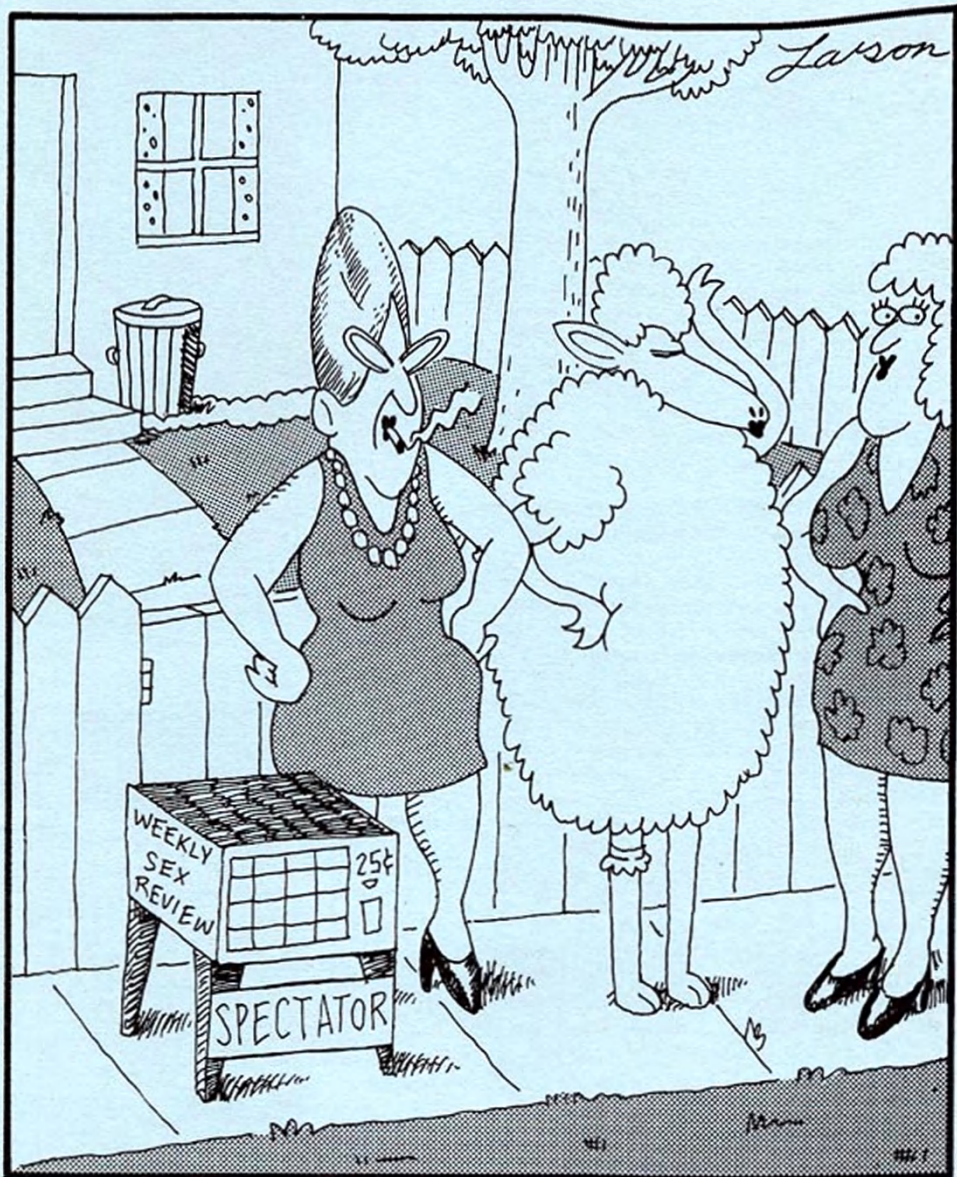


The Realist

Robert Anton Wilson
Covers the Futurists Convention

Number 111
Editor: Paul Krassner



The Whore Side

A state Court of Appeal has struck down a municipal law in Alameda, California, banning newsrack sales of sexually explicit newspapers from within 500 feet of residential communities. The ordinance was adopted in 1987 after parents complained that their grade school-age children were bringing home copies of the *Spectator*, which calls itself "California's Weekly Sex News & Review." The city had sought to limit the location of such racks in the same way other communities have restricted adult theaters and bookstores offering

material that is explicit but not legally obscene.

Appellate Justice Donald King stated, "It may be true that adult entertainment downgrades neighborhoods. But neither prior cases, independent studies nor common sense have yet demonstrated that adult newsracks downgrade neighborhoods." As for the contention that the vending machines provide a potential meeting place for prostitutes and customers, the judge said this "sounds more like an idea for a Gary Larson cartoon than a plausible constitutional argument."

COURT JESTER

Woodschtick Nation

The first time somebody asked me what I thought of the new drug czar, I thought they were talking about a new drug called Zar. I had to admit I'd never tried Zar. Was it like Ecstasy? Adam is another name for Ecstasy, and I thought that they must have gone from A to Z, from Adam to Zar, and I was disappointed because I thought they should have balanced Adam with Eve. Anyway, the new drug Zar is William Bennett, and Wavy Gravy wants to debate him. He works with kids and thinks it's a dangerous mistake for Bennett to act as though marijuana and cocaine were in the same category. Wavy recently garnered a flurry of media attention celebrating the 20th anniversary of Woodstock.

As CNN's resident defender of the '60s, I was a guest on *Sonia Live* during Woodstock Revisited Week. I reminisced about being in the press tent when a *N.Y. Daily News* Reporter pointed out a photographer who was actually in the Criminal Intelligence Division of the U.S. Army. Obviously they were disturbed by the spectacle of a half million young rock music lovers who were not exactly entranced by the Vietnam war. Indeed, if the American intelligence community has worked hard so to destabilize governments in other continents, it wasn't too far-fetched to speculate that there was also a concentrated effort to destabilize the counter-culture in *this* country.

I was on CNN again to balance the appearance of Peter Collier, co-founder with fellow turncoat David Horowitz of the Second Thoughts Project, a think tank with a \$300,000 annual budget underwritten by conservative foundations. Collier admitted that as ideological leftists they had viewed hippies as "lumpen proletariat." And on radio, Horowitz vomited revisionist rhetoric at me concerning the 1968 protest at the Democratic convention in Chicago: "Tom Hayden was responsible for electing Richard Nixon." At a formal dinner party in Washington, Rob Owen—the courier for Oliver North who had operated out of Dan Quayle's senatorial office—announced that Horowitz and Collier "have seen the light." As in a thousand points of opportunism.

They worked as speechwriters for Robert Dole in his presidential bid, and when he lost the nomination these former Marxists wrote speeches for George Bush that lashed out at Michael Dukakis for being soft on Communism. Their current party line is that the permissiveness which promoted pot has led quite linearly to the crack epidemic. No wonder William Bennett complains about "the Woodstock legacy" of do-your-own-thing. But all is not lost. For \$3.49 he can now buy a Micro-Dye kit that will enable him to tie-dye a T-shirt in a microwave oven in only 4 minutes. Zar, anyone?

Narco-Terrorism

Thanks to Jesse Helms, millions of people—who would never before have associated bodily waste with their Saviour—suddenly became aware of an image titled *Piss Christ*, which showed Jesus himself floating in the photographer's urine. Meanwhile, this senator from North Carolina, the nation's top tobacco growing state, has been the leader of a narco-terrorist industry that slaughters 390,000 civilians in this country every year. That's over 1,000 deaths every day—slightly more than a couple of hundred Colombian judges—and those dead consumers have to be replaced daily with new smokers.

Helms has been an avid supporter of Chilean dictator Pinochet, and has been following his lead with his own sort of death squad on the installment plan. The smoke from a single cigarette contains about 100 times more cyanide than the pair of grapes from Chile that were impounded by the U.S. government.

Tobacco companies give more bribes—oops, more honoraria—to members of Congress than does any other special interest group. Moreover, they are conducting a war against children. About 90% of all smokers began to smoke before age 19, and 60% before age 14. There was a six-page foldout ad for Marlboro in *Spin*, *Rolling Stone* and *Playboy*. Of course, readers were warned that "Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide." The tobacco industry is the nation's largest advertiser in print media and on billboards. Ads are tax deductible as a business expense, so we all subsidize these druglords' attempt to brainwash American youth into early lifetime addiction.

As contradictions become more blatant in this country, the tobacco pushers try to expand their victims in other lands, where the exported product has higher tar content and not even wimpy warnings are required. After all, it was *our* Surgeon General who took the pipe away from Mr. Potato Head. In Thailand, five empty Winston packs will get you in free to sports events. In Bangkok, school notebooks serve as a promotional vehicle for cigarettes. It is estimated that in 25 years, 900,000 smoking-caused deaths a year will occur in China, making the Beijing massacre seem like a Little League playoff.

When a reporter for the *Twin Cities Reader* wrote about the Kool Jazz Festival and mentioned that Duke Ellington had died of lung cancer, he was fired. When an advertising agency produced an anti-smoking commercial, conglomerate R.J. Reynolds cancelled their \$70-million Nabisco account. When Cardinal Cooke said a prayer at a Philip Morris-sponsored display of Vatican art, a CEO bragged, "We're probably the only cigarette company on this earth to be blessed by a cardinal." It would not be much of a surprise now to see hanging on Jesse Helms' office wall a portrait of Jesus Christ smoking a cigarette and blowing smoke-rings through his halo.

Decisions, Decisions

Now that the Supreme Court has ruled that your right to burn the American flag is protected by the First Amendment, it just isn't as much fun anymore. Legislation defying that decision resulted, so now you can burn the flag only if you soil it first. Patriots can accuse you of burning an unsoiled flag, but how can they prove it, since you destroyed the evidence?

The Court also ruled that phone-porn—whereby junior executives ejaculate all over their credit cards—is freedom of speech because it's merely indecent and not obscene. There are, of course, objective standards by which to make such a judgment. Rob Lowe's sex video was definitely indecent and therefore legal. But his duet with Snow White at the Academy Awards was obviously obscene and should have been banned.

The Court's abortion ruling was not a reversal of *Roe vs. Wade*, but rather handed the power over women's bodies over to state legislatures. So NOW is now fighting for the legalization of fetal transplants. Let's say a poor woman in Texas is pregnant and doesn't want to be. Her fetus is transplanted to the uterus of a wealthy woman, who can afford to fly to New York for an abortion. This would simply be a way of combining pro-choice and conspicuous consumption without violating any laws along the way.

Corrections & Clarifications

• In issue #110, I mentioned that Abbie Hoffman—who suffered from clinical manic-depression—had tried to have himself institutionalized. Not so. That wasn't his style. It would have been more accurate to say that he was *advised* to have himself institutionalized.

• In issue #100, I referred to John Lennon as "that maneuvering swine," but unfortunately without those quotation marks. Actually, I was quoting Paul McCartney, out of context.

• Also in #100, I wrote that "other artists have been afraid to parody Disney characters ever since the folks at Disneyland sued Dan O'Neill and forced him to settle out of court." Wrong again. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which decided in favor of the Disney empire. Now, however, O'Neill plans to sue *them* for using one of *his* old characters—namely, *Roger Rabbit*—and so the shoe is on the other paw.

• Last issue, #110, was dated Summer 1989. This issue, #111, is dated Winter 1990. There was no Fall issue, but subscribers will not be affected, since subscriptions are figured by number rather than by the dating game.

And, to all *Realist* readers, may you have a Happy New Decade, whenever it begins.

—Paul Krassner

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The Future Is Coming! The Future Is Coming!

I have seen the future and it's plural. I attended the sixth General Assembly of the World Future Society.

Futurism is a game played on the interface between Science and Science-Fiction. A meeting of the World Future Society is a lot like traveling through the parallel universes of quantum theory. There are 10¹⁰⁰ "virtual" futures (at least) all being seriously and learnedly discussed by various statisticians, sociologists, economists, mathematicians and assorted Prophets and Visionaries; in much the same sense as in quantum theory, each "virtual" future is equally real until an "actual" future manifests in our space-time. Keeping track of the possible futures is like following a million marbles rushing in all directions from a spilled jar.

Concretely, at a WFS Assembly, there are always at least four seminars going on at the same time, so you attend one and try to collect give-away literature from the others to fill in what you missed; you don't get enough sleep or food, and, in general you feel as if you've gone down a laundry chute with your old shirts. In fact, there were 850 speakers at this Assembly and I didn't hear more than 40 of them, including panels in which there were four or more participants.

* * *

I was playing the World Game on a large Dymaxion map of the world which covered the floor of the seminar room. This is the map designed by Bucky Fuller which is flat but has no distortion of land areas and sizes, because it uses synergetic geometry. (The distortions in Mercator maps are caused by using Euclidean "flatland" geometry on the surface of a sphere.)

The Game was run by Medard Gabel, a longtime co-worker with Fuller.

I was assigned to represent the Near East (except Israel). I was given the props to represent that Arab world's share of the planet's resources. Eggboxes represented food, light swords represented energy, and balloons represented weapons. I found I had three eggboxes, representing 3% of the world's food. Consulting my information sheets, I found this was adequate, since I represented 3% of the world's population; but I couldn't sell any food without some of my people going hungry.

I also had 9% of the world's energy, which also seemed adequate. However, my literacy rate was only 65%. I decided to attempt to raise it to 85% in the course of the Game.

Despite only having enough food for my population, I tried to sell some anyway, hoping to buy more later. The people who really needed food couldn't pay me. The people who could pay (e.g. the U.S.) didn't need food.

I invested \$50,000,000,000 of my capital in buying educational equipment and teachers, raising my literacy rate to 75% in the first round. I then got another egg-box, since when literacy increases 10%, food production increases proportionally. I now owned 4% of the world's food, and had only 3% of the

world's population to feed. I tried again to sell some food, but the hungry couldn't pay and the wealthy weren't hungry.

I decided to give some food away, to Africa. This earned me a Good Will certificate, which meant I could collect something from Africa eventually. I gave away some more food to South America, and got another Good Will certificate. With that much Good Will, I felt secure in investing another \$50 billion in education—and got a bonus light-sword, since energy production increases when literacy rises.

Quickly, I sold my light sword (1% of the earth's known energy) to Southeast Asia and bought more education. Things were getting exciting: Players were shouting, trying to hurry deals before the time limit ran out. I gave away some more food, bought more education, and got a bonus in food production to bring me back to the 3% that I had started with.

When the Game ended, I still had 3% of the world's food, 9% of its energy, a lot of good will from Africa and South America, and had raised my literacy rate beyond the 85% I had aimed at to a full 100%—higher than the U.S.—meaning that food and energy would increase in the next round (if the Game had continued).

Because of my "generosity" to Africa and South America, infant mortality declined in both places, meaning that the birth-rate would also decline soon. (Birth-rate always drops when most children who are born live past their first two years. Most excess births seem to be "insurance" against high infant mortality.)

I was beginning to get an idea of the sociological meaning of Fuller's theory of synergy, which previously I had understood largely as a mathematical concept. If X gives away some food instead of letting it rot, he not only collects "good will" but also lowers the planet's birth rate. Synergy means that there are no isolated systems.

* * *

I'm at lunch. Sven Bjork, M.D., comes over to chat with me for a moment. I last saw him in Oslo in 1986. He's involved with Forum 2000, a Norwegian Futurist group, and the Hanover Project, a Pan-European Futurist group, and he's also the principal instigator of the Scandinavian Bypass Operation, an attempt to start a joint Norse-Swedish-Danish-Dutch Space Program to collect solar power in space and sell it cheaply to the Third World. The less obvious agenda of the Bypass is that the U.S. and U.S.S.R. will be invited to participate and will eventually find the program irresistibly cost-effective; Dr. Bjork thinks this will strengthen *detente* and make Star Wars obsolete.

I think the Scandinavian Bypass is a great idea and I always give it all the free publicity I can. (I am doing that right now.)

* * *

There are now 50,000 thermonuclear weapons on Earth. I am back in the World Game. Medard Gabel carries us through a Doomsday scenario, in which all 50,000 weapons are used in a global conflict. Each weapon was represented by a red plastic chip

about the size of a dime. On the Dymaxion World Map, each chip covered the area that would be destroyed when a nuke was dropped. The 50,000 chips were spread across the map and covered every square inch. No part of Earth was not blown up totally, in this scenario.

"This only represents the immediate effects of the blasts," Gabel told us. "We're not even considering fallout and nuclear winter and other long-range effects."

* * *

I was in the lounge. Three Islamic-looking gents were sitting at the next table.

"A lot of Iranians are Kuwaitis," one of them said. I pricked up my ears. What the hell did he mean by that? I began making notes.

Now one of them was talking about China, which he had evidently visited recently. "It's worse than Iran," he said. "Worse than Iran." "In China," one of his companions said, "the bottom is changing but the top isn't. In Russia, it's just the opposite. The top is changing, but the bottom is confused."

"In Iran," the first chap said, "let me tell you. My sister teaches high school. She started out full of ideals, going to change the world and all that. Now all she teaches is the *Koran*. I asked her what happened. She said, 'When a strong wind blows, the toughest tree must bend.' That's Iran."

Fifty-four percent of all American families now have home computers. Could that be considered another strong wind blowing?

* * *

I was at a seminar on health care in the future. The first speaker was a Dr. James Gordon, a former Army psychiatrist who is now a Holistic physician. Dr. Gordon quoted some statistics on Americans' increasing use of Alternative (non-A.M.A.) therapies and indicated that by 2030, Alternative therapies would be as common here as the A.M.A.'s allopathic medicine.

Dr. Gordon told us the story of how he got interested in non-orthodox healing. While an Army psychiatrist, he developed painful back problems which ordinary A.M.A. methods could not cure or even alleviate. As an officer, he got treated by the best medical specialists the Army had, but none of them helped him. He finally went to an osteopath and got his first real relief from the pain—but it was only temporary.

Finally, Dr. Gordon tried something really far out; he consulted a Hindu herbal healer, who told him to eat nothing but pineapples. The "explanation" of this therapy seemed even more absurd than the therapy itself, but Gordon was desperate enough to try. His pain immediately got worse—and then in a few days decreased 90%. The Hindu then told him to go back to the osteopath. This time the osteopathic treatment worked and Gordon has had no more troubles with his back.

A.M.A. Fundamentalists will say this was "coincidence." Since a Hindu was involved, Protestant Fundamentalists will say it was "demons." I don't know, but I wonder a bit.

* * *

I was chatting with Medard Gabel in the

cocktail lounge. I asked how he had gotten involved with Bucky Fuller and the World Game.

"I was majoring in English," he told me, "and then Martin Luther King Jr. came along. I dropped out, and went to Selma to work with him. Later on, I was active in the anti-war movement, too. Then I heard Bucky speak, and I decided he had the best, most practical approach to solving the problems facing us."

Gabel returned to college, got a degree in Comprehensive Planning and Design, and went to work for Fuller.

A child in Costa Rica, Gabel said, currently has better health care than a child in the U.S. To raise American child health to parity with Costa Rica would cost only a sum equal to 8 days of our yearly military budget.

Imagine that, I thought. Even without trying to get health care equal to that of Europe—a Herculean task after 8 years of Reaganomics—we Americans could at least achieve parity with one moderately advanced Third World country, if we gave up 8 days of bomb-building. I wonder if anybody in Congress would dare that risk. Dan Quayle would probably shit a brick at the thought.

Thirty-four Congresspersons and 80 Congressional staff members have played the World Game. Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder arranged to have the Democratic Party officials of Colorado play the Game recently. Ten top American businessmen will be playing it with 10 European and 10 Japanese executives this September.

At the Colorado Democratic Party session all 280 players openly wept when the planet was destroyed before their eyes.

I was at a luncheon, which included a talk by a sociologist named Amitai Etzioni. I thought his name sounded like the botanical title of a hallucinogenic mushroom, and he was in fact quite psychedelic in his own quiet way. He began by discussing skin cancer and quoted figures showing that white people are more susceptible to this illness than black people. He then proposed that we should pass a law under which whites could sit in the shady area of baseball parks and blacks would sit in the sun. He went on with a few more Modest Proposals of that sort, and climaxed with a novel solution to the so-called Drug Problem: we should hang 100 randomly chosen drug users every year, he said, to discourage the others.

Bush might like that idea, but the Futurists were starting to look as if somebody had slipped them Bad Acid. Prof. Atzioni admitted that he had been having us on. His real subject was scientific "objectivity" versus morality and his argument was that scientific "objectivity" does not exist: we are always making moral choices whether we admit it or not. Scientific objectivity, he claimed, was often an excuse for making immoral choices.

Atzioni went on to quote statistics proving that most mothers will rush into a burning building to save their children even if the children are insured. No "scientific economists" can account for this "irrational"

(non-egotistic) behavior, he said.

That was just the beginning. He went on to launch an attack on Homo Economicus, the rational egotist proposed in most economic theories, and claimed there was no such animal ever found in the real world. He mentioned that even in New York City, the world capital of sleaze, 70% of lost wallets are returned. This quiet, dry, soft-spoken professor had subtly introduced the most far-out Futurist idea I had heard thus far in the Assembly—the notion of a kind of science that would not evade moral issues but confront them squarely.

My phone light was blinking. I had a message from somebody at NBC who wanted me to call him back. I called him and he wanted to interview me about the CIA and cocaine smuggling, a subject on which I had recently written an article for *Spin*. We agreed to meet that evening.

I was attending a seminar on fractals by mathematician Theodore J. Gordon. Fractals are popular this year, especially among Futurists, and the room was jammed when I got there. I had to sit on the floor, which meant that I could hear Mr. Gordon but never did clearly see any of the slides he was showing.

Fractals are unpredictable deterministic systems. They are not random, or stochastic, like quantum systems; they may be classically Newtonian, but they still remain unpredictable. They represent the most philosophically exciting development in mathematics of this generation and their logic is summed up in the famous paradox called "the butterfly effect": a butterfly shakes its wings in Brazil and air currents shift enough to produce a typhoon in Japan.

Gordon showed some sociological fractals (which I couldn't see) and pointed out that fractals are appearing in more and more fields every day, now that scientists know how to recognize them. The finer your scale, he said, the more fractals you will discover. The implication was that there might be fractals everywhere, which we have traditionally overlooked by not using fine enough scales. Different computers, he pointed out, give shockingly different answers to certain trajectories, just because they round out differently at the 14th decimal point.

That is, starting with two measurements that are as close as 1.00060003000004 and 1.00060003000003, you might get totally different and completely unpredictable results 150 steps later. The butterfly's wings have given birth to another typhoon.

Gordon then demonstrated with graphs I couldn't see that as information flow increases, fractal "chaos" enters a system sooner.

"Chaos" in fractal theory doesn't mean riot and arson; it merely means the unpredictable. Nonetheless, in some systems, it can take the form of the social breakdowns that most of us mean by "chaos." But it can also take the form

of rapid reorganization on a completely new level of coherence.

It was time to meet the reporter from NBC. I went down to the cocktail lounge and ordered a Perrier. He found me. He was a young, intelligent guy and an experienced interviewer. He fired rapid questions about the CIA's involvement with cocaine and other drugs; I answered, giving my sources for every fact and rumor I had collected, trying to differentiate the facts from the rumors.

A funny thing happened midway through the interview. I suddenly had a flash that maybe this guy wasn't from NBC at all; maybe he was from the CIA. This happens to me occasionally, and is a hangover from *Cointelpro*, the FBI operation that infiltrated the Peace Movement in the late 1960s and deliberately let us know we were infiltrated, to spread paranoia and mistrust among us. I have learned to live with such misgivings. It is the price we pay for being born into this age of Clandestine Operations. I went on calmly with the interview, noting every little subliminal clue that might tell me if this chap was NBC or CIA. I never did decide, but I don't think he noticed that I was having Suspicious Thoughts about him.

I had dinner with two fellows from Michigan who were fans of my books. One of them offered me a new Strange Loop for my collection, which I copied into my notebook:

"Know thyself."
"I'm an enigma."

Breakfast, coffee and TV. It was the 20th anniversary of Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon: *in some sense*, a turning point in human history. Then onto the TV came more Israelis shooting Arabs, more Arabs shooting Israelis, and George Herbert Walker Bush saying nothing very sincerely and at length. A bunch of women from Orange County appeared on screen, apparently protesting cruelty to cats. I turned the set off.

That morning I had an interesting chat with Barbara Marx Hubbard, an old friend and one of the directors of the WFS. I asked her how old the WFS was. She said it was started in 1967 by Ed Cornish, a former editor of *National Geographic*, who put out a mimeographed newsletter because he thought we needed a journal of Future Studies. I asked current membership and Barbara said 30,000.

I told her I agreed with the esteemed Dr. Hunter Thompson that the Reagan-Bush years represent a "White Trash Revolution." Developing Dr. Thompson's thesis, I said the Poor White Trash had become Middle Class White Trash, even Rich White Trash, but had remained at the same level intellectually.

Barbara said that when Reagan got elected in 1980 she went around for a long time asking herself, "How did we fail?" But she finally became philosophical and decided we were in "post-natal torpor." We were reborn as a new species in the 1960s, she said, and now we're just learning to toddle.

Another luncheon. I found myself seated

next to an investment counselor. He told me most investors are so stupid that he often has the temptation to allow them to make the idiot investments they dream up. "If they got burned once or twice, they might learn something," he said morosely. "But it's my job to baby them and keep their hands out of the fire."

I quoted W.C. Fields: "It's a sin against nature to leave a sucker in full possession of his assets."

"That's too rugged," the investment counselor said.

But then Orville Freeman—Secretary of Agriculture under JFK, remember?—arose to introduce the luncheon speaker, a chap named Lester Brown who has written about a dozen books on ecological problems. Brown took the podium and proceeded to spend 45 minutes ruining everybody's digestion. The ecological emergency, he assured us, is much worse than we had ever imagined. Neither governments nor the multi-nationals were doing anything serious about these looming disasters and most "reforms" are merely cosmetic. It will take a major disaster to change our priorities, he finished with priest-like solemnity, as if concluding a High Mass. He seemed to think the disaster would be good for us, or that we deserved it, or something like that.

"Same speech he's been giving for 20 years," somebody near me muttered, as the muffled applause died down and everybody stampeded for the bar to seek escape from Brown's Vision of Apocalypse.

I found a table occupied by two computer crackers I knew from Berkeley. We ordered Moscow Mules and they told me the latest news on the Cyberpunk front. "A guy in San Jose has a virus that he says will penetrate I.R.S. He's still trying to decide whether to destroy files selectively or just take the whole system out in one dump." The kind of talk you always hear from Berkeley computer people.

The other guy had a bright view of Urine Testing. "It only screens out the pot-heads and coke-freaks," he said. "They can all go into arts and entertainment—hell, they got the temperament for it, right? But meanwhile, who'll be passing the urine tests and climbing the corporate ladder?"

"The usual alcoholics," I said.

"Well, yeah," he said, "some of them, sure, but dig, baby—the acid-heads, too. There's no urine test for acid. By the year 2000 the top of the pyramid will be full of acid-heads. They'll make Tim Leary Secretary of Nature and everything will be like 1968 again."

The first guy interrupted to tell me about the cat killer of Orange County. Cats, evidently, are turning up dead, drained of blood, all over the Orange suburbs. "Just like the cattle mutilations, only now it's aimed directly at the kind of people who voted for Reagan and really worry about Satanists. Real sick humor, huh?"

We had another round of Moscow Mules and the second guy told me about the dog castrator of San Diego. "He doesn't kill the mutts, just cuts off their balls. Weird shit."

"Are you sure this isn't just more right-wing paranoia?" I asked.

"Hell," the first guy said, "NBC did a show about the cats. The Orange County authorities say it's coyotes doing it, but did you ever hear of a coyote that sucks the blood and leaves the cadaver behind? Coyotes drag off any animal they kill and eat it later, where they feel safe. They don't leave bodies lying around on lawns, like these cats are found."

"I never drink . . . wine," I said in my Bela Lugosi voice. We had some more Moscow Mules. Lester Brown's doomsday was too depressing; the Satanist Armageddon, on the other hand, had an evil glamour and was almost more intriguing than frightening.

"This dog castrator has been seen," the first

both infant mortality and birth rate rapidly decrease. Since I had read most of that in Fuller's *Critical Path*, I was impatient for the question period.

When I did get a chance to ask what was happening concretely, Meisen answered that the American Society of Mechanical Engineers has gotten very interested in the grid and is having a conference on the subject with Russian and Japanese scientists next Spring.

Like Sven Bjork's Scandinavian Bypass, this has a hidden pacifist agenda. When America and Russia see the profits in the Grid, Fuller thought, war between them will become less and less likely. It just won't make sense for either super-power to blow up the other end of "their" electrical power grid.

* * *

The next day I slept late and went to a luncheon addressed by Senator Albert Gore, a member of the Congressional Clearinghouse of the Future, which looks into the more plausible scenarios Futurists project.

A politician, Norman Mailer has noted, is by definition a man without serious doubts about his own charm. Gore was cute. He was cuter than a bug's ear. Hell, he was as cute as Colombo's dog. He even said after the introduction had listed his achievements, "I also used to be the next President of the United States," and after waiting for the laugh, added "I promise not to run again until I'm an older candidate."

He then got serious and spoke about various historical trajectories—the way most factors increased fairly slowly from the Stone Age to the 19th Century and have been accelerating faster and faster ever since. He said Congress needed to evaluate alternative futures every 4 years. He made a lot of sense, and he used a lot of what seemed to me theatrical tricks to emphasize his points. I began to think he might be President some day.

* * *

I was in the cocktail lounge and got into a conversation with a guy who said he was a former Pentagon officer now working as a computer consultant in civilian life. He said he was a fan of my books, and he told me some amazing stories, all off the record: X, Y and Z (all prominent Futurists or New Agers) had worked for the CIA once. A certain prominent organization of "humanists" was a CIA front. Top Pentagon officers are now trained in Neurolinguistics. And so on; it was all fascinating stuff and I wish it hadn't been off the record.

I ran into the guy from NBC I had thought might be a CIA officer. "Do you know who you were just talking to?" he asked me.

"Big man in the Pentagon once, he says Retired now. That's what he told me."

"Retired, hell. He got transferred. He's with the CIA now."

"Oh," I said.

You can't go to our Capital without some adventure of that sort. As Kissinger says, anybody in Washington who isn't paranoid must be crazy.

—Robert Anton W



When Harry Met Leona . . .

hacker went on. "He looks like a Mexican, but with very thick goggles. For some reason he wears a kind of scuba diving outfit."

* * *

I was at a seminar on Bucky Fuller's global energy grid led by Peter Meisen of Global Energy Network International (GENI). The grid or network is a simple plan to integrate the electrical systems of the whole planet. Because of the peaks and valleys in electrical use (caused by the human work/sleep cycle) every part of the world could be selling electricity to every other part and also buying from every other part, at different hours of the day. This would be very cost-effective for all, Bucky claimed; and indeed the Soviet Academy pronounced the plan "feasible and desirable" about ten years ago. I wanted to know if any real steps have been taken to actualize the grid.

Meisen spent most of his time explaining the ecological benefits of the grid. Sharing electricity means less new plants need to be built and hence there will be less pollution. Non-polluting sources of electricity (e.g. windmills) would be feasible within such a system. The Brazilians could pay the interest on their national debt by selling electricity and might not chop down so many trees, slowing the Greenhouse Effect. On general humanitarian grounds, the grid is desirable because whenever kilowatt hours increase,

Nixon's First Commercial

(The Oval Office. President Nixon sits behind his desk, preparing for his most important speech in years. He mouths the words to himself while people hover around him—checking his microphone, powdering his upper lip.)

It's almost time. A director asks for quiet.

"Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . ."

"Good evening. I'm speaking to you tonight about a matter of great importance to you and your family—money. In order to grow, your money must be invested wisely. That's why I recommend—"

"Cut! He's sweating again. Powder him up!"

He's baaa-ack. Yes, thanks to The First Independence Bank of New Jersey, Richard M. Nixon is back on TV. Commercials featuring The Great Jowly One will soon begin running in the New York-New Jersey area and, since I know you can't wait, here's what I observed the night of the shoot.

Nixon entered the studio at 11:30—the late hour a curious attempt to keep the press away. First thing they did was sit him down in the "Oval Office" and give him his first shave of the evening. The five o'clock shadow that made him look like a crooked bastard in 1960 wasn't going to help the bank's image in 1989. But, a great opportunity is lost . . .

"We shaved one side of Dick Nixon's face with an ordinary blade, the other with new TwinTrak from Gillette."

Nixon gestured to a Mr. Vandenhuyvel, the vice president of the bank.

"Hey, Van!"

Van came over quickly. Nixon whispered something to him and, just as quickly, Van ran off and returned with a telephone. Nixon dialed, then waited for a few seconds.

"No, no, I don't mind."

He hung up. This happened often. He'd make a call, wait, hang up. Who was he calling? Bush? Vesco? His Hong Kong mistress? Pat? You'll never guess.

Filming a commercial—whether it features Tricky Dick or Joe Isuzu—is a painstaking, time-consuming process. Things never go as planned. For example, the "storyboard" called for the camera to zoom slowly into Nixon, with the final shot framed so that his face completely fills the screen. But, every time they would get close, his upper lip would begin to sweat—just like the old days.

After a creative powwow, it was decided to go to a wider shot. But that meant adding something to the background. The set wasn't wide enough. So, they hauled in some potted plants, stretched the curtains out a bit, added a couple of flags—meanwhile, I watched Nixon. He was uncharacteristically relaxed. And in a chatty mood. When he noticed that a member of the crew was wearing a Washington Redskins T-shirt he began to talk—to no one in particular.

"I was at the game last week. They had Minnesota totally baffled. Shut down the passing game completely. That new kid—Jones? James? Jackson?—anyway, he had three interceptions at the half. Great field position . . . great field position . . ."

"Mr. President . . ."

"They plowed the ball in—just rammed it down their throats, and then"

"Mr. President, sir—"

"And then—nothing. The running game stopped and that new kid—Morris? Morse? Morrison . . .?"

"Sir, we have to—"

"Anyway, Morton panicked. He tried to do it all by himself. And, you know, when you're down by four points, which is what I think they were when they took out what's-his-name—"

"Please, sir, we have to try one more."

"Oh sure, sure."

"Quiet please!"

"Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . ."

"Good evening. I'm speaking to you tonight about a matter of great importance to you and your family—money. In order to grow, your money must be invested wisely. That's why I recommend a high-yield three-year certificate of deposit, fully insured by the United States Government, as offered by The First Independence Bank of New Jersey. Recently, Pat and I—"

"Cut! Powder!"

We're on a five. Nixon is handed the phone. He waits, nods, says something and hangs up.

"Let's see, the Giants are looking very strong . . ." he continued, again to no one in particular. They began powdering his lip. ". . . Mmmphhh slumpph fumphhh mmmphhh . . ."

Why would Nixon agree to do a commercial? For an answer, I turned to Jay Berston, one of the "creative directors" with the advertising agency.

"Ed Bolibaugh, the president of the bank, is an old Nixon pal. They go back maybe forty years. The savings and loan crisis hit Bolibaugh big—in fact, The First Independence Bank was The First Independence Savings and Loan until recently. He borrowed heavily, and then, when he needed to scrounge up new depositors in a hurry, he called on his old friend. By the way, even though Nixon has been free to make commercial endorsements since he left office in 1974, this is the first one he's ever agreed to do."

"That's a feather in your cap," I said, not sure how he'd take it. "But didn't Nixon do commercials for Burger King about five years ago?"

"Burger King?"

"Quiet please!"

"Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . ."

"Good evening. I'm speaking to you tonight—"

"Cut! Make-up!"

It was time for another shave. Back to Jay Berston.

"He didn't do Burger King, did he?"

I assured him he had, even though it wasn't true. Then, shaken, he continued.

"So, about ten days ago we were called in for a meeting with Bolibaugh, Nixon's lawyers, and a talent agency from William Morris who represents Nixon theatrically. We went over all the ground rules.

"Like, 'No Nudity.'"

"Well, more like staying away from any material that reflects on the man politically."

"Like Watergate."

"Right. Like Watergate."

"And the bombing of Cambodia."

"Yeah. Excuse me for a second."

I never saw him again. It was getting late. I was very tired. I'm not sure, but I think I went over and asked Nixon for an autograph.

"Who shall I make it out to?"

"Alger Hiss."

"Could you spell that?"

"Quiet please!"

I must have dozed off.

"Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . ."

"Good evening. I'm speaking to you tonight about a matter of great importance to you and your family—money. In order to grow, your money must be invested wisely. That's why I recommend a high-yield three-year certificate of deposit, fully insured by the United States Government, as offered by The First Independence Bank of New Jersey. Recently, Pat and I were looking for a safe place to invest our modest savings. We chose The—"

"Cut! I heard something!"

It was my laughter, I admit it. But, when they looked around the room, I stonewalled. I covered up. I pointed at Mr. Vandenhuyvel.

"That's a five!"

It was now 2:30 in the morning. I was getting too tired to laugh. They went back to work on Nixon, who made yet another phone call.

"Yup. Um-hmm. Thanks." He hung up and absentmindedly handed the phone to one of the make-up people. She didn't know what to do with it, so she handed it to me. By now I was really fading. Not Nixon.

"Quiet please!"

"Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . ."

"Good evening. I'm speaking to you tonight about a matter of great importance to you and your family—money. In order to grow, your money must be invested wisely. That's why I recommend a high-yield three-year certificate of deposit, fully insured by the United States Government, as offered by The First Independence Bank of New Jersey. Recently, Pat and I were looking for a safe place to invest our modest savings. We chose The First Independence Bank of New Jersey. Why? Security. I believe in security. Just like I believe in



—Photo by Marge Grudzinski

Elvis, We Hardly Knew Ye

The 12th anniversary of Elvis Presley's passing served as a reminder that, contrary to conventional folklore, he did not die from a drug overdose. Rather, according to the original front-page report in *The New York Times*—but in their first edition only—the cause of death was “straining at stool.” In commemoration, Harry Shearer performed his own version of an Elvis classic, *I'm All Backed Up*, on his syndicated radio show. *The Realist* commissioned artist Kalynn Campbell to capture Presley's constipated finish by painting it on velvet as a surprise gift for Shearer. However, Harry didn't return two calls, so it hangs in our office instead, and this is the first he knows of it.

Last month the FBI released Elvis Presley's files. This dossier had begun in the '50s after the Bureau began receiving complaints about Presley's effect on American youth. Ironically, when Elvis wanted to meet J. Edgar Hoover, an aide advised that “he is certainly not the type of individual whom the Director would wish to meet. It is noted at the present time he is wearing his hair down to his shoulders and indulges in the wearing of all sorts of exotic dress.”

Although Presley had served as an inspiration to the Beatles, his FBI files indicate that he was “of the opinion that the Beatles laid the groundwork for many of the problems we are having with young people in this country.” Moreover, he thought that “the Smothers Brothers, Jane Fonda and others in the entertainment industry of their ilk have a lot to answer for in the hereafter for the way they have poisoned young minds by disparaging the United States.” Or, *Please Don't Step on My Red-White-and-Blue Suede Shoes*.

In the Wake of the Quake

As a “sympathetic gesture to our neighbors in the Bay Area,” Universal Studios' Hollywood theme park shut down its Earthquake attraction for 48 hours; the ride supposedly simulates an 8.3 shaker.

executive privilege. Think about it. If those bastards hadn't made me turn over the tapes I wouldn't be sitting here now, in this cheap replica of the Oval Office, begging you to bail out an old ‘friend’ who got his nuts caught in the S&L grinder. I am not a crook . . .”

The phone rings, jarring me awake.

“Cut! I think we can use that.”

I pick up the receiver.

“Hello?”

“Mr. Nixon please.” It's a female voice. And it's not Mrs. Nixon.

“Who shall I say is calling?”

Silence at her end. Then, with great hesitancy, she spoke.

“This is—Shirley. Shirley MacLaine.”

Just when you think you know everything . . .

“Please hold.” I handed the phone to Mr. Vandenhuyvel, who brought it to Nixon.

He brightened immediately. Then he took out a small notepad and wrote something on it.

What was going on here? Was Nixon going New Age? Were they collaborating on a book? Was he making a deal to be “channeled?”

“That's a wrap!”

Suddenly everyone heads for the door. Vandenhuyvel helps Nixon on with his coat and, in the rush, I notice something fall to the floor. It's the notepad. I pick it up. Nixon had written:

Giants +2 vs. Chicago
San Diego -7½ vs. Green Bay
Seattle +1 vs. Denver

I checked it out. He and Shirley would have won all three games.

—Matt Neuman

Urine Trouble

Indianola Academy in Indianola, Mississippi, now has the distinction of having the toughest drug law in the nation. Every student from grade 7 through 12, every teacher and the 24 members of the board of directors must submit urine samples on demand. The alternative is dismissal.

No longer is the student who raises his hand to go to the bathroom certain that he will make it. He may be met halfway there by a man with a tube. It's the first salvo in the war against drugs, and things, of course, won't stop here.

Our streets will soon be equipped with little sinks every few feet or so for urine tests. Every 20 minutes drug patrols force everyone against them. I think this patrol should be voluntary, so as not to tie up our police and armed forces, which will be needed abroad to urine-test foreigners. I suggest that members of the Aryan Brotherhood would be ideal for the job, for several reasons.

Meanwhile, the home front ought to be manned by all of us. Children should watch parents, parents should watch children, spouses should watch each other, and, in addition, any one of us should have the right to demand a urine test from anyone else, in the manner of a citizen's arrest. “Right in here, Daddy, now!”

Sure, some people will object, but believe me, the psychological problems associated with urinating on command are eminently treatable. I looked up the subject in *The Pill Book*, the illustrated guide to the most prescribed drugs in the United States, and there are at least 8 medications capable of inducing urination. Of course, that would mean equipping the Aryan Brotherhood with these pills in addition to flashlight, Uzi, and portable sink.

My Pill Book is a wonderful and convincing argument, as well, for the superiority of legal over illegal drugs. Have you ever seen a news photo of rock cocaine? Ugly, wrinkled little things, beaming pure evil. How different, these round, oval, elliptical, square, white, red, pink and multi-colored pills, neatly stamped by corporate giants.

These little pills, too, are soldiers in the war against unauthorized, untaxed drugs. Instead of helmets, they wear caps. Instead of rifles, they carry medicinal charges. And many of them are winking at me, “Fire away, folks.”

—Andrei Codrescu

MEDIA FREAK

The Realist Index

- Number of TV shows so far objected to by Reverend Donald Wildmon's right-wing-sponsored National Federation for Decency: 42.
- Number of months in one lifetime that the average American spends opening junk mail: 8.
- Number of times Mark Christiansen claims to have had sexual relations with Rock Hudson after the latter had been diagnosed as having AIDS before he told the former: 160 (in 8 months).
- Number of Americans who believe in an afterlife: 71%. Number of Americans who expect the afterlife to be boring: 5%.

Complaint Department

A letter to *Harper's*: "We ladies of the Indianapolis Retirement Home appreciate the stories and articles in your well-known magazine. However, we cannot understand why the advertisement for the 'penis poster' is frequently included in the Classified section. Surely your monetary needs do not call for this type of advertising. We believe this advertisement to be degrading, and we would like you to think about it."

The ad, under *Gifts*: "Penis poster (23" x 35") depicts 12 animal penises (man to whale). Scientific novelty. Send \$10. . . ."

Do the White Thing

In Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*, a riot explodes after the killing of a black man that develops out of an incident in a Bedford-Stuyvesant pizza parlor. The customers decide to boycott the place, then destroy it. The white Italian owner lives in Bensonhurst, where in real life there was recently rioting after a black youth was slain, and a placard read, "Boycott Pizza—Mafia Pig Food!" Lee visited the scene of the crime and was asked for his autograph by white Italian kids. He refused, explaining that they wouldn't ask him if he wasn't a star, they'd think he was "just another nigger."

Another example of life imitating art: Twenty years ago there was a Jerry Lewis movie, *Don't Raise the Bridge, Lower the Water*. And now Dan Quayle took his family on a whitewater rafting trip down North America's oldest river after the Army Corps of Engineers lowered the water level for a "kinder, gentler" ride. So it's not the stupidity, it's the arrogance. The Vice President is a constant target for his dumb remarks. Nevertheless he said proudly on *Prime Time*, "I stand by my misstatements."

Condom Wars

The *Village Voice* reports that "Gays have been accused of choking whales to death with condoms in an absurd twist on a disagreement between environmentalists and gay rights activists. The Balloon Alert Project first claimed that prevailing winds could blow the 10,000 balloons originally planned to be released at the Heritage of Pride march, each bearing the name of a person who died of AIDS, out over

the East Coast, where turtles may swallow them, thinking them to be jellyfish. Balloons, being made of latex or mylar, which can take months to degrade, could block marine animal intestines, causing the animals to starve to death. . . ."

Playboy reports that technicians in Japan have invented a singing condom. "Researchers put a microchip in the base of a condom. It works in the same way those musical greeting cards do—chiming the Beatles *Love Me Do* at the 'vital moment.' We are waiting for the musical condoms to make their debut in the U.S. Will there be additional song titles, e.g., Michael Jackson's *Beat It*?"



Fear of Dying

Eastern Airlines has offered 50% discounts and frequent-flyer awards to funeral homes that ship dead bodies in the cargo bellies of its jetliners. Eastern will credit mortuaries with one free mile in its "frequent shipper bonus program" for each \$1 spent. Thus 10,000 miles will earn a free first-class upgrade on an Eastern coach ticket, 40,000 miles will earn one free coach ticket and 70,000 miles will earn two free tickets. For 150,000 miles, a shipper will receive two free first-class tickets to South America. Shipping cadavers is a key part of the air freight business, and presumably Delta will try to compete with Eastern by offering even cheaper rates if the corpse stays over one Saturday night and . . .

Another Final Solution

Murray L. Bob writes: "If the homeless were allowed to sleep in parked cars at night, the incidence of break-ins would fall. Instead of viewing vehicles merely as transport, we should consider them as enclosed spaces. Then we might take advantage of their possibilities as shelter. All they shelter at present is pilferable property. If my idea were adopted, America, with its penchant for euphemisms, would soon cease to call the homeless 'homeless.' Instead, we would refer to them as 'security guards.'"

In Santa Cruz, California, Sandra Loranger

was sentenced to a 45-day jail term for serving soup and bread to the indigent without a permit. She said her time behind bars would likely be spent working in the prison kitchen, where she could end up serving food to some of her homeless friends who are serving time for violating the city's outdoor sleeping ban.

Playboy Marriage

In preparation for the wedding of Hugh Hefner and Kimberly Conrad, official planner Colin Cowie mailed out detailed manuals to the crew so that nothing would be left to chance. Ushers, for example, "will know not to wear strong cologne, no jewelry and they ought to be suntanned." He explained, "I think people look better when they have a nice glow to their skin." Cowie arranged to have an extra pair of shoes a half-size larger on hand for the bride in case her feet swelled during the reception. Hefner's dentist attended the ceremony and stated, "I've never seen his smile brighter."

Filler Items

- The cover of *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* blared: "Burn Your Flag—No Matter What Ideology It Represents!"
- NPR reported that in the 16th century in the Near East you could get the death penalty for drinking coffee.
- On CNN's *Earth Watch* feature, in answer to a question about saving the wilderness, a young woman responded, "Is that the name of a band that plays in Hollywood? No? Some place fun to go?"
- The Muscular Dystrophy telethon ended with credits being billboarded to the accompaniment of *Walk Like an Egyptian*.
- USC students were asked to name their favorite TV news programs. One said *Murphy Brown*. The tabloid *Examiner* predicted that "Candice Bergen will become a real-life TV news anchor."
- *Euphemisms of the Month*: "Performance enhancers" for steroids. And "reduction procedure" for partial survival of a multiple fetus.
- CNN had a serious feature on Successful Breastfeeding in which viewers were advised to "make sure the baby's mouth is open."
- The Anti-Defamation League complained about a disc jockey's stereotypical riddle on KLOS. "What do you get when you cross Arnold Schwarzenegger with a Jew?" Answer: "Conan the Distributor."
- Richard Nixon's birthday will become an official holiday in Yorba Linda, his official birthplace. In his honor, will all parking meters stop running for 18½ minutes?
- Jay Leno claims that the Home Shopping Network and C-Span have merged "for those who want the convenience of buying a politician in the privacy of your own home."
- *Rumors of the Month*: Biologists will reduce the gestation time for frozen embryos by resorting to microwave ovens. Also, Jackie Mason and Rudolph Giuliani will co-star in a new sitcom titled *Chicken Shit*.
- *Infamous Last Words*: Noriega in *Newsweek*: "I have George Bush by the balls." And convicted serial killer Richard Ramirez: "Hey, big deal. Death always went with the territory. I'll see you in Disneyland."