

# the monthly monthly<sup>2</sup>

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NOVEMBER  
FRIDAY

## U.K.'s common r

BLACKPOOL, England — Government said today Britain will join the common market while being one of the largest net contributors to Europe.

Addressing the Conservative Party convention, Deputy Foreign Secretary Lord Gilmour said: "We are not prepared to accept the disproportionate burden on Britain of a change in our net contribution to the common market and gets too little out of it."

## Severe flooding i

NEW DELHI, India — Severe flooding hit one million people here today. The swirling flood waters of the Brahmaputra river in India's eastern Assam state have inundated the Jorhat District alone.

## Crisis averted in

LA PAZ, Bolivia — Bolivia's President Siles, uneasily weathered his day, but reports from the capital indicated a coup attempt had been averted.

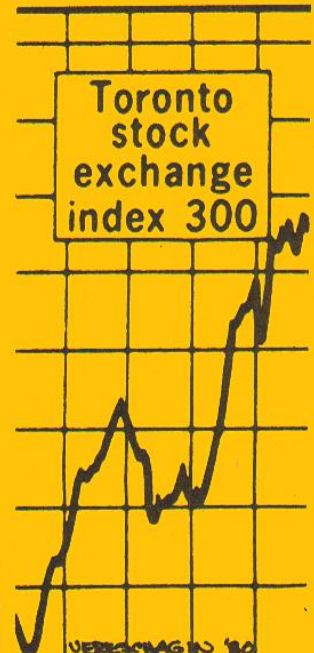
A government communiqué said officers had been persuaded to remain loyal to the high military command in La Paz. The coup attempt began when a division based in Trinidad, in the northeast of La Paz, marched on the city.

The coup attempt began when a division based in Trinidad, in the northeast of La Paz, marched on the city. The rebellion failed to spread outside the province.

## Pope's platform

PHILADELPHIA — The pope's proposal to sell pieces of the plane in which he celebrated mass last week in the structure.

The city spent at least \$196,000 to build the structure.





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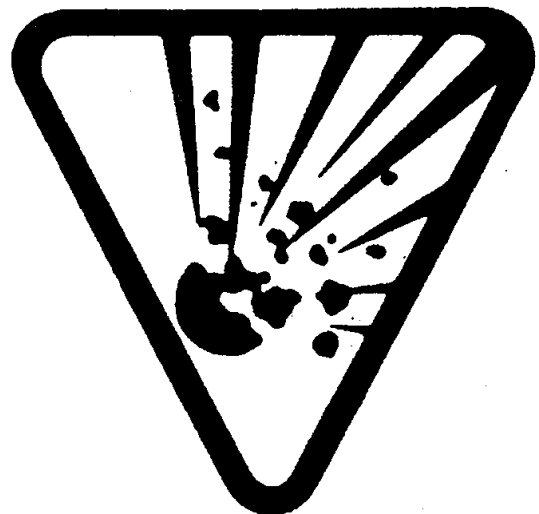
## CONTENTS

Throw Away That Truss!	
Dave Vereschagin.....	p.2
An Interview with Eli Cohen.....	p.4
The Agony and the Ecstasy	
Christine Kulyk.....	p.9
Stuttered Motion	
Bill Beard.....	p.13
Off the Shelf	
Doug Barbour.....	p.15
contributors' addresses.....	p.16
Monthend Update.....	p.16

## ART CREDITS

Dave Vereschagin.....	cover
A. Hakke.....	p.1
John Durno.....	p.3
Bill Gibson.....	p.7
Bill Gibson.....	p.10
T.S. Bradshaw.....	p.12
Dave Vereschagin.....	p.14
all titles by me again.	

Collating and mailing help furnished last issue by John Durno and Denys Howard.



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# ***Throw Away That Truss!***

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## ***Dave Vereschagin***

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It was a somewhat surprising moment when, at NonCon 2, held here last month, we discovered that Eli Cohen is not a Canadian. After all these years of living here, he is nought but a landed immigrant, stubbornly retaining his American citizenship. Of course, he does have his reason. Something about going blind and getting books in braille from the Library of Congress.

Despite this slight character flaw, we are still presenting a good-parts version of an interview held with him at 11:00 in the morning as part of the NonCon 2 programming.

As well, this issue starts off two columns by people who will, hopefully, be regular contributors to these pages.

Doug Barbour needed remarkably little prodding to agree to contribute book reviews, and even came up with the thought of contributing regularly himself.

The part of this issue I am most pleased about is Bill Beard's film review. Bill teaches a film studies course at the University of Alberta. As well, he does movie reviews three times a week for local radio station CKUA, is actively involved in the Edmonton Film Society, and writes for its newsletter, *Film Edmonton*. (He also, supposedly, finds time to teach English at the U of A, too.)

Bill is not a fan, but his reviews have previously appeared in *Genre Plat* (hi, Allyn). *The Monthly Monthly*, however, has the advantage of being able to provide a much more regular platform for his observations and opinions.

Good film criticism has been hard to find in fandom. What passes itself off in this regard rarely does little more than offer a plot synopsis and state whether or not the reviewer thought the

did a good job or not. Oh, and the occasional niggles over plot holes, scientific inaccuracies and differences between book and movie. While some of these things should be considered when evaluating a movie, they are certainly not all there is to it.

As a prerequisite to reviewing books, it is generally acknowledged that one would be able to do more than recognize words, and actually be able to read. When it comes to films, however, it appears that so far the people who have been trying to evaluate them have little to no understanding of film language--they don't know how to "read" movies. Hopefully Bill's regular appearance here will be a step towards correcting this situation.

Of course, the general problem with fan reviewers is that they look at movies as if they were reading books. Fans may be fairly literate people, but they suffer from a rather cloudy visual sense. Because of their concentration on words, words, words, fans seem unable (I will be generous and not say unwilling) to accept movies on their own terms. While it occasionally happens that one "loses oneself" in a book, movies practically demand that you lose yourself in them. In a darkened room, cut off from the other people by the darkness itself, all senses save sight and hearing subdued, a gigantic image demands your attention. Going to the movies is almost like dreaming.

Movies are like dreams not only by the way (if they are at least decent) they almost force attention, but also by the way they create and constitute their own realities. These realities may or may not parallel the "real" reality in

as many (or as few) respects as it wishes.

But fans, having an easy time accepting alternate realities should have an easier time at the flicks, no? Alas, no. True, fans have become quite adept at accepting all sorts of preposterous notions for the sake of a story--as long as they receive some sort of satisfactory explanation for them. And there's the rub. The movies have little to no time to waste on giving logical-sounding reasons why we should believe in what is happening on the screen.

But, the magic part of the movies is that *they don't have to explain*. Books are an indirect experience. We have to look at groups of symbols which our brain must interpret into words and sentences, and by examining their relationships to each other, divine the meaning behind them. And what I am referring to is not symbolic or thematic meaning, but the bare essentials of narrative meaning. In contrast to this, films are a direct experience. They present us with a vision which (if properly done, and it's not that hard to meet the minimum standards--you can even do it without sound and in black and white), since we are cut off from the "real" world, carries the conviction of being its own reality. In the absence of "objective reality", what is happening on the screen replaces and becomes the new reality for the viewer. There is no need for the brain to interpret groups within groups within groups of symbols before getting at basic meaning. The meaning of what is happening is grasped immediately.

Because of this immediacy, this appearance of reality, the movies have merely to make something seem to happen in order to have us believe it can happen, and is happening. In short, seeing becomes believing. And it is in this way that films can operate under their own logic, or lack of it.

The problem for some people who go to movies--and it seems fans especially--is that they are fighting against, instead of being allies with, them. They continually bring in the rules and constraints of objective reality where such rules have no existence--and then complain because they don't exist.

To take a very small example: it is

continually harped on by fans that spaceships flying in the void will, of course, make no sound. But to their utter consternation, fans are just as continually finding that in the movies spaceships do indeed go *whoosh* and *zoom*. I suppose there might be ground for complaint if these films gave any sort of pretense of attempting to mimic the "real" world. But they don't. In *Star Wars* and *Alien* (for two quickie examples) the stories take place outside of our frames of reference entirely. We're lucky the main characters bothered to speak American English! Yet fans have complained that in these movies, respectively, spaceships make noise and you can hear wind in outer space. If you can believe in a laser sword or a creature that grows from stomach-size to over six feet tall in only a few hours, why should other unusual goings on be picked on as flaws?

I've sidetracked myself into discussing sci-fi flicks, but my argument holds as well for all movies. Don't go expecting them to show you objective reality. It is by distorting and altering reality that film can make its subjective connections.

[By the by, there will be no letter column this time around as responses to the first issue as still pouring in. The lettercol will start next issue.]



# *an interview with* **ELI COHEN**

CONDUCTED BY CHRISTINE KULYK, DAVE VERESCHAGIN  
& JERRY KAUFMAN. ADDITIONAL REMARKS BY SUSAN WOOD & PAUL LEMMAN

[Eli = Eli Cohen]

[CK = Christine Kulyk]

[DV = Dave Vereschagin]

[JK = Jerry Kaufman]

[SW = Susan Wood]

[pl = paul lemman]

Eli: Tell me, how do you like co-editing a fanzine?

DV: *There are people who say it won't work, but we think it's a great idea.*

Eli: Where did you get the idea to do this?

DV: Michael Hall says it was his idea, wasn't it?

CK: No, Randy says it was his idea.

DV: Randy thought up the title. It's just one of those ideas that comes up during late night partying.

CK: Anyway, my first question is: Will you ever forgive us for getting you up this early?

Eli: No, never.

CK: Well, I have asked somebody to bring you some coffee.

Eli: It's not just today. This is the second day in a row. I have it in writing from the committee, nothing before noon. I said, "Well, I'll be your guest of honour, I don't go in for this sort of thing. But only one requirement, nothing before noon"

CK: Well, we're on Edmonton time, here.

DV: No, we're not. We're on Greenwich mean time, which means it's, what, four in the afternoon?

CK: Eli, why don't you tell us about The

Mimeo Man?

Eli: There's not that much to tell about *The Mimeo Man*. What happened was, as I recall, I was walking down Broadway with Asenath Hammond, you know, Asenath Hammond-Sternbach, and the line just sort of popped out of nowhere. She said, "Mama, a man with a Gestetner followed me home" and it just seemed like a very interesting idea. If you took *The Music Man*, changed a few things and made it into a fannish musical, it would be just perfect. The idea just sort of sat around and then Hank Davis...

Why was Hank Davis...?

JK: It was his thirtieth birthday and Moshe [Feder] published a fanzine called *Quo Davis*.

Eli: It was a fanzine to honour Hank Davis' thirtieth birthday, and Moshe demanded that I do something for it and the only thing I could think of to do was to try to work on this fannish musical. Debbie Notkin agreed to help out. I don't even remember at this point what songs I wrote, if any. It's been a long time, but what we'd do was throw together a short little written version with probably half a dozen songs and a little bit of continuity and it was published in *Quo Davis* and Moshe Feder thought, "Gee, what a great idea, a musical based on *The Music Man*." So he added about twice as many songs and wrote this massive script. By this point I, of course, had left New York, and they started putting this on. All I ever got were these in-

comprehensible tapes that were sent to Regina. I could just barely hear people humming in the background. I didn't know what was going on. The closest I've come to actually seeing *The Mimeo Man* performed has been a video tape at MidAmeriCon that they made.

CK: Can you remember a couple of verses?

Eli: Oh no, I couldn't sing, anyways.

There's "Troubles" which is done for TVs instead of pool halls and leads into the solution to their problems being fanac--joining an apa. At least as reasonable as setting up a band.

JK: "Seventy-six genzines led the Locus

poll,  
"With one hundred and ten one-shots  
right behind.

"They were follwed by rows and rows  
of the finest offset illos,

"The cream of... "

CK: Do you want to ask him anything?

DV: No, you can ask another question;  
'til I get inspired.

CK: What was it like to be a fan in Regina?

Eli: Proud and lonely. Actually, I've always had a deep desire to live somewhere where a common table implement was something with which you cracked the ice on the surface of your beer between drafts. And Regina is about the closest you can get to that in this sort of solar system.

To be a fan in Regina is to depend entirely upon the mails because there are no fans. I don't know if there are fans in Saskatchewan now.

You'd never read anything about any Edmonton fans and there weren't any conventions that you could get to that were closer than Vancouver. Even getting to Minneapolis would be three planes. You'd have to go to Winnipeg and you'd stop in some little town--which escapes me--between Winnipeg and Minneapolis, and it would take forever.

CK: Back when you were the co-editor of the clubzine for... Fissfisskyou.

Is that how you say it?

Eli: Gesundheit.

CK: Fantasy and Science Fiction Society of Columbia University, right?

Eli: Right. F.S.F.S.C.U.

CK: You mentioned one time that you collated Akos number two at St. Louiscon in 1969. What's it like to collate a fanzine at a convention?

Eli: Oh, it is not, it is not a good idea to collate a fanzine at a convention.

We were very, very late with that issue and I flew off to St. Louiscon and my esteemed co-editor--we used to refer to ourselves on the masthead as editors in chafe--Janet Kagan was driving down with Ricky Kagan with the uncollated Akos, which we had just run off two days before we were all scheduled to leave. We had to get the thing collated, -cause if we didn't, we couldn't get it out. So there it was, and we did have to get it done.

There was this rather attractive young fan--she must have been about seventeen, or something--and she seemed quite taken with me and I invited her up to my room to help me collate my fanzine.

I don't know how your audience will feel about collatio... But she really seemed fairly enthusiastic about coming up to my room to help me and I thought, "Wow, gee." We went up to the room and I spread the sheets of the fanzine out on the floor and she got this very funny look on her face. It must have been her first time, or something, because she wasn't very experienced at it. She wasn't really very good at it and after doing about a dozen copies she made some excuse and left. It was terrible.

CK: Never again.

Eli: No, can't trust these casual pickups. No fannish spirit at all.

CK: About being treasurer of the 1972 Lunacon, you said, "You don't want to hear about Theodore Sturgeon's room service bill."

Eli: No, you don't.

CK: I do want to hear about it.

Eli: Well, Theodore Sturgeon was a marvelous guest of honour. An interesting speaker, and he ran up a \$210 room service bill over the weekend.

pl: How's Gordie [Dickson] doing?

DV: Well, he got a head-start with his plane ticket.

JK: And the Thursday night dinner?

DV: We'll just pass that by...

CK: What about life in the Avacado Pit?

Eli: Was there life in the Avacado Pit?

CK: Maybe just tell these people what the Avacado Pit was.

Eli: The Avacado Pit was an apartment a block and a half from Columbia University which, to start with, I shared with David Emerson and Jerry Kaufman.

JK: Don't forget Nancy Lambert for a



month.

Eli: That's right. Nancy Lambert was actually one of the original members, because Jerry didn't arrive until about three or four weeks after. Nancy gaffiated years and years ago. Nobody's ever heard from her since. The only remnant of hers is the copy of *The Impoverished Student's Guide to House Cookery, Sweepery, and... whatever*. Anyway, it's a fantastic cookbook, which has a recipe for left over chicken in cheese curry sauce which is out of this world.

Well, there's this copy of *The Impoverished Student's Guide* with Nancy Lambert's name in it, but that's the only trace of her that's left in the world.

JK: *She also disappeared with my copy of Negative Minus.*

Eli: Oh, she's got it?

CK: Negative Minus?

Eli: *Negative Minus* is this book by R.L.

Fanthorpe which Jerry used to wander around the house quoting from. It had marvelous lines. The line I remember most vividly--because Jerry would quote it all the time--is: "One by one, food and drink overcame the revelling princelings." The other one was: "He slept the sleep of the tired. He slept the sleep of the weary. He slept the sleep of the exhausted. For he was tired and weary and exhausted."

Actually, I've never really appreciated the descriptive aspects of that line until this very moment.

There was all kinds of great stuff in there. It's quite possibly one of the worst science fiction books ever written.

CK: *Can we have him for our guest of honour next year?*

Eli: Actually, he was at Seacon.

So, Jerry's copy of *Negative Minus* disappeared, with Nancy Lambert, and this has been a great loss to fandom at large. I mean, it's a wonderful thing to have quoted at you at 7:00 in the morning. That was one of Jerry's habits--getting up at 7:00 am and reading at you. He also makes great chili.

Anyway, the Avocado Pit was this place that I shared with David and Jerry and, to start, with one cat named SNAP, which stood for Snub-Nosed Avocadivorous Pussycat. We had four avocados at the time, and cats and avocados never seem to hit it off; it's one of those "balance of nature" things. Avocados left to them-

selves will grow through the roof, and I guess cats are natural enemies there to keep them in check.

CK: *Ecologically balanced.*

Eli: Ecologically balanced, right.

Anyway, I don't remember that much about the Avocado Pit. We had FSFSCU meetings there every Thursday night, which my roommates just loved. We became one of the focal points of New York fandom.

It was a small apartment--five rooms counting the bathroom, the kitchen and everything. It had a little hall which stretched for miles. A straight little narrow thing, all the rooms were right off the hall. I think you'd call it a "railroad flat".

At our housewarming party we had people who hadn't spoken to each other in years, and didn't speak to each other at the party. New York fandom is wonderful for togetherness, closeness and backstabbing.

DV: *If it was so wonderful, why did you leave?*

SW: *Tell them about the pentagram on the floor.*

Eli: Oh, that was much later.

The members of the Avocado Pit fluctuated in time. Suzanne Tompkins moved in about a year and a half after the pit started. And about eight months after that Asenath Hammond moved in. It was actually fairly crowded with five fans.

JK: *And two months after that, Suzle and I had moved out.*

Eli: Yes, but there was a point where there were five people, four cats, and... No, three cats, and...

JK: *Four cats? Did we have four cats?*

*Four somethings, and three somethings.*

Eli: Five avocados... I don't remember.

It's been so long. It was a very crowded apartment. Jerry and Suzle left sometime after that, and it was just David, Asenath and me until I moved to Regina.

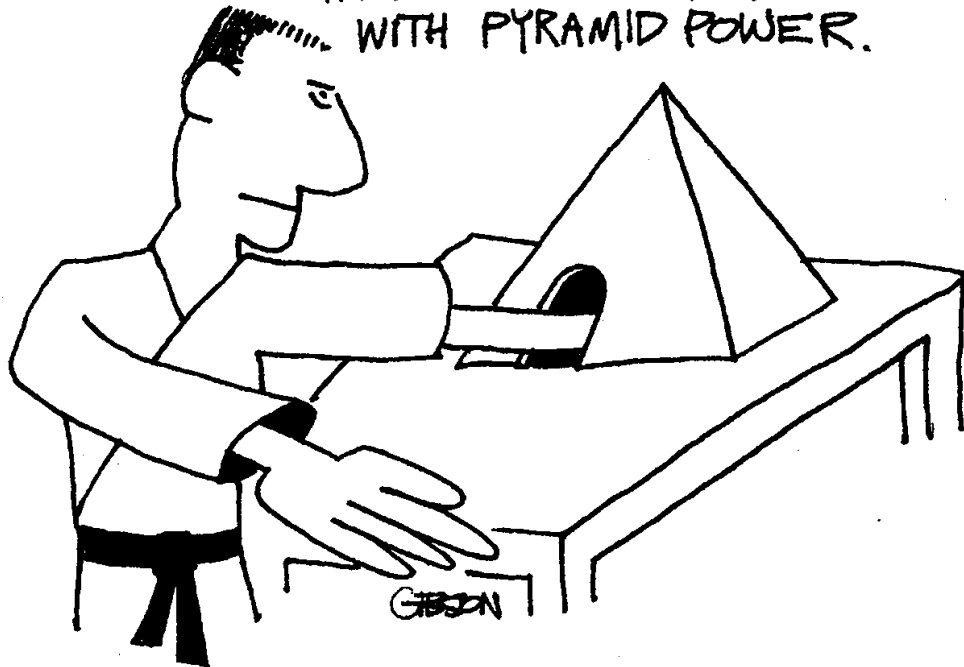
But we never did anything weird. Asenath was a witch, but other than that, it was a perfectly normal existence.

CK: *You mean "witch" in a magical sense?*

Eli: Yes, if someone displeased her she would go into her room where she had this pentagram on the floor and burn candles, and people would go bankrupt.

CK: *Is that what happened to Suncon?*

KARATE MASTER SHARPENING  
HANDS TO RAZOR EDGE  
WITH PYRAMID POWER.



Eli: I had nothing to do with Suncon. I was long gone.

CK: *One of the things that Susan mentions in the biography that she did for the program book is that at the first Pghlange in Pittsburgh, 1969, you and the members of the Western Pennsylvania Science Fiction Association claim to have "turned on Robert Silverberg for the first time." Could you explain this?*

Eli: It's quite straightforward. Silverberg, of course, claims that it's a lie. What happened was Robert Silverberg was the guest of honour at the first Pghlange. He did this very funny speech. He basically described that when he was a kid--a young fan--he would go to conventions and there would be a certain time when all the pros would disappear into the closed pro party. And fans would wander about the halls, wondering, trying to imagine what was going on--what these pros could be doing inside the closed pro party.

As he got older and became a pro himself, he joined this elite group and he said, "You know what happens at the closed pro parties? They go in there and they wonder what is going on at the closed teenage pot party which they can't get into." Anyway, on the basis of this

speech, the members of the Pghlange committee, who wanted to do right by their guests of honour, decided that maybe this was his subtle way of hinting about something, and why don't we tell him about the pot party? So they invited the Silverbergs to the closed pot party.

Of course, the Pghlange one was very nice. It was a small convention. Probably about 40 to 50 people constituted the entire convention in the evening. There were another 30 or so people who showed up during the day for whatever programming there was. The only programming I can remember was Silverberg's speech. It was a very small, intimate convention. There was a point when I think everybody at the con was in a large circle playing Frisbee--there were three or four Frisbees.

There was this incredibly good dope, and we had Greg Moor's Er'nmeyer peace flask, as he referred to it, which was being passed around.

Robert Silverberg maintains stoutly that of course he'd done this thing before. But I saw him there, hacking and coughing, and making remarks about how he thought it was a passing fad, and as soon as it was made legal everybody would quit, and all that sort of thing.

Pghlange was really great. I don't know



about the committee, but everybody who attended had a great time.

JK: The committee got very nervous, forgot their opening speeches, and went off and got drunk.

Eli: Those were the days. Those were the days when you could put an entire convention into one room, and throw a party.

JK: That was a small motel near the airport. It was run by a man who had been to the Pittsburgh worldcon and was incredibly thrilled to have Robert Silverberg staying in his motel, so he did all sorts of things...

CK: Ask him something, David.

DV: Is the coffee okay?

Eli: It's probably the worst coffee I've ever had. It tastes like chlorine.

DV: Speaking of "worst", what's the worst convention you've ever been to, Eli?

CK: Shhhh!

DV: That's a leading question?

Eli: I'm not even sure if I can remember, really. The thing about conventions is that if you get to the point where you know a reasonable number of fans--in fact where the only time you get to see a fair number of your friends is at a convention--once you reach that point in fandom, it can't be too bad.

There are conventions which have been famous for hotel problems, like St. Louiscon. The Chaseport Plaza is famous for a hotel doing absolutely everything in their power to destroy anything that's going on. They double-booked all the rooms, so that people showed up and were told, "Sorry, we don't have a room for you," even though they had a reservation. They had these two towers, about twenty floors--

SW: Twenty-four.

Eli: Twenty-four. Okay. It was Labour Day, and the staff was incredibly surly. They would refuse to operate the elevators. They would go up and sit at either the top or the bottom for hours and refuse to move. Or they would let three people on and then slam the doors in people's faces. If you've ever walked up 24 flights of stairs, this isn't a pleasant thing.

They kicked us out of the swimming pool and were really nasty.

CK: You don't have anything else to ask?

DV: I asked the last one.

JK: Boy, what slick interviewing tech-

nique.

DV: You want to interview?

JK: Sure.

DV: Okay.

CK: Tell us how you got started in publishing *Kratophany* and why.

JK: Explain what *Kratophany* means, first of all.

CK: We have a new interviewer, Jerry Kaufman.

Eli: The name *Kratophany* comes from a Sandra Miesel letter, and loosely translated means "a manifestation of power". It's "Kratos", "autocrat" and all those words, meaning "power"; and "phany" (as in "epiphany"), meaning "appearance of".

The reason I started doing *Kratophany* was because it'd been a year since *Akos* 3 and I had all this material in the file. My esteemed co-editor did not particularly want to do another issue of this fanzine, and also you want to keep in touch with people.

*Kratophany* was my second fanzine. At this point I had gotten into fandom, I had been getting fanzines, and if you stop publishing, you're lazy like I am, and you're not very fast at writing letters of comment, or equivalent things, after a while people--for reasons which escape me--stop sending you their fanzines. They pretend that you've gaffed and you just lose touch. Not to mention various artists saying, "About that illo that I sent you in 1967, are you ever going to publish it?"

So I had to do a fanzine. There was just no question there. Also, living with two other fans-- One of them, David Emerson, at this point denied that he was a fan. I believe he continued to deny it until his fourteenth convention, or whatever, after he had done a personazine, and whatever else he did.

Oh, *Kratophany*. Are you asking why *Kratophany*, or why do we publish at all?

JK: Why do you publish so infrequently?

Eli: I didn't think every nine months was infrequent. It seemed a perfectly reasonable schedule.

CK: Does anybody in the audience want to ask anything?

Anon: You were introduced as being interested in personal computers--

Several: groans Don't start him up! Oh no!

Eli: I thought they'd never ask!

JK: Christine, we can leave now.

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# ***The Agony & the Ecstasy***

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## ***Christine Kulyk***

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A hush falls over my spacious room at the Edmonton Inn as my breathing is temporarily suspended--my hand upon the door-knob. I prepare to go forward bravely to face the first moments of Saturday morning at NonCon 2. "Let's see now, do I have everything? Name badge, briefcase containing program book and timetable, my memoes and other Programmer's paraphernalia, my room-key--check." I step out boldly, into the elevator, then swiftly walk along the long corridor to the lobby and the function rooms. "If I remember correctly, the Attic Room is *this* way." (That's where the Costume Workshop is due to begin in about half an hour.) Past the hucksters' room and the registration desk. "No, I'm sure it wasn't *this* far down the last time I was here." Up these stairs, to the door at the top, and-- "Wait a minute: Door? I'm *sure* there wasn't any door at the top of the steps last time. Come to think of it, these aren't the right steps." I'm famous (among my close friends) for my lousy sense of direction, but I couldn't be *this* far wrong, could I? Well, maybe I should check out the hucksters' room instead.

They're doing quite nicely, setting up right on time, and Dave Stuart seems to have things under control. On to the second programming room (The Top of the Stairs Room); through the lobby and up these weird stairs of twisted metal shapes --to find that the equipment which will be needed for the various panels (microphones, projectors, projection scree) is being hauled out of the room by convention personnel. "Excuse me," I ask, "but why are you taking those out of the room? Aren't

we going to need them here for the panels?" I'm told that it's being done on instructions from our operations manager. I rush out to find him. He explains that I don't really need the equipment I asked for, so he's having it stored elsewhere. I acquiesce, only managing to insist that there be a microphone at the sound poetry reading at the very least. (Doug Barbour received a promise from me the night before that there would be a microphone for his presentation with Stephen Scobie, as it was needed to produce some specific effects, and particularly as Stephen had developed a sore throat.) Our operations manager warmly assures me that a microphone will definitely be provided for this event, and also for the trivia quiz, and wherever else he deems such equipment to be necessary. Not wishing to start the con off badly by pressing the issue, I refrain from asking him why he has waited until now to tell me that the equipment I requested will not be provided for all panels, since he has had my list of required items for several weeks prior to the con.

I move off to check out what is happening at the registration desk, where I am gratified to see a long line of people waiting to join the con, and the registration people hard at work. After speaking to some of the other people I meet on the way, I head back for the Top of the Stairs Room,--and here's Randy Reichardt, ready to start his "Why are we here?" panel... "Let's cancel the panel!" Randy announces, and he whisks past me. I try to restrain him by physi-

cal force; he all the while complaining loudly that the audience is too small to make it worthwhile to start the panel. "Get back in there this minute!" I say, "Don't worry, people will show up soon; it's still early." But he's off and running, leaving me to stand bewilderedly in the hallway, with my briefcase. It's approximately 9:55 am. The panels are scheduled to start at 10:00 am. I begin to foresee some problems. I ask myself, pointedly, "Why am I here? How did I get myself into this situation, anyway?"

Thinking about it, I realize that every sf convention which I have attended so far has left me emotionally and physically exhausted. At my first, Westercon 30, I blissfully got high on the thrill of having a fantastic time with hundreds of other fans and pros--I was too happy to complain much about how worn-out I became from an overdose of fannish fun. At V-Con VI, I ran myself ragged by taking in as many of the organized activities as I could--competing in the Trivia Bowl and the masquerade, being a finalist in the short story workshop, getting caught up in the excitement of the art auction and buying the first piece of original artwork I ever owned (a lovely work by Jeanne Gomoll)--all of this compounded by lack of sleep and lack of food. I found myself with little energy left for partying at night--but that didn't stop me from doing it anyway.

At Iguacon, as I began to form friendships with people who live hundreds or thousands of miles from me, I also began to discover the joy and the pain of long-distance friendships. My convention "highs" have been counterbalanced by periods of depression during the cons, when I have felt homesick because of the culture shock of a strange city, or lonely at times when all the people I knew seem to be off somewhere having fun without me.

At all of the conventions I've been to, there have been bad moments. Still, it all seems worth it--the expense, the culture shock, the long trips, the over-intense activity, the tearful goodbyes--all are more than offset by the joys of meeting terrific people I would never have had the chance to meet if it hadn't been for conventions. Let alone being able to call many of them my friends. With these people, I have participated in



the marvellously crazy things that fans do at cons--from filksinging to wearing outlandish costumes, from watching a panel of fans impersonate famous dead authors to howling at the moon. Best of all, there is the warm sense of belonging which I have often experienced among other fans, and which I wouldn't trade for several worlds.

One of my reasons for becoming involved in the organization of Edmonton's first NonCon was that I wanted other people in our local fan group who couldn't attend a con in another city to be able to experience the excitement and fun of an sf convention in our own city. As it turned out, our NonCon was not a noncon in the traditional sense of the word, since we organized extensive programming along the lines of a full-scale convention, rather than a relaxicon or a less formal noncon. I expected to have to do lots of work, and I anticipated some sleepless nights, but I believed the results would be worth the time and the effort.

I ended up as Registrar, plus organizing two of the panels and the trivia quiz. For the better part of a year, many of us on the concom worked our asses off. Even with a rather large concom, there never seemed to be enough bodies to do all that needed to be done. We all made lots of mistakes, and we discovered difficulties of which we had never dreamed. The worst of the problems turned out to be the tendency of some people on the concom to want to do things BIG, and to ignore or contravene the advice of the two people on our committee who were the most knowledgeable about fannish activities--Dave

Vereschagin (who was Chair) and Robert Runte (Treasurer).

Being a habitual worrier, I worried a lot, about whether the dust would clear after NonCon One to reveal all of us standing around with egg on our collective faces and a lot less money in our collective pockets. Some of my worries turned out to be groundless, many things which could have gone wrong didn't, while many things which seemed to be going wrong turned out okay in the end. Somehow, despite all the problems and mistakes, we didn't lose money, we ran the con itself with no major hitches, and many of the people who came said they had a great time.

On the other hand, I spent most of the con trapped behind the registration desk. I wouldn't even have been able to watch part of the trivia quiz (for which I had spent days editing and preparing all the questions submitted) if not for my able assistant Bob Weir taking over for me--and even then, I had to serve as scorekeeper! When evening came and I had time to relax at last, I was too worn-out from the hectic weeks of preparations before the con and the tiring work of the day to really enjoy myself. Besides, I had to balance the registration receipts and prepare for the panel I was chairing the next day.

I wasn't the only one in this condition. Several concom members complained of overwork--such as the projectionists, who were bleary-eyed from being buried in the film room for long hours without a break; and the bartenders, who spent too much time at their work for it to be a pleasure. And I know that people like Robert and Dave did more work than any of the rest of us, before and during the con. Was it all worth it?

Well, the attendance was quite good; our guests of honour--Marion Zimmer Bradley and Grant Canfield--were marvelous, cooperative at all times, terrific speakers with very congenial personalities. And I did have a lot of fun in spite of all the work and the hassles, since many of my favourite fannish friends were there. All in all, not bad for our first convention.

Still, I don't know why I convinced myself to do it all over again this year--I should have known better. But somehow I ended up volunteering to plan the pro-

gramming this year. At the time I naively thought that things would be much easier and more enjoyable this time around, since we would be building on an established base rather than starting from scratch, and we could all learn from the mistakes of last year. I was wrong. Some things seemed to happen with less hassles than we had the first year; but I had more work to do this year, and my job as Programmer was made very difficult by a lack of general concom meetings until a few months before the con. Other things were enough to drive me batty--such as finding out much too late that our pro GoH, Gordon Dickson, had a serious health problem which might prevent him from participating in some of the things we had planned. I also found out, by accident (it was not made known to most concom members before the con), that the con executive committee, in an apparent panic after some of their previous choices for GoH had turned them down, agreed to pay first-class airfare for Gordie, plus renting an expensive split-level hotel suite for him, and agreeing to pay for long-distance phone calls that he would make *during* the con--all of which he demanded as conditions for appearing as our GoH.

Those of you who know sf authors and artists personally, and/or have had dealings with them regarding conventions, will know that many of them are still willing to be con GoH's without this lavish "first class" treatment. I feel that Gordon Dickson has the right to demand first class fare and accommodations. I do not feel that our small con could afford to meet these demands. None of our other GoH's have made such exorbitant demands.

To return to the question I asked myself as I stood outside the Top of the Stairs Room, "How did I get into this situation?" The answer is, I think, that fandom is important to me, both as an international entity, and in its local manifestation, and NonCon has become very much a part of local fandom. I felt that it was important enough for me to do a lot of work to help keep it going just as many other people worked very hard to make both NonCons successful.

I had some very good times at NonCon 2, with people like Eli Cohen, who was an unassuming and thoroughly delightful fan

GoH. (Now that we've broken him in, I hope that other cons will take "advantage" of his talents in this capacity.) And Jerry Kaufman (who does great Groucho Marx imitations), and Doug Barbour, who with Stephen Scobie entranced us with a thrilling presentation of sound poetry--the best, most exciting part of the programming for me. And the CRAPA party, where I spent happy hours with a bunch of wonderful people. And the mimeo room, where Mike Hall kept his tireless vigil, which proved to be a refuge for fannish souls, as well as being immensely useful to the convention. These are only a few of the good things that happened. Many people enjoyed themselves very much, and the art auction was especially successful.

But the attendance was much lower than anticipated, which might not have been such a bad thing, except that we had spent a lot of time and money on things which were never used, such as lots of left-over program books, films which played to a virtually-empty room, and many panels which were very poorly attended. This result makes it hard to justify the amount of work which so many concon people and gofers did to produce NonCon 2.

The things which bothered me the most, as Programmer, were (besides the scanty attendance) the following: There were microphones at only a few of the events--the sound poetry session was not one of the lucky ones, and I apologize to Stephen Scobie especially, for his strained larynx. The final two rounds of the trivia quiz also were not graced by microphones, with the result that, even in the small room we were using, the audience at the back (although we could hear most of what quizmaster Fandy Reichardt was saying--as he spoke clearly and loudly), could hear very little of the answers given by the contestants.

Randy did decide to go through with the "Why are we here?" panel, in spite of his initial reservations, and it was very entertaining. Unlike Randy, some others *didn't* show up on time for their panels, which must have caused considerable confusion among those of the con attendees who wished to observe them. And I was stunned to discover that the hotel renovations which had occurred since my last scouting expedition to the Edmonton Inn were so extensive as to change the configuration of the hucksters' room signif-

icantly, and to make the Attic Room (which had been dimly-lit before, when it was open on three sides) an almost tomb-like cavern of dreariness now that it was completely closed in. No one who knew about these alterations before the con bothered to mention them to me; and the spotlights which our operations staff provided were vastly inadequate to compensate for the dimness of the room, particularly since they were usually disconnected or had no bulbs in them.

The con had many other problems, but I've concentrated on those which concerned me directly. These experiences have given me a profound appreciation of the amount of work which con organizers have gone through to put on all the terrific cons which I have attended. These things have also made me unwilling to serve on a concon in the future, except perhaps for a very small relaxicon. Big and elaborate conventions are fun, however small, informal conventions are fun too, as so many relaxicons in the past have proven, and I believe they are much less painful to produce.

I intend to keep going to sf cons, as long as there are people brave or foolish enough to organize them, as I once was myself. I also intend to keep offering my assistance to these people, as others once offered their assistance to me. Some people who have run cons in other cities seem to have done so without becoming discouraged over the whole process; others I've seen have been nervous wrecks at their cons. I unfortunately seem to have fallen into the latter category at NonCon 2, even more so than at NonCon 1. This most recent experience was much more agony than ecstasy for me, as it must have been for many of the others who did so much work for such unsatisfactory results.

LARD  
↑ LARD, IN BLOCK LETTERS

# **S/TU/TTER/E/D M/O/T/I/O/N**

## **Bill Beard**

### **DAWN OF THE DEAD**

written & directed by George A. Romero

George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, the subject of considerable critical comment in the United States, has shown up only on the drive-in circuit in this part of the country as a component of schlock horror-movie triple bills. Horror-movie fans will certainly recall Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, which he made, largely with his own funds on a miniscule budget, as long ago as 1968. This grisly and frequently stomach-turning film, based on the notion of the dead coming back to life as murderous zombies with an insatiable taste for living human flesh, established itself almost immediately as a cult favourite. Amateurishly put together in several respects, *Night of the Living Dead* nevertheless made spectacular use of high-contrast black and white photography, and sent its audiences reeling out of the theatre haunted by such images of ultraviolence as a venomous-looking little girl chewing gorily away on her father's body.

Whether they liked the movie or not, people certainly remembered it, and even today, after a handful of intervening films, Romero is still mainly thought of as the maker of *Night of the Living Dead*. Romero's career over the last decade has been a curious one. Wanting to keep complete control over his films--which he writes and edits as well as directing--he's never gone to Hollywood, preferring to set up independent financing and distribution while working out of regional centres, and consequently he's at times sunk from sight for several years at a stretch. But on the evidence of *Martin*

(a modern day vampire story set in Pittsburgh) and now *Dawn of the Dead* (a sort of sequel to *Night of the Living Dead*) Romero appears to be really growing as a filmmaker. In this latest movie he again taps that vein of quiet, despairing melancholy in the face of horror and violence that was such a distinguishing feature of *Martin*.

Whereas *Night of the Living Dead* set out to shock and horrify, *Dawn of the Dead*, which continues the situation of the earlier movie with scarcely five minutes for exposition, is already past all that, and exists instead on a level of sad detachment--almost serenity--that reveals a sensibility which has plumbed every depth of awfulness, seen everything, and survived to look on the worst horrors with something like calmness. Certainly the visual appearance of the movie gives this impression. Gone are the glaring, nightmarish black and white contrasts and panicky handheld camera movements of *Night of the Living Dead*. In their place we find quiet, well-modulated, even soothing, colour photography and a classical straightforwardness of camera placement and composition. The scenario is daringly attenuated: Romero has developed a single striking metaphorical situation and stuck with it from beginning to end. It consists of putting four characters--two SWAT-team paramilitary cops, a helicopter pilot, and his media-worker girlfriend--into a giant Philadelphia shopping-centre, where they hole up privately for the whole elngth of the movie, surrounded by swarms of zombies wandering around the parking-lot and surrounding areas.





There are two brilliant ideas driving the film: the first is the conception of the "living dead" as mindless, helplessly awkward, almost comic figures rather than spine-tinglingly frightening monsters; and the other is the shopping centre setting, representative of the whole American consumer-capitalist way of life at its most elaborate and its most banal. The zombies, despite their potentially lethal appetite for human flesh, are essentially sad, pathetic creatures, stumbling stupidly around like marionettes operated by a first-time puppeteer, driven only by some obscure memory of an instinct which brings them in herds to the shopping centre, a place which (as one of the characters says) "meant something to them once." As they stagger along the clean, brightly-lit shopping malls, stumbling over objects and each other and falling down to the accompaniment of light-hearted muzak intended to produce peace of mind in shoppers, they are clearly Romero's grotesque vision of everyday suburban America--beyond pain, beyond thought, beyond everything but some faint, dumb impulse of appetite or instinct. Their numbers will grow steadily and inevitably until they're all

that's left, their sleepy, pathetically comic progress at last overwhelming the experts talking about them on emergency television programs, the gangs of vigilante raiders roaming the countryside on motorcycles, and the last pockets of survivors such as our protagonists. It's a totally original, sad, unforgettable vision of apocalypse--and one which demonstrates how a stubborn individual talent working within a despised sub-genre on a low budget can achieve something meaningful and memorable.

There is, though, the question of violence. The zombies in *Dawn of the Dead* can only be despatched and laid to rest by destroying the brain of the walking corpse, and this leads to many, many scenes of massive bloodletting as the living club and potshot away at the animate dead for survival, for sport, or even out of compassion. The print on view in Alberta shows the hand of the provincial censor at work in many scenes, intending, no doubt, to spare us unpleasantness or to discourage sick indulgence--either that or a distributor's attempt to save the censor the same trouble. But the very goriness and repetitiveness of the violence are necessary to take us through the realm of sensationalism onto the plane of banality, and finally detachment. Romero's point is exactly that the violence is endless and meaningless, and that getting any satisfaction out of killing these poor creatures is a stage one gets through pretty quickly once the futility of the procedure becomes evident. Also, of course, the violence is the outward manifestation of the convulsions of the soul which must affect any sane person faced with this tragedy. And a tragedy it is, too, though like Beckett or Pinter, Romero sees the human catastrophe as a thing deprived of dignity, merely pathetic and absurd.

And so for all its violence and horror, and for all the sensationalism of its genre situation, *Dawn of the Dead* is dominated by a feeling of immense sadness and melancholy. It's a film not to be missed if you can hack horror movies at all, and if you're lucky enough to find it showing up on the program of some weekend drive-in schlock-fest, you should jump at it.

[This review was previously broadcast in slightly different form on radio CKUA.]

# off the shelf

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## doug barbour

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Stanislaw Lem is best known as Eastern Europe's major science fiction writer, but he's many other kinds of writer too, as his most recent book, a collection of "Perfect Reviews of Non-Existent Books," demonstrates. *A Perfect Vacuum* (Academic Press, \$12.25) is a great sf title, actually, but it's something else entirely, a collection of essays whose formidable erudition and analytical wit are breathtaking.

One of the "non-existent" books Lem reviews is *A Perfect Vacuum*, thus leaving all other reviewers with little if anything to say. Among the others can even be found an sf book, as well as books on sex, mythology, writing, and, oddly, a supposed Nobel Prize lecture which offers us a "new Cosmogony" far too complex to even begin to describe it here.

This is not a book for readers seeking light entertainment, for it makes demands upon its readers. But it *is* entertaining in an intellectually and wittily austere fashion. Fans of Borges' mind-games should find it just the thing. Something completely different, and provocative: *A Perfect Vacuum*.

Ian Watson is the premier idea-man in sf right now, his five novels all contain examples of cerebral speculation beyond the ordinary. Now we have his first collection of short stories, *The Very Slow Time Machine* (Clarke, Irwin & Co. Ltd. \$14.95), and the ideas, their cerebral intensity and energetic speculation, are entertainingly present in all of them.

The title story, for example, adds a couple of new and startling twists to what everyone thought was a hackneyed theme. And the wit of the title operates

in disturbing ways throughout that story and the others. Stories in which ancient Mexican gods are still worshipped in smog-bound America, in which Tantric Yoga, sex and ESP keep starships in contact with Earth; all these and more reveal an imagination of great range and power. Watson is basically interested in ideas, but he creates characters who are feeling, empathic people; these are stories of human striving, not just conceptual games. *The Very Slow Time Machine* is provocative and exciting entertainment.

Each year two fine anthologies appear, Terry Carr's *Universe* and Robert Silverberg's *New Dimensions*, each with at least a couple of real winners among their stories.

In *Universe 9* (Doubleday Canada Ltd. \$9.95), Terry Carr has come up with two super stories and five good ones. If there's a focus here, it's the concept of social change, especially as abetted by new technologies. In John Shirley's "Will the Chill", we have a man who, through direct interfacing with a starship computer, can literally move worlds, though that's only context for the transcendent climax. In "Options", John Varley goes back to an early stage of his future history when sex changes have just become possible as everyday acts. "Options" is a careful and compassionate exploration of one family's confrontation with the myriad ramifications of such possibilities.

Paul David Novitski explores a future where the nuclear family has been replaced by a variety of other possibilities, while Bob Shaw looks at the social

effects of time dilation on starship personnel in the context of a murder systery. There are some quiet earthbound stories by C. Pangborn, Gregory Benford and Greg Bear which nevertheless have teeth in them. All in all, *Universe 9* is a fine addition to a fine series.

For *New Dimensions 9* (Fitshenry & White-side, \$14.95), the big story is Ursula K. Le Guin's haunting anthropological fantasy, "The Pathways of Desire". It's eerie exploration of a literal "dream-world" and of a burgeoning love between two members of the Ethnographic Corps is intellectually provocative and emotionally powerful.

Robert Silverberg has gathered some other good stories, too, quite a few of

which have something to do with the human/computer interface. Peter S. Alterman's "Binding Energy" is especially interesting as it's told from the point of view of a computer program. Donnan Call Jeffers "The Sands of Libya are Barren" also uses a number of fictional techniques to explore one human's response to the possible "immortality" of electric "ghosts". Good stories by Benford, Hecht, Sarowitz and Connor, as well. It's good to see Silverberg accepting poems, but I'm not sure Peter Dillingham's work that well, though the last one has its moments.

*[These reviews, or portions thereof, have appeared or will soon appear in The Toronto Star.]*

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# monthend update

## THE HITCHING POST

Locals Diane Walton and Rick LeBlanc have become engaged and have scheduled a December marriage. Good luck, kids, and I hope the tax break is a goodie.

Edmontonian Marianne Nielsen and Seattlite Bob Doyle are now also engaged to be married sometime around June next year. After which Bob will be moving up to the fannish mecca of the eighties. Uh, that's here, folks.

## NO OTHER NAME CON GOES ON

Randy Reichardt was elected as President of the NonCon society during NonCon 2 and will be acting as chair for NonCon 3. Wasting no time, he has already lined up Vonda McIntyre and Jim Young as guests of honour, is renegotiating with the Edmonton Inn to return the con there and has set the beginning registration fee at \$10.

Meanwhile Calgary fans are gearing up to get ready to hold NonCon 4.