

Ideas are welcome. As far as I know, Jan still plans on calling her new fanzine *New Moon* and for the time being no magazine coming out of Madison will bear the name *Janus* after *Janus* 18 is published...

I've started to do some work for *The Feminist Connection* a new newspaper in town. The logo below is one I designed for a continuing column. I'm rather pleased with it. Besides doing artwork I will probably be doing some writing for them as well. The latest *Bread and Roses* (local feminist literature zine, distributed nationally) has just come out with some of my work in it. This is feeling good, getting my work in places other than fannish press. It feels good, too, knowing that there are feminist periodicals springing up all over the place. *B&R* didn't turn out as well as I expected it would (mainly because they would rather deal with me only as an artist: I'm not sure whether they are influenced more by their feeling that artists don't write or that SF isn't Literature). But I am shying away from getting involved at all with the editorial board from this point on and just continuing to submit art as they request it.

Studies continue with regard to the Great Gomoll Iron Deficiency Mystery. No answers yet. On another health front: I go into the hospital next week (Novem-

ber 14) to have a tubal ligation done. No more pills!!

Last week I was visiting at my folks house (for my little 11 yr. old brother's birthday) and my sister and I went to a male strip bar. Very weird. Not a turn-on at all. Most obvious was the fact that there was no role-reversal going on except in a most superficial manner. That is that men were undressing. Even though there were only women in the audience (men being excluded during show-times) and thus vastly outnumbering the male performers, it was still the women who were being made into objects. As the dancers strutted down the aisles they'd sometimes pull the women's faces into their crotches (when they'd gotten down to g-strings). I was horrified. Whereas women strippers need the bouncers' protection from very possible rape, the announcer at this performance actually encouraged women to "go on out there girls, attack him!" No woman took him up on the suggestion: obviously the male strippers (dancing mostly to themselves in the enormous mirrors that covered most of the wall space) had no fears of the women. After the show was over—and an extremely amateurish show it seemed to be (the dancers awkwardly undressing, with no breakaway clothes, and dancing badly at that), male customers flowed in, en masse. We zoomed out, not managing to avoid a couple men who assumed that all the women in the bar were primed and ready for and wanting any man.



The
Feminist Month
In Review

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Mailing Comments

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Joan Gordon You refer to cats as "a cheaper, but often equally pleasurable substitute for kids."

Well, if having kids is a possibility that one imagines with pleasure, I suppose the substitute also assumes that sense. On the other hand, there are other emotions than pleasure that fill my mind when I imagine the possible scenario of children (or cats) in my life.

To be serious now. Thank you *very much* for the bibliography of Australian feminist lit. Thank John for me too. I just saw the film of *My Brilliant Career*—and thought that it was marvelous and charming—and am very eager to read it now, as well as the other books on your list. I'm curious about Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* for your comment that the portagonist's "weirdness was not a factor of [her] strength." The film definitely connected that "weirdness"—her excentricity, her liking of the unorthodox—with her strength in an almost cause/effect manner. Your comment on Pritchard's *Coonardoo* about its land symbolism (a thing that fascinates me most in Australian films), and on Tennant's *Ride On Stranger* attract me most of all the books you listed. I have managed to find Judith Wright's *Collected Poems, 1942-1970* and though not the same volume of poetry you recommend, it covers the period of time that *The Double Tree* merely selects from. I've just barely started looking through it yet. (But I did take it out of the library and considering the fact that it's got to be only the second or third time I've voluntarily bought or borrowed a book of poetry, you can see that this fascination with everything Australian has really caught me.) A poem found by random opening of the pages is "At Cooloola" and I was excited to see that familiar Australian sense of the malevolent landscape again, a land, and earth that will eventually take its revenge: "Those dark-skinned people who once named Cooloola/knew that no land is lost or won by wars,/for earth is spirit: the invader's feet will tangle/in nets there and his blood will be thinned by fears." The only other

books on your list I was able to find was Dark's *The Timeless Land* and another by her (though not on your list, actually), *Storm of Time*, which seems to be a sequel (if only in a historical sense) to *The Timeless Land*. I'm especially interested to read these as you mentioned in your comments that they have to do with the Irish convicts' settling of Australia. Right now I'm watching a series of PBS-TV produced shows on that very subject: a fictional presentation called "Against the Wind" in thirteen segments. (I think there are three or four episode-weeks remaining. I've often wondered why we aren't shown any aborigines during the course of the show. A friend who has seen the series already (and invites me over to his house so that I can watch the rerun) says that aborigines do eventually make an appearance, but he doesn't say how. As far as I would know if I had no knowledge of Australia, New South Wales was completely unsettled before the British and Irish arrived. I can't believe that the area with the best climate on the continent (Mediterranean or Southern California in type) was actually avoided by the native population. I wonder how much of this reflects a racist attitude on the part of the Australian film-makers. Have you seen the show on PBS? I'd be really interested in your comments.

I've been trying to find the local of *My Brilliant Career* on my wallmap of Australia, but can't find it.

This evening (before I returned home from work), I visited the public library and tried to find the books in the bibliography, but I couldn't find most of them. I left requests for interlibrary loan copies though. Hopefully I will get them later.

For some reason that place is terribly fascinating to me—in a combined sort of way that imaginary planets and fantasy worlds have always been. But maybe I'll actually be able to visit there some day. Hopefully the fantasy doesn't evaporate with the reality.

☆ ☆ ☆

I'd say that the best photograph is both document and art. You both should learn from one another.

☆ ☆ ☆

With regard to your story of the so-called "girl's libber"—I think that the hardest thing about being a feminist is actualizing one's philosophy in one's life and behavior. (Again, see Marilyn French's novel, *The Bleeding Heart*). While I think that women whose actions do not quite match up with their spoken philosophy (yet) merit considerable sympathy and patience—you are right, I think, in implying that it's sometimes dangerous to accept an unknown woman's or a slight acquaintance's profession of sisterhood at face value (before observing her ethics in action).

☆ ☆ ☆

Re your review of *The Madwoman in the Attic*, which sounds great, have you read Jean Rhys' novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*? It's the fictional treatment of that idea, the story of Antoinette Cosway, viz Mrs. Rochester. It's definitely not what one would call a traditional interpretation of the madwoman in Grace Poole's charge.

Rebecca Lesses Yes, it's a bit frightening to realize that adults carry off their role as a façade and that we're all basically the same, children and adults. It's a relief too, though, knowing that one doesn't have to anticipate some sort of monstrous Jeckle/Hyde transformation, one way or the other.

As I said to Joan, I finally got to see *My Brilliant Career*. I also saw and liked a lot the other film you mentioned, *Newsreel*. (Again there was the Australian, wild, unpredictable—and totally unpersonified—image of a malevolent land: that weird flood section in which one of the camerapeople died without any sense of violence, but without any chance of escape either, as if a blind hand had absent-mindedly crushed him. Even *My Brilliant Career* touched on that theme with the weird, sudden dust storm at the beginning of the film and the omnipresent drought that controls everyone's life throughout. What is mere backdrop in those two films comes out in full force, of course, in films like *The Last Wave*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, and *Walkabout*, though I know the last isn't really an Australian-made film.)

The Getting of Wisdom hasn't come to Madison yet, but when it does I'm sure that I'll go to see it.

While I'm on the subject (again), I'd like to quick ask Joan Gordon another question about why she said "Oz films" and I think there was another expression but I can't find it now. Are these Australian colloquial usages?

☆ ☆ ☆

OK...let's look at your most extreme example of Norman Mailer deciding to call himself a woman and moving into a lesbian community. Ignoring the sheer hilarity of such an image, let us agree that right now Norman Mailer represents the ultimate in odious and extreme sexists and chauvanistic men. If he's not in reality, well let's assume that for the sake of the exercise. I'd still say that the question of what sex Norman/Norma is gets cloudy after a period of time, say after 10 years or so. After 10 years of Norma living in a lesbian community, presumably having had a sex change operation, having to adjust her new life to previously unfelt (and unimagined) pressures put upon her by her publishers, her readership, her friends, her family, even by people who pass her on the street, sell her clothes and food, interract with her at bars, and impinge on her life every moment of every day. The same as necessarily happens to all women in our society. No-one escapes contact with and most importantly change by one's environment. But even as that experience is universal it is not, for everyone, the same. We all experience institutionalized sexism in different ways. After 10 years as a self-proclaimed lesbian separatist, Norma would have inevitably changed. I think that that change (more and more important with time) is more crucial than the sex-change operation. I'd be comfortable at some point, I think, identifying this new person as someone who has been both a man and a woman in their lifetime. If pressed to make the absurd choice of some either/or "always" definition, I'd accept that person's self-description.

I do not feel threatened by another person's self-categorization. Why should I? But there is a loss of information and

potential for complexity of appreciation of reality in insisting on either/or categorization for all.

Yes, we have gone over this over and over again. I too am eager not to start this particular conversation up all over again. (Thus: *This has not been meant as a comment hook!*) But why not leave matters open?

Cheryl Cline Thanks for *The Wretch Takes to Wrestling*. I haven't gotten the nerve up yet to read any of it yet. I think of wrestling with about as much enthusiasm as I do most punk music. A pattern seems to be developing, hmmm. I wonder why I seem to otherwise like your writing and your AWapa-zines?

Re your derisive note on Jerry Pournelle, you must ask me someday to tell my Jerry Pournelle story. (I ran into him at Noreascon and those of us that were in the SFWA suite those nights Jerry ran bizork have all got crazy memories of his behavior).

Thankyou for the Rubber Stamp catalog addresses! I've sent for the first four on your list. Maybe next issue evidence will appear in *Obsessions*.

Avedon Carol I loved your comment about it only being the "me decade" after women started helping themselves. If there were someway you could get that put onto a bumper sticker, you could make a fortune.

In light of all I've been saying about my growing infatuation with things Australian (keeping in mind the probable reality-kicker of that country's sexism and racism problems), the upcoming contest between your Baltimore bid and Australia's is going to be a difficult one for me. Have you heard about Madison's (tongue-in-cheek) bid for 1985?

Anne Laurie I enjoyed your brief con-report. Hope you catch your mentions in the attached con-report article from *Gay Community News*.

D. Potter I'm glad that you aren't going away.

Amy Bruce I haven't tried, but I should think that spray starch would work well on a nest of wasps as well as it does on individual wasps. It would seal the nest and incapacitate any escaping individual wasps (which would be dealt with in the usual manner, stepping on them as before). Only instead of stepping on the whole nest, which would be a dangerous approach, since the spray might not have penetrated throughout the nest, one could pluck the nest from wherever it was attached and immerse it in water... This is merely theory of course. I don't guarantee anything, but it seems fairly reasonable. You can see now (can't you?) the difference between my very real fear/neurosis with regard to wasps in my personal vicinity, as opposed to my only jokingly malicious attitude toward cats. I don't even mind petting cats at other people's houses as long as they don't shed too much. Wasps, however, I don't want anywhere near me. Wasp-killing I am serious about, though even here, not on a widespread, ecology-damaging scale. I do, after all, work for the Department of Natural Resources. I'm supposed to like even mosquitos!

Marty Siegrist Beautiful, very pleasing layout! Who is the singer on the first page?

Your comments on the legalities of self-defense were fascinating. neither confusing or boring. Thank you. Also enlightening was your description of Seligman's experiments with dogs becoming passive after repeated random torture (in connection to battered women's behavior). The experiment sounds awful though. Sort of the thing that Tiptree/Sheldon wrote about in the short story, "The Psychologist Who Wouldn't Do Awful Things to Rats."

Mog Decarnin Thank you for the compliment (in your comment to Avedon). But I'm not sure whether you're complimenting me on a friendly writing tone or first-drafting. If the latter, you are sadly confused.

Allyson Whitfield Nice logo and
caligraphy.

...What, you
don't want to give us the black perspec-
tive on Star Trek!? Sorry. Joking.

The Denvention Art Show sounds hideously
planned. Hopefully this gets publicity
and gets talked about and worked over
well before the con. Otherwise a lot of
us, certainly me (since I was intimidat-
ed by the extremely well-organized
Noreascon simply because of its size),
may avoid the show...or want to. Disas-
ter. I suggest that you (and me and
anyone else concerned as an artist or
buyer of art) write to the committee and
find out for sure what is planned and
start expressing opinions early. If
things go on as you describe, I can't
see that it will help but be totally
unacceptable to all concerned, both for
the expense but especially for the loca-
tion of the show in another hotel from
the one where most programming is sched-
uled. Of course, this may not be the
only area that looks like a possible
disaster waiting to happen from what I've
heard...

Congratulations on your new bundle of
joy and carbon ribbon. Mine has just
gotten in some new ~~LEEW~~ elements. It
behaves itself beautifully, is complete-
ly trained and broken in. I haven't
had to clean up after it once. And I
think that I could get friends to pay
me to babysit it if I worried about
leaving it at home alone. I don't of
course: it's got its plus and minus,
but basically it's got good cents.

And my sympathies to the people in Los
Angeles who had their copy of *Caligula*
returned to them. I saw it and it is
truly the most horrid film I've ever
seen, worse even than *Swept Away*. *Ca-*
ligula was a hard core film of the type
anyone can see for 50¢ in an adult books
store with segments of soft core (in
which the big name stars were shown)
sandwiched in between. It was also one
of the most gross and violent films
I've ever seen. When we walked out of
the theatre (on opening night: none of
us had heard anything about the film),
we convinced half of the people standing
in line outside to go home. I don't

know whether we convinced them through
the vivid descriptions of the plot line
(accompanied with appropriate sound ef-
fects), or our warning of the cost of
the tickets (which in Madison was surpris-
ingly "cheap"—only \$5.00). I've vowed to
never again see a film about which I've
heard absolutely nothing, at least if
it's rated XX.

Janet Bellwether Yes, Fanny Trib-
ble was/is the
artist's name
(who did the strip
I printed a couple issues ago).

I haven't read Ellison's "Catman" and I
don't think Greg had anything in mind
but my typewriter's birth announcement
when he wrote his satire. I'm con-
fused. What is "Catman" about that you
assume Greg wrote its sequel???

The two *Moby Dick*-derived apazines are
this one, *Obsessions*, and *Shoreline*,
for the Cascade Regional Apa, or C/Rapa.
The first comes from Ahab's characteri-
zation as a man obsessed, as in this
paragraph:

...there is a Catskill eagle in some
souls that can alike dive down into the
blackest gorges, and soar out of them
again and become invisible in the sunny
spaces. And even if he for ever flies
within the gorge, that gorge is in the
mountains; so that even in his lowest
swoop the mountain eagle is still high-
er than other birds upon the plain,
even though they soar.

I had considered calling my sometimes
perzine, What Spare Time?! by another
name, another *Moby Dick*-inspired name,
and sort of the opposite of the meaning
of my first apazine: *Shifting the Con-
ceit of Attainable Felicity* (having, as
it did, the same meaning as What Spare
Time?! and coming from the chapter just
before the one with the quote of the
obsessed eagle), but I didn't. It
seemed too convoluted a source. *Shore-*
line comes from another generalized
theme and idea from Melville's novel:
i.e., that the sea represents human
dreams and madness (if embraced to the
exclusion of land), while the land repre-
sents all that is mundane and lifeless
...and in the two things' synthesis
being creative life. Ahab goes over-

board to one extreme (no pun intended). Ishmael survives because he is able to shift the conceit of his attainable felicities. But anyway the interface of land and sea becomes an important image. The ship itself, in fact, is referred to as a piece of land. But life is difficult:

All deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous slavish shore.

But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shorelessness indefinite as God—so better is it to perish in the howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! For worm-like, then, oh! who would craven crawl to land!

I could write pages and pages about that, but then I'd have to re-read the book again. I will someday. It's one of those books I don't want to ever loose from my bookshelf. Anyway, this is how I described my use of the word "shoreline" as my title in the first issue of that apazine:

A shoreline is a constantly shifting boundary, which as it moves, leaves evidence of the sea upon the land, changing the land, changing the sea, interconnecting, separating. . . Conflicting desires and needs, for security and freedom, to want to be alone and self-sufficient and want, at the same time, to be connected to others. And the shoreline, being the constantly changing line of contact, tension between the two. Rather than thinking of myself in terms of a being with boundaries, I often think of myself as being a place that has a shoreline, and that the changes in me take place on that shore, moving back and forth, building slowly.

☆ ☆ ☆

Yes, I read *Ishi in Two Worlds* (about Northern California Indians) in a college Anthropology course. I like it a lot. Did you know that it was written by the father of Ursula K. Le Guin?

☆ ☆ ☆

I liked your poem—very evocative of real, solid, sensual pleasure. Enjoy.

Adrienne Fein Interesting comments about non-monogamous relationships and orgy-like encounters.

This is not something I feel comfortable talking about (naming names, etc, even with permission) in a public forum though. I find that I'm glad—now—that I resisted temptations (to talk about relationships of a multiple sort) in detail in the past, and I assume that I will be glad in the future for avoiding such chronicles now.

But it's nice to hear how happy you are. Enjoy.

oo

To Sarah Thomson, Janet Wilson, Sue-Rae Rosenfeld—RAEBNC

Ooops, but not finished with MC's: I just found the postmailings...

Andrea Antonoff Nice drawing: "The Awful Truth". I can identify with that, for sure! Hope things continue to work out for you and your friend, whatever you decide to call him.

Karen Pearlston You are the first person I've ever heard to say that they liked *Shikasta* better than *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five*. I felt that the messages were far more effectively communicated in the latter than in the lecture-mode of the first. Hope you enjoy *Vida*. I bet you love it.

oo

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When It Changed

Lesbians, Gay Men, and Science Fiction Fandom

By Pat M. Kuras and Rob Schmieder

It was Saturday afternoon of the Labor Day weekend and we met by a statue of a nude flying man. (He has no penis and he had nothing to do with the science fiction convention we were about to attend; he just happens to be a tacky landmark in Boston's Prudential Plaza.) Neither one of us had ever been to a gathering like this before.

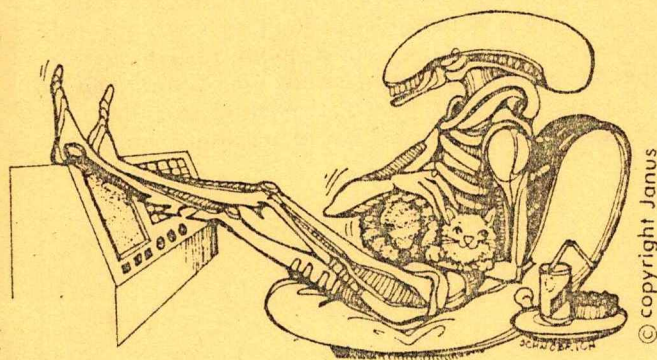
As it turns out, we spent three exhilarating days exploring science fiction, gays, lesbians and feminism. This article began as coverage of a single panel, but blossomed and snowballed into an amazing experience that had to be shared. Even if we had had a team of ten writers, we still could not have covered everything that took place at the 38th World Science Fiction Convention (Noreascon II).

In the course of our reporting, we often ventured off alone. Yet this article speaks with the royal "we," as though we did everything together — it is a literary convenience to which we have succumbed. We have written in the form of a diary, a patchwork of everything we saw, did and heard. Fasten your seatbelts and enjoy the trip.

Noreascon II was a truly international gathering, with registrants from every state and dozens of foreign countries. Past conventions have been held in most large U.S. cities as well as in England, Germany, Australia and Canada. In addition to being a meeting ground for writers and fans from all over the world, the annual convention is the site of the presentation of the Hugo Award, one of the two most prestigious literary awards in the sf field (the other is the Nebula, awarded by the Science Fiction Writers of America).

This was our first Worldcon, and we were overwhelmed by the numbers: of fans, writers, and pieces of information. The Sheraton/Hynes complex where the convention was held resembled a huge living computer, where information about film programs, panels, discussion groups, merchandise, and personal messages were conveyed with amazing efficiency. The five-day convention produced a newsletter, *Lobster Tails*, which appeared twice a day as a source of general information. The attendance of about 6000 broke all previous records for these conventions, and we saw just about all of our favorite sf writers at some point in the weekend.

Our first impression of the convention participants was dominated by the flamboyant costumes that seemed to be everywhere. We saw members of the Fantastic Four, witches, and spacepeople — lots of weaponry — along with a few people in street dress. People seemed either to exaggerate or downplay their real selves. During the discussions that went on at the convention it became obvious that we were in the midst of a strange mix of people who had been drawn to science fiction for radically different reasons. Many of the costumes betrayed a sexist sensibility that for many years was at the heart of almost all sf, and this sensibility was still very much alive at Noreascon II.



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However, we also encountered many gay people, feminists and progressives of every stripe. These people were at the convention because present day science fiction has much to offer them. Science fiction is a fiction of ideas, and the ideas coming from the minds of the new writers more and more concern progressive analyses of social issues. Progressivism is now almost taken for granted among sf writers and fans alike. This is still a recent development, however, and we were surprised to see so much political debate within the organization of the convention and in the convention programming. Fans are looking at sf from a more political perspective, and publishing fanzines (fan-produced magazines) with strong political identities. One such fanzine (*Thrust*) says of itself: "We've built our reputation on never failing to take a close look at the most sensitive and controversial issues concerning science fiction."

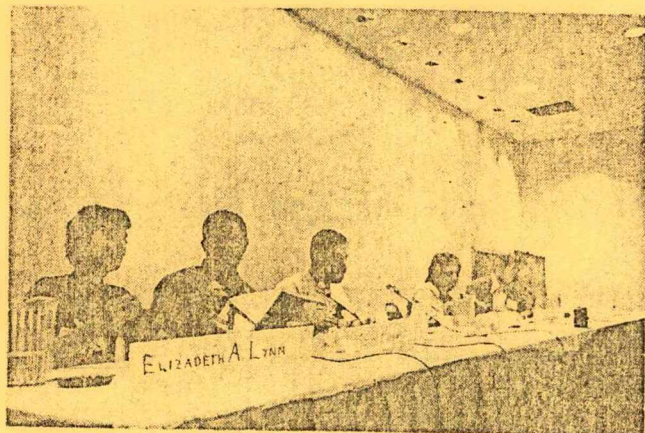
The progressive focus of this year's convention was perhaps best symbolized by its choice of Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm as guests of honor. This pair have, in their separate fields, been trailblazers for forward-looking science fiction.

Knight was one of the first sf writers to insist on making the same aesthetic demands on sf that are made on mainstream fiction, while also demanding that this future-obsessed genre not perpetuate the problems of the past and present. In the '50s he started the first sf writers' workshop. In the '60s he founded the ORBIT series of original anthologies which introduced many of today's more progressive writers and opened the door to the many original anthologies currently being published. ORBIT and its followers were pivotal influences in sf's move from technology-dominated fiction and space westerns to the examination of biological, anthropological, social and sexual issues. Kate Wilhelm is a salient example of this change in sf, as her stories treat human relations with the same sort of speculative mind that made trips to distant stars imaginable in the '40s.

Saturday afternoon, we found our way to the press room, where we had our first encounter with homophobia in science fiction. The Tufts student making out our press passes said, "You don't *really* want me to put *Gay Community News* on these, do you?" To our retort, "Of course!" he responded with, "Well, if I were gay I sure wouldn't want to let anyone know about it." He then apologetically handed us a "special gift" along with our press kit — the 1980 "Fairies" desk calendar.

We realized that we had gotten into something much bigger than we had bargained for as we perused the bulging press kit and went over the packed schedule for the remaining three days of the convention. We noted with sadness that we were missing a scheduled autograph session with Thomas Disch, and would have to leave before his reading later that afternoon. Disch was the first sf writer we encountered who has a long-standing record of

successfully incorporating gay characters into his fiction. His novel *334* is remarkable for its images of both male and female gay couples in a more liberal, though materially bleaker, New York of the near future; and all his novels and stories have incorporated sexuality in a markedly more sophisticated way than run-of-the-mill sf.



Rob Schmieder

We hurried off to the hall where "The Closed Open Mind: Homophobia in Science Fiction Fantasy Stories" panel was scheduled to be held and grabbed seats near the front of the room. This panel was possibly the first with an openly gay topic to be held at a Worldcon. Around 200 fans attended the panel, more than attended most other small panels at the con. The participants in the panel were Elizabeth A. Lynn, Samuel R. Delany, Jerry Jacks, Norman Spinrad, and Frank M. Robinson.

Elizabeth A. Lynn is a young writer who has just come to prominence in recent years. Her writing is suffused with homoerotic relationships, especially her soon-to-be-completed *Chronicles of Tornor* (see *GCN Book Review*, Vol. 8, No. 5). It is indicative of the current acceptability of homosexuality in sf that this has not hindered her success in any way. Introduced as a nominee for the prestigious John W. Campbell award (given to new writers), she jokingly corrected the moderator by saying she would rather not be a three-timeloser, as she was in fact a nominee in 1978 and 1979.

Samuel Delany has probably been out longer than any other sf writer, and has consistently used gay material in his books and stories. He has championed other gay sf writers as well: he wrote the introduction to Joanna Russ's collected *Alyx* stories, and is editor of a forthcoming collection of Thomas Disch stories, *Fundamental Disch*. His own works include the novels *Nova*, *Dhalgren* and *Triton*, and the recent visual-story collaboration with Howard Chaykin, *Empire*. He has also published a collection of essays on science fiction, *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*, and a long essay on Disch's story *An American Shore*.

Jerry Jacks, moderator of the homophobia in SF panel, attended his first con in Chicago in 1962. He has chaired some of the Westercons and organized other smaller ones. As a gay man, he came out in college (1968) and was instrumental in forming the Gay Liberation Front at San Francisco State University. In 1971, he came out in fandom. Jerry says that "fandom has always been conservative about sexuality," but this attitude has been changing in the '70s.

Jerry mentioned that there were two nights of gay parties at Westercon '79, the SF con that took place at the Sheraton Palace Hotel in San Francisco, California. That con attracted about 2,500 people and Jerry says a good number of "gay, lesbian and sympathetic straights"

enjoyed the parties. At the parties, a mailing list was circulated for those interested in forming a gay/lesbian SF club. The Uranian Club (as it is called) got off to a wobbly start. There was a strong interest in having a club, but members were unable to find a meeting place. Rev. Michael Itkain of San Francisco's Metropolitan Community Church finally suggested they use MCC space and, as a result, the Uranian Club has been holding monthly meetings since November '79. The club has a mailing list of over 200 members, while an average of 30 people attend meetings. Earlier this year, the Uranian Club held its first social event, a picnic in Golden Gate Park, which was very successful. Club member Eric Garber is working on a slide show on gay and lesbian SF, while organizer Jacks admits to fantasies of having a science fiction float in San Francisco's Gay Freedom Day parade. The Uranian Club also issues a newsletter, keeping members informed of upcoming events.

Jerry distributed copies of a condensed version of a forthcoming bibliography of fantasy and science fiction books with "clear and positive gay and/or lesbian content." The bibliography, compiled by Eric Garber and Lyn Paleo, is entitled *Uranian Worlds*.

Norman Spinrad, the token straight on the panel, is the current president of Science Fiction Writers of America, and has a long track record as a science fiction writer. His novel *Bug Jack Barron*, loathed by feminists, at least has the distinction of having broken ground in treating sexuality in science fiction, a genre once distinguished by its almost complete asexuality. Though his lack of understanding of lesbian and gay issues made him poorly equipped to participate in the discussion, his presence on the panel gave it the cachet of approval from the straight sf establishment.

Frank Robinson's presence on the panel came as a pleasant surprise to us. The oldest member of the panel, he has a long involvement in the field and has also been involved in the sf-Hollywood connection. One of his best-known novels, *The Glass Inferno*, featured a very strong gay character (who never made it to *The Towering Inferno*, the Hollywood version). Robinson was full of stories of homophobic treatment of writers in the '40s and '50s. He alluded to his career as a speechwriter for Harvey Milk in explaining his commitment to improving the gay position in sf.

The panel began with introductory statements by all the panel members. Lynn led off by saying that she felt the problem with gay and lesbian images in sf was not that they were awful, but that there are so few of them; sf is dominated by straight male WASP characters, and the absence of gay characters is matched by a dearth of women and people of color in sf. Delaney disputed the notion that there are no awful characters, saying that there is, in fact, a long history of homophobic characterizations, and named as one of the more salient the Baron Harkenden in Frank Herbert's *Dune*.

Delany went on to discuss the notion of a dichotomy between allowing the writer full artistic freedom and the expectation that sf was a progressive genre of which one could demand a commitment to social and political responsibility. Spinrad came out in favor of "artistic freedom" in such a dichotomy, saying that "oppressed groups shouldn't tamper with freedom of expression, as they have more to lose than the majority in any clamp-down on such freedom" — a familiar liberal cliché. Robinson then attacked this position as being unrealistic, and cited the history of censorship of gay material by straight editors, and the crying need of gay people for positive images in fiction. Jacks reinforced Robinson with a short history of homosexuality in science fiction, and the two most widely used homosexual formulas: the monosexual culture, which eagerly embraces the arrival of a

member of the opposite sex;* and homosexuality used as a mark of villainy.

The ensuing discussion centered around the concepts of "freedom of expression," censorship, and the effect of mass media images on mass culture. Lynn pointed out that concepts of censorship and freedom of speech are realistic and culture-bound; "culture sets up its own rules and freedom of the press is only for the man who owns one"; whatever freedom gays have to write sf is limited by our access to print.

She added that there are covert as well as overt rules for what may be written. Delany pursued this, saying that our cultural conditioning, which is heterosexist, determines the mind-set we bring to our writing, which is therefore straight, and that we can only break out of this by unrelentingly analyzing the unconscious, culture-conditioned components of our writing. In answer to a question about Ursula LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (a novel which deals with relations between hermaphroditic beings), he took this one step further and analyzed the specific fictional clichés that are part of a self-perpetuating mass culture. He described *The Left Hand of Darkness* as an example of the "doomed homosexual relationship" plot, which ends with one of the lovers dying. "True artistic freedom," Delany said, "comes only with the abandonment of such clichés. . . . Narrative conventions victimize artists." Lynn echoed this sentiment with her insistence that the tension between the unconscious and the conscious must be explored by the writer of worthwhile fiction.

Frank M. Robinson and Thomas N. Scortia have written novels which are something like the Arthur Hailey thrillers. A good deal of factual research goes into their books but, unlike Hailey, their characters sometimes transcend stereotypes. *The Glass Inferno* is about a fire in a skyscraper (parts of this novel were incorporated into the film, *The Towering Inferno*.) The building in the novel, the Glass House, has both apartments and businesses, among them an interior decorating agency, whose supply room contributes to much of the fire. The owners of this business are gay male lovers. We only meet one of them in depth — a fat, middle-aged man.

Robinson gave this quick description of his gay character, quickly pointing to the stereotype he had used. However, rather than keep his character a cardboard figure, Robinson has him grow throughout the story. The gay man becomes one of the novel's heroes — courageous, poignant and quite unforgettable.

Spinrad's assertion that homophobia in publishing attitudes is a thing of the past was generally conceded to be true, but the long history of censorship was not forgotten. All of the panel members recalled examples of censorship or homophobic rewrites of gay material. Very few examples could be conjured up of positive images dating any earlier than the past decade.

Stereotyping, like hackneyed writing, is something that should be overcome. However, as some of the panelists pointed out, there is at least one instance where stereotypes may have been an advantage. This occurred in a Charles Beaumont story, *The Crooked Man*. The story (which was written in the '50s) concerns a society in which homosexuality is the normally-accepted lifestyle while heterosexuality is seen as a heinous perversion. The plot concerns two heterosexual lovers who sneak around to meet; by the end of the story, the two lovers have been scooped up by vice squad officers and are on their way to be "cured," a process involving electro-shock and glandular operations. In Beaumont's story, although gays are considered the norm, there is nothing attractive about

them. They're monstrous and grotesque. However, the story serves as a neat, allegorical horror story. With its switcheroo theme, it gives straights a taste of oppression and, perhaps, may set some to consider their own prejudices and ignorance.

A constant problem in covering the con was deciding on what to do — should we attend the feminist fairy tales panel and miss out on the Star Trek episode, *City On The Edge of Forever*? The scheduling always left us gnashing our teeth. In addition to the art shows and dealers' room, there were two screening rooms showing separate movies while the 75 or so different panels were in full-swing. Also during the course of the con, there were 20 autograph sessions involving over 90 top-name personalities. In other words, there were always at least five different and exciting things happening at once.

The screening rooms ran films all day and well into the night. In addition to the feature films (such as *Star Wars*, *Alien*, *Watership Down* and *Wizards*), there were cartoons (Bugs Bunny in *Hareway To The Stars*) and selected shorts. While waiting for *The Seventh Seal* to begin, we yawned through a dry piece on thermonuclear fission, but applauded the next short — a bizarre little film called *Screentest*. *Screentest* lasts about twenty minutes and the convention's film notes claimed that it was "highly experimental and hard to describe." Imagine how delighted we were to chance upon a gay film! *Screentest* has no plot. There is a voice-over narration, a jumble of party sounds and meaningless voices. (Near the end of the film, one male voice clearly asks, "Isn't it about time we threw in a story line?" — it's hysterical.) The visual part of the film is a flurry of lightning quick editing — campy gay men changing in and out of different costumes, many dresses, hats, capes, fans. They pose and pose and pose, and that is the essence of the film — it's their *screentests*.



An illustration by Alicia Austin

Sunday afternoon we visited the Art Show, which took up most of a large hall on the upper floor of Hynes Auditorium. Going through the thousands of paintings, drawings, sculptures and artworks in other media was exhausting and not very rewarding. Most of the artists

*Joanna Russ's *When It Changed*, a landmark gay sf story, deals with this very cliché.

exhibiting were amateurs, and will likely remain so; and amateurs and professionals alike showed little imaginative range. Spacemen, moonscapes, unicorns and armored characters abounded; art that deviated from the iconographic and conceptual clichés of standard sf illustrations were rare.

Many paintings featured Playboy-style female nudes in fantasy or space settings; this represents the pandering to a certain part of its straight male audience that has always been present in sf. The most extreme example of this kind of illustration was a lavish oil painting by Jane MacKenzie and Philip Hagopian (who also collaborated on the program book cover painting), called "Young Ladies Should Not Walk Alone." The painting showed a young woman being assaulted by a male centaur in Central Park; he has begun to tear off her shirt, and her breasts are exposed. For the most part the works including nude figures did not show sexual activity. One exception, however, was professional illustrator Alicia Austin's exhibit, which included her eight-drawing *Erotica Portfolio*. Her compositions in these drawings show the influence of Beardsley that is also very noticeable in her early work; they are more fluid and less phallogocentric than most erotic art produced by straight men. Tim Hammell's exhibit featured "Mandragora: The first folio of male fantasy nudes." The men in this series ranged from a hairy barbarian to an androgynous star-creature, and were clearly designed to appeal to men.

Also on Sunday afternoon, we attended a discussion on "Post-Holocaust Themes in Feminist SF." The panelists included Elizabeth A. Lynn, Jeanne Gomoll, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro and Suzy McKee Charnas. (The panel ran overtime, causing about two dozen women and men to join the panelists in a continuation room, where the discussion lasted another half-hour. In the continuation room, Samuel Delaney joined in the talk.)

The panel discussion itself was quite animated and jumped from real holocausts to fictional ones. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro remarked that "history teaches us that if you have a holocaust, any small rights you had are gone." To illustrate her point, she maintained that two thousand years ago, the women of ancient Rome had more rights and control of their bodies than modern women do. To tear down civilization, she claimed, "is a Pyrrhic victory." In fiction, the holocaust metaphor is a way of wiping the slate clean; it is a way of vanquishing patriarchal structures and experimenting with alternatives. Yarbro further stated that to use "holocausts as a real response [to alleviating society's problems] is crazy," but holocausts can be used as literary devices to imagine new futures.

By way of the "Post-Holocaust" panel, we met Jeanne Gomoll, a fan from Madison, Wisconsin, and contributor to *Janus*. *Janus* is a fanzine of the sercon variety ("serious and constructive" for you mundane readers), but it is not without humor. The cartoons are funny and the writers quite clever. (A very educational, yet readable, piece on time travel is titled "Let's Do The Time Warp Again.") The summer 1980 issue of *Janus* has book and fanzine reviews, movie reviews, poetry, comics and an extensive letters section. This particular issue also includes a lengthy pro-con debate on SF fans' proposed ERA boycott of Chicago.

Janus is unusual in that it is a fanzine with a definite feminist leaning. It has been in existence for five years and, more than once, has been nominated for a Hugo Award. *Janus* is cleverly and professionally produced. Its feminist attitude places it several notches above other fanzines, and gay and lesbian readers will appreciate the sensibility shown in much of its writing, articles which are written by both women and men.

Sunday night the presentation of the Hugo awards, one of the two highest honors given to science fiction works, took place in Hynes Auditorium. We got there early in order to get a good seat, and were rewarded with a ringside seat for the procession of famous writers who quickly filled the reserved section. The awards ceremony itself disappointed our expectations. Master of Ceremonies was Robert Silverberg, a writer we have long respected both for the brilliance of his writing and his long dedication to using unusual cultures, including gay culture, in his fiction.*

Silverberg came out with a barrage of racist and sexist Bob Hope-style jokes and insults that led tortuously to the presentation of awards. The high point of the awards presentation was the novel award, which was presented by Isaac Asimov. Asimov, who makes a point of being obnoxious on every possible occasion, grabbed both woman attendants standing by the stairs to the stage; as he walked onto the stage a third woman, seeing him coming, backed away and knocked over a screen which ran along the back of the stage, revealing the other attendants. Undeterred, Asimov went on to kiss his final victim. Asimov's ridiculous behavior earned him guffaws from the audience which by this point had put up with enough bullshit.

One of the more hotly contested awards was that for best fanzine. The winner, Boston's *Locus*, was booed by a large segment of the audience; there is widespread sentiment that the publication can no longer be considered an amateur production. *Janus* and *Thrust* were also nominees.

We were disappointed that Disch's *On Wings of Song* did not win the novel award; but at least it was a nominee. The award was given to Arthur C. Clarke's *The Fountains of Paradise*.



FIGHTING WOMAN NEWS

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*Robert Silverberg captures pure emotion in his characters; his stories are often poignant, exciting and realistic. To a large degree, Silverberg has drawn on minority characters in his work. His short story *Sundance* is remarkable, in it, a biologist of Native American descent is psychologically tortured as he witnesses a race of creatures being destroyed, just as his own Sioux ancestors were almost totally wiped out in the 1800s.

Sometimes, however, Silverberg's use of minorities is questionable. He relies on cartoon figures. In the novel *Dying Inside*, he has a gang of jive-talking black basketball players beat a man unconscious. Another novel, *The Book Of Skulls*, has a gay character, Ned, who is purely vicious and evil. Ned triggers the suicides of three other gay men, who all happened to have loved him. With this book, Silverberg is whipping gays with a double whammy — we're shown as being either horrible, self-centered monsters or death-wishing sadsacks.

On one hand, Silverberg's use of minority characters can be almost called commendable — he is showing us that we do not live in an all-male, Anglo-Saxon, lily-white world. However, the manner in which he uses minorities raises many suspicions.

The gay party (announced in *Lobster Tails* as being for "gay men, lesbian women, and friends of the preceding [sic]"), took place in a two-bedroom suite. The bathtub, filled with ice, served as refrigerator and, as it was Sunday night and the liquor stores were closed, our refreshments consisted of Tab and Coca-Cola. About fifty people attended the party in the time we were there. A straight man, claiming to be an AP photographer, stood in the doorway (afraid of contamination?) and took pictures as gay and lesbian SF fans chatted with writers and fan organizers.

At the party, we discussed the ERA with Denys Howard of Seattle. Denys explained that SF fans from different cities place bids to host the world conventions. (The conventions generally move across the country. In 1982, the worldcon is due to be held in the Midwest.) There was a controversy surrounding the proposed locations — Chicago and Detroit were both bidding. (As we learned at the party, Detroit lost its bid.) The controversy stemmed from the ERA — Illinois (Chicago's state) has not ratified the amendment, while Michigan (Detroit's state) has. Many SF fans (men, as well as women) felt this was just cause to boycott Chicago while others argued that it was unimportant.

A San Francisco-based group called Fans for the ERA placed a full-page ad in the program book which outlined Illinois' non-ratification of the ERA and went on to endorse the Chicago boycott: "SF literature, the heart of fandom, consistently addresses political and social issues. We consider human rights and gender roles in fanish writings, readings, and conversations — why not when fan action would affect the world we live in? . . . The rights of over 100 million Americans' entire lives can't be outweighed by the disappointment of some dozen people who can't run a con in a specific year. . . . The boycott is pure economics, intended to include us. We are big business — the '82 Worldcon attendees will spend over \$1,000,000. We'd be one of the ten largest groups honoring the boycott, just behind the Democratic National Committee."

With Denys, we shared our pleasure in seeing so many lesbians and gay men at the convention. There is a kind of merging point between gays and SF fans — we're both considered odd, outcasts from society at large. Also the press has a knack for bringing the two groups together by way of some insensitive oppression. Denys said that SF fans usually distrust reporters, who have a tendency to misunderstand fandom and focus on its more "bizarre" aspects. Indeed, earlier that day *The Boston Globe* had run an article on the convention, one that stressed the masquerade of the night before and failed to mention all the other events (films, panels, etc.). The fans were disappointed. There's an interesting parallel in these media misrepresentations: how many times have we been equally disappointed by lack of coverage at gay pride week activities, coverage that usually consists only of brief, filmed footage of drag queens?

Some years ago, Denys published a fanzine entitled *Women And Men*. Its emphasis was on material of interest to lesbians and gay men. After seeing such an amazing turnout at the gay party, and at the feminist and homophobia panels, Denys expressed a willingness to print his fanzine once again.

The people we had seen at the homophobia panel resurfaced at the party, along with a few surprises. Elizabeth Lynn, whom we had seen an hour earlier at the Hugo Awards in a lavender backless gown, typical "lady writer"

drag for such events, showed up at the party in T-shirt and jeans. Marion Zimmer Bradley talked about the new paperback edition of her non-sf gay novel, *The Catch Trap*, which she reported is selling well in this "less closeted" edition. (Publicity for the hardcover edition was subdued and avoided mention of the dominant gay theme, whereas the paperback deals straightforwardly with the gay material both in the jacket illustrations and the blurbs.) She also spoke to us about gay life in the thirties and forties (one of the outstanding features of the novel was her convincing rendition of this era) and her involvement in the early Daughters of Bilitis journal, *The Ladder*, dating from that time. Marion, unlike most *Ladder* contributors, wrote lesbian short stories under her own name.

Robin Johnson, a member of the Gay Information collective in New South Wales, Australia, talked to us about the problems of being gay in fandom, speaking from long experience. He characterized fandom as a clannish subculture of people who feel alienated from society; a description he sees as applying to the gay subculture as well. Despite this connection between fandom and the gay experience, however, he saw gay sf fans as being almost invisible. He felt disappointed that, despite a long involvement in fandom, he had no encounter with other gay fans until three years ago.

When Samuel Delany made his way into the room we immediately cornered him and found him more than willing to answer our questions. Though he has been conspicuous as a gay sf writer for years, we were unaware that he is also a father and has been active in a gay parents' group. He acknowledged that there is no formal support network for lesbian and gay sf writers, but it became clear in the course of our conversation that gay sf writers are aware of one another and that the underground links exist. Dropping names of sf writers of varying degrees of closetedness would be pointless; but we began to realize that the gay presence in sf is much greater than we had thought, and this leaves room for the hope that gay themes will continue to emerge in the writing of both the established and newer writers.

Delany followed up on some of the ideas he had tossed out at the homophobia panel. We talked about Ursula LeGuin's treatment of gay characters: in addition to

the no-win plot of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, she included in her major novel, *The Dispossessed*, a gay character who was remarkable for embodying all the most depressing stereotypes of gay "pathology," and who, everyone agreed, was best forgotten. Delany made the interesting point that the main reason most gay characters in sf are failures is that there is usually only one of them in any given work. Shown outside of the context of relationships with other gay characters, it is impossible to show them as fully developed people, and obviously a gay surrounded by straight characters is going to be a mess. This is paralleled by the traditional treatment of women in sf; a succession of female characters relating to one man does not equal a series of female characters, but rather one male character.

We also spoke briefly to one of the "friends of the preceding," Val Eads. We were familiar with Eads's work due to her brief stint as a comic book writer; her strongly pacifist and feminist war stories stood out among the morass of mediocre comics writing. She is currently editor of a women's martial arts magazine called *Fighting Woman News*, and spoke of her relief at escaping the overwhelmingly sexist atmosphere of the male-dominated fantasy business.

The themes of the social impact of sf and the cultural determinants of sf plots which had emerged at the homophobia panel and were touched on lightly at Sunday's panel on "The Craft of Writing SF" were the sole topics of discussion at Monday afternoon's panel entitled "Fairy Tales, Myths, and Feminism." This was the most exciting panel we attended; the debate was lively and informed, with extensive and enthusiastic audience participation. Continuation rooms had been provided to allow panels to tie up loose ends after the hour allotted to them; this panel crowded an overflow audience into its continuation room and went on for an extra hour, winding down only as panelists left one by one to catch planes out of Boston.

The panel was moderated by Sandra Miesel, a fantasy/sf editor for Berkeley/Putnam. Panel members included writers Patricia McKillip, Melissa Ann Singer, Anne Laurie Logan (an editor of *Harlot*, a feminist fanzine); Ellen Kushner, an editor recently turned writer (her feminist fantasy anthology *Basilisk* is due to be published this month); and Anna

Vargo, a convention worker who also happens to be very widely read in the field.

Miesel asked the panelists to define the difference between myth and fairy tale. Although the semantic issue was never resolved, the distinguishing criteria used by the different panelists reappeared as critical factors in all subsequent discussion. One distinction involved the difference between archetypal material drawn from the past and concerned with power relationships (myth), and the self-conscious use of this material to create a work of art imbued with hope for beneficial uses of power (fairy tale). This distinction can be seen as a dichotomy between unconscious and conscious, or culture-bound and countercultural, re-generations of archetypal material.

Implicit in the discussion was that, though most fiction contains plots based on mythic archetypes, this is much more obvious in science fiction and fantasy, which bear a closer superficial resemblance to the myths upon which they build and the fairy tales from which they are historically descended.

As this was a statedly feminist panel, one of the goals of the discussion was to find ways in which sf can serve feminism. It was generally agreed that it is impossible to create new archetypes (this is not the same as saying fiction cannot explore in new directions; it means that there are no new plots under the sun). Therefore, it was proposed that writers search for archetypes containing feminist values in cultures other than the "egocentric, adolescent, Christian, Medieval, European value system" (Kushner) that has produced most of our fairy tales.

The panelists were pressed to come up with examples of sf and fantasy writers who have broken out of this mold. An oral reading list ensued, but the name that was reverted to again and again was that of the prolific but neglected writer Andre Norton. Norton's most famous novel, *Daybreak 2250 AD* uses Native American myths. Native American, Asian and African myths — with strong women, emphasis on emotional and social relations, and de-emphasis of male dominance and power-wielding — appear throughout the body of Norton's work.

Though it was agreed that archetype is a cultural given and cannot be manufactured, some realistic criticisms of this constricting fact were offered. Kushner noted that even the most positive archetype have little to offer some oppressed segments of the population — an implicit reference to the fact that there are few homoerotic myths. Unfortunately this was not pursued. McKillip said that although gender-role reversal was ultimately a counterproductive ploy, at the present time it is socially useful. It is simply social reality that strong women have had to identify with strong male

archetypes, and transforming these male archetypes into female characters in fiction can be beneficial. Such a mechanical device is also a useful spur to the writer to examine the myths she is using; McKillip concluded that when one is a woman there is "nothing more lovely than the pronoun SHE."*

We were left with the feeling that, if all sf and fantasy writers were as conscious of the materials they are dealing with as were the six panelists, there would be considerable hope for sf to act more and more as a medium for progressive social values. The question of how homosexuality can be treated seems still to find its best answer in Delany's earlier assertion that only by the questioning and even abandonment of archetype — which in his case has meant the abandonment of traditional plot — can we break through to an understanding and portrayal of ourselves that is truly free.

*This brings to mind another criticism of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, that the female/male characters are referred to throughout as "he" rather than "she" or any of the many other alternatives — a criticism to which LeGuin has never satisfactorily responded.



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| The Uranian Club c/o Jerry Jacks 170 Carl St. San Francisco, CA 94117 \$1/issue (donation for mailing costs requested) | Janus P.O. Box 1624 Madison, WI 53701 \$6/4 issues | Andre Norton Fan Circle & Fanzine c/o Michele Rosenberg 85-45 130th St. Kew Gardens, NY 11415 \$2/4 issues | Fighting Woman News A Quarterly of Martial Arts, Self-Defense and Combative Sports Box 1459 Grand Central Sta. New York, NY 10163 \$7.50/yr. |
| Robin Johnson c/o Gay Information Box A491 Sydney South NSW 2000 Australia | Feature on Tim Hammell in Fantarama #4 1120 Bird Rd. Richmond, DC | Gay Fandom c/o Don Sakers 303 Jerlyn Avenue Linthicum, MD 21090 | |