit liberated the guppie volunteer assigned to care for him.

Bressan had the balls--or maybe he just couldn't help himself--to inject romance into fuckflicks. Even at the height of the casual sex phenomenon, and while he never judged those who just wanted to have fun, Bressan gave us characters who were looking for Mr. Right--or in one case, waiting for him to get out of jail.

Defending a nonexplicit masturbation scene in *Buddies*, Bressan said it enhanced the film's human dimension: "Disease doesn't happen to charts. It happens to people."

AIDS happened to Artie Bressan. He was 44.

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Goal luck with your project.

Cinematically yours,

Artie Bressan.



Found Loose in Mails

Walt Willis Thanks very much for Majoon 1. Its arrival after #2 raises various profound philosophical questions such as the one which occurred to me in the shower this morning. (I wonder how different the world would be today if Archimedes had taken showers instead of tubs?) The question was: is it a merciful dispensation of providence or an inherent quality of our space-time continuum that while we have five toes on each foot, we only have four spaces to wash between them? To my own surprise I decided the former, because it's quite possible we could have had circular feet. I was relieved to have this to think about: it was such a relief from the thought of the gay Star Trek crew which has been haunting me ever since you mentioned it. Is this I wonder the same alternate crew postulated by Bob Shaw? It would explain why nothing ever seems to happen during their shift: they're too busy to notice.

Debbie Notkin To my mind MAJJOON is one of the most exciting zines in fandom, and I hope it lives long and prospers! As you might guess from the stationery, I always find a Kvern cover worth waiting for -- and this one is particularly fine. I loved Ole's answer to TSQ, and it brought back some of my (much older) memories of being a virgin among virgins, sex counselor by default to an entire dormful of freshman women (what an odd phrase) by virtue of my not being afraid of the words. To this day, I've never learned a good answer to "Will it hurt less if he breaks my hymen with his finger?" -- not a question about which comparisons are possible, I fear.

Hooray for Constant Voyeur and orgasm not being the exclusive goal of sex!

I note Kate Schaefer faults her gynecologist for not giving her specific advice -- while I can see her point, I still have nightmares about the only gynecologist in the town I went to college in who would prescribe any birth control at all; his trip was to ask the (shy, scared, guilty) young women lots and lots of personal questions about favorite positions, number of partners, and so forth, and try to give them the idea that he needed to know this in order to prescribe correctly. (Fortunately, I had supportive parents and other sources for my own needs.)

I was also interested in Kate's comments on fear of male homosexuality. It has always interested me that I never had any fear, or even mild surprise, on hearing about homosexuality -- it simply seemed natural, so much so that the concept of "accepting" it was unnecessary enough to seem foreign. It wasn't

until I grappled with the S&M issue that I began to understand how people I'd talked to must have felt coming to terms with homosexuality (i.e., I started out feeling that S&M was repulsive, and had to educate myself to the point of accepting it, which seems to be a pattern other straights go through when learning about homosexuality).

Faye Anne Meyer's story has all kinds of implications (not just about children and sex, but also about how easily we all decide what other people MUST have been doing).

Kris Sellgren I'm playing jet-set astronomer again...Went to a movie in London (Working Girls) and before the movie there were not one but two AIDS commercials, featuring condoms prominently. One had a drag queen dressed as Maggie Thatcher talking about the health crisis and playing with a condom. The other was Bob Geldorf talking in very explicit language about "safer sex" and condoms, and how a little reduced sexual pleasure might save your life. Also saw a SAFER SEX t-shirt on the subway (tube). Seems they're taking things more seriously here.

((You bet they are. Compare to our non-intervention policy and our well over 40,000 cases of full-blown AIDS. Sounds like the ad must be aimed primarily at men to bring up "reduced sexual pleasure" -- I have only known one woman to say condoms were uncomfortable to her -- only thing I could think of was maybe they weren't using any lubrication, which you really should with condoms -- water-based of course, no oil. Britain's "scare tactics" campaign may or may not work as well as one based on sweet reason, but it has to be better than not doing any education at all.))

Avedon Carol There was a riot down at the new S/M club when the anti-S/M dykes came in with ski masks and crowbars and wrecked the place, also breaking the leg of one of the owners. She's charged the one they captured with Grievous Bodily Harm. Really, reminds me of Lifers bombing clinics. Argh!

Susan Crites Constant Voyeur's comments about the fear of pregnancy in the 50's reminded me of my own adolescent paranoia. I somehow had gotten the idea that once your periods started, they'd click off like clockwork every 28 days. My second period did not make its appearance on time, and I was horrified but very confused. I knew a missed period meant you were pregnant -- what I could not figure was HOW I'd gotten this way. My best guess was that I had inadvertently used a washcloth after my father (the only adult male in our house), and it had somehow had viable sperm on it. I asked my mother in a roundabout way whether this were possible, and she eased my mind on that score, but I made it a point to use no secondhand washcloths ever again, just to be on the safe side.

Your info on flea bites was useful, for we've had a particularly bad invasion from last summer that never did die out. But with a new heavy duty spray for the animals and B-complex for the people, we've gotten it more or less under control. Real test will be summer, though.

((Let me know how it works in summer. Replication is all in science.))

How I Don't Write

People always ask me, "Why not write?" There are as many answers to that question as there are non-writers. Some want to avoid the obloquy that inevitably attends putting any thought whatsoever into print. Others are more concerned with the issue of conserving natural resources, such as pulpwood, electricity, and leisure. Still others cite the severe damage writing inflicts upon one's social life, the compulsive nature of the act, or the dangers inherent in revealing one's innermost psychic structure to total strangers. Occasionally one runs into a really novel ideological position, such as "I don't know how." or "I know nothing worth saying."

Whatever one's reason for not writing, whatever one's level of dedication, a few tips from the pros can always help in avoiding some of the pitfalls of the nonwriting career.

Of course, the best way not to write is to have a job. Go to work for some bran-brained martinet 40 hours a week plus commute, and I can almost guarantee a 50-90% reduction in your writing urges.

But not everyone, especially nowadays, can get a job. The next most certain way of never putting pen to paper or finger to keyboard is to have friends. See them often. Encourage them to call you and talk a long time. Call them. Be invited everywhere, and don't hesitate to initiate major social events. You'll find you just don't have the time to go on those writing binges! And your concentration will be shot. Remember "Kubla Khan".

But what if you don't have a job or friends? You'd be surprised how common this is in the kind of person who really has to fight against a writing habit. Don't despair -- anyone can not write, if they know how. One of the most sure-fire techniques is available to almost everyone in this land of the public library. All you have to do is -- read! That's right -- use writing against itself. A single mystery novel can demolish a whole day's potential writing.

My own favorite way of not writing is the jot. Jotting can take either positive or negative form. I keep a giant bound volume I call Reservations (because that's what's on the cover -- it was meant as a hotel register) in which I jot down many of the exciting plot ideas, titles and phrases that come into my mind. For example, randomly:

Boring from Within: The Role of Ennui in the Collapse of Empire
Trigger Treat (hard-boiled detective novel set at Halloween)
Fiddler on the Hoof (article about catching crabs?)
Kingfish as the Fisher King: A Critical Reappraisal of Grail Imagery in Amos &
Andy
skin like chicken ankles
typewronger
Send me your tired, your poor, /Your huddled masses with a Ph.D.

The jots have prevented me from writing over a wide range of topics and tones. There's even a knock-knock joke in ancient Egyptian. Once jotted, these thoughts

are safe and secure. Forever. Sometimes I go through and read them over, and smile.

The negative jot is, of course, when you have a great plot, or name for a character, or significant observation to write down but first you have to just feed the cats... Later, you remember you thought of something really good. You can wrack your brains for it or just let it go. Either way, it's lost.

Some ways of not writing through negative jots are pretty esoteric. Others -- like always meaning to keep a notebook by your bed to catch those great ideas that come just as you're drifting off to sleep -- are all but universal. This is particularly satisfying as you are left with the knowledge that the phrase or concept -- now gone forever -- was among the truly great moments of literature.

Not writing also takes a particularly safe form for me: sometimes I write in my sleep. Poems, stories, lots of things. All I remember when I wake up are a few words. Once I broke down and wrote a poem about this odd phenomenon:

The Archaeologist

waking with words unreeling graceful
 as a readout onto the floor of consciousness:
 "--something
 dry as a desert
 something as something
 bitter as aspirin--"

starting
 at the footfall of Undream
 they vanish back
 into the dark of the machine
 like deer from the glades at dusk,
 like a cloud
 of minnows. I remain;
 slow words
 caught in the tar of wakening leave ribs, toe-bones.
 I turn the shards
 and know:
 there are
 the civilizations of the night.

Lying in a roomette long ago on Amtrak I woke in time to ambush the following couplet:

Lou Reed calls forth the prospect of the rhyme:
 Why ignore th'inventions of our mother Time?

I can only add that I know less than nothing about Lou Reed, having read one or two remarks on him in American media. The writing habit will light on any pretext for a line, paragraph or page.

Tag bits like this must be of what an old friend used to call "unherald value" to a fantasist. You can quote bits of supposed verse and song till the cows come home, building up a sturdy, thriving cultural background, without ever having to finish anything or make it relevant to reality. Tolkein is the undisputed greatest at this, with his astounding feat of reducing readers to tears in languages that don't exist. Naturally I'm not suggesting you follow his lead -- that would defeat the whole purpose of jots and oneirography as techniques of not writing.

The anti-writing potential of cleaning has opened to me since I quit work. Slowly, as I recovered from employment trauma, the pockets of filth and chaos in my home began to exert a mystic pull on my consciousness. I started to tidy. Imperceptibly the excitement mounted as long-forgotten baseboards and flooring emerged. I find myself noting dust and stains as though storing up future pleasure. I've rediscovered that childhood thrill of cleaning the schoolroom sink -- seeing immediate effects of my very own efforts upon the universe, combined with the voluptuous appreciation of smooth white porcelain miraculously freed of soapscum and poster paint. Remember that feeling? These new, clean expanses around me are like the tingle of a different environment every day. It's like standing back from a freshly made shelf or the unclean pleasure of rereading a poem you've just written with inspiration's glow still all over it: the fact that I did it myself lends a sparkle like no other. And it escalates. Yesterday I wiped a year's dust off the black and white squares of my chessboard. That night the urge to polish up the bathroom lightswitch overcame me (it yielded the brown of years to a simple damp paper towel; its whiteness catches my eye now with a tiny pleasant shock). Still later, in eager, excited convoitise de nettoyer, I grabbed a rag at 2 a.m. and got started on the curves and minute crevices of the plastic footsoldiers, mounted knights, bishops, etc. of that aforesaid chess set. After a few grimy pieces I was able to go in and sleep like a baby.

The zealous cleaner can avoid writing almost indefinitely, wrapped in virtue the while. The guilt of the sloth is not hers. Everyone knows that cleaning is self-sacrificing. For a woman, a lifetime of rigorous cleaning of the home is known to be the one foolproof means of ensuring paradise without purgatory. These are givens, and better reason never to clean anything (if you have the cold and literal mind of a child) cannot be imagined. So, what I never really got was that cleaning is also a fabulous source of instant gratification.

A double-edged discovery. Clearly things can be carried too far. Sylvia Wright cites a woman writer known to her who, in the treacherous languor of the nettoyeuse, sinks to her knees and begins picking dirt out of the cracks between the hardwood floorboards, with a hairpin. You can see where this sort of thing might lead. Fortunately the problem no one dared to name in my youth is now being brought into the open. I understand Nancy Reagan is considering heading up a War On Drudge, and there are cleaning dependency clinics in many major cities. Of course, my "problem" has never reached these proportions -- in fact I wouldn't even call it a problem. I really only do a little social cleaning now and then. Which reminds me, my Dad is supposed to come out here on a visit in two or three months and I don't want the place looking like a hovel. I'd better go and polish up the rest of those chess pieces.

(Now, many months after this article was written, further proofs can be offered of the dangers of writing even a little, if your goal is to not write. Within days of having written down her perceptions about cleaning as a technique of avoiding writing, the author found she had entirely lost all desire to clean. Her apartment rapidly deteriorated, and, when last heard from, she was mumbling something about "pubbing her ish".)

"I'll wager you a dozen of champagne on it." Wedge seemed to recall that he was one whom the service of literature kept on the near fringes of destitution. "That is," he emended, "a dozen of drinkable Beaujolais."

Michael Innes, The Case of Sonia Wayward

The Sex Question Answer Form

(Please do not use for "regular" letters of comment.)

You may print my name with my answer.

Please print my answer anonymously.

Name: _____
(Please fill in even if you wish to remain anonymous in print.)

Question #4: Most people have erotic awareness long before they have sex. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear; think back: What was the first erotic sensation you remember?

Answers to the Sex Question will be printed as "anonymous" unless you check the "print my name" box above. Names of other people or identifiers ("my wife", etc.) will be changed or the whole answer rendered anonymous unless I also have written permission from that person. (Exception: persons referring to molestation by relatives or named adults.) If you need more room, use the back or attach other sheets. Briefer nitty-gritty replies will be more highly prized by Ye Ed. than abstract essayistic ones. Nevertheless, do your thing.

Less a Review Than a 96th Thesis

I just paid \$2.00 to see Dune.

I was robbed.

From the first inept words, in which, after an unbelievably gratuitous "Oh yes -- I forgot" lead-in, one of the key plot secrets of the book is revealed, to the last interminably galling battle scene, in which people are burned alive, blown to bits and eaten to the sweet lauds of a heavenly choir, this movie is the most grotesque botch ever to waste Hollywood's celluloid.

Who? Who dropped nearly every one of the superbly dramatic scenes that cram the novel -- that made it a best seller almost unique in the history of science fiction -- to replace them with vacuous drivel and loud bangs? Can we ever know where to place our censure? The scriptwriter responsible for this travesty would clearly be incapable of pinpointing the dramatic moments in the last three days of the life of Christ; but could we not even so have been spared such scintillating dialog as "How are you?" "I feel fine.", "I'm alive! I'm alive! I'm alive! I'm alive!" and -- three or four times -- "Arrakis. Dune. The Desert Planet." Such few trivial incidents and phrases as were salvaged from the book are unerringly mangled.

Some actors are so unfit their selection could only be attributed to the casting couch, were it not that all decisions toward this production were equally sheepwitted. The "star", who ought to have looked 14 years old, was blatantly in his 20s and, to put it kindly, lacked sparkle. Others, for example Jessica, the Emperor, and the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam, struggle grimly to overcome sceneless scenes and useless dialog. The charisma and natural sensuality of Sting stand out like the Koh-i-noor in a pile of navy beans. But nothing mere actors could do would have saved this turkey. The decision to bomb had been made at a higher level, and no Enola Gay ever carried out its mission with more accuracy.

The sweep and spaciousness indispensable to the epic are not even attempted. Ever set is claustrophobic. Slackjawed drool (heartplugs, for godsakes) replaces Herbert's fertile invention. The depth of relationships would have disgraced a Flash Gordon tv episode of the 50s.

Has every brain in Hollywood been so vitiated that it can be fascinated only by noise and flashing lights? Is not one left there, after the great eras of the adventure film, able to recognize the factors necessary for the barest audience identification with characters? What major filmmaker even 15 years ago would have accepted this mishmash of a script, this doltish costuming, this misconception of setting, and this edenic lack of awareness of an audience's desires? That last is what my mind cannot assimilate. Almost any one of the book's millions of readers could have pointed out the basic tactical errors of such a script. Yet the freebase fog that has settled over Tinseltown's already minimal intelligence is apparently such that these squads of highly -- nay, obscenely -- paid men are unable to distinguish gorgeous popular craftwork from boring inanity. I say nothing here of art. I make no idealistic demands. I question only the chowderheadedness that cannot even copy well, that cannot recognize the very entertainment it has paid huge sums to option and purchase. The lack of grasp of their material by these men surpasses the simian. English words do not exist to intimate such abysses of dotardy.

This is not merely the film of decadence; this is the film of irremediable corruption.

It is enough to make me think that, worldwide, some sumptuary law ought to be enacted forbidding the total waste of sums in excess of, say, one million \$U.S., on pain of donating an equal sum to starving peoples. After a second offense, perpetrators would be denied access to large-scale spending decisions of any kind. Under such law, the makers of Dune would already have been fined, and their further work permitted only quamdiu se bene gesserit: roughly, "on good behavior".

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????????????????THE SEX QUESTION????????????????????
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What's the Funniest Thing That Ever Happened To You in a Sexual Situation?

This time a lot of people responded with versions of "you had to be there". It turns out to be surprisingly difficult to translate a funny sexual experience into words. There were those, on the other hand, whose experience was all too vivid...

Loren MacGregor I was 19, she was 18. In Washington State terms, she was "legal", I wasn't; she kept saying she "could be arrested for seducing a minor." We fooled around and fooled around and one day, at a party in Seattle, we finally made it into the sack together. It was at a gathering of science fiction fans and I was quite naive. At one point we were in the same sleeping bag together, and we both had our pants off, and I was up and she was ready, and I said...

"Hold it for a minute. I've got to think this out." We were in a houseboat, and I carefully put on my pants (though not my shoes; I could always come back and get those), walked through the roomful of people, out the door and down to the end of the pier, where I stared into Lake Union, looking for an answer. "The Catholic Church says sex without marriage is wrong," I mused. "If I really believed that" -- here comes the marvel of specious reasoning -- "I don't think I'd be responding." I was acutely aware of my painful erection, still tenting the left leg of my pants. "I'm responding." The fastest rejection of Catholicism on (my) record took place: I went back in to be with Lora.

I liked it. The old in-and-out was much more fun than I'd imagined. But I wasn't sure this was "true love"; I wasn't sure it would last. So, just in case it didn't, I got up, got dressed, and went out to the party to borrow busfare home. Then I went in and fucked Lora some more. Then, convinced, I went out and returned the busfare. Then I went back and...

Lora (need I add?) was incredibly patient with me; and I finally caught on to how silly I was being, and began to laugh; and then we were both laughing, hysterically; and just about that time a dozen or more of the drunken, stoned science fiction fans decided to conduct a scientific experiment by all going to one side of the houseboat -- the side where we were, uh, "sleeping", and jumping up and down in unison. So Lora and I were in the sack together, giggling uncontrollably, and letting the motion of the houseboat, which was by this time considerable, rock me in and out of her, and I kept coming and so did she and that was my first experience with heterosexual sex. I couldn't wait to repeat it.

And I did. If we found ourselves alone for ten minutes (even if we knew it was only ten minutes, and someone was likely to be by) we'd end up fucking like bunnies.

Well, at a con, I got sick. Too much work, too little sleep, too much alcohol, and a stimulus level that had to be seen to be believed. Suddenly I was having chills and fever and the shakes and my pulse was racing and my blood pressure was dropping... Lickety split, through the streets of Portland in a beat-up VW van and screeching to a halt in front of the emergency room... I remember stumbling back to my friends, and saying, "Um, he, uh, says I have 'battle fatigue'."

This is all preamble. I returned to Seattle on the train, with Lora and Ginny, another close friend. It was the middle of summer, hotter than blazes, the train was not air conditioned, and though I was doing better I was still not doing well. And Ginny is the most persuasive speaker you've ever heard in your life, really beyond belief. The result was that, on a train that was otherwise totally and completely packed, Ginny had convinced the railroad employees to reserve the last car for the three of us.

Now, it was innocent to begin with, Lora asking me with great solicitude if I wasn't just a trifle warm. So I took off my shirt. Then Lora took off hers. Then Ginny, not to be outdone, took off her shirt. Lora pointed out differences and similarities.

Then they both decided it was only appropriate and would further my education if they demonstrated the further differences between two women, one quite large, one rather slim and, really, almost androgynous. Then Lora (I think, or maybe Ginny) decided that pure visual demonstration wasn't enough, and that it wasn't fair that they be benefitting from the cool of total disencumbrance while I, who was sick, was still partially clothed, and that that thing sticking up there looked as if it was adding to my discomfort and Lora felt honorbound to do something about it, so they both helped to make me more comfortable and one thing led to another and then the Catholic nun from the first car opened the door on her way to the back of the train.

Yvonne Coopmans Actually this is more of a funny situation that turned sexual. While in college, I had a friend who was a photography major. He had asked me to be a "model" for a photographic requirement which involved pouring chocolate syrup on my torso. In the process of regulating the rivers and streams of chocolate, he began to lick me, and it didn't take long for us to forget the reason why we were in such a situation to begin with...but since we were already lovers was an easy step to make. The photographs were not that sensational, as I recall, but the smell of chocolate was an asset to the whole process. Highly recommended if you both like chocolate!

Lisa LaBia Well, the funniest way I ever got involved in a sexual situation was when I was eighteen and I went to get a perm at the local hair salon. I ended up being the last client of the night, and with half of my head in rollers -- WHAM! -- the hairdresser gave it to me right in the chair. He was very nice and didn't charge me for the do!

But the funniest thing that happened during sex was when a lover & I were having deep passionate sex. He was going down on me and I was thinking "This time I think I can really come from this...!" We were both moaning & groaning and suddenly he looked up and his face was covered in blood, so were the sheets, and my legs -- it was everywhere! Nope -- it wasn't THAT TIME. He got his first bloody nose. If he only could have held out for a few more minutes!!

Susan Crites Several years back Caro and I used to put on a little pseudo-con, Mountain Con by name, where fannish friends could have

fun in the great outdoors. People were allowed to bring other friends we hadn't met yet, and one year a non-fannish but cute guy was there, looking a little lonely. So I made a special effort to make him feel at home. Him not being a fan, it took him a while to catch my drift (I finally had to bite him), but once he figured it out, he happily slipped away with me, looking for a private bit of mountain-side. We stumbled around in the dead dark for awhile, going higher and further from the camp. Finally we found what seemed like a good spot, and like a true gentleman he took off his windbreaker so I wouldn't get pine needles in my behind. Unfortunately, windbreakers tend to be slick, and every time we'd get going real good, we'd find ourselves sliding downhill. The first time was deliciously scary, with the mental image of skiing down and sliding dramatically through the crowd singing around the campfire...but eventually, we were both laughing so hard we had to give up on romance for the evening.

Does accidental nudity count? I've been mc of the masquerade at MileHiCon for a few years now, and I always do a costume involving painting myself some odd color. The year I came as Eccentrica Gallumbits we had a crummy hotel, and during the masquerade, the cheap movable wall between the function room and the art show fell down, sending art flats tumbling like dominos. Being closest, I leapt first to the rescue. Two of my three breasts came loose from the costume, only one artificial. Someone tossed it back politely. None of the art was hurt badly, so it was all okay. I was just sorry I had neglected to put the makeup on my breasts, too -- I hate messing up a costume illusion!

Janice Murray The funniest thing that happened to me during sex had to do with my first boyfriend. It was the autumn of 1973, and I was seeing a member of the Seattle University basketball team. We were feeling playful (it was also my first experience with cocaine) and discovered his roommate was using the apartment at the time. He had a Volkswagen Bug and we thought it might be exciting to do it in the car, what with the danger of being caught and all. Unfortunately, this six-foot-eight-and-a-half-inches tall gentleman was redshirted (put on injured reserve) for the rest of the basketball season after he put his knee through the back window. I just wonder what excuse he gave his coach. I guess there are some advantages to being five foot three, after all.

Jeffrey Lankin I was driving to Kansas City and I'd gotten off to a late start -- we're talking 8 hours late, it's 4:30 a.m. and I haven't had but four hours' sleep in two days, but I'm driving along and all of a sudden the sky just opened. Whomp -- I mean it poured. So I'm driving through this downpour and I see this Marine at the side of the road. It's too late and I've already gone past him. But I think, that guy is never going to get a ride, there is nobody on the road. So I figure, well, if I come to an exit in the next couple of miles I'll go back. So, I come to an exit...get off, turn around, and I go back and pick him up. "Where you heading?" "Kansas City." I tell him that's where I'm going, I can give him a ride all the way there. Fine. So then he says, "Do you smoke?" I say yes, Camels. "I mean do you smoke marijuana?" "Oh -- well, I tried it once, but it doesn't have any effect on me." -- which I later realized was because it had been really lousy grass. So, we smoke this joint. And I'm doing fine until about two hours later suddenly I realize I can't drive any more. I couldn't keep my eyes open. "Look, I'm sorry," I said, "but I've got to stop, I'm falling asleep. But if they have a double room we could split it and later I can drive you into K.C." He said that sounded okay.

So we get a room. He's wearing that tight Marine uniform -- they cut them to fit that way on purpose so you can't gain weight -- and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, showing in his pants. He goes in and takes a shower and then he comes walking out of the bathroom, no clothes on, and I look -- hm: mouse meat. I mean this was the smallest penis I'd ever seen. It was TINY. So he says, "You wanna fool around?" Well...I figure that's about what I can deal with in my condition so I say okay. And we're getting a little excited. And he started to fluff up. And he fluffed. And he fluffed. And he fluffed and he fluffed -- I'm not kidding you, finally that thing was as big as an arm, and the head was like an apple stuck on the end.

I looked at him and I said, "Uh..."

And he told me, "Look, don't worry about it. I've never met anyone, male or female, who could handle it. We'll just do other stuff."

And that's what we did -- frottage. But the most amazing thing was that, before, his penis had been literally just about the size of my thumb!

The other funniest thing that happened was the night before I left England I went out for a walk. I was staying in a hotel that backed up on Charing Cross Station, so I was walking through Trafalgar Square -- I knew it was known for its hustlers but I wasn't looking for anything like that. This very good-looking man came up to me...I couldn't think of any polite way of mentioning that I was neither buying nor selling, so when he finally asked, "You want to come back to my place?" I just said "Yes."

Well, we got there and we made it and it was quite nice, and we got to talking, and he asked me if I'd enjoyed my stay in England. "I loved it, I only wish I could stay longer, but I'm out of money." He said, "Well, did you get to do everything you wanted to do?" "Almost." I recounted some of my adventures, and added, "I did have one fantasy that I couldn't fulfill -- I wanted to have sex with an English bobby."

"What!" He laughed. "Well, how do you know you haven't?"

"There's that. But I mean in uniform."

"Are you serious?" I said I was. He thought for a minute, then asked, "Do you really have to leave England tomorrow?"

"I have my ticket on the ten a.m. flight from Heathrow."

"Oh."

After a while he went out of the room, and I lay there thinking over the highlights of my visit, of which this night was one -- but I didn't realize how much so till I looked up at the bedroom door. And there was the guy, in complete English police uniform, the cape, the helmet, everything!

Yes he was a real bobby-- and yes we fulfilled my last unsatisfied wish about England.

Anonymous woman Humor is one of my knee-jerk panic reflexes. This causes somewhat fewer casualties than behaving like Rambo when scared, but the fallout frequently takes years to clear up.

Anyway, sometime before I officially came out to my mother about being gay, and sometime after my mother realized that something strange was going on with her fragile flower of femininity (me), I was helping my mother cook dinner by slicing carrots with a large extremely sharp knife. Completely out of the blue my mother asked me "Dear, how do you become a lesbian?" This is not the kind of question that should be asked of anyone working with a large sharp knife. I put the knife down, counted my fingers, took a deep breath and in an absolutely straight tone of voice I replied, "Well Mom, you see it's like this: You go to a gay bar and you ask the bartender for a lesbian card. It's about this big, and bright lavender. Then you pick up a lesbian and you go home and you sleep with her, and she stamps your

lesbian card, and that's how you become a lesbian."

My mother thought about this for a while and then said, "You're kidding, aren't you?"

Anonymous woman After my marriage of five years had ended I was in bed with another man, and was hit in the eye with a jet of sperm. It seemed that my husband, after all of those years of accusing me of being frigid was, in fact, sexually dysfunctional himself, in that his ejaculations were mere dribbles. I was unprepared for a normal discharge. After my partner convinced me that his ejaculation was normal, I laughed myself into hiccups. It might not seem tremendously funny to some people, but while wiping cum and tears from my face, the irony of life had its way with me.

Anonymous woman It was funny in retrospect. At the time I wondered "why the hell am I doing this?" It was completely unlike my naturally reticent sexual behavior in the past. But then I had just survived 3 intensely emotional days at a convention.

Three of us stayed up all night after the Dead Dog party, finally collapsing into a large bed around 4 a.m. The guy slept between me and my girlfriend. We were pretty loopy and slept fitfully. A couple hours later the guy started fondling me and in my half-dead state this seemed okay even though I didn't have any feelings of lust for this person when I was fully conscious. I didn't really think about my girlfriend being in the same bed.

Eventually we wiggled around enough to be pretty serious about intercourse. We were actually in the process of Doing It when the guy pulled out too far, re-aimed his penis, and accidentally entered the anus. I let out an unholy screech, my girlfriend jumped up yelling at us and grabbed the blankets off the bed to go sleep in the hallway. I collapsed in pain and laughter, unable to complete any more action.

Anonymous editor I was working as a model in an art school, and was on some kind of birth control pill; whatever the reason, my libido was occasionally going into overdrive, and one day the sight of a cute young artist in paint-smearred overalls was too much for me. At lunch hour I hot-footed it up to the women's room on the top floor, as likely to be the most deserted. Fingers have never been my thing, so I wadded up my jacket and put it against the only accessible solid object, the toilet seat, and started to rub off on it. Since I'm also never without a fantasy, I started repeating the name of the guy I was currently hanging around with. It wasn't till I'd come a couple of times to the sound of "John...John..." that I realized I'd been addressing my actual, er, partner by its nickname, and completely cracked up. I'm grateful no one walked in to find a lunatic draped across the toilet, giggling helplessly.

As usual, there were also some belated responses to earlier Sex Questions:

Janice Murray (What Surprised You About Sex?) The thing that surprised me about sex was the Female Orgasm. For more years than I care to remember I thought the female orgasm was a fabrication of the fertile (sorry) male imagination. I honestly thought it was a conspiracy men thought up to help cajole women into the sack. "I'll make it worth your while" is a line I heard a lot. Judging by the information I was able to compile

from Everything You Always Wanted To Know..., etc. it didn't sound like they would be doing me that great a favor. "Go to bed with me and I'll give you something remarkably similar to an epileptic seizure." Thanks a lot. I still harbor a lot of resentment about the so-called "sexual revolution". I found it particularly amusing when it occurred to me how easy it is to "fake it". Right out of high school all boys had a pretty grandiose opinion of their own ability. Just arch your back, growl a little and rake your fingers along their backs. Eighteen year old boys are so gullible. Of course, when I did eventually succeed in short-circuiting I thought I was having a heart attack. "What in the hell is happening? Oh, really? No kidding? Hey, that's not too bad!" That was about ten years ago. I think about my former naivete sometimes and wonder at the Marvels of Neurology. There are times when it actually does live up to its outrageous propaganda.

Loren MacGregor What surprised me about sex was that I didn't need lessons. Generally speaking, of course; I've needed some specific lessons, and had them, and they were. Specific, I mean. Yes, there. Now move your hand like this. A little more to the left. Now lick it, just with the tip of your tongue. Yeah! (I could use more lessons like that; I really like them.)

(And:) Is there something that scared me about sex? Yes: everything. I was afraid of masturbating (and didn't, until after my first experience with a woman). I was afraid of anal sex. I was afraid of being gay. I was afraid I couldn't perform with a woman. (I was even afraid that I was abnormal because after I reached orgasm I never lost my desire for sex, and never (unless I/we got up and did something else immediately) lost my erection, unless I'd already come three or four times. Everything I read said men came once and that was it; my god, I thought, where does that leave me?)

Debbie Notkin What always scared me about sex was not being Good At It, not Knowing How. It isn't clear to me why I didn't read sex manuals to learn more, but I've always had a sneaking romantic vision of sex which involves learning about it from partners rather than books. I was never sure I'd know how to behave in bed (and I think it's extremely telling that my orgasmic response looks and sounds a lot like that of a woman I had as a lover very early in my sexual development, when I was more or less pre-orgasmic myself).

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A lot of women are, I think they're kind of confused about what they want. They want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to have all the benefits of having a lover, and a man that adores them and on the other hand they want to be independent and they don't want to feel like anyone's telling them what to do.

... Young male journalist, in a tone of great resentment

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ROUTINE STREET SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Linda Frankel

"I do not get assaulted or verbally harrassed every time I walk out of my front door, and I have a crewcut. I do not live in a state of seige." From "Among Us, Against Us: The New Puritans" by Pat Califia

"I don't think sex, or most sex, is grubby or deadly or dire. I think, though, that the notion of sex I grew up with had one resounding element of truth: sex is everywhere, informing everything we do. You can have sex without realizing it at all, seduce and not know it, be attacked and never touched. It is insidious, mutable, in ways that still astonish me; a tyrant sometimes, a traitor at others." From the "Hers" column in the NEW YORK TIMES, May 1982, by Jennifer Allen

When I first read the quote above by Pat Califia I was incensed because it simply wasn't true of my experience, and I am no puritan. I was on Pat Califia's side in the feminist sex wars. Still, I am subjected to regular sexual harassment on the street. I believe that this is a ubiquitous aspect of the experience of many women that Pat Califia is denying. In order to set out to prove that this is so, I took careful records of my experiences for a period of two months. This article will describe what happened to me, and give my views of the causes of such incidents.

The most common form of sexual harassment I have encountered takes place on the bus. Sometimes men who sit next to me fondle me, but that is not nearly so common as seat crowding which happens every day. In my experience, women never take up extra space unless they really do need it, but many men seem to think it is their right to sit as wide as they like, and to shove the woman next to them against the wall. Why is this sexual harassment? It is sexual harassment because it is a behavior involving physical touching by men directed at women. Also, space is power. If men can claim more space than women, then they are demonstrating women's subordination to them.

There were a number of more unusual incidents:

5/4/87 - While I was passing a phone booth, a man halted his phone conversation to leap out at me, and attempted to fondle my breast, but I moved too fast. Later, I observed a black woman chasing a white man past the bus stop where I was standing. She was shouting: "White men ain't allowed to want my body!"

5/5/87 - While waiting for the bus home: a man in a window above the bus stop made kissing sounds at me, and shouted in Spanish the entire half hour I waited for the bus.

5/15/87 - While waiting for the bus home: a man said to me, "If you want to fuck with somebody, just keep putting out that pussy."

5/19/87 - Waiting for the bus: just outside my front door, at an unusual time for me, there were a bunch of male schoolchildren who shouted, "Screw you, white lady" and rotated their pelvises shouting "bitch" at me. I don't think any were older than ten years old. Later, coming out of the local post office, a man in a car passing by made kissing sounds at me and shouted, "Come with me, babe." Then, on the bus on the way home, I looked out the window, and saw a man dragging a woman by the hair. She was screaming. This took place in a major heroin dealing area, and it was evening.

6/25/87 - I overheard a woman on the bus telling a story. She said that she'd refused to have sex with a man who lived next to her. He followed her

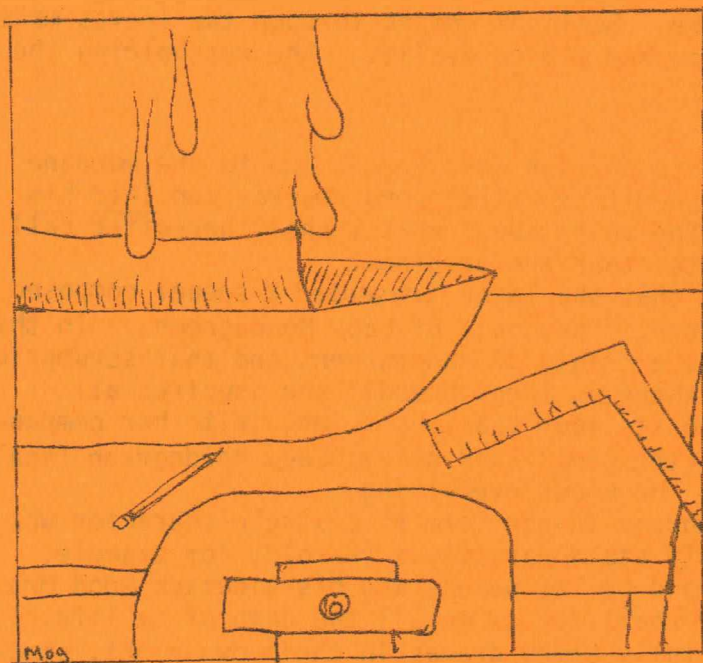
to a disco, and attempted to rape another woman there. He was thrown out of the disco. The next day he told the woman who was speaking that his assault on the other woman at the disco was all her fault.

7/12/87 - On the bus, a man was flirting with an unreceptive woman across the aisle. When she did not respond, he called her stupid and continued to do so for the next twenty minutes until she got off.

Obviously, if I had a car I wouldn't have been exposed to any of this. I did have access to a car at times during the months of June and July, which accounts for the fact that there were more incidents in May. I recently read a study on the usage of public transportation by women. In most lower middle class families, if there is a car, it is the man that gets to use it. Women are expected to use public transportation even if they must go shopping and carry many packages. This means that lower middle class and lower class women spend more time on the street than their more fortunate sisters.

Another factor here is race. I am a white woman who lives in a black neighborhood. The most obvious examples of racial tension in this account are the observed incident of the black woman chasing the white man on 5/4, and the incident I had with the school children on 5/19, but I am convinced that many or even most of the incidents that I have experienced are fundamentally caused by the race issue. On another day, a black child on a bicycle asked me if I was rich. She assumed that I had to be rich because I was white. The black schoolchildren were probably envious of me, thinking I was privileged because of my race, and lashed out at me in consequence. This goes to the root of what sexual harassment is all about -- it is using sex to express hostility, as in rape, but it is a milder form.

Because it is milder, and because it is so common, many men and women don't think of street sexual harassment as a serious problem. I didn't think it was serious either for a long time. It was just the way the world was. Yet feminism is about uncovering the sexual politics of events that occur every day in women's lives. So I think it's time we dealt with street sexual harassment, and that we recognize that differences of class and race can be aggravating factors that make it more common in some women's lives than in other women's.



Copy Editor of the Year
Award:

"Lighting. I put one-hundred-foot candles uniformly on the drafting table. Reduces fatigue and improves performance with no extra effort."

in Herbert Resnicow's
The Gold Solution

Rocking the Mondegreen

Sylvia Wright is one of the many unsung geniuses of female humor. She's the one who wrote the classic female response to Robert Graves in "Me as White Goddess". The one who defined for all time the relationship between opera and housework. The one who expounded the hidden beauties of the Italian-English/English-Italian dictionary of Prof. W. Backford.

You never heard of her, right? Joanna Russ will tell you why that is, but meanwhile I need you to know about Wright because you have to know about mondegreens. Wright discovered and named the elusive critters, and no one explains them better than she did in "The Death of Lady Mondegreen":

When I was a child, my mother used to read aloud to me from Percy's Reliques. One of my favorite poems began, as I remember:

Ye Highlands and ye Lowlands,
Oh, where hae ye been?
They hae slain the Earl Amurray,
And Lady Mondegreen.

I saw it all clearly. The Earl had yellow curly hair and a yellow beard and of course wore a kilt. He was lying in a forest clearing with an arrow in his heart. Lady Mondegreen lay at his side, her long, dark-brown curls spread out over the moss. She wore a dark-green dress embroidered with light-green leaves outlined in gold. It had a low neck trimmed with white lace (Irish lace, I believe). An arrow had pierced her throat. From it, blood trickled down over the lace. Sunlight coming through the leaves made dappled shadows on her cheeks and her closed eyelids. She was holding the Earl's hand.

It made me cry.

Wright refuses, and rightly so, to abandon this tragic duo to the mundane logic that points out that in the poem they killed Lord Amurray and laid him on the green. As she maintains, "The point about what I shall hereafter call mondegreens...is that they are better than the original."

Wright was so convinced of this that she later presented a sequel composed of mondegreens sent in by her readers, "The Quest of Lady Mondegreen". In this saga Lady M. sets out to discover the origin of mondegreens and that scrumptious tea-time favorite, fancy bread. "Where is fancy bread?" she inquires all across her country, Tizzathee, with its four spacious skies. With her companions Round John Virgin and Gladly (the Cross-Eyed Bear), Lady Mondegreen finally decides she had better ask Harold. He knows everything.

Though mondegreens frequently appear in the form of a single character who transforms and galvanizes previously staid narratives (Harold, for example: "Our Father who art in heaven, Harold be Thy name", and his sidekick Good Mrs. Murphy -- "Surely Good Mrs. Murphy shall follow me all the days of my life."), they occasionally spring forth as fully-armed dramas in their own right, some-

times even from a print medium, as Wright learned:

One day I found, on the back page of the New York Post, a headline: GIANTS STRUGGLE UNDER WEIGHT OF 'DEAD' BATS. This is one of the most terrifying scenes I can think of, particularly since there seemed to be some doubt as to whether the bats are really dead. That would be bad enough, but if they were all stirring and squeaking --

The leftover Victorian poetry of Wright's childhood was also prone to this sort of thing:

And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.

As Delany has observed, an idea like this last line's could be fresh and meaning in science fiction (can't you just hear it redone in Zelazny's voice?) We may owe many an s-f conceit to the skews bad poetry implanted in our little psyches. Certainly it gave Tolkien precedent for ruining the last quarter of The Return of the King with a bunch of spurious conjunctions (one sixth of the above verselet is "ands", Biblical chaff among the alien corn), so why not assume conceptual influences, too, weave the soporifics?

The eye can create its own mondegreens. The other day I caught a glimpse in a used-book store window of the title Dwarfism Defended. On second glance, it was actually Darwinism Defended -- a much less arresting theme.

Despite such variants, the true mondegreen is but rarely available through a direct interface with print. Only a culture that reads aloud to children, or otherwise exposes them to words and phrases they don't understand, can boast a rich tradition of mondegreens. Sermons and hymns, carols and poetry, anthems, pledges and folksongs -- the mondegreen survives only where there are orally transmitted pieces, and the fact that it survives today in America is startling evidence that, despite widespread literacy and tv's illustrated, simplified, mondegreen-proof vocabulary, we still acquire a large part of our learning via the ancient routes of folk wisdom.

Note that the mondegreen is not baby-talk, i.e., mispronunciation, but a substitution of the known word for the unknown, in a pretty astounding demonstration of faith: the child often can't really make sense of the mondegreen, but accepts this version unquestioningly, part of that grown-up world that cannot be questioned -- it can only be accepted as the nature of reality, unexplainable and given.

This is the state of mind, the contemplation of which now renders me humble and wordless, in which my sister and I year after year sang gaily about dashing thru the snow in a one-horse soap and sleigh. We couldn't really grasp this image, but it never occurred to us to question it. One wonders what effect such mondegreens have on children's worldview...what Cheryl Cline, for example, now so deeply interested in cooking and cookbooks, made of the annual direction she received -- "Brown yon Virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender" etc.

Religion wanes apace, the poetry of eld gives way to Little Golden Books; some of Wright's examples are unrecognizable to the modern reader. But other sources of mondegreens have sprung up, foremost among them the cheap radio in its role as transliterator of Top 40 (in my day it was Top Ten) music. Mushroomed rockers sliding by the PMRC on skateboards of incomprehensibility probably aren't using difficult vocabulary and syntax, but, as even in the bygone days of adult naivete when lyrics about LSD permeated the airwaves like gay in-jokes in 1940s movies, low-fi and blues convention result in a new form: the rock mondegreen.

Now, there are mistakes about rock and pop that aren't mondegreens. Until my sister corrected me, I innocently sang,

I got sunshine on a cloudy day.
 When it's cold outside, I got the month of May.
 I guess you'll say
 What could make me feel this way --
 Magic -- talking 'bout magic....

One example demonstrates the difference between an ordinary error, which results in little that is really new, and the fearless inventiveness of the mondegreen that uproots whole systems of thought: compare the above with the startling endearment my sister herself sprang on the world, singing along to "He's a Walking Marigold".

It can't be denied that sometimes this naive acceptance of the inexplicable lives in us to quite an advanced age. At 13 I still hummed along to these words sung by someone named Bobby (all male singers were named Bobby at that period):

Oh a tree in motion
 Walking by my side
 A picture of devotion
 Keeps my eyes open wide...

It would keep my eyes open too, nowadays, but in 1961 I saw nothing to goggle at in this independent invention of the entwife. (Could it be that the sense of wonder is dependent upon the loss of credulity? As fans, we probably ought to think about this.) Of course, I assumed the tree was a metaphor, and that made it reasonable to me. It is only to the rutbound brain of the adult that one metaphor seems tame while another jars the very foundations of perception.

Sometimes, for an adult, the lifespan of the mondegreen is only the few heady nanoseconds between perception and rejection. Still, such mondegreens are at least as real as the exotic particles visionary physicists claim to have seen on their screens, and many of them originate in the rock gestalt. Loren MacGregor reports that everyone he knows experienced the momentary Twilight Zone of hearing Niel Diamond's bitter accusation in "Long Gone",

You're not the devil,
 But you're Marcus Welby.

Undeniably pithier than the "you might as well be" that appears in the published lyrics. Other adult mondegreens linger on, suspect but unverifiable. Lynn Kuehl was probably unconvinced when Bruce Springsteen lamented being

Hung up like a douche,
 Run over in the night.

And Denny Lien wondered when he heard The Who declaim,

Happy Jack was a clam, but he wasn't that,
 He lived in the sand by the automat --

though, tv wrestling fan that he is, he may not have given it a second thought that a Cuban folksong seemed to be celebrating the attractions of "One-Ton Romero... guajira One-Ton Romero..."

That the mondegreen is relevant to science fiction, and hence to fanzines, can be shown by the fact that the novel Riddley Walker is written almost entirely in mondegreens; the sf/f ur-mondegreen has history stretching back to L'Engle's Happy Medium and many tales of generation starships whose crews have forgotten Earth; and there's the complex visual mondegreen that is Zardoz. The rock mondegreen's relevance to sex is obvious if you consider only the number of variant readings of and resultant divergently indignant responses to That Line in "Brown Sugar". I'm only surprised not to have heard any objections from gay groups, because it's clear to me Mick Jagger is singing "Just like a faggot should", no matter what it says in the songbook. Directly relevant or not, though, MAJOON feels a duty to preserve the mondegreen. Send me your misheard, your unsure, your huddled mondegreens

yearning to breathe free... The mondegreen is a spontaneous folk creativity that complicates the universe in the teeth of entropy, that opposes the process of homogenization. Mass media itself is willy-nilly sucked into this creative wellspring, to emerge unrecognizable and asparkle, new-washed in the subconscious dew.

The world needs more mondegreens.

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Mog --

This is a letter a guy I work with just had to write to Herb Caen (of the Chronicle, remember?) after checking USA Today for the major league standings.

Best fishes,

Bruce

Mr. Caen:

Here is an item that might be "column-worthy". On the cover of today's issue of "USA Today" (that fine newspaper) ran this small article:

Names by the thousands

Today's editions of USA TODAY include more than 100,000 names on the Kellogg's Corn Flakes Honor Roll.	join the Honor Roll. To accommodate the response, USA TODAY is: Running a two-page, four-color centerpiece in all the four sections -- News, Money, Sports, Life.
Millions of Kellogg's Corn Flakes boxes in 1987 carried a special promotion that offered to print the consumer's name free in the July 1 paper.	Splitting the names into 12 regions. Consumers' names appear only in papers printed in the regions in which they live.
Consumers were asked to return the box's mail-in certificate to	

My interest was piqued, as they say, so I turned to the centerfolds and there, in fact, were thousands of names listed on the Kellogg's Corn Flakes Honor Roll: only the California names appearing in my issue. The entrants were listed alphabetically under their cities, which also appeared in alphabetical order. I went directly to the San Francisco list (to see if anyone I knew could possibly have submitted their name), and found this:

Lourdes Villalobas, Joe A Yohn, San Francisco—Nambla, Alfred B Adler, Sarah Bacon, Anthony Baez, Henry J Bagley, Stanley W Bailey Jr, Christine M Balma, Augie Bau, Fred Beck, Natalie Benavitch, Thomas A Bernheim, Richard W Biermann, David Blessinger, Nora F Blessinger, Rel Bochat, Howard M Buell, Linda Burden,

Nambla, as you probably know, is an acronym for the North American Man-Boy Love Association, a gay pedophile group. Now, I'm gay myself, but I still find it pretty hilarious that this should be the first entry on San Francisco's Kellogg's Corn Flakes Honor Roll. The Kellogg's computer must have taken "Nambla" for a one-word name (like "Madonna") and for that reason put it ahead of the alphabetized two-part names.

Hope you can use this.

Mark R. Harris

State
A rash of biting attacks in Lake Mendocino may be catfish angered by delayed sex and too little food. Page A3.



Later that year, Bruce sent this clipping in on a postcard, commenting,

This was listed in the July 23rd SF Chronicle as the most important thing going on in the state. A Chron headline a few weeks ago was: "Why the Earth Wobbles!" Talk about impactful! Mr. Harris' flake item got used in Herb Caen's column. 103° on the corner of Van Ness & Sacramento Streets last Sunday. Things are back to abnormal around here.

Bruce

Almost forgot! Zipper graphic on page 4: Caro Hedge.