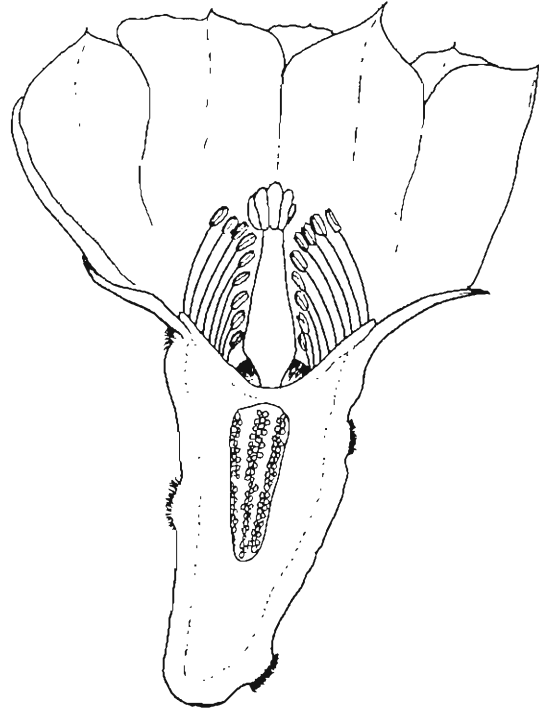
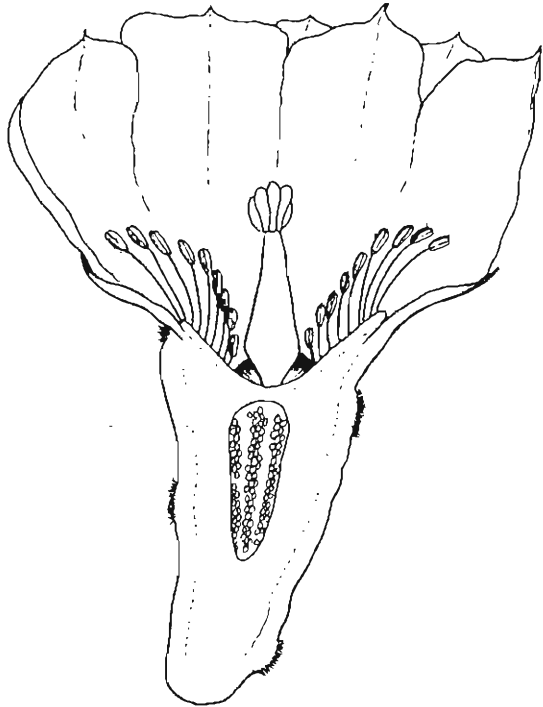


OPUNTIA

46.1



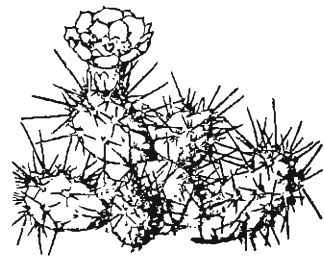
OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage outside USA and I don't collect them.

Whole-numbered OPUNTIA's are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines.

COVER ART CREDIT: *Opuntia brunneogemma* flower cross-sections before and after the stamens (male pollen-bearing filaments) have been touched. Most, if not all, opuntias have motile stamens which bend towards the pistil (female filament which has the unfertilized ovules, or future seeds, at its base) if stimulated, usually by insects. This deposits pollen on the insect for cross-pollination when it flies to other flowers and also on the pistil as a backup measure. Artist unknown, from: Schlindwein, C., and D. Wittmann (1997) Stamen movements in flowers of *Opuntia* (Cactaceae) favour oligolectic pollinators. PLANT SYSTEMATICS AND EVOLUTION 204:179-193

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Susan Poe, Grace Toy, Brant Kresovich, Diane Bertrand, John Held Jr, Chester Cuthbert, Ken Miller, Sheryl Birkhead, Scott Garinger, Rodney Leighton, Murray Moore, Emma Klee, Bob Cable, Picasso Gaglione

**LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR**
[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]



FROM: Joseph Major

2000-06-15

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040

Re: Carolyn Clowes on cyberspace. I remember predictions from the early days of cyberspace. Hypertext would, you see, prevent the spread of untruth, because all texts would have to give links, and the reader could check the links and see where the assertions came from. Most early writers on cyberspace were technonerd with no real background at human interaction.

[The July 2000 issue of WIRED magazine discusses how it is too difficult to deal with liars and cheats offline, but the thing can be done easily online. There is indeed no new thing. Of course, hypertext is based on the fallacy that linear reading (start at the beginning, follow in order, and finish at the end) is inferior, whereas hopscotching about through the Web is somehow better.]

FROM: Andrew York
Box 201117
Austin, Texas 78603

2000-05-29

[No. The Writing Equipment Society is a legitimate organization. I only list zines I have received, which is why I don't take reviews from others.]

Re: the loss of material originally issued in one media and not updated. This is not limited to music. Many older movies have seriously deteriorated, TV show tapes tossed in archival cleaning (the BBC was notorious for this), and such. The situation is even worse in computer media. Vast amounts of unreviewed data from early space probes, the Moon landings, and such are unretrievable, even if the media is usable. Readers for the data no longer exist, even in museums.

I don't entirely agree with your votes on the Hugo Awards, but that's why they have elections, so people can express their differences of opinion peacefully. Most of us go through a phase where we try diligently to track down and read all the nominated stories, then decide it's more work than the awards justify.

FROM: E.B. Frohvet
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive, #506
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

2000-07-??

FROM: Harry Warner Jr
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

2000-07-02

You do get some strange zines. The Writing Equipment Society, collectors of antique fountain pens? I have the sense you're yanking me on that one. Without mentioning any names, I once got so tired of the pompous reviews in a certain zine that I wrote a detailed review of a non-existent book and the faned published it verbatim. I wonder if you are not amusing yourself with something of the sort.

All the fan Hugo Awards are suffering from a dilemma; so few fans nominate in those categories that a fairly small number of admirers of an individual or a publication can nominate with bloc voting. The only way to increase the participation would be radical lowering of the supporting membership fee. That would lead to really bad recruiting of fans to lend their names to local favourites.

[Which happened with this year's Aurora Awards, of which the Best Fanzine category was won by a Trekzine from a minor Star Trek fan club.]

BOOK REVIEWS

by Dale Speirs

Review of **Viral Intelligence** by Don DeBrandt (Ace, 2000, ISBN 0-441-00716-3, mass market paperback). This is the third novel by DeBrandt. It continues the sequence of characters from his previous books but is not a sequel even though set in the same universe. It is not necessary to read his previous two novels STEELDRIVER and TIMBERJAK, but is certainly recommended.

What I like about DeBrandt is his ability to take what other authors would write as tired Celtic or cyberpunk cliché and put a twist in it. His villains are not cardboard characters out to conquer because that's what cardboard people do; they have rational motives like the good guys, and are often jerked around by offstage events as might be the case in real life.

The story begins with a bang in hyperspace. Something burst through the fabric of hyperspace, and people want to know what and why. The answer will arrive in the concluding pages, but meanwhile there is a planet with a war going on between cab drivers, a.k.a. the Drivers Guild, and the Bernardis, a mob family that wants to take over the Guild. After a few cabs are blown apart and a few Bernardi nightclubs burn down, both sides get serious and switch to biowar. The Don is cancerbombed by the

Guild but doesn't die because he brings in nanomachines to cure him.

-4-

The cabbies try to hack the nono ticks, as the nanomachines are called, but can't succeed, and the whole affair degenerates into a Mexican standoff. Nono ticks are of uncertain biological origin, leak hyperspace radiation, and are a plague bad enough in their own right when they escape and start to spread. Then they bond with an artificial intelligence and develop group minds. Imagine a sentient bubonic plague that wants to rebuild the world in its image.

The novel changes viewpoints several times, as different characters tell their sides of the the story. DeBrandt works in a variety of urban legends into these stories. At first this seems an unwarranted intrusion of our society into a far-future world, but it is tied in with the novel at the end. Thinking about it later, I realized that urban folklore will go to the stars with us, along with the rest of our cultural baggage.

Trinitech, the company that supplied the nono ticks, had a real hostile takeover, its staff having been infected and assimilated into the ticks' group mind. The Viral Intelligence spreads via the planet's financial system: "*Money itself was the enemy, and the VI was right: money was everywhere. Hiding inside the banking system was brilliant ...*".

The VI is fragmented into seven clones, which start to diverge over time and begin scheming against each other. Regardless of who is who, the VI must be stopped, because the hyperspatial energy they are using will physically destabilize the local area of the galaxy. The trick ending is a bit of a cheat, with a deus ex machina gimmick used to solve the problem. It wasn't quite as bad as "And with a single bound he was free!" but one hopes DeBrandt will not develop the habit of cheating readers in his future books. Gimmicks only work once, the first time a story is read, and it is the characterization and internal logic that makes it worth re-reading.

What I like best about DeBrandt's three novels is his ability to avoid hack-written plots that have and still are being done by those Ivy League graduates with triple-barreled names. You know the kind. A young girl or boy takes on an evil overlord, goes through as many quests as can be published before the readership fades away, and accedes to the throne. If Lord Evil gets to the Sacred Knickknack of Qwerty before Perky Young Kid does, the universe will be destroyed. Ho hum. From time to time DeBrandt drifts dangerously close to the ANALOG style of "Spot-weld me another bus-bar" but manages to avoid too much time in Campbellian territory. The changing viewpoints allow the reader to understand why the characters are behaving the way they do, and not just because that's the cardboard they were cut out of.

And on that proposition I'll end. Well recommended.

PLAYING GOD WITH LANGUAGES

The Languages Of Pao is a science fiction novel by Jack Vance. My copy was published by Daw, 1980, a paperback reprint of 1957 original.

The Plot.

Pao is a planet of 15 billion people, with a homogenous culture under mild climates planet-wide. The descendants of the original settlers are submissive and resentful of change. They live in country villages or smallholdings, with no large wars or plagues and only the occasional famine. Their society is static and status conscious, with a caste system. They live under a bureaucratic monarchy, whose head, the Panarch, starts off the book by suddenly departing life courtesy of a poison dart. His son and heir Beran, a young boy, would succeed to the throne but for his Uncle Bustamonte, the Regent.

An outlander from the planet Breakness, a dominie (a cross between a Lord of the Manor and a cyborg) named Palafox, takes Beran off-planet for safety and schooling.

Bustamonte does not

get to enjoy a peaceful reign as the new Panarch, for the Pao is soon invaded by an army from the planet Batmarsh. The populace offers no resistance and Bustamonte finds himself a puppet monarch paying tribute to stay on the throne. He appeals to Palafox for help.

Be careful what you ask for, as the saying goes and as Bustamonte discovers. Palafox is agreeable but advises he cannot make an army overnight out of a passive peasantry who won't fight. To Bustamonte's dismay, it will take twenty years, for Palafox wants to introduce new languages and social groups to change the thought patterns of the lumpenproletariat. There is no alternative, and so Bustamonte agrees reluctantly.

Years later, Beran returns to Pao to reclaim his throne after long study at the Breakness Institute. He finds he is no longer comfortable in his homeland, partly because he has changed and because his people have changed as the new languages take root. He overthrows Uncle Regent, takes over, and then discovers that he must keep Palafox as the power behind the throne. Pao is still building up an infrastructure, making the tools to make the tools, and cannot yet overthrow the Batmarsh overlords.

Eventually the Paonese do so. Once Beran evicts the Batmarsh invaders, he discovers that the now-polyglot population is not entirely loyal. Beran overthrows Palafox but finds himself

fighting off coup attempts from his own linguistically-divided people. Fortunately his enemies cannot unite against him because they speak different languages and have different cultures. Beran hangs on, but his will not be an easy reign either.

The Languages Of Pao.

Vance makes the Pao language suitably exotic by having it with no verbs, adjectives, or comparatives (good, better, best). He stumbles when he gives it a base-8 number system. This doesn't make sense, as humans would not abandon base-10 for daily use.

Palafox's linguistic changes to Pao take place mostly off-stage. This is done in what I call "The Magic Wand of ANALOG" style, in which SF magazine the good guys (engineers) build computers out of old valve-tube radios, or build radios out of coconut husks and a quartz pebble found on the beach. The details are carefully glossed over, not so much just the technical flim-flam, which is really irrelevant to the story, but the unlikely social engineering of populations.

The languages Palafox introduces to Pao are Cogitant (for the managerial bureaucrats, and actually a simplified form of Breakness), Valiant (military), Technicant (scientists), Mercantil (trade). Enclaves of these languages are founded amidst Paonese

and Batch, the language of the Batmarsh overlords. Things get away on him though, as his students at Breakness Institute develop a creole made from the above languages plus Paonese. It starts as a fun joke among them but gets loose into the Pao population because of its evident utility. The creole is called Pastiche and will eventually swamp the other languages.

Palafox explains his plan to the Regent Bustamonte: *“Paonese is a passive, dispassionate language. It presents the world in two dimensions, without tension or contrast. A people speaking Paonese, theoretically, ought to be docile, passive, without strong personality development, in fact, exactly as the Paonese people are.”*

The new languages that Palafox will introduce will be designed to change the thought patterns of the next generation of Paonese. Children sent to military academies will learn Valiant, where: *“The syllabary will be rich in effort-producing gutturals and hard vowels. A number of key ideas will be synonymous; such as ‘pleasure’ and ‘overcoming a resistance’, ‘relaxation’ and ‘shame’, ‘outworlder’ and ‘rival’. Even the clans of Batmarsh will seem mild compared to the future Paonese military.”*

The technicians of Pao will learn a different language in which: *“... the grammar will be extravagantly complicated but altogether consistent and logical. The vocables would be discrete but joined*

and fitted by elaborate rules of accordance. What is the result? When a group of people, impregnated with these stimuli, are presented with supplies and facilities, industrial development is inevitable.”

For merchants, *“Theirs would be a symmetrical language with emphatic number-parsing, elaborate honorifics to teach hypocrisy, a vocabulary rich in homophones to facilitate ambiguity, a syntax of reflection, reinforcement and alternation to emphasize the analogous interchange of human affairs.”*

Language And Culture.

At the Breakness Institute, the student Beran is told by his lecturer Fanchiel that: *“Each language is special tool, with a particular capability. It is more than a means of communication, it is a system of thought. ... Think of a language as the contour of a watershed, stopping flow in certain directions, channelling it into others. Language controls the mechanism of your mind. When people speak different languages, their minds work differently and they act differently.”*

Another Breakness don, Finisterle, emphasizes the point: *“No language is neutral. All languages contribute impulse to the mass mind, some more vigourously than others. ... there is no ‘best’ or*

'optimum' language, although Language A may be more suitable for Context X than Language B."

Fanchiel cites the planet Vale, a planet of extreme individualists: " ... *their actions give the impression of insanity. Actually they are complete anarchists. Now if we examine the speech of Vale we find, if not a reason for the behavior, at least a parallelism. Language on Vale is personal improvisation, with the fewest possible conventions. Each individual selects a speech as you or I might choose the color of our garments. ... They live in complete spontaneity, in clothes, in conduct, in language. The question arises: does the language provoke or merely reflect the eccentricity? Which came first: the language or the conduct?*"

I grant that Jack Vance was merely using Vale as a throwaway example; the planet plays no part in the story. On thinking things through as to how such a society would work, I have to conclude it wouldn't. If everyone speaks their own private language, with only a minimum number of conventions to ensure the electrical grid works and the trains run on time, the society would barely function. Scientific progress requires a common language among engineers, technicians, and researchers. On Earth, it used to be Latin but is now English. On Vale there could be none, and it would have a stagnant society. There would be little knowledge of history beyond living memory, for who could read the old books? It would be like a world of phonetic alphabets, because

each change in pronunciation renders the existing written language useless.

In speaking of the new languages of Pao, Palafox says: "*All these languages will make use of semantic assistance. To the military segment, a 'successful man' will be synonymous with 'winner of a fierce contest'. To the industrialists, it will mean 'efficient fabricator'. To the traders, it equates with 'a person irresistibly persuasive'. Such influences will pervade each of the languages. Naturally they will not act with equal force upon each individual, but the mass action must be decisive.*"

The Language Of Breakness.

Beran has trouble adjusting to life on Breakness at first, not only because of the different culture but because of the view that the Breakness language imposes on life. The Pao citizens are social animals. The Breakness dominies are loners, although not anarchists like the citizens of Vale. The Paonese language is polysynthetic, using prefixes, affixes, and postpositions to extend the meanings of root words.

The Breakness language is isolative, with syntax derived from the speaker's self, with no personal pronouns or emotional states. Finisterle points out that: "*We are total individuals; each has his private goal. The Paonese word 'co-operation' has no*

counterpart on Breakness.”. This can't be totally true, since a technologically-advanced society can only exist with co-operative action between individuals of its population. It seems better to assume that while they might be isolated socially and emotionally, they do co-operate on technical tasks.

Language And World View.

It has been claimed that language affects how we perceive the world. I am prepared to concede this to some degree, but do not think it is as extremely important as some would believe. Language may affect how we operate in a culture, but the laws of science force language to notice it. If a language has no word for the colour orange, it may be that its speakers perceive only red, reddish-yellow, yellowish-red, and yellow. If a language has no word for 'gravitational attraction', then it does not mean that its speakers can float across an abyss instead of falling to their death.

Vance takes this belief to an extreme in this novel, the idea that there is no objective viewpoint and the world is only perception. Finisterle tells Beran: “ *First, there is no reason to believe that a 'true' world-picture, if it existed, would be a valuable or advantageous tool. Second, there is no standard to define the 'true' world-picture. 'Truth' is contained in the preconceptions of him who seeks to define it. Any organization of ideas whatever presupposes a judgement on the world.*”.

All animals with sensory organs must have them reporting objectively what the environment around them is like. Eyes that do not see the real world as it actually is will soon be selected out of the population. Samuel Johnson dealt with Bishop Berkeley's hypothesis of the non-existence of matter by kicking a rock, saying “*I refute it thus.*”. Language must have some degree of objectivity so that people will agree that the train is coming down the tracks and one should get off before being run over. Whether it is a military, technical, romantic, or managerial language, it must have words for the phrase ‘Get off the tracks! The train is coming!’.

OMNILINGUAL

This is a short story by H. Beam Piper, subsequently reprinted in collections. My copy is in a 1981 Ace paperback anthology of his short stories titled FEDERATION. Piper had built up a connected series of novels and stories set in the future history of the Federation, in a similar style to Asimov's Foundation series or Heinlein's Future History. The star-travelling humans of the Federation series spoke Lingua Terra, which Piper described as a blend of Australian English, South American Spanish, and Brazilian Portuguese. That language does not occupy a frontmost position in the series; it is merely an added detail of the cultural background.

OMNILINGUAL is set early in the history of the Federation, when humans have only just begun to explore Mars, where they found the remains of a civilization that died out 50,000 years before. The heroine of the story is Martha Dane, one of a team of archaeologists exploring the ruins. Books have been found in the desiccated buildings, but no one can read them without a Rosetta Stone.

The story is the progress of how the basic steps were taken to decipher a language with no human referents whatsoever. The problem of learning the dead alien language is that no basis exists from which to work. Earth archaeologists could work from other languages. If one half of a bilingual text is known, then the other can be worked out, which was the basic methodology of the Rosetta Stone.

Martha Dane is under criticism from other members of the expedition for a futile task. But she begins to make headway, especially after libraries and a museum of natural history are discovered.

The numbers are first to be identified, from magazines found in a library. Tables of contents gave the issue number and date. Captioned pictures, which might seem useful on first sight, are not: *“Suppose some alien to our culture found a picture of a man with a white beard and mustache sawing a billet from a log. He*

would think the caption meant, ‘Man Sawing Wood’. How would he know that it was really ‘Wilhelm II in Exile at Doorn’?”.

The bilingual text needed to decipher the Martian language is found. It is science. A periodic table of elements hanging in a Martian laboratory gives the names of the elements. A calendar gives the names of the months. A slow drizzle of details allows Dane and her colleagues to build up a vocabulary. Technical data is the same everywhere, for the laws of science are constant throughout the universe. What applies on Earth also applied on the long dead Martian society. Logic comes to the rescue, and the archaeologists have their Rosetta Stones.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$2 or \$3 cash, trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world.]

Bogus #4 (The Usual from Sandra Bond, 46 Stirling Road, London N22 5BP, England) 4-page perzine, going from goth bees to performance personas to Yank speak to music.

Head #1 (The Usual from Christina Lake and Doug Bell, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA, England) SF fanzine which starts off by lamenting the lack of convention reports and focal point zines. Mostly reviews and letters.

Plokta #19 (The Usual from Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, England) SF genzine, this issue mostly convention reportage, letters of comment, and rowdy miscellany. A focal-point zine for English fandom. Also comes with a CD-ROM with beautiful artwork (a detoured Dr. Plokta's Lonely Hearts Club Band) but it wouldn't open on my computer (Windows 95, Works 4.5, and WordPerfect 8) so I don't know what was in it.

The Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin V7#7 (The Usual from Julie Wall, 470 Ridge Road, Birmingham, Alabama 35206-2816) Lots of convention reports, news and notes of SF fandom, and letters of comment. A focal-point zine for southern USA fandom.

Steam Engine Time #1 (The Usual from Maureen Kincaid Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ, England) A new focal point zine for extended SF book reviews and serious essays, the very anthesis of PLOKTA. This issue discusses Cordwainer Smith, ghost stories, Olaf Stapledon, trends and history of British SF, and other articles. Sometimes drifting

dangerously close to graduate student essays in academic journals, but fortunately without the reference citations and jargon.

Con-Tract V12#4 (The Usual from John Mansfield, 516 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0G2) Newszine for SF conventions, with con reports, listings, and advice about con-running. A focal-point zine for convention committees.

FOSFAX #199 (The Usual from Falls of the Ohio SF and Fantasy Association, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) 86 pages of microprint, with lengthy SF and history reviews, convention reports, political commentary, and 40 pages of letters of comment. The politics is mostly local American concerns, and the letters demonstrate that flaming was not something invented on the Internet. A focal point zine for sercon fans.

Twink #18 (The Usual from E.B. Frohvet, 4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott City, Maryland 21042) SF genzine, starting off with an installment in a series about SF characters of colour in Samuel Delaney's books. Robert Sabella looks back at writing workshops and his progress since then. Also book reviews, zine listings, and letters of comment. A focal point zine for literary SF fans.

Banana Wings #15 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA, England) This entire issue is a convention report about the 1999 Australian Worldcon and subsequent tour around Australia to see all the sights.

Ethel The Aardvark #91 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) SF clubzine with news, convention reports, reviews, and letters of comment. Also an essay on artificial intelligence and the problems of system feedback. A focal point zine for Australian SF fandom.

File 770 #135 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) Newszine of SF fandom; a focal point fanzine for the convention and club crowd. News and notes about SF fans, goings-on, reviews, and commentary.

Aztec Blue #1 (The Usual from Murray Moore, 1065 Henley Road, Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 1C8) This issue leads off with an introduction to SF fandom, then recounts a meeting with Ray Bradbury, life as a deaf person, and airplane travel to Albania (which reminds me of Mike Resnick's horror stories of flying Delta out of Cleveland).

Angry Thoreauan #26 (US\$5 from Box 3478, Hollywood, California 90078) Ostensibly a musiczine, and it does have the obligatory reviews of records and zines, plus all those ads from record labels. What sets this apart from the typical punkzine are the essays and commentaries. None of those bad interviews with bad punk bands who will be quickly and deservedly forgotten ("So how did you pick the name for your band?"). This issue's theme is failure, from life in the dirty side of downtown Los Angeles to prison life to job hopping flipping hamburgers. The content is also helped by a decent layout that makes it easy to read, as opposed to the plethora of cut-and-paste collage zines whose editors make one regret the advent of universal literacy.

The high point for me was Jeff Bale, formerly of MAXIMUMROCKNROLL, discussing some of the problems with zines today: "*... that trashed-out xeroxed look is now wholly orthodox. It is what almost everyone does these days, in part because they don't have the talent to do anything else, and in part because that's what is traditionally associated with punk now. ... And why are they worthless? Because the people that put them out don't have anything interesting to say ... they practically beg other people to submit stuff because they are unable to generate any material for their own magazines.*"

The Knarley Knews #82 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Mostly letters of comment (so if you don't like how I truncate or wahf you in OPUNTIA, you can send epistles to TKK), and a memorial to the late Joe Mayhew. Also an analysis of the fourth verse of "The Star Spangled Banner", with the too-true comment that "... *it is indeed a pity that most people don't know all four verses of the anthem; they seem to think that the last two words of the first verse are "Play ball!"*." Not just an American problem, as I doubt you could find ten Canadians who know from memory the second verse of "Oh Canada!"; Canadians instinctively associate the final bar of the first verse with the sound of hockey sticks slapping the ice as the referee drops the puck for the opening face-off.

Kreuz Aktionen 2000 (DM5 from Wilfried Nold, Eppsteinerstr. 22, D-60323, Frankfurt, Deutschland) Nicely produced in card covers, illustrated throughout, multilingual. This issue has articles on crosses, from roadside shrines to art to mythology.

Popular Reality V436#5 (US\$1 from Susan Poe, 1116 Shepard Street, Lansing, Michigan 48912) Newsprint tabloid in the cut-and-paste style, with rants, fiction, anarchist tracts, and ads you'll never see in a Southam newspaper. I found particularly amusing an anarchist review with gems such as: "*Balash identifies himself as Canadian, and a resident of Edmonton, capital of the prairie*

province of Alberta (many of whose settlers were American)" [true, but 99.5% of whose settlers were British, Scandinavian, or Slavic] or "*Per capita, Canada is easily more anarchist, and especially more McAnarchist, than the United States.*" [he's in for a shock if he ever visits Alberta, the heartland of the Tories and Canadian Alliance, where Maggie Thatcher is considered a weak-willed pommy].

Neil Armstrong's Second Trip To The Moon (The Usual from Babynous Cult, 110½ State Avenue, Bremerton, Washington 98337-1241) Chapbook that recounts a part of the Apollo programme you never heard about. An interesting alternative history written by surrealists.

Tortoise #8 (The Usual from Sue Jones, Flat 5, 32/33 Castle Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, England) God is an Englishwoman, with additional comments on matters Welsh, a 1739 steeplejack who suddenly went to God, random miscellanies, and letters of comment.

Musea #91 (The Usual from 4000 Hawthorne #5, Dallas, Texas 75219) Taking potshots at modern 'art' and the intellectual laziness it represents in this issue. Lots of quotes and examples about what has gone wrong in the post-WW2 era with art. What is to be done?

Azmacourt #6 (US\$1 from Marc Parker, Box 890372, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73189) Perzine, using both comic strips and essays to tell the stories and anecdotes.

Drum #15 (The Usual from K. Linda Kivi, S-19, C-14, R.R. 2, Nelson, British Columbia V1L 5P5) Perzine with commentary on cross-country skiing, enlivened with detoured CATHY comics whose characters rant about logging British Columbia forests.

New Kind Of Neighborhood (The Usual from Ylva Spangberg, Disponentg 3, S-112 62 Stockholm, Sweden) SF fanzine from Sweden, in the English language. Lots of convention reports from Stockholm, some of which may be real.

And Stuff #4 (The Usual from Doug Bell, 12 Hatherly Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA) Perzine, with accounts of DJing past and present, performance art, tavern fandom in Edinburgh, and letters of comment.

Sugar Needle #13 (The Usual from Phlox Icona, 1174 - 2 Briarcliff, Atlanta, Georgia 30306) Zine devoted to candy; this issue is about adult candy. Illustrated are wrappers from X-rated fortune cookies, licorice whips (edible cat-of-nine-tails), edible condoms (terrible taste), and Penis Gummies. It's enough to put you off both sex and chocolate. Not recommended for diabetics, dentists, or people without a sense of humour.

Ordinary Madness #4

(The Usual from Rob Levesque, Box 51, Site 16, R.R. 2, Strathmore, Alberta T1P 1K5) Not quite a cut-and-paste zine from hangers-on in the Calgary rave scene but dangerously close to what Jeff Bale was complaining about. A few anecdotes about building skateboard ramps with stolen lumber, a Calgary Flames hockey game, and other excitement on the cutting edge in Cowtown. (Strathmore is a rural village just east of Calgary.)

Erg #150 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ) Movie memories, weird aircraft designs, and the hazards of matter transmission, plus letters of comment.

Nova Science Fiction #2 (US\$6 from Wesley Kawato, 17983 Paseo Del Sol, Chino Hills, California 91709-3947) Fictionzine specializing in alternative history. I particularly liked the story "England Night" by Kurt Sidaway where an unhappy Prince Charles views other timelines of alternative Englands, while stuck in one of his own.

The Thought #119 (The Usual from Ronald Tobin, Box 10760, Glendale, Arizona, 85318-0760) Starts off with a series of did not/did too letters, then to tracts on early Christianity, language, libertarianism, the American prison industry, and public schools.

Probe #110 (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Clubzine, nicely produced digest in card covers. More of a fictionzine, but with news, notes, and reviews as well.

Quipu #11 (The Usual from Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road #6-R, New York City, New York 10034) Perzine, mostly about a trip to France.

Leering At The Postman #38 (The Usual from Ken Miller, Box 101, Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940-0101) Mail art zine, this issue being a detournement issue using the face of Debbie Garlick grafted onto other personages. Weird, more so in my case because I have no idea who Garlick is.

This Here #5 (The Usual from Nic Farey, Box 178, St. Leonard, Maryland 20685) Perzine about state-ordered alcohol rehab, wrestling, reviews, letters of comment, and miscellany.

Trap Door #20 (US\$5 or The Usual from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) Genzine, starting off with the editor's recovery from a serious car accident, then others writing on life in New York City, a sauna in Russia, why Hollywood movies turn out the way they do, various personal vignettes, and letters of comment.

Vanamonde #353 to #367 (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Single-sheet apazine, but since it appears weekly the cumulative effect is the same as a regular zine. Topics range from getting caught in the middle of a Chinese New Year dragon parade to convention reports.

GUFFaw #4 (US\$2 from Paul Kincaid, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ, England) A collection of trip reports of people who attended SF conventions in Australia.

Word Play #3 (The Usual from Scott Crow, Box 445, Clements, California 95227) A small zine discussing words, their origins, and current usage. An example is how 'hamburger' became 'liberty sandwich' in the USA during the World Wars.

Your Town In The 1950s (The Usual from Scott Garinger, Box 321, El Segundo, California 90245) One-shot, a mail art assembling on life, real or imagined in the 1950s. Some interesting responses, especially the European ones.

For The Clerisy V7#39 (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Box 404, Getzville, New York 14068) Starts off about addictions and obsessions, from Internet surfing to bodybuilding. From there to Japanese politics, spy novels, zine listings, and letters of comment.

MAIL ART LISTINGS

Home Sweet Home: (Ginger Mason, Box 39168, Vancouver, British Columbia V6R 1G0) Is locating your home anywhere, any time, important? Is home about four walls or is it where the heart is? What makes home for you? What do you need to feel at home? Tell me, show me, delight me, enlighten me! Free medium, documentation to all. Deadline October 31, 2000.

Eat Your Art Out: (Patricia Collins, Alan Turner, Julia Tant, and Martha Attchison, c/o The Shopping Trolley Gallery, P.O. Box 108, Beckenham BR3 1GY) We will welcome your artwork on the subject of food, on an open postcard, to join us in an exhibition during the Christmas period at a busy restaurant in London. We will send you documentation of the event later on. Deadline is November 1, 2000.

Rats And Mice: Think Twice: (Christa Behmenburg, Max-Planck-Str. 64, D 85375 Neufahrn, Deutschland) I am a librarian at the Technische Universität München and am working privately on rats and mice in culture and history. My collection includes 11,000 postcards, 800 books, 3000 figures, 100 posters, and 200 pieces of art. For a documentation and exhibition of cartoons, caricatures, photographs, paintings, collages, etc., I need contributions from artists all over the world. So please join! The exhibition will take place in the Public Library of Berlin-

Zehlendorf, Germany, in 2001.

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All techniques, size: postcard, no return, no jury, non-profit. Each contributor will get documentation. Deadline is end of 2000.

Body Transfert: (Casare Iezzi, iperspazialista, Via S. Camillo de Lellis, 97/B, 66100 Chieti, Italy) How many lives do we live? Do you trust in parallel universes? I am waiting for your answers. Please send me one of your original works. Deadline December 1, 2000. Size free, catalogue for all.

Mani Art: (Pascal Lenoir, 11 Ruelle de Champagne, 60680 Grand Fresnoy, France) 60 copies of 15 cm x 21 cm artwork or 60 postcards. No black-and-white photocopies. Leave 1 cm margin on longest side. Nicely bound volume of mail art assembling, with the postcards slipped into a pocket. Addresses of the contributors are included as part of the usual "doc to all".

The Tree Of Poetry: (dott.ssa Tiziana Baracchi, Via Cavallotti, 83-B, 30171 Venezia-Mestre, Italy) The Tree of Poetry is an American maple in Cavallotti Street. Below its fronds, sheets with verses, in plastic envelopes to preserve from rain, hang down. The poets read their lines in the shade of the tree. Painters and sculptors put their works on walls and grass. Do you want to send your mail art or mail poesy?