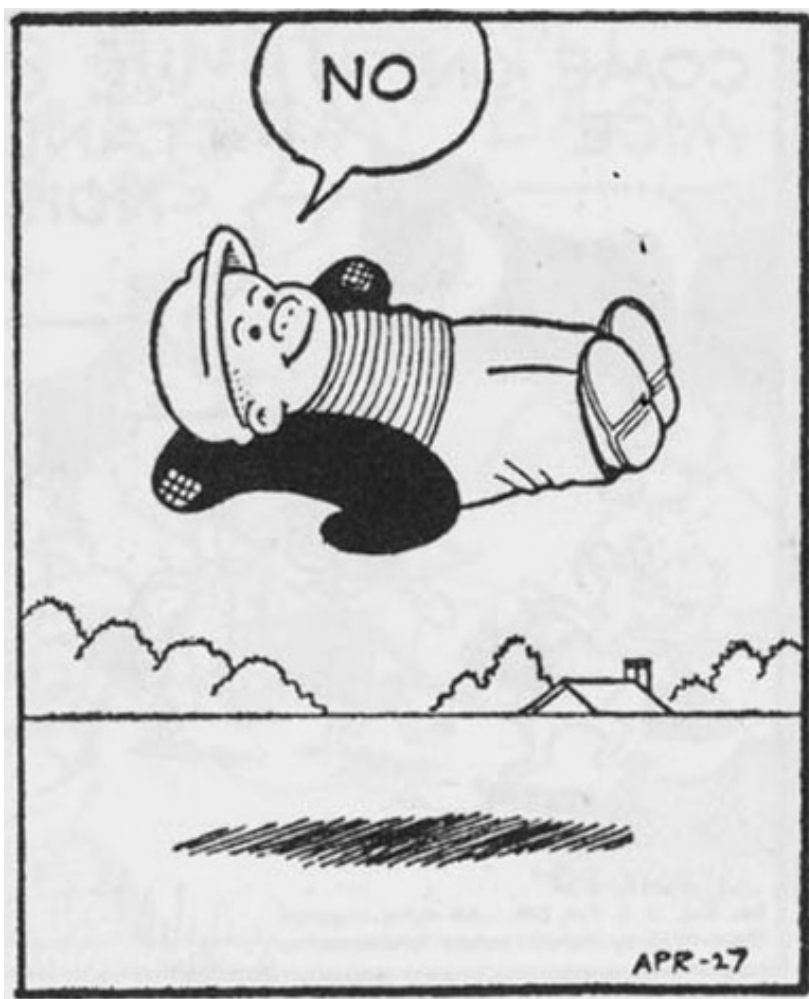
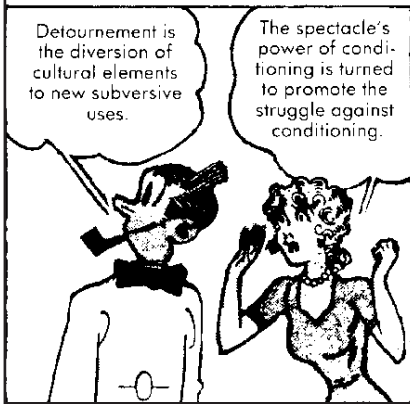


diet soap



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special preview issue



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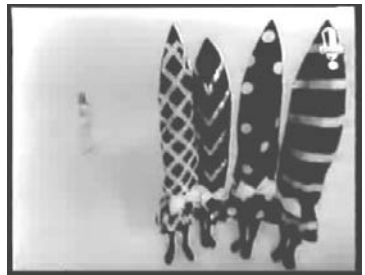
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Next issue
Theme: Surveillance
Submission Deadline: 8/1/07

diet soap

Diet Soap is a commodity that nobody needs but everybody wants, a thought everybody is trying to get rid of, a 'zine with revolutionary ambitions.

We're pleased to present this preview edition for WisCon. We are looking for contributions and collaborators. Please contact us and ask how you can help this new venue for the strange, the political, the bizarre and the irrepressible come into being. ■



editorial

by doug lain

Were you aware that History ended in 1989?

For nearly twenty years we've been living without, outside of, and beyond History. It has been quite some time since, in the words of Francis Fukuyama, we arrived at the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." You might not have heard about it when it happened, but you've been living by this principle all along. For some of you this has been how things are for as long as can be remembered.

You may not like the new universal order—most hate it—but everyone agrees that totally changing it, or more specifically attempting a total critique which could lead to total change, is impossible. It's probably not even desirable. All attempts to understand and address the disorder which we watch on television, and also, more subtly, live through in our every day lives, are deemed regressive, exercises in backwards thinking. Responsible writers and artists know better than to attack the New World Order, or if not, then they at least know better than to call the system by its name and attack it in Toto.



The unwritten rule is this: Do not say anything against the spectacle of our total demise, but limit yourself to fragmented projects of reform, or to reformulated projects of fragmentation. These projects have a variety of names. They are postmodern, surrealist, slipstream, interstitial, hyperrealist, or part of the New Weird. But, whatever they are called, and however they appear, they are always partial or partializing.

These works can't be recuperated because they are the very process of recuperation, and the creators of such works, those who claim to be experimental or visionary as they play at the boundaries between science fiction and fantasy, between realism and irrealism, perpetuate the very system they are hoping to see beyond. Unless we become conscious of what we are doing, of what our goals are, unless we grab onto the terribly unfashionable notion that what we write could actually lead to change, do damage, then we will run cold.

The moment has been frozen for almost twenty years, it is our job to provide something warm, or even something hot.

In Anselm Jappe's critical biography Guy Debord he explains that in the past radically engaged modern artists, or those who are part of what was once called the avant garde, "wanted to be 'partisans of forgetting.'" These artists "could hardly have foreseen that the spectacle [or capitalist order] itself would take charge of consigning the whole historical past to oblivion, and destroying everything 'old-fashioned' that impeded its progress, without helping the revolutionary project in the slightest." In the words of Jappe's subject Guy Debord, "When 'to be absolutely modern' has become a special law decreed by a tyrant, what the honest slave fears more than anything is that he might be suspected of being behind the times."

We hope that in publishing Diet Soap we can create a place where writers and artists will remember things, a journal that is unafraid of anachronisms, a publication that dares to publish manifestoes and to take them seriously. Not so much because we hope to publish work that would fit comfortably into a period before 1989, but rather because we hope to be part of a time to come when Fukuyama's declarations will be seen by all as in error, a time, in other words, of revolution. ■

The troubles began quietly, long before Vashti was conscious of them.

One day she was astonished at receiving a message from her son. They never communicated, having nothing in common, and she had only heard indirectly that he was still alive, and had been transferred from the northern hemisphere, where he had behaved so mischievously, to the southern—indeed, to a room not far from her own.

man who was my son believes that the Machine is stopping. It would be impious if it was not mad."

"The Machine is stopping?" her friend replied. "What does that mean? The phrase conveys nothing to me."

"Nor to me."

"He does not refer, I suppose, to the trouble there has been lately with the music?"

"Oh no, of course not. Let us talk about music."

excerpt: "The Machine Stops" **by E.M. Forster**

"Does he want me to visit him?" she thought. "Never again, never. And I have not the time."

No, it was madness of another kind.

He refused to visualize his face upon the blue plate, and speaking out of the darkness with solemnity said:

"The Machine stops."

"What do you say?"

"The Machine is stopping, I know it, I know the signs."

She burst into a peal of laughter. He heard her and was angry, and they spoke no more.

"Can you imagine anything more absurd?" she cried to a friend. "A

"Have you complained to the authorities?"

"Yes, and they say it wants mending, and referred me to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus. I complained of those curious gasping sighs that disfigure the symphonies of the Brisbane school. They sound like some one in pain. The Committee of the Mending Apparatus say that it shall be remedied shortly."

Obscurely worried, she resumed her life. For one thing, the defect in the music irritated her. For another thing, she could not forget Kuno's speech. If he had known that the music was out of repair—he could not know it, for he detested music—if he had known that it was wrong,

"the Machine stops" was exactly the venomous sort of remark he would have made. Of course he had made it at a venture, but the coincidence annoyed her, and she spoke with some petulance to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus.

They replied, as before, that the defect would be set right shortly.

"Shortly! At once!" she retorted. "Why should I be worried by imperfect music? Things are always put right at once. If you do not mend it at once, I shall complain to the Central Committee."

"No personal complaints are received by the Central Committee," the Committee of the Mending Apparatus replied.

"Through whom am I to make my complaint, then?"

"Through us."

"I complain then."

"There never was such an unfortunate woman as myself. I can never be sure of my music now. It gets worse and worse each time I summon it."

"What is it?"

"I do not know whether it is inside my head, or inside the wall."

"Complain, in either case."

"I have complained, and my complaint will be forwarded in its turn to the Central Committee."

Time passed, and they resented the defects no longer. The defects had not been remedied, but the human tissues in that latter day had become so subservient, that they readily adapted themselves to every caprice of the Machine. The sigh at the crises of the Brisbane symphony no longer irritated Vashti; she accepted it as part of the melody. The jarring noise, whether

"The Machine is stopping?" her friend replied. "What does that mean? The phrase conveys nothing to me."

"Your complaint shall be forwarded in its turn."

"Have others complained?"

This question was unmechanical, and the Committee of the Mending Apparatus refused to answer it.

"It is too bad!" she exclaimed to another of her friends.

in the head or in the wall, was no longer resented by her friend. And so with the mouldy artificial fruit, so with the bath water that began to stink, so with the defective rhymes that the poetry machine had taken to emit. all were bitterly complained of at first, and then acquiesced in and forgotten. Things went from bad to worse unchallenged.

It was otherwise with the failure of the sleeping apparatus. That was a more serious stoppage. There came a day when over the whole world—in Sumatra, in Wessex, in the innumerable cities of Courland and Brazil—the beds, when summoned by their tired owners, failed to appear. It may seem a ludicrous matter, but from it we may date the collapse of humanity.

The Committee responsible for the failure was assailed by complainants, whom it referred, as usual, to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus, who in its turn assured them that their complaints would be forwarded to the Central Committee. But the discontent grew, for mankind was not yet sufficiently adaptable to do without sleeping.

“Some one of meddling with the Machine ...” they began.

“Some one is trying to make himself king, to reintroduce the personal element.”

“Punish that man with Homelessness.”

“To the rescue! Avenge the Machine! Avenge the Machine!”

“War! Kill the man!”

But the Committee of the Mending Apparatus now came forward, and allayed the panic with well-chosen words.

It confessed that the Mending Apparatus was itself in need of repair.

The effect of this frank confession was admirable.

“Of course,” said a famous lecturer—he of the French Revolution, who gilded each new decay with splendour—“of course we shall not press our complaints now. The Mending Apparatus has treated us so well in the past that we all sympathize with it, and will wait patiently for its recovery. In its own good time it will resume its duties. Meanwhile let us do without our beds, our tabloids, our other little wants. Such, I feel sure, would be the wish of the Machine.”

Thousands of miles away his audience applauded. The Machine still linked them. Under the seas, beneath the roots of the mountains, ran the wires through which they saw and heard, the enormous eyes and ears that were their heritage, and the hum of many workings clothed their thoughts in one garment of subserviency.

Only the old and the sick remained ungrateful, for it was rumoured that Euthanasia, too, was out of order, and that pain had reappeared among men.

It became difficult to read. A blight entered the atmosphere and dulled its luminosity. At times Vashti could scarcely see across her room. The air, too, was foul. Loud were the complaints, impotent the remedies, heroic the tone of the lecturer as he cried: “Courage! Courage! What matter so long as the Machine

goes on? To it the darkness and the light are one." And though things improved again after a time, the old brilliancy was never recaptured, and humanity never recovered from its entrance into twilight. There was an hysterical talk of "measures," of "provisional dictatorship," and the inhabitants of Sumatra were asked to familiarize themselves with the workings of the central power station, the said power station being situated in France. But for the most part panic reigned, and men spent their strength praying to their Books, tangible proofs of the Machine's omnipotence.

silent, and at the conclusion there was no sound. Somewhat displeased, she called to a friend who was a specialist in sympathy. No sound: doubtless the friend was sleeping.

And so with the next friend whom she tried to summon, and so with the next, until she remembered Kuno's cryptic remark, "The Machine stops".

The phrase still conveyed nothing. If Eternity was stopping it would of course be set going shortly. For example, there was still a little light and air—the atmosphere had

... she called to a friend who as a specialist in sympathy. No sound: doubtless the friend was sleeping.

There were gradations of terror—at times came rumours of hope—the Mending Apparatus was almost mended—the enemies of the Machine had been got under- new "nerve-centres" were evolving which would do the work even more magnificently than before.

But there came a day when, without the slightest warning, without any previous hint of feebleness, the entire communication-system broke down, all over the world, and the world, as they understood it, ended.

Vashti was lecturing at the time and her earlier remarks had been punctuated with applause. As she proceeded the audience became

improved a few hours previously. There was still the Book, and while there was the Book there was security.

Then she broke down, for with the cessation of activity came an unexpected terror—silence. ■

E.M. Forster is known for a creed of life which can be summed up in the epigraph to his 1910 novel Howards End, "only connect". "The Machine Stops" was originally published in The Oxford and Cambridge Review in November 1909. You can read the rest of this classic story at the Diet Soap Website: www.dietsoap.org

guidelines

diet Soap is a commodity that nobody needs but everybody wants, a thought everybody is trying to get rid of, a 'zine with revolutionary ambitions.

We are seeking fiction, essays, reportage, and art that documents and accelerates the deterioration of the late capitalist order rather than works that celebrate or reinforce the deterioration that is the late capitalist order.

We want stories that defy genre distinctions because they seek to escape the confinement of ideology. We want essays that are personal and strange and full of passion without being sentimental, ahistorical, bourgeois or confessional. We want art that confronts rather than comforts.

Some of our favorite fiction writers are Franz Kafka, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Philip K. Dick, John Barth, Stephen Crane, Dorothy Parker, Octavia Butler, Robert Anton Wilson, Ursula K Le Guin, John Fante, Sinclair Lewis, H. H. Munro, and Kurt Vonnegut. We like gonzo journalism, essayists who aren't afraid of philosophy and history, and non-fiction writers who can make truth as interesting as a lie.

Some of our favorite artists are Max Ernst, George Seurat, Gee Vaucher, Cindy Sherman, and mental patients. We like collage work and we like black and white drawings.

Diet Soap will take the form of quarterly themed issues. You can send us pieces of any length, in any format, but be advised that we probably won't print a 500,000 word screed or something written on a brick. Also, all submissions will be electronic, which means that it will be very hard to submit something written on a brick.

For complete guidelines, a list of upcoming themes, and information about how to get your hands on upcoming issues of Diet Soap, visit our Web site at www.dietsoap.org. We look forward to blowing your mind. ■

Diet Soap Coloring Fun Page



"And I warn the American people that a democracy cannot so deny its faith as to the vital conditions of its being—it cannot long play the king over subject populations without creating within itself ways of thinking and habits of action most dangerous to its own vitality—most dangerous especially to those classes of society which are the least powerful in the assertion, and the most helpless in the defense of their rights."

—Carl Schurz, 1899.



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