



Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis



© Movies of 2000

[SC] Jeanne and I go to a lot of movies. Movies are expensive, especially when paying full price, so we try to choose films we not only think we will like, but will be worth the \$7.50 or so we each usually end up spending. We check out movie trailers and we read lots of reviews. Now and then we just take a chance and go to a film without knowing much of anything about it. Below is our list of movies we saw in the theaters last year in the order we saw them. One or the other or both of us liked most of these movies. At the end is a short list of films we both thought were utter dogs. I am no film critic, but I took the opportunity to put an ☺ by those films I thought were exceptionally good and an ☻ by films most favored by Jeanne.

- The Talented Mr. Ripley* ☻
- Mansfield Park* ☻
- Magnolia*
- Cradle Will Rock* (twice) ☻ ☻
- Snow Falling on Cedars*
- Topsy-Turvy*
- Regret to Inform*
- Boys Don't Cry* ☻
- Pitch Black* ☻
- The Whole Nine Yards*
- Mission to Mars*
- Wonder Boys* ☻
- The Cider House Rules*
- Erin Brockovich* ☻
- Rear Window* (restored, re-release)
- High Fidelity* ☻
- The Emperor and the Assassin* ☻
- U-571*
- Frequency* (twice) ☻
- Gladiator* ☻
- Dinosaur*
- Mission Impossible 2*
- Small Time Crooks*
- Fantasia 2000* ☻
- The Perfect Storm*
- The Patriot*
- Chicken Run* ☻
- Titan A.E.*
- X-Men*

© Comments on Turbo No. 173

[SC] Thanks to everyone who responded in issues 173 and 174 to my request for C.J. Cherry recommendations. My ambition is to do at least one this year.

© Calvin Powers

[SC] Thanks as always for the reviews. We both liked *Topsy Turvy* too but a big obstacle for us was the fact that we are both rather unfamiliar with Gilbert and Sullivan's operettas. That meant the film had a rather limited impact on us.

I liked your "Observations from a Train." My mother's family mostly lived in Los Angeles and when I was little my mother would try to go out there once a year to visit, usually in the summer. Sometimes the whole family would go, sometimes it was just mom and the kids. One year it was just mother and me. We always went by train until about 1963 when the whole family drove out there in dad's new car. Some of my earliest memories are of traveling on the train to California in the late 1950s/ early 1960s. I have heard that I learned to walk on the train. I loved it. Jeanne and I have since taken a couple train trips, once out West through Denver to San Francisco, then up to Seattle and back to Wisconsin across the Northern route. Another time we took the train East to Philadelphia, Princeton and New York. We enjoyed both trips and we'd take the train again.

© Lee Murray

[SC] Wonderful piece on the passing of Great Uncle. Thank you.

[JG] What an fine essay about family, Lee! Thank you very much for sharing this with us.

Space Cowboys
 The Cell
 Nurse Betty ⊕ ⊕
 Blood Simple (re-release) ⊕ ⊕
 Tao of Steve
 Almost Famous ⊕ ⊕
 The Contender
 The Exorcist (SC only, re-release)
 Meet the Parents
 The Legend of Bagger Vance
 Men of Honor
 Two Family House ⊕ ⊕
 The 6th Day
 Unbreakable ⊕ ⊕
 Bounce
 Vertical Limit
 What Women Want
 Cast Away ⊕
 Ran (re-release) ⊕ ⊕
 You Can Count On Me

We can't expect to go to this many movies in a year without ending up with a few regrets. *The Patriot*, *Titan A.E.* and *The 6th Day* were the big disappointments for both of us last year.

⊙ Scott's Books

[SC] Jeanne is going to do her annual, annotated book list this issue. I only got through a fraction of the number of books she read and for that reason, and the fact that we have a lot of overlap since we belong to the same book group, I am not going to publish my whole book list for last year. I am going to take this opportunity to list ten of my favorite reads from last year out of a total of 24 books, in the order they were read:

1. *Adventures in a TV Nation*, Michael Moore
2. *The Cider House Rules*, by John Irving
3. *Mara and Dann*, by Doris Lessing
4. *The Island of the Sequined Love Nun* and *The Lust Lizard of Melancholy Cove*, Christopher Moore
5. *The State of the Art*, Iain Banks
6. *Cryptonomicon*, Neal Stephenson
7. *The Perfect Storm*, Sebastian Junger
8. *The Vintner's Luck*, Elizabeth Knox
9. *The Cassini Division*, Ken Macleod
10. *Halfway Human*, Carolyn Ives Gilman

⊙ Jim Frenkel

[SC] I place myself solidly in the rationalist camp, but with a few lingering reservations. It is odd, but when things are going really well, I don't tend to credit my good fortune to luck. But when things take a turn for the worse it sometimes takes all my willpower to keep from feeling that some Greater Power has decided to take a crap on my head.

⊙ Joan Vinge

[SC] Welcome Joan. I wish that your first appearance in these pages had been motivated by more pleasant circumstances. I hope you are able to find a way to reduce the stress level in your life and begin a long overdue recovery. We all miss seeing more of you.

⊙ Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I loved this year's installment of Halloween craziness you all come up with out there. I think it is a terribly cool thing to do.

[JG] I sure wish I'd seen your Halloween extravaganza this year. I think I say that every year in *Turbo*. I'd love to drop in one Halloween. Do you allow tourists?

I have been following with interest the discussion about Napster, but didn't think I had much to say because I'm so little involved in current music. But your comments widened the scope of the discussion for me and I was reminded of a recent incident at work. Nancy, a DNR employee, came to me and asked me to do some PhotoShop work to fix up a piece of artwork she wanted to use on a Wildlife conference program book cover. She handed me the artwork and it was obviously the front of a Christmas Card. She wanted me to remove the religious symbolism (a star and a dove) but to leave in the animals. My first question: "Do you have permission to use this?" "Permission?" she replied. "It's just a Christmas card. It came in the mail. I don't need permission to use it." Well actually you do, I assured her and pointed out that there was a small signature in the corner and that obviously some artist had painted the piece and sold it to the card company. Either the artist or the company holds the copyright to the piece of artwork and might object to someone using it (and altering it) without permission or fee. Nancy seemed stunned at the notion. "But it's only a Christmas card," she repeated. And then: "And anyway, the artist would probably appreciate the 'exposure.'" "Exposure?" I asked. "Are you going to print the artist's name and contact information?" "Well no...." So I suggested we do a search for the artist's name on the web, and Lo and Behold we found her web page and she was in fact selling that very card and others. "See," I said, "she makes a living selling her artwork." Nancy got a little grumpy and went back to her office with the artist's publisher's phone number. Later in the day, she said that the publisher wasn't willing to give her the artist's telephone number but had agreed to forward a letter from Nancy. "So I wrote her and told her I was using her artwork and 'fixing' it in PhotoShop. That should take care of it." I didn't think so. I told

Nancy that the artist would be within her rights to charge us after we had published the work. "Charge us?" "Let's look on the web again," I said. This time we found a phone number for the artist herself and Nancy called her. She found out to her horror that the artist normally sold temporary rights to her artwork for \$650. "Can you BELIEVE that!?" But the artist had graciously given her permission to copy and publish her artwork for the small print-run, no profit purposes of the conference cover. I was rather amazed that the artist wasn't alarmed about our plans to "fix" her artwork. But that was an eye-opening day for Nancy, and a stunning one for me too: I am still mulling over the idea that artwork printed on a Christmas card could be assumed to be anonymous, non-copyrighted work. Actually, I think that neither Nancy or myself made ourselves entirely understood to the other. I don't think Nancy "gets" the idea of an artists' right and I don't think I "get" Nancy's view of the world either.

© Marjjean Trew

[SC] Regarding going out in downtown Madison at night, Jeanne and I were sitting in a window seat at the restaurant called "Madison's" one night last summer observing exactly the nightlife you were referring to. We were both impressed by how much traffic there was on King Street, especially walking traffic. It struck us that many of the people going by probably lived near downtown and were simply able to step out their front door and into the action. We were both thinking very hard that night how much we envied them and how we would like to live downtown someday.

© Lisa Frietag

[SC] Regarding your comment to me, I think *Turbo* has lately managed to attract a few more serious writers to our existing small stable and that may be just enough to help the apa evolve into more of a real writer's group. This trend could lead to longer, more personal and more interesting zines drawing more thoughtful feedback. I hope this is so. It poses a large challenge for me since I have rarely composed articles of completely original writing for the apa. The prospect frightens me partly because I have no idea if I can write something that anyone will find at all interesting to read, but I am also concerned that I might sit down to write something and find out that I don't really have anything to say. Commenting on other people's work has always been kind of reassuring to me because I only have to respond to someone else's work rather than coming up with something completely on my own.

I console myself that the writing practice would be good for me even if I find out I'm lousy at it.

[JG] I loved your question to **Ruth** about whether Mia is doing different gender-associated chores these days, and your final comment about the dearth of parenting manuals in this area. Good comments, too, to **Georgie** about employers who don't trust their employees and ask for notes from their doctors.

© Jeanne's Books

***The Furies*, Suzy McKee Charnas**
***The Conqueror's Child*, Suzy McKee Charnas**

I read these last two books from Suzy's 4-book *Holdfast* series in preparation for panels at Potlatch and WisCon last year. (I read the first two books in the latter part of 1999.) Once again, I was blown away by the story, which was made far more emotional and compelling by reading them one after the other. The *Holdfast* series, in my opinion, is the epitome and essence of feminist SF. A truly amazing work.

***Three Women*, Marge Piercy**

Piercy is one of my favorite writers and this one was an excellent one, though not among her top three or four, in my opinion. I love her ability to describe and pull me into relationships between women — friendly, loving or strained and angry. Her work is never clichéd. And it is always laced with feminist insight.

***Coyote Blue*, Christopher Moore**
***Island of the Secluded Love Nun*, Christopher Moore**

***Bloodsucking Fiends*, Christopher Moore**
***Practical Demonkeeping*, Christopher Moore**
***The Lust Lizard of Melancholy Cove*, Christopher Moore**

A co-worker walked into my cubicle one day and as is usual for him, he glanced around my desk, looking for whatever book I was reading at the time. Ed seems fascinated by the fact that there is always a different book on my desk, and he likes to hear my opinions on what I read. This time was different, however. Ed had hardly entered my cubical when he blurted out that he wanted to recommend a book and that he would be glad to lend it to me. He handed me a dog-eared copy of *Coyote Blue*. "It's really funny and kind of science fiction-y," he said. "Thanks," I said, "I'll read it." And I did. Thank you, Ed! Within a couple weeks of reading that first book by Moore, I'd bought it and the rest of his books, and in the course of 2000, I gradually read them all. I tried to savor them, and I did space them out through the year, interspersing them with other books, but in the end, I couldn't resist; I had to read all of them. Christopher Moore is absolutely one of the funniest writers I've ever read. I think I was first captivated by his description of the Vatican video game in *Coyote Blue*, but I probably most often mention the dog from *Lust Lizard*, whose barking Moore translates as "Danger, Food Guy! Danger!" (Food Guy is, of course, the dog's owner.) I read *Lust Lizard* out loud to Scott during our vacation last summer, and the North Shore will forever be linked in my mind with the image of a monstrous, lactose-intolerant dinosaur who can disguise himself as a motor home. (By the way, *Lust Lizard* takes place in the same town as *Practical Demonkeeping*, and has some minor characters in common. I recommend that

you read *Demonkeeping* first.) I envy everyone who has not yet read Moore's books and still has them to look forward to. And I am glad that Moore looks to be a healthy, young man, capable of entertaining me for years to come.

Veiled Web, Catharine Asaro

I guess I just don't like the mixture of Romance with SF. I think Asaro over-simplified and over-explained the SF elements for Romance readers, and I found the Romantic elements cloying and silly. An inordinate amount of the plot was taken up with putting a good Catholic girl in the position in which she had sort of accidentally married a strict Moslem, after which she suddenly found out that her new husband didn't look favorably upon her ballerina career. Oh, the female lead is also a computer hacker of sorts, or at least she's a really good web surfer, and the guy is the designer of the world's premier search engine, which is so cool and complex that it has achieved artificial intelligence. Not recommended unless you really, really like Romance novels.

Mara and Dann, Doris Lessing

I haven't read Lessing for a long time, not since I became disenchanted with her *Canopus in Argos* series. But I used to like her writing quite a lot, especially *Briefing for Descent into Hell*, *The Golden Notebooks*, and *Four-Gated City*. There was still a bit of silliness in *Mara and Dann*, reminiscent of her purposeful ignorance of science in the *Canopus* series. Dann and Mara are brother and sister who live in a future, post-ice age, devastated Africa. The meteorological and physical changes that Lessing ascribes to an ice age are more or less impossible, but are only hinted at, and I found it easy to believe that all sorts of other, possibly human-caused disasters may have created the devastated world traveled through by Mara, and eventually Dann. Lessing lived a big chunk of her life in Africa and a lot more of her novel rang very true. One hardly needs to imagine a science fictional disaster to think of this part of the world in apocalyptic terms. Lessing's portraits of people barely surviving and her definitely Marxist economic perspective made this novel a rewarding and memorable novel.

Someplace to be Flying, Charles de Lint

De Lint is a writer of sweet fantasies and yes, I did like the Crow Girls a lot. But I probably won't be going back to his novels. I thought his image of a gritty urban world wasn't very gritty or very dark. When the main character—who is described by other characters in the book as a scary sort of guy—opens his mouth, he reveals himself to be pretty much a pussycat, a sweet, sensitive, new age kind of guy. I was constantly feeling that his description by the author and the other characters was totally incongruous with the person he revealed himself to be by his

© Pat Hario

[SC] I laughed at your dialog with the kids. They seemed like a charming bunch. Are they the reason you decided to move?

Regarding tennis, I have to admit that Tracy has a point that watching tennis with you would be a lot more fun than watching it under most other circumstances. Come to think of it, watching two guys having a race painting a picket fence would be fun with you as long as you were taking a side. You are just a very enthusiastic fan when you are into the game. That makes it fun to watch competition with you. It doesn't quite redeem tennis for me, but I can see Tracy's point.

© Jerome Van Epps

[SC] Did you get any sense that Eric Larson intends to do FilmCon again? I might try to go next time if he does. Any idea how close he came to hitting his membership limit?

I liked your piece on advertising on the subway in New York. All your pieces on your days in New York are always interesting. Madison and Milwaukee must seem very boring in comparison.

© Jim Nichols

[SC] Very worrisome piece on your seizures. I hope you find the cause and are able to treat it. I will be looking forward to the updates in your zine.

Very interesting and sensible comments on music in your "Am I Getting Old" piece.

© Vijay Bowen

[SC] Congratulations on the new relationship. I hope you are still experiencing bliss.

© Julie Zachman

[SC] A really delightful "travel" piece on your trip to Baraboo. It sounded like you all had a wonderful time. Thanks for sharing some of the fun with the rest of us.

© Interlude

[SC] Two things before we launch into comments on last month's *Turbo*: First, our New Years Eve party went well despite some changes that had a few of our regular attendees questioning our sanity. In the neighborhood of fifty people showed up during the course of the evening and it was especially great fun having **Andy Hooper**, **Carrie Root** and Julie Humphries join us for the first time in a long while. The early feedback on our decision to substitute a midnight meal for the table loaded to the sky with snack food has been positive. We'd like to make it a regular thing. We also hope to gradually cut down on the amount of trash this party generates by exchanging paper and plastic

plates and utensils with real china, silverware and cloth napkins (picked up from yard sales or St Vincent's in the coming year.) It doesn't seem that hard to make this continuing event more environmentally friendly. Please let us know what you think of these plans.

We'd also like feedback on Elizabeth Matson's storytelling. We like doing something a little different every year and we felt that the storytelling this year might be well received by this community.

Thanks to all of you who came to the celebration. We hope to see you all again next year. A big thank you to those kind souls who helped us clean up before the last hardy party animals settled down to bruising game of (naturally) *Trivial Pursuit, the Millennium Edition*. By the way, the game didn't end until 8:30 am, and I won (with a little help from my friends).

[JG] A funny thing happened before everyone arrived for the party on New Year's Eve. Scott called out to me, "someone's here already!" He had heard voices outside and so I went out to porch to open the door. But no one was walking up our steps. All I could see was a group of teenage kids running down our street, laughing in delight. It was *cold* out there and I had no idea what they were doing, but I didn't think about it till I walked to the bus stop on January 2 and discovered that the kids must have been tagging with cans of red spray paint. The neat thing was that they had come up with idea of tagging *snowdrifts!* I laughed all the way to the bus.

[SC] Second, the election. I will spare you a long discourse other than to complain that things did not work out the way I'd expected. I was rather amused at the way the fiasco in Florida was playing out up until the end. Being a Ralph Nader supporter, it didn't much matter to me who finally won. But when the U.S. Supreme Court decided to blatantly step in and steal the election for Bush, that really pissed me off. I cannot view Bush now as anything but the illegitimate President of the U.S. Every decision he makes in the next four years will be especially bitter for me because he hasn't earned the right to make it. I do not feel bad that I supported Nader. I really don't believe Nader's low numbers contributed much to Gore's loss, even in Florida. I just hate the idea of anyone serving as President who so clearly has no right to be there.

Comments on *No. Turbo 174*

Sheila Lightsey...

[SC] Who says there is never anything interesting to see in L.A.? The Tom of Finland show is just like an SF art show except it is full of dick? That sounds like a rather big difference to me. I was amused reading about your experiences there, but I just don't think Tom of Finland is something I am likely to put on my next L.A. tour schedule. I could see taking in the Museum of Death however. Don't ask me why, but three rooms full of dick inspired art and junk is creepier to me than a museum full of death-related crap.

I am so glad that you have decided that this apa is something you want to do with us. We are lucky to have you. I love your stuff.

In answer to your question to guys, it is not a universal guy thing.

actions and words. And, well, I guess I just don't go for this much fantasy in my fiction.

A Fire upon the Deep, Vernor Vinge *A Deepness in the Sky*, Vernor Vinge

Following de Lint's book with a re-reading of both Vinge's *A Fire Upon the Deep* and *A Deepness in the Sky* underlines my preference for the harder varieties of SF. We read *Deepness* for the Borders book discussion, and I decided to read both of these books to get a better sense of the plot and physical characteristics of the universe they share. I love the BIG stories within these novels — events that span generations and light-years. I love the enormous betrayals, of whole races, of whole communities that remain hidden from almost everyone and must be foiled by a few individuals whose lonely struggles are made all the more dangerous and stressful for their isolation. And I love the Big characters. Wow! I am SO happy that Vernor has apparently quit his day job and is now writing full time. Hurry, Vernor, hurry! Give me more!

White Mars, Brian Aldiss

I read this (well, at least I read *most* of it) in preparation for a panel at WisCon. The idea in it — a utopian experiment designed by committee, whose members marked out those elements of modern society they felt were most important to eliminate. So, the panel was charged to do likewise. A fine idea that led to some very interesting discussion, but believe me, a really really really bad book with lots and lots of lecturing, a boring plot, and ridiculous reasoning.

The Silence of the Langford, David Langford

Langford is a funny and extremely smart guy. This is a collection of essays and short fiction, and reviews and ephemera that kept me laughing and admiring for months, on and off. Maybe that's because I kept this book in the bathroom. "Are you OK, Jeanne?" Scott would call from the other room. "Oh it's OK then, you're just laughing."

Midnight Robber, Nalo Hopkinson

This is a science fiction novel that extrapolates from mostly black Caribbean culture — a pretty amazing thing when compared to most SF that usually extrapolates from white, middle class, suburban or urban culture. I loved the mountain-sized tree/ecology that supported hundreds of aliens and yet was capable of being destroyed by its inhabitants in the course of a single night with no sign of its ever having existed. I very much admired Nalo's use of the idea of Coventry. Like the old Robert Heinlein novella, *Coventry*, criminals in Nalo's novel are sent to an isolated world rather than jail. Nalo's Coventry is a parallel world from which offenders can never return. Heinlein's characters learn that civilization is better than anarchy and return to become better citizens. Nalo's characters learn considerably more complex lessons. The main character, for instance, goes through

a gradual about-face in her understanding of her father.

Sky Coyote, Kage Baker

I like time travel stories, and Kage Baker has been working on a series of stories about a future Earth that sends a small company of immortals back to pre-historic time to "rescue" lost things. For instance, books rescued from the library in Alexandria just before the fire, can be cached someplace and "rediscovered" by people in the future, as can extinct animals, plants and dinosaur bones. But traveling in time is so expensive that the small original band must recruit people from local time rather than importing more staff from the future. The locals are given immortality and permanent birth control treatments and trained as recovery experts. One of the main characters in *Sky Coyote* and the novel that preceded it (*In the Garden of Eden*), is a young girl originally rescued from the Inquisition. (All the recruits are people recorded as having died.) The third book has already come out, but it's hardback and I don't think these books are good enough for me to justify the purchase of hardbacks. I'm not very impressed by Baker's characterizations. If I weren't such a fan of time travel stories, I probably wouldn't have bothered with *Sky Coyote*, but I like the unique time travel gimmick, and also, it turns out this second novel is better than the first one. Also, *Sky Coyote* hints intriguingly about a confrontation between the immortals and the future people who initially sent them into the past. So I'll continue reading this series to find out more about that, and if you like time travel fiction you might want to check these out these stories too.

Wild Life, Molly Gloss

I've bought several copies of this book in hardback as gifts, in addition to my own copy. This is one of the best books I read all year, and considering the wild enthusiasm displayed in some of the capsule reviews above, that is significant. Molly Gloss is the same person who wrote *The Dazzle of Day*, which impressed me so much last year. Remember Quakers in space? ...In which the sci-fi plot is mere background to everyday life? *Wild Life* is completely different. It takes place in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1900s and its main character is a young single mother of 5 sons. Charlotte's husband may have left her, may have died, no one's sure, but the family is just scraping by on small checks that mom brings in with her writing. One of Charlotte's favorite writers is Jules Verne, so it's not surprising that her own writing has a bit of a fantastical character. You could even say that Charlotte is a science fiction writer. What is less clear is whether the story told in *Wild Life* is fiction or are Charlotte's actual journal entries. The main story — aside from journal and short fiction excerpts and feminist critiques of the publishing world — is the story of Charlotte's adventure that

I have no idea whether it is a gay guy thing.

[JG] I'm glad you want to join the conversation, Sheila, and hope the computer struggles get easier. Amazing stories about the Tom of Finland show. Thanks.

© Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] Of course you are right that there is no excuse for the really bad design of those ballots. If it is any help, I was reading the other day that there has been a wave of voting reform legislation sweeping the nation. Something like 300 bills have been proposed in state legislatures across the country. Maybe things will be a little better next time.

Regarding your comment to me, certainly Al Gore was a better choice for President than George W. Bush for a number of reasons. But was he good enough? Recently the Clinton administration ruled against opening up the (public's) airwaves to a vast number of low-watt frequency radio stations, many of them free to nonprofit and community groups. The FCC initially backed the idea but when the National Association of Broadcasters (and NPR) objected, the Clinton Administration scuttled the plan. At the very same time, the administration enthusiastically approved the massive merger of Time-Warner and AOL creating one of the biggest (if not the biggest) media empire in the world. Does this attitude seem troubling to you from an administration that is supposed to be fighting for the little guy? I don't think Al has made any attempt to distance himself from these sorts of Clinton administration decisions. There may be some small differences between the Democrats and Republicans on the national level, but this is what I mean when I say there doesn't seem to be enough difference.

[JG] I agree that the butterfly ballot was an incredibly bad design. I've seen several critiques by forms designers who came up with some really easy fixes for the problem given the requirements of the punch card system. It would have been easy to avoid this particular problem if a forms designer had a little input into the process. But there were more problems with the butterfly ballot than just bad design. Apparently the holes didn't even line up for people who were able to scan the whole page. At one polling place it was reported that a pre-election "test" of the ballots by the poll officials resulted in 15% of the ballots being thrown out. But the poll officials did nothing; apparently the manager said that some of the officials made mistakes and simply didn't understand the ballot. What did they expect, one wonders, when less experienced voters encountered the system.

It's been pretty horrifying to find out historically how many non-votes have been acceptable in especially poor neighborhood polling places. I hope that a reform in the actual mechanics of voting is one thing that emerges from this mess.

I'm afraid I'm one of those people who is pretty blasé about bad weather and the difficulties of getting to work in spite of it. I take the bus during the winter. The only weather the state will shut down for is weather that stops the buses. That's only happened once that

I can recall. My bus driver said that it has to be really bad for Madison Metro to shut down. "There has to be lots of buses stuck and not moving for that to happen," he said. That one time when the weather shut down Madison Metro there were apparently six or seven buses stuck before they quit. So if I get to work, I know the office will be open. If I can't get to work, the office will be closed and the state will be obligated to pay me for the day anyway.

Your theory of why my mom may have reacted the way she did to my college education sounds dead on. I never thought of it that way. It probably didn't help that I rejected the idea of a wedding, the one permissible way for working class women to claim the spotlight.

I too have felt that the media has been getting most people's reaction to the election mess all wrong. I think most mainstream media still don't have much of a clue about the long-term reaction to the election will be. Right now, I think they're treating it like a normal news event — that once we move on to the next scandal, people will forget about it. I think it's going to go away.

© Maureen Kincaid Speller

[SC] Sorry to hear about another year of New Year's party travails. I hope you and Paul managed to have a good time anyway. Of course both of you are always welcome to come to our New Year's party, we don't care how far away you live.

Interesting developments on the house remodeling front, especially the window hidden in a wall. I have never heard of that before. I don't think this stuff is boring at all and I am glad that your friend's criticism did not put you off writing about it. Incidentally, I want to be clear here, I don't care if you submit a 6 page zine or a 60 page zine because I enjoy your work and, at the end of it, I know I will be hungry for more. In the past, I have cautioned people about submitting large zines because, as Jeanne and I have learned, large zines often fail to get many comments. These days, with more large zines and writers committed to commenting on each other's work, this generalization may no longer be true. And, since you are happy with the feedback you have been getting, by all means write as much as you please. I love your stuff.

Thank you for the update on fox hunting, flooding and the fuel strike. I have seen a mention or two in the media about the fox hunting controversy (including the very recent news that the House of Commons is about to pass a ban on fox hunting but the Lords are likely to reject it), but the rest has gone unreported out here in the Midwest. Two stories from your end of the world that have captured our attention recently included the nudist in London who managed to convince a court there that he was not corrupting anyone's morals by going around naked. The other story, on this week's "60 Minutes" newsmagazine, was about the small town doctor who murdered 260 of his patients, mostly older women. Those are the sorts of stories from your country that American media outfits feel Americans need to know about.

[JG] I think it's so cool that you're coming to WisCon this year! Other *Turbo* members are jealous of Scott and I that you're staying

takes place when she decides to help in the rescue effort of a young child in the deep timber of eastern Washington. Charlotte gets lost and Well, I don't want to tell you any more. Find out for yourself. *Wild Life* is a wonderful story, containing some excellent commentary on and by a single mother's struggle to make art. It's beautifully written and images of Charlotte, dressed in men's clothing and tramping through the forest, still float in my head.

Dark Cities Underground, Lisa Goldstein

What if the world's great urban subways were all magically connected in a sort of modern Fairyland. And also, what if some of the world's most famous fantasies, supposedly told TO children, were actually cribbed FROM real children's actual experiences? There are quite a few other big what-ifs in this novel, which was entertaining, but in the end, for me, flawed by plot holes created by all those what-ifs.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, J.K. Rowling

OK, I admit it. I'm hooked. But you all know what these books are about, right? And if you don't, you're tired of people trying to tell you about them. So I won't go into it, but I have to say I do like the growing darkness of this series as Harry grows up and the world becomes more and more menacing.

Darwin's Radio, Greg Bear

I can't remember what this book was about. It came up in conversation a couple weeks ago, and I couldn't remember if I read it, so I glanced at a plot summary on Amazon.com, but I *still* didn't recognize the story. But here it is on my list. The book itself is in a bag of "to be sold" books on the porch. Sorry, but that's all I can tell you without re-reading it and that's not going to happen. Maybe it's a great book that I read in an alternate universe and all memory of it was wiped when I came back to our world. Or maybe it was just forgettable novel.

The Perfect Storm, Sebastian Junger

I liked this one. However, when I first picked it up at the bookstore, just before Scott and I went to see the movie, I was surprised and mentally cursed myself for looking at it. The first sentence gives away the ending and tells you that all the guys on the ship die. But the plot's not really the thing in the book. The important part of the books is all the DETAIL ... about meteorology, about the science of waves, about the ecology of swordfish spawning grounds, about the economics and mechanics of fishing, and about the training of Navy rescue supermen. It was great to read this in conjunction with the movie because even though the details are there in the book, it's hard to visualize a wave several stories high. And even though we hear the weather reports in the movie, I loved getting the big picture and meteorological details in the book. It's non-fiction, but it kept me reading like a suspense novel.

Wild Angel, Pat Murphy

It's so cool to know Pat Murphy personally and recognize some of the little jokes in this novel. But I would have enjoyed it without knowing her. This is the second of a very interesting, I might even say *unique* series, each written by a different fictional author, one a pseudonym of the other — who will all eventually (in the soon to be published third book) come to life and interact metafictionally. And that includes Pat Murphy herself who is a different male, fictional character in both of the first two novels. *Wild Angel* is supposedly written by Mary Maxwell, the pseudonym of Max Merriwell, who himself is the supposed author of *There and Back Again*. The first book is a space adventure story and an homage to J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. *Wild Angel* is something else entirely — set in the late 1800s California, it is a feral child adventure story of a young girl baby raised by wolves and growing up into your basic Western superhero. Pat Murphy throws realism out the window and I didn't mind it at all. And I loved the Pat Murphy character in this one — an ex-con and artist who was caught forging banknotes because he couldn't help himself from improving the artwork.

Tangled in Blue, Joan D. Vinge

Ah, how nice to return to the world of *Snow Queen*, *Worlds' End*, and *Summer Queen*! And it was great to see Jerusha and BZ again, but from a different perspective—the other cops on the force. This novel feels like a Film Noir story and fills in some of the political background of Tiamat before the Snow Queen's death. Lots of fun. I had this surprising epiphany while reading it that both Joan and Vernor Vinge seem to share an interest in a very similar idea. In both of Vernor's two recent novels and in Joan's Tiamat novels, an ancient civilization, far advanced beyond the world contemporary in the novels left traces, remnants behind that provide powerful clues to advanced science and technology. In some cases, the remnant technology still can be made to work and thus is much sought after by the characters. I am really curious about whether this shared idea was shared consciously by Joan and Vernor.

Kipper's Game, Barbara Ehrenreich

Scott and I admire Ehrenreich's left-leaning political essays and so when we found out that she was writing a science fiction novel, we were intrigued. We watched for it, but it must have sunk without a trace, because I only found out that it had actually come out many years after its publication. Well, I still like Ehrenreich's essays, but I don't think she has much of a future as a fiction writer, much less an SF writer. I sure wish she had used her sharp and incisive critical skills in this book. There is very little political analysis to be found in *Kipper's Game*, in fact. Ehrenreich has a lot in common with Doris Lessing insofar as their understanding and use of science; neither Ehrenreich

with us. You could probably set off a bidding war if you wanted to play us off against one another.

But I know what you mean about not getting into the holiday spirit. I've been feeling this way for years—being busy with so much other stuff, that as the holiday approaches, I'm thinking of it as just one more damn list of things that needs to get done. Gone is the joy that used to grip me in late November as the magic day approached. I usually have some pretty wonderful times during the holidays, especially since Scott and I have developed our own traditions, but I don't feel the sense of anticipation that used to make this season so exciting. I don't think that good decorations would do it for me. By the way, you expressed a wish for a bit of snow at Christmastime. I think your wish got mis-filed and redirected toward our part of the world....

I love the idea that Clive is taking part in time-spanning conversations with other workers on your house through cryptic messages on hidden surfaces of your house. It seems like this idea could make a wonderful story — a mystery unraveled through notes found in a house being renovated, or a time travel story in which the time traveler uses surfaces known to be hidden for a long period of time to send messages to a future self.

Wow, gas light pipes. That's pretty old isn't it? Well it would be REALLY old here. Late 1800s? Would the piping be good for running cable through for electronic connections?

You bought chestnuts charred over a brazier at Charing Cross. Is there some connection? How was Charing Cross named?

No matter what the zoning laws or greenbelt regulations, urban growth always seems to end up with those who flee the city centers unhappy that the country didn't turn out to be what they expected followed by pressure to rearrange the country to suit the immigrants. The familiar story here involves the folks who move out to the country, looking for a rural, bucolic landscape, farms, cows, etc., and who are then horrified to discover that farms can be rather smelly and sometimes noisy. The farmers are then dismayed to find themselves being pressured to keep the farm animals quiet early in the morning and to do something about that manure odor.

I don't know if I especially like the idea of sushi on conveyer belts. It sort of detracts from the idea of sushi as food art, doesn't it?

"I can't speak for god but yes, I was pretty wrathful..."
Excellent sentence, Maureen.

© Lee Murray

[SC] I have to confess that after I read the first paragraph of your hilarious essay on American bathrooms, I ran out and read it aloud to Jeanne as she was cooking dinner.

As you have probably already figured out yourself, the reason Americans consider the word "toilet" to be rude is because it is way too specific. Have you ever heard the expression "too much information"? That is the problem with "toilet." If you ask someone for the directions to the "bathroom," you are asking for a private space which you may need for a variety of unspecified possible reasons. Maybe you need to

wash your hands or fix your clothes or hair or makeup. Or maybe you desperately need to take a crap. Who knows? “Bathroom” or “restroom” is nicely vague. But if you ask for directions to the toilet, you seem to be telling people precisely what you need to do and that seems like more than most strangers really want to know about you. At least that seems to be the case here in the squeamish American Midwest.

I also laughed at your accurate criticism of our toilet’s wimpy flush power. This is a recent development, I think, as we attempt to incorporate more environmentally friendly, low-flush models into our homes. I have heard lots of people complain that the new ones don’t help the environment because you end up flushing several times to get the same job done the old models did with one flush. I have also heard there is a thriving underground market in the old toilets by people who desperately do not want to give up old fashioned flush power.

I think the Three Dog Bakery is truly odd in a “only in Madison” sort of way. I’m tempted to write back to my family in Iowa about it.

Regarding vending machines, you won’t get warm pop this time of year, but you will get cold, but not frozen, pop. I believe the machines are climate controlled to give you pop at a certain temperature regardless of what the weather outside is doing.

Regarding your comment to me about car size, I was really surprised that gas in New Zealand is so cheap. Why is that? Are there oil reserves close by? I suppose there is something to the legendary American romance with cars and how that contributes to the popularity of big vehicles in the U.S., but the practical advantages of big vehicles melt away once the price of gas goes up.

Regarding making friends at work, you made many good points in your response to this subject. I’m really glad that **Julie** reached out to you and brought you into this social group. I can’t argue with your statement that one can’t really have too many friends, but I hope I didn’t imply that I was unfriendly toward people at work. There are a few people at work I’m actually close to calling friends. But most of my co-workers would not fit in well with my primary social group for various reasons and I don’t have the time to cultivate several separate social groups. Your situation living here far from home and in need of social contacts, is different from mine.

[JG] I loved reading about your encounter with American euphemisms. It’s true, we get really very silly about ambiguous terms for the word toilet. We’d rather refer to any part of that room or any other use of that room than its primary function. We’re even willing to call a room a “bathroom” that has no bath in it. Your piece reminded me of a short story I read a long time ago called “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” by Horace M. Miner. It’s written as an archeology article, mostly about bathrooms, from the point of view of an future scientist who digs up archeological remains of the ancient Nacirema, or American, spelled backwards.

The rites are normally only discussed with children, and then only during the period when they are being initiated into these mysteries.

I was most impressed by a restroom in London. It was right across the street from Westminster Cathedral, just off an underpass beneath the street. I was expecting an unpleasant experience, actually, but my need was urgent. I found a lovely facility with

or Lessing seem to think it’s necessary to do any research about the fictional world catastrophes they propose (Could this actually happen? And if it did, what would the physical and ecological consequences be?). They use SF ideas totally as metaphor and don’t seem to be troubled by any curiosity about the ideas they propose. Both are more interested in their characters and use fantasy elements as sort of mythic/psychological projections of their characters. Lessing, however, is a lot better at writing good characters. Trees have stopped sprouting leaves in *Kipper’s Game*. Apparently there is grass and maybe bushes, but no leaves, not for a couple years. No one looks to see if the trees are actually dead. Things just look very dismal, like the main character’s life — a recently divorced woman who was shocked to find out that her husband was having an affair and that he no longer respected her. The main character’s son, whose name is Kipper, has invented a video game that is so addicting and consuming, that western civilization seems about to crash as a result. But then it turns out that there is only one copy, really, and so things turn out OK in the end, though Kipper may have died. Or maybe we’re all living in the fiction of the video game. Or maybe not. Sorry that I spoiled the ending for you, but you should consider yourself lucky to be warned away from this turkey.

The Jazz, Melissa Scott

I know that this novel is some people’s pick for their favorite Melissa Scott work, but mine is still *Trouble and Her Friends* or maybe *Shadowman*. I guess I’m getting a little tired of Scott’s familiar themes of virtual reality modeled after ecological principles. In this novel, “jazz” is a sort of arform of mis-information — rumors spread through the web that are considered successful and good to the degree that people believe. One of my favorite bits was the description of a highly successful bit of jazz — a diet scheme involving foods grouped by color— which was promoted by the main character. At the time the story takes place, the colors diet is such a successful phenomenon and is marketed so widely, that she can no longer convince anyone that she made it up and that it doesn’t actually work.

The All-True Travels and Adventures of Liddie Newton, Jane Smiley

Gloss’ *Wild Life* and Pat Murphy’s *Wild Angel*, which are both set in the American West, got me in the mood for Western fiction I guess. Also, I like Jane Smiley’s writing a lot. (Have you read *Moo! Or A Thousand Acres...?*) This novel takes place in Kansas just before the Civil War and we see the events of “Bloody Kansas” first hand through the eyes of abolitionist settlers, and more specifically through the eyes of Liddie Newton, a young woman, just married. Liddie slowly discovers her own opinions about a whole range of things through her experiences in Kansas. I like Liddie a lot and enjoyed learning the history of this place in time.

Reinventing Comics, Scott McCloud

David Emerson gave me this book when we visited Barb Jenson and David in Minneapolis. David couldn't believe I hadn't seen it before and after reading it, I couldn't believe it either. It's a sort of historical, how-to, where-to, what-if primer on comic book art and the possibilities of this art form in electronic media. And it is told entirely through the media of ... comics! A tour de force! Informative and a lot of fun to read.

The Rhinoceros Who Quoted Nietzsche and Other Odd Acquaintances, Peter S. Beagle

My favorite Peter Beagle book is *The Innkeepers Song*, which I read 4 or 5 years ago and which then inspired me to go back and read everything I could find by this author. Beagle's elegant, lovely prose is a joy to read. There are several wonderful stories (and essays) in this collection, including the gently amusing title story, which involves a friendship of many years between a professor of philosophy and a possibly imaginary rhinoceros. "Lila the Werewolf" was good too, about the ultimate in bad relationships. But my favorite story was "My daughter's name is Sarah," a sweet and sad mixture of memory and imagination.

Cryptonomicon, Neal Stephenson

Ah! This is my *other* favorite novel of the year! It's a Big Novel — more than 800 pages — but I wish it was twice as long. I would have been glad to keep reading. Great characters, excellent plot (or plots, as there are several stories in different times that only gradually come together) and huge dollops of ideas and fascinating information about World War II, cryptography, electronic security, church organs, dentistry, weather ... it goes on and on. What a great story!

The Jump-Off Creek, Molly Gloss

This is Molly Gloss's first novel, a very little one but still very lovely, and it is a revisionist Western story, told from a woman's point of view. It's amazing how much historical fiction I have read this year.

Minions of the Moon, Richard Bowes

It was almost impossible not to think of de Lint's novel, *Someplace to be Flying* while reading Bowes' novel. Both are definitely urban fantasies, but Bowes does a much better job at portraying an incredibly gritty and sometimes horrifying ghetto setting. Bowes main character is a heroin junkie who pays for his drugs by selling sex and sometimes robbery. He has a doppelganger who — believe it or not — lives a life even more desperately degraded than that of the "hero," who does finally climb up out of squalor and begins to live a better life. It's a hard book to read, even though it is beautifully written; I realized several times that I would not have been one of the people who stood by this character. If he had been my friend

two glass vases of gorgeous white lilies on the counter beside the sinks.

Your question about fractions and restrooms made me wonder why some of the larger homes which boast rooms with enormous multiple-person baths and showers, several sinks and toilets aren't referred to as double bathrooms or some multiple larger than one. Actually I suspect the use of fractions has something to do with expensive per-word space in want ads.

Actually, I suspect that it wouldn't be extremely difficult to find an example of a dying uninsured person in Madison's streets. Maybe not in the west side, but there is definitely a population of street people here and sometimes, when the weather is really bad, the shelters turn away folks and the uninsured do indeed expire occasionally right here in our town.

You might like to check out the Wisconsin Tourism Office at some point before the weather turns warm again and ask them for their publication on cheese factories in Wisconsin. I understand that one can tour these places and sample a lot of the less publicized varieties of cheese and enjoy a pleasant tour of the cow-grazing part of Wisconsin's landscape at the same time.

Have you ever heard or read David Sedaris? He's very funny and an extremely fine writer. Your description of the rude American on the French train reminded me of a similar description by Sedaris in his book, *Me Talk Pretty One Day* (which is an example of one of his translations of how he sounded to French people while he was learning the language in Paris). Sedaris tells the story of being in a Parisian train and overhearing a loud and obnoxious American man speculate to his wife about the likelihood of who in the train were probably pickpockets intent on robbing them. The American was most suspicious of Sedaris, unaware that he was in fact also an American. Like your American tourist, this guy assumed that no one in the train could understand a word he was saying. It's a very funny piece, especially for the silent insults Sedaris is thinking at the rude tourist. Scott and I find Sedaris' tapes excellent entertainment while traveling.

© Andy Hooper

[SC] Once again you drew me in to a subject that I normally would have little interest in. I enjoyed the whole article.

You are in a tough spot, needing time to write a book but not being able to take time away from trading online. I hope you manage to find a way to do the book anyway. If you will permit me to say so, I think you are a very fine writer and I would much rather see you writing for a living than trading online (unless, of course, you found a way to do both.)

[JG] "Now I am just another filthy scalper, keeping toys out of the hands of kids and destroying the last vestiges of mankind's innocence." Well, at least you like your work Andy.... Just kidding. Fascinating stuff about some of those games. I had no idea. But then I was surprised to find out after *A Toy Story* came out that there actually IS a pink aisle in Toys R Us. I thought the movie was

making that up. I'm sort of out of the loop in this world. Still, you make it fascinating and draw me in with your writing.

© Carrie Root

[SC] It was delightful having you and **Andy** come to our party and we look forward to seeing you again if you happen to be in town during the holidays. I expect we will be doing a New Year's Eve party for the foreseeable future.

[JG] My family is a lot like yours, Carrie. It's huge, probably larger than **Lee's**, but we're spread out and I don't stay in contact with the members that are close. Extended family used to be the main social community for my mom when she grew up, but it is no longer that for me or most people in my generation.

© Kim and Kathi Nash

[SC] You had a really good turnout at the birthday bash this year. I had a lot of fun. Good party.

© Ruth Nichols

[SC] Thanks for the review of *Best of Show*, a movie we missed seeing. I have been hearing good things about it from other sources as well. We will rent it sometime. Too bad they didn't publish your whole review in the department newsletter. Only bad movies should have reviews consisting of bullets.

We enjoy our breadmaker, but it is one of those things that doesn't get used much once it gets put away in the closet. It is great when it occurs to us to use it, but it can often be months between uses.

I laughed at the "Twelve Days of Christmas (at the call center.)"

© Jerome Van Epps

[JG] Gosh, it sounds like the ancient Athenians produced the first live action *Survivor* show!

© Tom Havighurst

[SC] Your zines these days are beautiful.

I have yet to meet a hangover "cure" that failed to make my hangover worse. Potatoes, eggs and Kimchee sure sounds like something I'd like to face with a pounding head, churning stomach, and stinging eyeballs. You go for it, guy. I'll stay in bed and moan.

Maybe the subject of the election is threatening to get old, but you pointed out a good thing with the democracy project. Getting as much information as we can directly from the candidates is good advice. Thanks for the tip.

[JG] Scary stuff indeed from Gore and Bush, re the Nader question. But not surprising. The two-party system as it exists now depends, I think, upon ostracizing third parties and a broader range of discussion in general.

What a cool wedding announcement!

or relative, I would have abandoned him long before he turned his life around. That's a rather uncomfortable thought. There is a problem having to do with the fact that the novel was originally written as a series of short stories and was patched together into a novel, not quite successfully. (The character is forever reminiscing about an episode in his past, and his self in the past then begins reminiscing about an earlier episode in his past.) But it's an impressive novel, much closer in my mind to what an urban fantasy should be if it really means to use an innercity-scape as its setting. The fantasy element of the doppelganger is treated in an interesting way, especially towards the end of the book when it appears there are two sorts of doppelgangers....

Ledoyt, Carol Emshwiller

The All-True Travels and Adventures of Liddie Newton and *The Jump-off Creek* weren't enough. I wanted more revisionist Western fiction from a woman's point of view. In fact, I actually read *Ledoyt* a few years ago, but this year we found out that Carol Emshwiller will be coming to WisCon 25 AND that her new novel, *Leaping Man Hill* (a sequel to *Ledoyt*) had been published. So, I picked *Ledoyt* up again, and enjoyed it again. *Ledoyt* is a very quiet, little novel written from the point of view of a conflicted little girl who witnesses her widowed mother falling in love with a man named *Ledoyt*. The little girl at first likes the man, but then hates him for choosing her mother rather than herself. All this is set amid a detailed exploration of how lonely and hard pioneers' life must have been 19th century western United States.

Leaping Man Hill, Carol Emshwiller

Characters from *Ledoyt* are grown up here; both *Ledoyt* and the mother have died, and the characters continue struggling with their lives and the land and the world around them. I'm finding it difficult to explain why I like these books so much. I think I may like them in a very science fictional way. I learn about an alien world from characters who take most of that world for granted. But all of its surprises and contrasts to my world are explored in my head — not explicitly pointed out by the author in the text. Emshwiller is a fine, fine writer too. I have a couple of her SF books on my to-read shelf that I intend to read before WisCon. All I remember of her SF is that I really liked some of her short fiction, but it's going to be interesting reading her again and connecting her Western novels with her SF. I look forward to it.

Persuasion, Jane Austen

Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen

See what I mean about reading a lot of historical fiction this year? I've begun re-reading Austen for the Jane Austen book discussion group. We sip tea and nibble on scones and cucumber sandwiches and discuss the fiction and England in the early 19th century. It's been great fun re-reading Austen. I've

found so many passages that I didn't notice the first time, that it's clear to me that I'll be re-reading these books over and over again in my lifetime. I dream of going back and having conversations with her....

Accidental Creatures, Anne Harris

This is Anne Harris's second book; the first was *The Nature of Smoke* and both are set in the same world. Harris is a WisCon regular and I suppose that's why I originally looked for her work. She's a good writer, a good story-teller, and I've enjoyed her writing. "Accidental creatures" refers to mutant humans whose variation from the norm has been caused by rampant biotechnology pollutants, experienced on a daily basis by industry workers. Accidental creatures also refers to artificially created creatures who are able to literally swim in poisonous biotech material. There are some wild ideas in this book!

Darwin's Blade, Dan Simmons

This one's pure fluff, just fun, which is surprising from Dan Simmons whose writing has so impressed me in the past. On the other hand, if there's one thing to expect from Simmons, it's the unexpected. He doesn't stick with any one genre or level of seriousness from one book to the next. And that's one of the things I find interesting about him. He's done hard science fiction, mainstream fiction, horror, and historical pastiche. *Darwin's Blade* is something different again — a rather superficial suspense novel about an insurance investigator (named Darwin) in southern California whose investigations make him the target of a nefarious gang of Russian mobsters. His physical capabilities are almost unbelievable; he's smarter than almost anyone else; he's both a physicist and all-around expert in literature; he's a gun expert, a driving expert and darkly handsome, too. But really, this novel is an excuse for Dan Simmons to string together dozens of Darwin Award stories (death by extreme stupidity) which are investigated by Darwin's company. So a lot of it is just plain silly and fun to read. That's about all there is to this novel.

The Iron Bridge, David Morse

Here's a *much* meatier novel! Recommended by the 1999 panel of Tiptree judges, I was glad to finally get to this time travel story. Well it isn't actually the kind of time travel story I am especially fond of — with lots of attention to paradoxes and their avoidance. But it did fit in well with my interest this year in historical fiction. It is set in the late 1700s, right about the time in which the technology of drilling an even hole in cannon was perfected and when the first iron bridge was constructed in Shropshire England over the Severn River at Coalbrookdale. People from the blighted earth of 21st century (which is nearly dead from the effects of 19th and 20th century pollution and greed), think that it is possible that if the industrial revolution had moved more slowly or had been interrupted in some drastic way, that the world as

© Hope Kiefer and Karl Hailman

[SC] Interesting piece on your seasonal jobs, Hope. Please keep us updated on how the job at CUNA is going. Do you expect to return to work permanently when Dee Dee starts regular school?

Regarding your comment to me on Ebert and Roeper, you are correct, there is no school for critics, but there are film schools. Roeper shows no evidence that he has had even a single film class. On the other hand he strikes me as someone who saw plenty of movies with his frat boy buddies. Ebert needs someone smart (and I agree with you that he should have chosen a woman) because he already has problems getting details right especially if the film has a complex or unconventional plot. One of Ebert's key phrases for us is if he complains that a plot was too hard to follow. Whenever he says that, Jeanne and I become more interested in the movie.

© Julie Zachman

[SC] Briefly on class, I guess I simply disagree with you. I think class is one of the most significant realities of our lives. We are taught not to see things from a class perspective at an early age and we are often told that class doesn't exist in America, but that is all nonsense.

As an example I have become even more sensitive to class issues in recent years as Jeanne and I travel to visit her family in Milwaukee and my family in Iowa. Few observers would fail to see the differences between Jeanne's comfortably upper middle class siblings and my family who are nearly all working class and a few of them barely hanging on to that. It can be astonishing to travel from one place to the other over the course of a single weekend.

I see class represented everywhere, from the pages of the newspaper to the movies we see, the advertising and dopey sitcoms on television to the people on the street. I think you can see it in the SF group, too.

[JG] "Interesting to think," you write, "that had there been a landslide on the East coast, Nader might have approached 5%" I think you are right, and I think it's interesting that the same Democrats who were fiercely pressuring us Nader supporters to support Gore in the event of a tight election now act as if Nader had infinitesimal support all along. They don't seem the least suspicious that Gore's win (in the popular vote) might be attributable to the Nader supporters who *did* vote Democratic out of fear of Bush.

I wonder if your friend Heidi might have found a wonderful career through her study of Art History even if her father hadn't died and she felt obliged to go for an MBA. I think that it's a myth that there's one lover out there destined for each person and also that there's only one perfect career for each person. Following one's interests and loves leads to interesting lives, not always predictable, but often quite wonderful.

I really disagree with your dismissal of the importance of class in our culture. There are lots of people who believe that sexism doesn't exist in any important way anymore. Their protests sounds very much like someone who rejects other people's experience of class in their lives.

 © Vicki Rosenzweig

[SC] I sympathize with your anger over the election results. I couldn't agree with you more.

[JG] I agree with you 100%, Vicki. My horror at what happened this the election has much less to do with Gore's loss than what it revealed about our political system. As you say, "*it's not about Gore, it's about the rest of us, and especially about those who weren't allowed to vote, or whose votes were discarded.*" Good point.

 © Clay Colwell

[SC] You complained that you just weren't in the mood for Christmas this year. I was in Austin at Christmas once and I found the whole scene a little peculiar so I figure it would be hard any year down there to get into the mood. Here in Wisconsin we got a lot of help getting into the Christmas spirit this year from the weather gods. They dumped enormous amounts of snow on us in December plunging us all deep into a winter wonderland whether we were in the mood to go there or not.

In a comment to us you wrote, "so how do you approach APA's (or, perhaps less potentially traumatic an issue, science fiction) with the intent of Socratic critique?" I don't know. I have no idea what you're talking about.

Thanks for the C.J. Cherryh recommendations.

[JG] I will try to remember to send you a copy of *The Nation* article this week! *The Nation* does have archives on the web, but I don't think this article is accessible there.

Gosh, I don't think I use Socratic critique methods to approach apas or science fiction. Do I? Maybe I should check the dictionary.

My favorite radio listening is also the NPR Morning Edition and All Things Considered. I hope you will keep your dial tuned to the left hand side of the dial since I am worried about this game of bingo you play with top-40 stations. Sounds almost as dangerous as karaoke cell phone calls....

 © Jae Adams

[SC] Very nice illustrations and I like Room Service, too.

As my worldcon was the same but different from **Diane's**, so yours was the same but different from mine. I also liked the *consuite/tavern* they came up with and wish I had had more time to hang out there and give the Goose Island and other offerings a fair taste test.

The Fairmont would have been a lovely choice for us, too, except that we were determined to throw the Tiptree party and that limited our hotel options. I am afraid Jeanne and I never joined you for dinner, we had only one dinner out which was on Friday with Spike and Tom. We headed back to Madison on Sunday afternoon.

In your comment to **Georgie** you wrote, "Jon puts butter on his sweet rolls." That's nothing. When I worked for the reformatory back

they know it might not be so deadly. One member of this future community — Maggie Foster — is more accomplished than the others at mastering the mental technique of time travel and so is chosen to go back in time a couple years before the iron bridge is built. In the end, the novel is not about changing the future with some sort of alternate universe gimmick, but about how much more important are ideas of responsibility and morality when it comes to making real changes in the world.

Master and Commander, Patrick O'Brian
Post Captain, Patrick O'Brian
H.M.S. Surprise, Patrick O'Brian
The Mauritius Command, Patrick O'Brian

I seem to be stuck several centuries in the past. These are the first four books in O'Brian's series about Captain Jack Aubrey and his friend and ship's surgeon, Stephen Maturin. Though they were written in this century, they take place in the early 1800s, mostly at sea, during the British war against Napoleon and at the height of England's imperialistic expansion. I don't know quite why I am attracted to these books, but I certainly seem to be caught by them. The next two novels are waiting on my to-read shelf calling to me. Maybe it's because I find it fascinating to be reading the opposite gender's perception of what life was like at the same time Jane Austen wrote and completely avoided any mention of male-only activities. Frederick Wentworth (from Austen's *Persuasion*) finds success in Jack Aubrey's world as a ship's captain who has captured enough enemy vessels to make a fortune and is eligible, therefore, to be Anne's husband. It's interesting to see where the guys went when not socializing in the parlors. I also suspect that much of the bits set on land in England and concerning romance and marriage are very much direct commentary on O'Brian's part to Austen's fiction.

Dune, Frank Herbert

Sometimes it's not wise to go back to read novels you thought were fantastic when you were young. *Dune* is one of those books for me. I decided to re-read it because of the TNT miniseries of a couple months ago. A lot of that production sounded very familiar but I couldn't believe that what I recalled as a very environmentally aware book had as one of its main storylines the desirability of terraforming a functioning alien ecology. But it's true, the Imperial ecologist and secret Freman advocates turning most of the planet of Arrakis into a Earth-like paradise ... except for a strip of desert around the equator that they'd leave for the worms. There is absolutely no discussion about the effects of such a drastic, world-wide change upon the current plantlife and animals, about whether it would even be possible for them to survive or whether humans had the right to do so. I couldn't believe it. I also couldn't believe that I'd been able to ignore the pervasive sexism in the novel. Sheesh! I

shouldn't have gone back; the book in my memory was much better.

Outlaw School, Rebecca Ore

If you admired *Gaia's Toys*, which I did, you might be a bit disappointed by the new novel by Rebecca Ore. She's fond of extremely dark futures in which individuals have very little hope. This is fine; it's part of what I admired in *Gaia's Toys*, that Ore is so good at creating dystopian warnings from the hints of the future in our own world. *Outlaw School* was less satisfying, though. In *Outlaw School's* world everyone is slotted into the role they are most capable of fulfilling and are fed the "truth" that best supports their intelligence and world view. Gradually you realize that even the so-called rebels are fed just the right amount of conspiracy "truths" about the world to satisfy their expectations and keep them in their place as rebels. In the case of our main character, her role is that of an "outlaw," unlicensed teacher of other rebels, and she does not suspect that her reality may be just as false and manipulated as anyone else's. It's actually a pretty neat idea, but the novel's plot — in which we get informed about various facts just in time to witness their impact upon the character's lives made *me* feel manipulated. Which may have been Ore's intention. But if so, then there was never a possibility of any of the characters or the reader to ever understand the actual truth about this world, if it even exists, and to discover who is directing the campaign of manipulation. It felt like an exercise in futility, which again may very well have been the point.

King Rat, China Melville

This is a fantasy based on the fairy tale "The Pied Piper," only from the point of view of the King of rats. It is set in present-day New York City. The Borders Book discussion members disagreed on which was the most horrific image in the novel. One woman felt it was one of the Piper's particularly brutal murders. I thought it was the garbage-eating scene. There's a very interesting idea in this book — having to do with recorded and manipulated music. (Melville calls it "jungle" music in the novel and some of you probably have a better understanding of what that is than I do.) The idea is that jungle music might be a really useful tool for a monster that uses flute music to control other creatures. He can normally play only one sort of tune at a time, but by recording different tracks on top of one another, he becomes far more powerful.

in Iowa, it was common to serve sweet rolls on Sunday mornings. They institution made their own huge rolls (one roll took up most of a plate) slathered in frosting. Then the cooks would bring out tubs of melted maple syrup and peanut butter and set them up on the steam tables. It was my job as the kitchen guard to watch as the inmates would get their sweet roll and go down the line pouring syrup or peanut butter (very frequently both) on top. It was amazing.

In your comment to **Jerome**, the song was called "War" and I think the singer was something like Edwin Starr (and, no, I didn't check for the answer on the internet, I owned the single once upon a time long ago.)

Thanks also for the Cherryh recommendations. A cursory glance at the selection of C.J. Cherryh at Borders East indicates that I may have to search for most of the titles recommended to me in some used bookstores, or go to the dealers room at WisCon to actually do some shopping. Oh darn.

Excellent first chapter of your trip to Britain. I am looking forward to chapter 2.

[JG] They served High Tea at the Fairmont?! Damn! I didn't know. I would have tried it if I'd known.

With the tea and the social observations and the coincidences, what a lovely Jane Austen sort of convention you had. Delightful. On the other hand, what an alternate universe sort of convention you must have had. I can't think of any other explanation for your having had dinner with Scott and me on Sunday night while at the same time we were home unpacking.

Thanks for the tip on *Lulu on the Bridge*. We'll go looking for it the next time we rent a video. We're both fans of Keitel, Sorvino and Dafoe.

Fascinating how much more British your vocabulary gets when you talk about your recent vacation.

Scott Custis & Jeanne Gomoll
21 January 2001