

# Young Hozhed

A black and white close-up photograph of a man's face, showing his eye, ear, and beard. The man has long dark hair and a beard. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights.

Volume I, Issue I

**This Issue:**

**Science!**

# What's wrong with this picture?

This woman  
works for  
the Men  
In Black?

This man  
just ate a  
llama?

This man isn't  
wearing any  
Hoz™.

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**Hoz™ . The Choice of Rebels.**

# YOUNG HOZHED

Volume I, Issue 1  
Winter 1998

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## Chief Brain Surgeon

Eric Tilton

## Ad Queen 'n'

## Ace Reporter

Jeliza Patterson

## Correspondents

Arne "hedonist" Baker,  
Peter "spoon!" Drake,  
Chris "twerp" Tilton,  
Sara "D'ohboy" Amato,  
Paul "Timelord" Curtis,  
Sean "Weasel" McGuire

## Interns

Reggie and Simon

## Drugs of Choice

Pineapple soda, Oreos,  
Boone's Wild Island,  
and Josta

## Music of Choice

Pink Floyd, Southern  
Culture on the Skids,  
the *Star Wars* soundtrack

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A Joint Production of



**Kallisti  
Press**

## ***Notes from the Front***

As we were gearing up for the initial issue of *Young Hozhed*, we found ourselves wondering what topic was most on the minds of today's on-the-go hozhed. What is the most pressing issue of the day? What keeps us up nights? What, in the end, gives the most opportunity for mischief? It wasn't long before the answer came to us: *science!*

After all, today's young hozhed is a member of a pretty diverse crew. They might be found in the midst of late-night hacking, culture-jamming, spontaneous

dereferencing, historical inquiry, musical shenanigans, road trips, or lime Jell-O™. They might be tracking down the last surviving copy of Highway Gothic, installing NetBSD on their Septiums (since Linux is so...1995), reading Gaiman and Tepper, or playing capture-the-flag on government property (ah, but *which* one?). They may be a force for great good...or great evil. But they are, and will remain, a force for great fun.

How does science tie all this together? Listen to track 12 of *Miscellaneous T* (alá They Might Be Giants). Turn your apartment into a chemistry experiment. Deduce the nature of life from the deeply interrelated crumbly bits in a bag of potato chips. Determine the relationship between vulcanized logic and rubber science. Work out the first five hundred digits of  $\pi$ , and *for God's sake, keep it to yourself*. Assign yourself as an exercise for the teacher.

Science is a mechanism for looking at the world; it provides a lens for analyzing the absurdities of life and re-engineering them. This issue, we deconstruct the fallacious urban legend of the left and right brains, and demand that you stop hiding behind the crutches of discipline. Art *is* science, and science *is* art. And algebra and iconography are both important survival skills which you, the home reader, will need for that inevitable day when you are stranded on a desert island without a network connection or an e-mail address, and need to re-invent Western Civilization from scratch. **YH**



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## ***About our Cover Model:***

Jason Packer, shown posing for the cover of his unrecorded album, *Songs from the Gut*, is an Oregon native.

**Name:** Jason William Packer

**Age:** 27, June 11, 1970, a Gemini

**Location:** Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**Vital Statistics:** A stunning near-six-foot height, with bearish appearance and mannerisms. Engaged to be married (sorry ladies!). College graduate, from Willamette University, class of '94, with a major in computer science.

### ***Jason, any diet/exercise/beauty tips for our readers?***

To maintain my zaftig figure, I keep myself to a strict diet of deep fried foods and meat products. Remember the motto of the Carnitarian: "If it's green—it's trouble. If it's fried—order double."

### ***What's your favorite BadFilm?***

*Mitchell*. I'd not encountered it until MST3K performed their work upon it. It truly stands the test of time.

### ***And good film?***

This changes all the time. I'm fond of *Blade Runner* (the original, rather than the director's, cut), *The Crow*, *The Birdcage* (I must have seen that a dozen times now!) I know I'm forgetting some, but I think that *Blade Runner* holds the crown for best overall. Recently, however, I've seen two fine films, *That Thing You Do* (the Tom Hanks piece) and *Grosse Pointe Blank*. Both were thoroughly enjoyable—a rare thing for me to say about mainstream films!

### ***What are your favorite sciences?***

Most sciences are forced onto the back burner as well, but for the one that needs the front burner—cooking. I'm finding that I'm not so very bad a cook, and every time I turn around, I'm making something that is not just different than our day to day fare, but also delicious.

### ***Who is your totem Muppet?***

Zoot.



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## Submission Guidelines:

Interested in writing for Young Hozhed? The theme for the next issue is *Travel*. We also have an open slush pile that we will pull from as we can; we're always interested in wacky, interesting stuff.

Here's what we are looking for:

- Book/Film/Album/Zines Reviews
- Fiction
- Features (articles)
- Rants
- Artwork
- Fake ads
- Letters to the Editor
- No poetry.

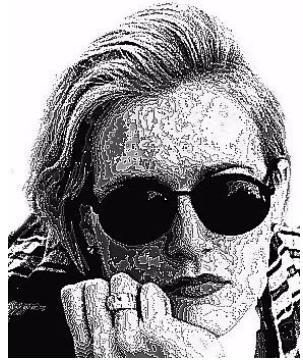
We prefer electronic submissions. For full details, please check our web site:  
[http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~valkyrie/Kallisti\\_Press/](http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~valkyrie/Kallisti_Press/)

## Ms. Kit *answers your etiquette questions.*

Q: If you are left-handed, what is the proper pocket in which to store your tommy-gun?

*Dutch Polka*

A: Working from the (rather dubious) situation in which a tommy gun fits into your pocket, obviously it should be the left one, which will not impede the speed of your draw. (Ms. Kit, being delicate and ladylike, prefers blow-darts, though they don't provide a sufficiently satisfying BANG.)



Q: As a USF certified Scientist™ my lab coat, (a linen Armani) is my badge of honour. Yet my assistants insist that I wear it during messy, dangerous experiments. How can I politely extract myself from this fashion *faux pas*?

*Blinded by Biology*

A: As a certified Scientist, your role is to create and oversee experiments, not dirty yourself with specimens and liquids of dubious toxicity. Oversee all your experiments from a comfortable office with a vidlink to the lab; your Armani will remain ever spotless while your assistants will deal with the icky stuff. **VH**

**Play the cards!  
Eat the cornchips,**

CWU -- EBURG -- Several years and several thousand dollars after fame and fortune in hollywood, the 900 year swamp dweller decides to clean up his act and try his hand at university administration. Seen here in a recent CWU publication, one can see how drastic the change has been, yet his origins are clear. When asked why the change Yoda only replied "Long have I waited for Jedi not to be".



I'm *NP hard*, baby! My genitals are prehensile! I know what you did! I can make *toast* by will force alone! Late night TV watches me! I abduct aliens! I've got 23 degrees of freedom! I subsist entirely on Twinkies and cola, I use charts and equations to optimize my *pleasure*, I like my pizza with human flesh and extra cheese! I'm live at the BSU pavilion, with a 600-foot mudbog! Rasputin keeps trying to assassinate me! I can milk gumball machines like cows, I've got 18/00 strength, I can call continuations collect! I use the plaid side of the Force! I AM CONSING NOW! I'm PoPoPoPoMo, I apply canvas to paint nudely and violently, I've got a bad feeling about this and I'm *not afraid to use it!* I've got six moons, eight hidden powers, and lucre! I watched *Robot Jox* and lived! Don't sass me, punk, or I'll tickle you until you become incontinent! I've got a phase induction cannon dipped in curry! I invent new letters of the alphabet! I can program a VCR clock recursively! W a a a a a h o o o o o o o ! I climbed Olympus Mons, I sank Atlantis, I stole the Mona Lisa, I forged Lenny Kravitz' signature on the Declaration of Independence, I beat Lady Godiva at strip poker! I ate a Nyarlathotep! I solved the Kobayashi Maru by *seducing* the distress beacon! I broke the causality barrier! I made waffles! I use Hitler's brain to reduce water usage in my toilet! Door-to-door missionaries are afraid of me! I AM NOT YEOMAN RAND! I buy M&Ms in 16 million colors! A i y e e e e e e e e e e !



(Yeah, but Yeti are lousy in bed. All that hair. Bleah. -eds.)



I would like to open this inaugural edition of my column by praising the luxury item for which it is named: the moist towelette. Strong, resilient, freshly scented, and laden with cleaning power, the moist towelette is one of the best things that the fast food industry has introduced to the world. *All hail the moist towelette!* Hail its astonishing compact cleanliness! Truly one of the ultimate consumer items—and that is the focus of this column, folks: stuff you can **consume**, because hey, capitalism is **FUN!**

Speaking of fast food, this month I had the pleasure of sampling a new food product that comes with its own special edition moist towelette, the KFC Honey BBQ Tender Roast Chicken. I will admit to being a KFC freak, but even I must admit that this latest offering is not up to the usual standards of my dear Colonel. The BBQ sauce is merely average, and only serves to mask the juicy essence of chicken that the Colonel had previously revealed in the classic “Tender Roast” offering. Or maybe it was just a bad batch. Whatever.

The honey in the “Honey BBQ” is only barely evident—and as my dining companion noted, why is everyone jumping on the honey bandwagon these days? Honey BBQ, Honey Dijon, Oats ’n’ Honey, Honey shampoo, yuppie honey double bock microbrews—why don’t they just flat out say “**Hey! We put more sugar in it!**” I’d still buy it.

Why is bee by-product so much more elegant than refined cane product, anyway? Most people certainly prefer plants to stinging insects.

Maybe they are all subconsciously reacting the presence of so many “Dip me in honey and throw me to the lesbians” buttons. Secretly, that button makes me picture a cornfield in Iowa, with a sultry voice from above intoning “If you baste it, they will come” and ranks of advancing, hungry-looking Amazons surrounding a BBQ pit doused in K.C. Masterpiece Honey Smoke BBQ sauce. (I’m not going to tell you which object in that image has been sauced, er, doused with sauce, either.)

I think that food advertisers should be required to have a minimum amount of honey in their product before they can put the word “honey” in the name. After all, if you don’t have enough real chocolate in your product you have to call it “fudge” or “cocoa” in order to tip off the concerned chocoholic that this product will not satisfy their needs. Honey isn’t like vermouth—it takes more than a glance at the bottle across the room to make a difference to the final taste.

Speaking of lame bandwagon bait, have y’all seen Josta™? Why the big deal over something that tastes like black cherry soda with cola added? The deal is Pepsi attempting to introduce **guarana** to the cola drinking stiffs of Middle America.

What the heck is guarana, I hear you cry? It tastes kind of like black cherries. It’s touted as healthful and exotic—a potion from the Amazon jungle and the latest Hip New Beverage. It is found not only in Josta but also in every other rave/new age/smart/energy drink available and that ever-popular supplement and alleged aphrodisiac “Herbal Ecstasy”. It’s really rather tasty. But what is it?

It is a berry from the Amazon rain forest. According to the Guarana Growers Association of America, “Natives in the Amazon Basin carry long rods of hardened guarana powder and grate it whenever they need a substitute for food. They can travel for two to three days if they have this rod to nibble on.” It has more than twice the caffeine concentration of coffee (woohoo!). It’s incredibly popular in Brazil, where fans claim that it wakes you up like coffee, but without the jitters. And some just like the taste. Then there’s “Professor Pan” (<http://www.charm.net/~profpan/>) who claims that guarana is a key component in Male-X, a virility drug rumored to be manufactured by intelligence agencies. (Drink guarana and be a pawn of the Men in Black! You know you want to!)

So, what about Josta, the item that originally inspired my research into this storied herb? The reaction on [soc.culture.brazil](http://soc.culture.brazil) has largely been to term it an “imitation guarana drink.” I’ll just end this column with the reaction of one canny American consumer, Paul:

*“I can tell you straight away that, whereas I know guarana, I admire guarana, and guarana is a friend of mine, Josta is no guarana. Sure, it includes extracts from the guarana plant, but as far as the actual beverages are concerned, there’s just no comparison... Y’see, **real** guarana (the beverage) has a light, refreshingly fruity flavor, which is just perfect for a hot summer day. Josta, on the other hand, tastes almost as bad as cough syrup. Being so sickly sweet, it is sure to appeal to the sugar-addicted Americans to whom PepsiCo is flogging the stuff, whereas Brazilians will just keep drinking the actual guarana, and good on ’em, I say.*

Until then, go enjoy your stuff. **YH**

**Internet not converging fast enough for you?**



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If you're like me—and I know I am—then you've heard the rap that science gets. It's cold, heartless, and uninteresting. Well, boys and girls, I'm here to tell you that that's just a big pile of overly dogmatic bullshit.

Science—and this is a well-kept secret that I'm letting you in on here—is fun.

You see, the soul of science is **empiricism**; empiricism is just a fancy word for finding things out for yourself, using your own senses to perform experiments on the world. That's right: if you're an empiricist, you get to mess with things, just to try to figure them out. It's societally sanctioned.

So let me give you an example.

Let's say you see this really cute woman. But it occurs to you that she might not actually be a woman. She might, in fact, be a chicken.

Go up to your subject and ask. If you're lucky, she'll answer. But don't take anyone's word for it—that's not what empiricism is about.

No, empiricism is about finding stuff out using your own senses. Just hearing someone say "I'm not a chicken" isn't sufficient for the truly intrepid empiricist.

Now, consider what you know about chickens.

They have wings.

They have feathers.

They have no lips.

Focus in on the last one: *they have no lips*. If the person you're talking to is actually a chicken, then she, too, will have no lips. It's a scientific fact.

Now, how are you going to find out if she has lips? Well, if you're an *empiricist*, you'll have to test this directly with your own senses. If she *looks* like she has lips, that's a good sign. But they might be faked. Thousands of chickens have discovered the technique of wearing fake lips—they learned it from Robin in that last Batman movie. So sight isn't gonna be enough.

No, you'll need the kind of scientific information that only your tactile sense can give you. To truly be certain that she's not a chicken, you'll have to kiss her.

See? *Empiricism makes you kiss people*. Especially cute people, when they might be chickens.

Now, science is also about *replication*. So kiss her again. To be truly certain, you should supplement your evidence with information from another experimental paradigm. This is the point where you say "well, you seem to have lips, which is consistent with the theory that you aren't a chicken. Why don't we go check for feathers, just for corroboration's sake?"

If you're feeling efficient, you can check for wings at the same time. But that won't get you as much grant money.

Happy experimenting! **YH**

*Next time: Ariel Delves the Mysteries of the Shake Machine*

# Alternate Theories of Continental Drift

**Chris Tilton**

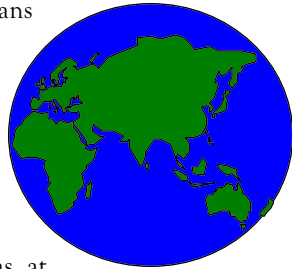
Some time ago, Alfred Wegener proposed the theory of continental drift. After a few decades of research, it was widely accepted. But was he really on the ball? For your consideration on this matter, I present to you the **alternate theories of continental drift**.

My first theory is the Pre-Pangaea Theory. I believe that all land once existed as a giant tower, many miles tall. In fact, it was so tall, the top of the tower reached out into the atmosphere. I call it the Tower of Rabbel. This tower rested on the north pole. However, one day (circa 4 billion B.C.E.), a giant tidal wave smashed into the tower, causing it to fall down onto the side of the earth, forming what is now called Pangaea.

My next theory revolves around the question of Antarctica. Fossils of a plant called the *glossopteris* have been found in many continents, one of them being Antarctica. But how can this be, when it is clearly too cold to grow anything in this region? I believe that after the Tower of Rabbel fell, Earth was tilted slightly. The product of this was that Antarctica resided on the equator. It stayed there for some time, until extra-terrestrial interference realigned that earth to its present position.

The last theory I'll present to you (but by no means the last theory developed on this matter) deals with the actual movement of the continents. I speculate that the Marianas trench was once a tunnel leading to the center of the earth. Rapid heating and cooling of the ocean waters created strong currents in the ocean. So strong, in fact, that it pulled Pangaea apart, creating the continents.

However, it is important to note that Greenland was, at this point, larger than Asia. Currents continued to pull at the continents until Greenland was finally sucked under. But, because it was so large, it clogged up the trench, thus stopping the currents and the continents with them. Reattaching themselves to land, the continents settled down to their present day locations. A piece of Greenland remains, however. It broke off from its former self and settled down just west of the Mariana Trench, before extra-terrestrial interference relocated it just off the Northeastern coast of Canada.



Many new theories are being presented in the modern scientific realm. And the new theories constantly put old theories into question. With the theories I've presented, are you beginning to doubt Alfred Wegener? **YH**

*Chris Tilton is world-class crypto-geographer currently disguised as an eighth-grade student. He denies the rumor that he has launched ten attempts to take over the world, and eats SPAM rigorously. Theorists Dawn Bund and Amy Moore also contributed to this report.*

# Voices from the Great Beyond

*Our intrepid correspondant recounts all the fun we aren't having.*

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*Some people have all the fun. In early 1996, our friend Arne announced that he'd managed to successfully weasel big bucks out of the Department of Defense to jaunt about India, which is even more impressive when you consider he's a humanities geek. He decided to celebrate by jaunting about Europe first, one Internet café at a time...*

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**Date:** Sun, 6 Oct 1996 18:31:04 GMT  
**To:** YOU PEOPLE  
**From:** Vice Minister of Komodo Dragon Affairs, on assignment in Barcelona

Greetings from Barcelona, home of tapas, tequila, and tecnologia. This has been a curiously postmodern vacation: here in Barcelona, one of the leading nightclubs plays flamenco music for the tourists until midnight, and then converts to an American disco for the locals, who then party till dawn. In Scotland, I listened to 14 hours of tango music in a crowded tourist bus, and very nearly indulged in the sin of Chinese-style haggis; reason, and my sensible stomach, prevailed. In Ljubljana, I was expecting to find babushkas in black scarves selling beets at the train station. No such luck: most of the locals wore designer clothes and drove nicer cars than we do. Also in Slovenia, the Republic Formerly Known As Yugoslavia, seven of eight local radio stations played only English songs. And so, while international borders and even cultures may be becoming increasingly porous, we all might want to question whether Bill Gates' and McDonald's conquest of the world is really for the best.

Okay, that was easy: of course it's for the best. The pinnacle of this three-month orgy of consumption I'm calling a vacation has already been reached, however. Nice, one of the more sumptuous fleshpots on the French Riviera, offered two irresistible attractions. First, there were the alluring stuffed Komodo Dragons at the local museum of natural history; and second, a pool of 1,200 breeding-and-feeding piranhae, billed as the largest indoor collection in the world. You can bet your sweet aspartame that I stuck around for the daily feeding. (I regret to say that they did not, in fact, lower in a live cow for defleshing, though the twenty pounds of white fish was impressive enough.) My Pagan Winter Holiday cards will contain photographs of this event, naturally.

Damn. My waiter just advised that the kitchen is out of meatballs, and I'll have to have giant stuffed olives instead.

Life is just suffering, I tell you. Perhaps a few more cervezas and a couple weeks on the beach will soothe the pain. The peasants in the cafe are getting a bit restive, so I must fire photon torpedoes and hope for the best.

Enjoy the drizzle and blizzards, —Arne

**Date:** Sat, 26 Oct 1996 11:53:52 +0100  
**To:** You People  
**From:** Vice Minister of Komodo Dragon and Goulash Affairs  
**Re:** The Mission That Dare Not Speak Its Name

Sirs and Madmans:

Greetings from yet another Internet Pavillion, this time in Pest, Buda's lesser half. It must be said that trying to use a keyboard riddled with unfamiliar Hungarian diacritic symbols is like playing a violin with a butter knife. But at two dollars an hour for the use of a P-133, this indignity can be suffered.

Here is a recap of the Major Sights Seen to date:

The day after I left the Barcelona internet cafe, I chanced upon a fantastic ceramic iguana designed by that loopy Catalanian, Gaudi, whose florid, pastry-like architecture warped the minds of the young Picasso and Dali and gave the city a distinctively surreal skyline. Visiting this iguana was a personal dream come true: I mean, this giant, lavender tinged ceramic lizard made me feel like I was right on the set of Komodos in Wonderland, or on the beach in Indonesia taking acid. It just doesn't get any better than this.

After Barcelona, I spent a day at the Prado admiring the works of another wacky European artist, Brueghel the Elder, noted for his exceedingly cool paintings, none better than the \*Triumph of Death\*. Ask Janus for some background on this joker and his morbidly intriguing reworking of the danse macabre theme. Way kool.

After Spain, I skipped through five countries in 27 hours to reach the Swiss border. Nothing much there, except for gold, chocolate, and frolicking third world tyrants. Okay, so Mobutu Sese Seko (sp.? Zairean dictator) is just dying of cancer in Geneva, but the Zaireans claim he's on vacation. Wieners. Picked up an advertisement for the "Double Bob Splash Pipe" in Lucerne—frop for the Crapbook, Pete.

I then rapidly fled Switzerland for the security of Austria. Vienna was lovely, and I rather enjoyed my visit to the Museum of Pathological Anatomy. More artsy stuff from Pieter Brueghel, too, though the Turkish bath in Vienna was no doubt the highlight of this particular visit, for reasons that I cannot go into on a FAMILY channel like this.

And now I'm in Pest. A drunk asshole staggered into the youth hostel last night at four o'clock in the morning and promptly proceeded to barf all over the down sleeping bag of one of the other inmates. Other than that amusing little episode, and the on-again-off-again, hot water, this is really a lovely city. I hardly need add that this lifestyle is much more to my liking than workin' for the Man.

Pursuing decadence, I remain, —Arne

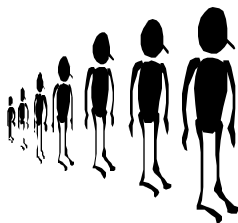
# Science as Storytelling

(or why more arts & humanities chicks should sleep with geeks like me)

**Sean McGuire**

## Beginning One:

In his book *Generation X*, Douglas Coupland makes a theme out of the importance of telling stories. Large swaths of the book are made up of his characters telling stories to one another. It's a wonderful book, and he does an excellent job of making what I think is a critical point: stories help us make sense of the world.



## Beginning Two:

Last summer, I was in the offices of the *Hungry Mind Review*, a small independent quarterly book review for whom I had been doing some consulting work. The editor, Bart, mentioned that he had received an order for one of their T-shirts from a biology graduate student at some prestigious institute in California. He thought it was very amusing that there would be a biologist walking around wearing one of their Muriel Rukeyser shirts, on which is the quote “The universe is made of stories, not atoms.” Apparently Bart thought this was a queer sentiment for a biologist to be expressing on his back. I allowed as how it made perfect sense to me, and said that, of all of the *Review*’s lovely shirts, that one was easily my favorite. So he gave me one. Not quite coincidentally, I’m wearing it right now. (Well, not right now necessarily. At the time of writing. I have no idea what I’m wearing right now. Well, I mean... you know what I mean.)

## Beginning Three:

I was in Pittsburgh, interviewing for a graduate position in the Department of Psychology at Carnegie Mellon University. I was sitting in the back seat of the car of my hosts, Randy and Yuko, and Yuko started to talk with Randy about her research. “At first, I was saying this,” she said, and then described a particular theory, “but that actually doesn’t work out. So here’s the story I’m telling now.” This particular turn of phrase was very striking to me. The next day, I heard several other people, both faculty and graduate students, refer to scientific theories and ideas as stories.

Okay, that should be enough beginnings for now. In case you skipped a couple of them, here's a quick summary: stories are compelling. The universe is made of stories, not atoms, according to Muriel Rukeyser. People I think are wicked cool talk about scientific theories in terms of stories. The point I'm trying to make here is that half, or more than half, of the "scientific enterprise" is storytelling.

Occasionally, a scientific disagreement will be over whether or not something actually occurs. This is why scientists try to replicate experiments, and why I had to suffer through two semesters of statistics and a semester of probability. More often, however, scientists end up disagreeing about what story to tell about a particular piece of data, or about a lot of pieces of data. And usually, when someone doubts that a particular result actually occurred, their doubt is motivated primarily by the fact that it doesn't fit with their favorite story.

Now, many of you might be saying "aren't you just using the word 'story' in place of the word 'theory' for no better reason than that it gives you something to write about, as well as an excuse to make pretentious references to authors you've never actually read?" And the answer to that question is yes, but only partially. I really am trying to make what I think is a very important point. Broadly speaking, stories serve one of three purposes: to entertain, to inform, or to explain. Since the primary purpose of a theory is explanation, theories can be considered stories in a very real sense. (Some scientific theories are also entertaining, occasionally even on purpose, but this isn't a prerequisite.)

Good stories are self-consistent, bad ones are not. Good stories are compelling, and bad stories just "don't ring true". Many stories require a certain willing suspension of disbelief, but this is much easier to manage for good stories than bad.

Scientific theories are rarely inconsistent with themselves, but they are often inconsistent with the facts they are trying to explain. People respond to this in one of two ways: they get new, better stories, or they try to explain the facts away. The latter course of action generally requires one to make up another story. Sometimes this is as simple as "the people in that lab have their collective head up their collective ass," but usually it's more along the lines as "well of course that result looks problematic but really if you just consider the way my story interacts with the neo-perambulation constant of the proto-simian gravitational access parametric, you'll see why it all makes perfect sense. And anyway, the people in that lab have their collective head up their collective ass."

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**"well, of course that result *looks* problematic but really if you just consider the way my story interacts with the neo-perambulation constant of the proto-simian gravitational access parametric, you'll see why it all makes perfect sense. And anyway, the people in that lab have their collective head up their collective ass."**

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Compelling stories are ones you just can't help but believe, at least while you're reading them. For me, one very compelling story is "the universe is made of atoms." It just seems to make so much sense. (Never mind that I've never seen an atom.) Another personal favorite is, "the brain creates the mind." Whenever I lay



this story out in full, I can't help but believe it (except for one or two nagging little problems like qualitative experience.)

Uncompelling stories are just not believable, no matter how hard you try. Of course, one person's perfect theory is another person's crock of raccoon feces. Two of the smartest people I know can't agree about whether psychologists should be telling stories about rules and symbols, or about thousands of little processing units interacting with one another, and they're both convinced that the other person is in some deep sense utterly and completely wrong. There are some very smart people in my field, whom I respect a lot, who create complicated and byzantine stories to explain things which I am convinced are explained much better using...well, using my story, of course. But these people are convinced that they're right. Then again, some people—even people I respect—liked the movie *Independence Day*.

Willing suspension of disbelief is a fundamental requirement of all fiction. Even if the story is one about modern day life, you have to be willing to say "I will forget, for the moment, that the author is making all of this up" in order to fully appreciate the story. In science, willing suspension of disbelief runs even deeper. To understand a paper, you have to be able to believe, or at least in some mild way pretend to believe, all the assumptions that went into that paper. That's either a lot of believing, or a lot of pretense. To come up with a new theory, you usually have to say "well, let's pretend it's like this for the moment." To even do science, one has to suspend one's disbelief of the scientific method, of experimentation, and of statistics. (That this is often easy to do is merely a testament to how compelling those stories are.)

I'm convinced that, insofar as there is such a thing, the storytelling metaphor is the "right way" to think about science. There are two reasons for this, one scientific and one social. The scientific reason is, one expects stories to be inaccurate, and one expects stories to reflect the biases of their tellers; since all scientific theories yet created are at least partially incorrect, and since all theories reflect, to some extent, the tastes of their proponents, it is useful to view scientific theories with the same skepticism. The social reason is that the storytelling view paints science as more humanistic. Under the storytelling view, science is not the antagonistic process of dissecting and disassembling the universe; it is the process of finding the truest, most beautiful stories to describe the world. **YH**

*Sean McGuire is, despite all protestations to the contrary, not a chicken, a giant chicken. By night he is secret master of the Llamas of Pittsburgh, and by day, he is a mild-mannered graduate student in the Psych department at Carnegie Mellon.*

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# *Subject: Saving the Universe*



***Nigel Kerr***

AHEM! of a sudden, I felt a presence near my hands, looked up to see prized and ancient artifacts of JCPenney fabrication or worse despite my skills at food preparation. What mysterious there should be-

BUT...

the two and only...

umbrella and scarf

of

yes, you guessed it

-I do in fact have a point here, but

I'm trying to make it necessarily and sufficiently

dramatic

James "<{(Eric)}>" Tilton!

"A-hem," repeated the umbrella, clearing its throat (or at least the moral equivalent thereof (or at least the pizza equivalent of a moral equivalent)), "Niggles!" It had a tiny tiny little voice, that made it hard to hear above the rattling of keys as I continued on a relentless torrent of word processing, despite it really being a goldfish or the presence of mind bearing 251 at 70,000 bananas. Or with them.

"You must, I say, you must," it continued as I sandwiched this new paradigm into my suitcase to consume at my leisure, "save the world as we know it before all is lost at last! We need it saved on at least 7.5%, to make it worth the time! But only you can do it now! Our fearless Lieder - Jim-bo ->)) Ericonomicon ((<- Tiltonic Knight - has abandoned us here under this pastrami to fend for ourselves with only Jungle Rhythms to award off Pulitzer Prizes with! Nig El Insecto De Encanta Del Desierto, you must take up this Wooly Quest!"

"Gadizoiks, you're Frank Lloyd Wright! I'll get right off on it!" With this, my hands flew off the handle, resembling much the pigeons I'd fed to my alligator

earlier that day. I staggered off my decrepit limbs, reached for those mighty relics of The Tiltidatious One-

-and the Laid-Back One of the Lake  
in the soft focus of my mind's eye  
arose to lean on her elbow,  
and did lob  
that  
great  
bumbershoot  
towards my outstretched palm  
and crown me on the for'ed-

-as i downed a Bucket O' Pillsbury, wrapped Scarfie around my waistline along with my lead beard and plasticine ears, I held a loft with one hand, and the other rose that mighty Pointy thing above my head, screaming as a banshee she'd been:  
"IN THE NAME OF VITAMIN X, I'LL TAKE UP THIS WHOLE E. QUEST... FOR SCIENCE!"

wasting no time, i immediately had a nap. Then i took in a flick, and availed myself of a spectacular repost, which I repost later, riposte to reconnoiter your reckoning, such a wreck! I then, wiping my lips in those days as the French so often don't, I flung myself over a fender, and whispered to the car:

"It is late, a man will massage you, or better, and there will be gas!"

Taking heed of this, it plunged headlong forward, driving then right, then left, ahead, behind, fast and slow, hurrying towards its destination so desperately, to save the world, at 7.5%!

Too bad it had left me behind. I leapt into a phone booth, and prepared to dial a magic pizza on which to fly, but Scarfie cleared his throat of my navel fuzz, and spoke:

"Nigglet, O Ye of the Wet Grommet, Ye have only to presse the Launch Buttone ye see before ye! Thereby we'll straight to't! O Ho Ho Ho Ho!"

Hearing him laugh thusly in capital letters, I did thraight away stab my finger forward to the big red button marked "LAUNCH."



And

did

Have

A

sensation

of

flying

and

soaring

that

began

rapidly

to

fade

>SPLUT!< We landed upside-up in the midst of a secret pothole, trembling in the dark light, knees knocking together to the beatniks. Peering around, I opened the umbrella so no one could see me, and proceeded bravely into a corner to hide. Taking stock in blue chips, I discovered our location: we were in the heart of downtown Slay'em, right next to Globo-Mega-Bank of Bob, a division of DysPepsi-Co, RIGHT WHERE WE WANTED TO BE.

“Oh, Nizhelle, you have rocketed straight to the heart of the matter,” squeaked the mystic Umbrella, “proceed now to be the world’s saviour!”

Stuffing the world into a deposit envelop, I shuffled across the square traversing a distance of merely a herringbone, slyly slid slaunchways slippery slothful creakily to the door, cracked it open with the point of my vorpal umbrella, and entered nonchalantly to the tune of gunshots and farm animals. I had arrived!

But hold! There, waiting in line for the next available teller was-  
that dastardly demon,  
wicked and evil nasty person,

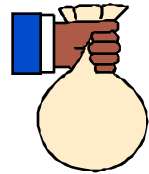
THE BAD GUY!

“CRIPES!” I shouted into my sleeve to make it sound like a sneeze. “Yes,” squeaked Umbrella and Scarfie in unison, “this show is so cheap, we couldn’t think of a better name for the antagonist.” Not loosing time in the three micro-seconds between our sight of him and his turning round, i disguised myself as a cigarette, but not an expensive brand! We fell in the Klein Bottle behind him, waiting, waiting for the next available teller, trembling at the thought of THE turning round and recognizing us for who we were, and attacking us without mercy. Mr. GUY was known for his bad acting and scripted parts, as well as a heavy hand when it came to roughing up the stunt doubles.

THE was whistling, whistling a duneless tune (because you want more dessert than desert anyways), shuffling his cache in his hands, yes, he would make a deposit this eve as well, looked like FroP Bonds. Oh, don’t turn round you evil villain. I switch disguise several thousand times a second to keep him guessing were he to have been looking at me, held my breath, and almost fainted. I came to rest as a long strand of jute...

His turn in line came, and the next available teller was not even dating anyone at the time, handsome as he was. We became first in line as THE sauntered across the carpet to stand alone in front of the teller, and tell him of his monetary concerns. I quivered, and the world quivered with me in the deposit envelop, and I suddenly remembered that i’d forgotten to remember the amount of the deposit before sealing it in with the slip >CRIMINY<!

And the NeXT available teller told me to come tell her of my desired transactions, or at least those involving money. I turned and twisted nonchalantly impersonating a mariachi band impersonator through my fibrous costume, drawing only the attention of myself, because i have an assertiveness problem. She was there, behind the counter, awaiting.



“Miss, I’d like to make a deposit, you see-”

“Uh,” she gazed down on my hempen form, wrinkling her eyebrows, “say, you aren’t one of those strings are you? We can’t service strings here, not even those

that are null terminated, you look a lot like a string to me.”

flickering my strands, my mind raced out of my skull to careen around the parking lot: what to do, i must fight this circus and deposit the world, or we'll loose 300 billion by 9:30 or bust!, but then, it came to me (again and again and again...)

“Fraid not. I'd like to deposit this world please.”

I passed the slightly crumpole envelop across the simulated fake wood grain counter top, and she nervously took it, her mind still locked over my words tumbling through space to her. Mechanically, her fingers and eyes scanned the envelop, moved to the computer, punched in the numbers and letters, and finally, with the sound of symbols crashing through the cosmos, handed a slip of a receipt back across the counter-

“Sign here, if you want to withdraw cash.”

Our collective ears pricked up-  
cash!

we could withdraw some of this  
deposit, and-  
celebrate!

“uh,” with my best John Hancock, scrawling out a cool 50, “there you are!”

She took the slip back, read it again. “Yes, thank you, Mr. Hancock. Here is your 50. We hope you've enjoyed banking with us. Have a nice day.”

We sprinted out of the bank through the front window, Scarfie taking down the transaction in the Czech Book, Umbrella coiled tightly round my hand, I waving our well-gotten gains high above my head, “Fifty cents! We can get a whole cookie! Yeeeeeeeeeeeeee-HAW!”

And with that, the Vitamin X wore off, I slept it off, and the television got turned off. There ends the cause,

but not

THE SYMPTOM! **YH**

*Nigel Kerr was the first man ever to be Inter-Library Loaned a sandwich, and the second man ever to eat it. He currently resides in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he encodes secret messages into classics of Western Literature by day and plays Death Twister by night.*

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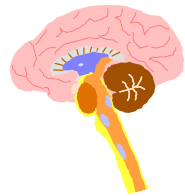
Please have him call 555/555-5555.

God, if you see this:  
*Come Home! All is forgiven!*  
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